

Triumphant Saints, Part 1

Revelation 14:1

66-49

Open your Bible to the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation, the last book in the Bible, Revelation chapter 14. Our theme for the message which will be a two-part message, tonight and next Sunday night, is "Triumphant Saints...Triumphant Saints." Let me read to you the first five verses of Revelation 14.

"And I looked and behold the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion and with him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who have not been defiled with women for they have kept themselves chaste, these are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, these have been purchased from among men as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And no lie was found in their mouth, they are blameless."

Frankly that's a fairly amazing group, isn't it? And a hundred and forty-four thousand of them that fall into the classifications of verses 4 and 5? A hundred and forty-four thousand men who have never been defiled with women, who have kept themselves chaste, who follow the Lamb wherever He goes, who have been purchased as firstfruits to God and the Lamb, no lie is found in their mouth and they are blameless. What an incredible force that would be in the world. Just to put that in perspective, there may be currently today fifty thousand missionaries in the world. Triple that and then multiply this level of commitment and you have an astounding group.

And here they are pictured in a triumphant posture back in verse 1, standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb. These are victors. These are winners. These have triumphed. The scene depicting the Lamb on Mount Zion therefore presents the return of Christ. Here He is, He has arrived, He's on Zion and there stand the hundred and forty-four thousand victorious, having gone through the time of Tribulation triumphant. These are the kind of men who would be attractive to all of us as Christians and perhaps the kind of men who might even be attractive in our culture which is so enamored with the image of a winner, a victor, a conqueror. We don't like losers. If they're coaches, we fire them. If they're players, we trade them. If they're politicians, we vote them out. We want winners. We want people who can face the greatest danger and be triumphant in the end. The macho man is what we want.

And the macho male had a great champion in General George S. Patton, "old blood and guts" as he was called by his fighting men. He freely admitted that he loved war where men were men. And, in fact, in battle he was a brilliant leader. A film was made about him called "Patton." It captured his sort of macho spirit. In the opening scene George C. Scott, who played Patton, strode on stage in front of

an enormous American flag, dressed in full military regalia, combat helmet, chest full of medals, pearl-handled revolver, knee-high boots and a whip in his hand and announced, "All real Americans love to fight. American men love the sting of battle."

Well when you're a kid that's pretty impressive stuff. Heroes are soldiers and athletes and men of action, and you love a winner and you don't like a loser. Even Patton said, "The thought of losing is hateful."

Of course this winners mentality was an incomparable asset on the battlefield as his tank division went ahead of all others into the heart of Germany, or as he led exhausted troops for days without sleep to rescue trapped allied forces in the famous Battle of the Bulge.

As I think about men of that stature and men who are known in society as winners, I think of Earnest Hemingway who was another one of those men whose life style captured the imagination of the men of our culture during the post-war period. Hemingway was into war also, he was a mercenary, you could pay him to fight a war. He loved war, too. He loved the smell of the guns. Hemingway was enthusiastically committed to boxing, bull fighting, big game hunting, tumbling women and, of course, his favorite pastime, drinking. Such books as Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls made men yearn for a life of adventure.

And more recently and maybe a little closer to home, Pete Rose comes to mind. The memorable ultimate all-star baseball player who gave a generation of boys an image of a no-holds-barred masculinity. Pete made more base hits, four thousand two hundred and fifty six, than anybody else ever has or probably ever will and got nicknamed "Charlie Hustle." When he walked, he would run to first base. Once he plowed so hard in when opposing catcher during an All-star game so that he dislocated the man's shoulder and affected his career. But he was a winner.

The world is enamored with winners. The courageous, the strong, the fearless, the undaunted, those who can do what we all wish we could do, win the big battle, fight the big war, win the big games. Those are the kind of heroes that American men have had through the last decades. But what about them? What about General George Patton the great hero of World War II?

His fall began when he encountered a weeping soldier in a hospital behind the front lines. When he saw that soldier weeping, he became enraged, he slapped him, he kicked him, he called him a yellow-bellied coward and ordered him back to his unit. That incident received worldwide publicity and Patton for a while was relieved of his command because of his merciless treatment of this soldier.

What about Earnest Hemingway, that great hero of the post-war era, the toast of the literary world. For most of his life he seemed like a god, larger than life. The trouble is, wrote Hemingway's biographer, A.E. Hotchner, "When a man is labeled macho, he tries to live up to it, this can be a real trap," end quote. It was a trap for Hemingway. It made him incapable of integrity, incapable of fidelity. He was married four times. He used alcohol to avoid admitting to painful personal situations. And at the approach of old age, rather than face the diminishing power in his own masculinity, he shot himself in the mouth and left his brains on the wall for his wife to clean up.

And what about Pete Rose? Here is a man who seemingly had it all...extraordinary achievement,

hero worship from young and old, a top job as the manager of the Cincinnati Reds following his retirement, but his ego was so monumental that he once made a scene in a Manhattan restaurant because there was no sandwich named after him. He became a gambling addict, feeling so godlike that when he bet on games involving his own team, a serious offense punishable by banishment from baseball. He felt somehow immune. When the blow fell and Rose was expelled from the game for life, he seemed dazed, hardly comprehending that he had done anything wrong.

They weren't really winners, they were losers, particularly where it really counts. What I just read to you in Revelation chapter 14 introduces you to some real winners. On a completely different level, I almost hesitate to give you those illustrations because the gap is so wide, they almost can't make the point even by contrast. Here in these five verses we meet as triumphant a group of men as the world will ever know. In fact, surely there has never been and there never will be anything to equal one hundred and forty-four thousand completely committed Christian men. There are others in the Bible. There is Joseph who was uncompromising. There is Daniel who was equally uncompromising. There is Paul. And there were more, faithful, godly stalwarts, preachers, witnesses to God, but never in the history of the earth has there been such a large group all together. Men of this level of commitment usually appear here and there, sort of isolated from one another, now and then. But here is a force of godly men, one hundred and forty-four thousand strong. Battle weary? Yes. Having survived the worst holocaust in the world's history, seven years of the onslaught of a combination of the wrath of heaven and the wrath of hell, the judgments of God and the assaults of Satan. And through it all they are triumphant, they are a hundred and forty-four thousand Daniels.

What made them so unique? What made them so invincible? What made them so victorious? Well the answer is in this text. And we're going to get to that answer tonight and next Sunday night. But before we look at that answer, let me just give you a little bit of the setting so that you understand what surrounds this tremendous introduction of these men.

The scene here, as I noted for you, is depicting Christ's return. We know that because the Lamb is standing on Mount Zion. Here we have a vision given to John of the return of Christ to takeover the earth, destroy the wicked and set up His millennial kingdom. This then is a glimpse of the end of the time called Tribulation, the end of the time called Great Tribulation when the Lord returns.

Now remember, as the book of Revelation has unfolded, as the apocalypse has unfolded, we saw a first vision of Christ in chapter 1, the vision of Christ in all His glory moving through His church. Then in chapters 2 and 3 we read His personal letters to the churches calling them to holiness and obedience. Then in chapters 4 and 5 we were lifted to heaven to the very throne of God and we saw all of this action around the throne of God as God began to move to enact His judgment. In chapter 6 we came down from heaven back to the earth, and from chapter 6 through chapter 11 we were given visions of the judgments of God as He devastates the wicked of the world who refuse to believe the gospel and as He begins to take over the universe. That description of the judgment of God runs from chapter 6 through verse...pardon me, chapter 6 through chapter 11 and it picks up again at chapter 15 and runs through chapter 20.

We're in that interlude of chapters 12 to 14. Now the purpose of chapters 12 and 13 is to go back over the same time period, the Tribulation, and look at it not from God's side, not from the side of God's judgment, but from Satan's side. And that's what we've been doing in chapter 12 and chapter 13. Chapter 12 we saw Satan's effort to destroy Israel. And chapter 13 we saw Satan's Antichrist and Satan's false prophet.

So by the time we come to chapter 14 we've seen the Tribulation from God's side, we've seen this time of Tribulation to come upon the earth from Satan's side. Satan will make every effort to destroy the Jews, to destroy any who believe in the gospel, to build one world empire under Antichrist with the aid of the false prophet, the two beasts described in chapter 13.

Now chapter 14 takes us back to what God is doing. It doesn't pick up the judgments of the time of Tribulation, they get picked up again in chronological order in chapter 15. But chapter 14 takes us back to looking at this time period from God's perspective. He gives us a general preview of the judgments to come and of the return of Christ, and then picks the details up in chapter 15.

Chapter 14 then marks a dramatic change. Chapter 12 and 13, Satan is in action. Chapter 14, God is in action. Before the specifics of the seventh trumpet mentioned back in chapter 11 unfold in chapter 15 and 16, here are three visions given in this chapter...three visions. All three of them look at the victory of the Lamb. The first vision has to do with a hundred and forty-four thousand. The second vision has to do with a series of angels. The final vision has to do with the one who comes with a sharp sickle in his hand and brings judgment.

So all three of these visions look at the victory, the triumph of the Lamb. Now another way to look at this, chapter 14 is the topside of thirteen. Thirteen is the dark underside, chapter 14 is the light topside. Chapter 13 is the dark picture of Antichrist and his people. Fourteen is the light picture of Christ and His people. Thirteen is Satan, Antichrist, false prophet, demons, damned, deception, idolatry and the mark of the beast. Fourteen is God, Christ, angels, redeemed saints, truth, genuine worship and the mark of God. The contrasts are notable. In 13 you have the beast, in 14 you have the Lamb. In 13 you have the false, in 14 you have the true or the real. In 13 the wicked, in 14 the righteous. In 13 corruption, in 14 purity. In 13 blasphemy, in 14 praise. In 13 destruction, in 14 protection. In 13 death, in 14 life. In 13, 666, in 14 one hundred and forty-four thousand. And there are other contrasts.

So as we come to chapter 14 we are turning to God's side of the action again. And we immediately meet a group of triumphant men who are in the classic category of winners, victors, namely the hundred and forty-four thousand. We have seen Satan's plan to take over, we have seen in chapter 12 and 13 all of Satan's assault, and all of his enterprise and all of his operation, and now we're going to find out that with all of that effort by Satan and all of that effort by demons and the world system that engulfs all of humanity, with all of that Satan in the end does not win because in the end on Mount Zion stands the Lamb and with Him the invincible hundred and forty-four thousand.

Now this is a very important opening vision here in chapter 14. And we need to understand all we can about these triumphant saints. To help with that, go back to chapter 6 for a moment, back to chapter 6 verse 17. In chapter 6 we begin to see the seals broken, and those seals being broken produce judgments by God. There is a false peace, then there is war, and then there is famine and then there is pestilence and death. And then at the end of chapter 6, the sixth seal is open, a great earthquake, the sun becomes as black as sackcloth, the moon becomes like blood, the stars of the sky begin to fall to the earth. The sky is split apart like a scroll, verse 14. The kings of the earth, the great men, the commanders, the rich, the strong, every slave, freeman hides himself in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They're screaming. Why? Verse 17, "For the great day of the wrath has come." The wrath of God and the wrath of the Lamb.

And then this question, end of verse 17...Who is able...what?...to stand? Who can survive it? Who is able to survive the fury? Who can live through the four horsemen of the apocalypse? The sixth seal? And then the seventh seal, when it's opened? And seven trumpets come out of that all indicating judgment. And the seventh trumpet when it's blown and seven bowls out of that, all indicating judgment, who in the world can survive all that? And the trumpets haven't even been blown yet, and the bowls haven't even been poured out yet, and still the question is asked in chapter 6...who can stand? Who can survive? Remember, judgment has already been severe. Before the question is even asked at the sixth seal, you have wars, famines, earthquakes, plagues, billions of deaths, sin running rampant over the world unrestrained. People being deceived by the Antichrist. A false religious system developing and growing up under the false prophet, blaspheming God, killing of Christians, killing of Jews, this is all going on. Demons are being allowed to run rampant over the earth as Satan himself has been cast down to the earth and all of his heavenly demons with him. Antichrist has desecrated the temple and set himself up as God by the time of the sixth seal. He has done abominable acts. He has now established one-world religion, that's the worship of himself. He has abominated the temple of God. The demons have been released out of the pit and they're running over the earth, it is a horrifying, unimaginable kind of situation. And the question is...will anyone survive?

And immediately you come to chapter 7 and you get the question answered. "I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth so that no winds should blow on the earth or on the sea or any tree. I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun...that's the east...having the seal of the living God and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea and said, 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bondservants of our God on their behalf.' And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel." And then it goes on to tell twelve thousand from every tribe. Who's going to stand? Who's going to survive? Here's the answer...one hundred and forty-four thousand are going to survive. They're going to go through this thing and they're going to survive. God's going to put a seal on them so they cannot be harmed, they will be protected because they belong to Him. In the midst of God's wrath they will be marked out as were those of whom Malachi wrote when he said, "The Lord knows who are His and He has a book and in the day that He makes up His jewels, all of His will be there. He knows who belongs to Him and they are protected when His wrath falls." He did it for Noah. He did it for Rahab. He did it for Lot. He did it for the faithful in Egypt. And He can do it again and He will do it again, there will be some people who will survive all of that and He introduces us to them in chapter 7 and they are the hundred and forty-four thousand.

If you want a wonderful psalm that supports this kind of protecting power of God, read Psalm 37 verses 35 to 40. I won't take the time to read it. There you have God saying how He protects His own.

Now let me add this very carefully. There will also be people from out of the nations of the world saved who will survive. And they will enter into the kingdom. Matthew 25 tells us that. There will be a judgment of the nations and the sheep, those who are still alive who are sheep in the sense that they believe the gospel and have been saved, will go into the kingdom, believing people in addition to the hundred and forty-four thousand. They will be spared. They will be protected. But there will also be others who will survive to enter into the glorious kingdom.

There will not only be people from the nations, there will be Jews. The salvation of the nations, the salvation of the Jews will take place, and there will be Jews that the Lord will protect. We saw that in chapter 12, didn't we? We know that the kingdom will be filled with people from every nation, so some of the Gentiles will survive and some of the Jews will survive and together they will constitute the people that make up the kingdom after Christ returns. Many of them, probably most of them, will die as martyrs.

Most of the believers will die as martyrs and many of the Jews will perish as unbelieving Jews. Some no doubt will die as martyrs because they have come to faith in the gospel. But many will survive. And I don't want to leave the impression in your mind that they won't. But here is one specific group who will be preserved in tact. The question in chapter 6 verse 17 that we just read...who will be able to stand? And then you go to chapter 14 where we are, and you go all the way to the end and he starts out, "There standing on Mount Zion is the one hundred and forty-four thousand." They were able to stand. Saved earlier, dedicated and devoted the service of Christ, twelve thousand from every tribe of Israel, they became evangelists across the face of the earth, one hundred and forty-four thousand men at a level of dedication never before seen. The unique group of Jewish evangelists who survived the whole thing, including the events of the day of the Lord. And there they stand alive.

Now I promise you that the world is going to want to kill Christians and the world is going to want to kill Jews, and of all the Jews they want to kill, they're going to want to kill the hundred and forty-four thousand most. The only people they would want to kill more than the hundred and forty-four thousand would be the two witnesses of chapter 11. But fire goes out of their mouth every time they try and consumes the people that try to kill them until finally the Lord lets them be killed and then raises them from the dead. Well they'll have the same animosity, the same hostility, and the same bitterness against this massive evangelistic force covering the globe. The world will want to kill them but not succeed. The promise was they would be sealed and they would be protected and they would be able to stand. And here they are at the end and there they are and they're standing.

They've had a signet, or a stamp to identify ownership, authenticity, security. They are marked as belonging to God, just like the followers of the beast have their mark, the hundred and forty-four thousand have their own mark. And you know, it says in verse 1 the mark is on their foreheads. You remember the beast his mark on the forehead or on the hand, right? And the mark of the hundred and forty-four thousand is on their foreheads. It is the sphragis, the signet, the stamp of God. This is Mine, you can't touch this. Believing, saved, redeemed Jewish men instrumental in the salvation of people from all the nations, they preach along with the two witnesses, along with an angel flying in the heavens proclaiming the gospel from space, and other believers who faithfully preach the gospel, they will preach. They will call people to repentance. They will tell them of sin. They will speak of judgment. And they will survive. They will go alive into the kingdom.

And I believe that once they get in the kingdom they'll keep doing the same thing. They're not going to change their job because when they get into the kingdom, there will be Jews going into the kingdom and Gentiles, they'll all be believers, but they'll start to have to children. And their children won't all believe. In fact, by the end of the thousand-year kingdom there's a worldwide rebellion against Christ. And I believe they'll continue to evangelize during the kingdom. I believe they will continue to bring people to Christ. I think they'll fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah. Back in chapter 59 of Isaiah, Isaiah talks about how that there's going to be salvation in the time of the kingdom. He talks about that all the way into chapter 60 of Isaiah. In fact, you can follow it all the way down to verse 22,

that's the end of the chapter. Chapter 59 and 60 talks about that.

Zechariah the prophet of the Old Testament indicating also in chapter 8, I think it is, about verse 23, "In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you for we've heard that God is with you.'" During the kingdom time the Gentiles are going to be grabbing on the robes and saying, "Take me to the Lord, I want to see Him, I want to meet Him." And I believe the hundred and forty-four thousand will do the same thing they did during the Tribulation, they'll survive it all.

You know what thrills me? It doesn't say in chapter 14, "And I looked and behold the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion and with him were a hundred and thirty-nine thousand five hundred." I'd be very distressed about that. They're all there. That's the protective power of God. They're all there, preserved to stand on Zion when the Lamb returns and to go into His kingdom and to continue their work. Here are some triumphant saints. Here are some real winners.

Now that brings us to ask the question that I asked in the beginning. What makes such a triumphant saint? What are the components? You say, "Well it's the sovereignty of God, He marked them out." It's more than that. You read verses 4 and 5 with me twice. It was not just the sovereignty of God. It was their own character. It was the level of their own spiritual commitment. And had they turned their back on that commitment, God would have had every reason to turn His back on His promise of protection, right? I mean, God will protect those whom He promises to protect if they themselves are faithful. And so we know a hundred and forty-four thousand of them are there. That means a hundred and forty-four thousand are protected because a hundred and forty-four thousand were faithful.

I want you to meet some real winners here. What was the source of their victory? What was the source of their invincibility? What made them so invincible?

Point number one, I don't know how many we'll give you, maybe one, maybe two. Point number one, power...power. Let's look at verse 1. "And I looked, and behold the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads."

They all belong to God. They all belong to Christ. And they are kept by the power of God whose they are. What verse 1 tells you is they are marked out as the possession of God and because of that they have the promise of the protection of God which calls for the power of God. This is the divine side, friends, of triumphant Christianity. This is the divine side. This is the essential side. The God who promised, the God who possessed them would be the God who protected them with His power. God who cannot lie when He makes a promise keeps His promise.

Look briefly at the details. "I looked...he says...and behold," that phrase is used ten times or a similar phrase ten times in Revelation as John continually calls attention to dramatic things. I looked and wow! exclamation. And what did I see this time? He's already said it eight times, he's going to say it even more, I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. What Lamb? Well that goes back to chapter 5 verse 6. Here we saw the Lamb standing again. Between the throne with the four living creatures, and the elders, John says I saw a Lamb standing as if slain, the slain Lamb is none other than Christ. And in the book of Revelation you see the Lamb crucified there in chapter 5 verse 6, you see the Lamb glorified later in chapter 5 verse 8, 12 and 13. You see the Lamb magnified, chapter 7 verse 9,

10, 14 and 17. And here you see the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. You can follow your way right through this much of the book by just following the Lamb. And there He is standing on Zion. This is a monumental moment, my friends, I cannot emphasize this enough, I cannot tell you how important this is. It goes all the way back to Psalm 2. And in Psalm 2 the Father God says, "I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." And by way of prophecy He says, "The day is coming when I will send the Anointed One, the Messiah, and He will take His place on Mount Zion as King."

Verse 8 of the same Psalm, Psalm 2 says that God will give Him the nations as His inheritance. The very ends of the earth as His possession. That's the great kingdom. And He will break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware, like a clay pot.

This is the fulfillment of that. This should be exhilarating, overwhelming, captivating for every Jew who has ever hoped for the fulfillment of Psalm 2, a Messiah who would come and ultimately reign as king, planting His feet on Mount Zion. Psalm 48 says, "Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. In the city of our God, His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great King."

Mount Zion doesn't just mean the little hill, it means Jerusalem, that great place. Mount Zion is where the Messiah is to come, so said the psalmist, so says Isaiah. In Isaiah 24, just one brief Scripture, verse 23, "For the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed," that's the darkness of the day of the Lord, "for the Lord of host will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and His glory will be before His elders." He's coming to Zion. Isaiah said it, the psalmist said it. He's going to return to Mount Zion, to Jerusalem.

Now strangely some commentators think this is a vision of heaven. They want to equate this with Hebrews 12:22 and 24, the discussion of a heavenly Zion. There is a discussion there of a heavenly Zion, which is just another way to express the abode of God in heaven. But there is also an earthly one, and this is the earthly one. The whole point here would be lost if the hundred and forty-four thousand are in heaven because if they're in heaven, then they didn't stand and they didn't survive, right? If these people are in heaven, then they died and the promise of survival was void and the mark didn't mean anything. But they aren't in heaven, this is not the heavenly Zion of Hebrews 12, this is the Mount Zion of the earth. And by the way, Jewish belief, Jewish tradition expressed, for example, in Joel 2:32 or in Isaiah 11:9 to 12 always expected a rallying of the faithful at Zion when the Messiah came. And here it is. Here are the most faithful...the most victorious...the most triumphant. And they're the same hundred and forty-four thousand that were promised to survive in chapter 7.

I read a commentator this week who said, "The hundred and forty-four thousand isn't an exact number, it's just a symbol for all the church." Wrong. That's...that's a cop out, that's just double talk. Another one said, "It's just a symbol of the Tribulation saints that survive." There are so many strange views. Seventh Day Adventist writer, M.L. Andrason(?) in his writing called The Sanctuary Source maintains that the last generation of Christians on this earth, which he calls the old earth, will live completely without sin, sinless and thus give a final demonstration of what God can do with humanity. This is a little hard for me to believe that any generation of Christians could live without sin, particularly the ones who are on the earth when all hell is breaking loose and the restrainer is gone.

The writer, this Seventh Day Adventist writer further says, This final demonstration will follow the

example of Christ and...quote: "Prove that which God did in Christ He can do in every human being who submits to Him," end quote. So, he is saying it will be a group of Christians who are as sinless as Jesus.

Now, if you happen to be a Seventh Day Adventist you know that the most important act of righteousness is to keep the Sabbath. And if you follow the logic a little bit, it's going to be a hundred and forty-four thousand perfect Seven Day Adventists.

On the other hand, the Jehovah's Witness group says it's them. They had a little trouble once they went past a hundred and forty-four thousand and they've sort of tweaked it a little bit, it will be the best of them.

The Mormons claim it's them.

I read one writer that said it's a special group of history's most outstanding Christians that are all collected in heaven for this scene.

We know who these people are, why do we have all these silly speculations? We know exactly who they are. They're twelve thousand Jews out of every tribe, it tells you that in chapter 7. You don't have to get exotic, it's right there. And it also tells you there that it's the people who aren't going to die during the time of the wrath of God, they're going to stand, they're going to survive. And here they are and they're there. And the Lamb is on Zion here on earth, He's come back and He's done exactly what Joel 2:32 said, He's redeem...He's gathered His own people around Him. They're the ones who were sealed. They're the ones who had the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father on their foreheads. They have God's name and they have the Lamb's name where everybody can see. And I don't think that will be a bar code either.

John Phillips writes, "No other age has produced a company like this, veritable army of militant believers marching unscathed through every form of danger. It has been theirs to defy the dragon, debate the beast and to give the lie to the false prophet. Their calling has been to preach the gospel from the housetops when even to the name....even to name the name of Christ called for the most dreadful penalties. They have been surrounded, these latter day Jobs, with impenetrable hedges, able to laugh, to scorn all the grand inquisitors of hell. They have walked the streets in broad daylight, careless of the teeth gnashing rage of their would-be torturers and assassins, true witnesses of Jehovah in the most terrible era of the history of mankind. The devil knows about this coming band of conquerors and writhes already in an agony of anticipation," end quote.

They will live Psalm 91...they will live Psalm 91. You remember that great Psalm, I can't resist reminding you of it. Verse 5, "You will not be afraid of the terror by night or the arrow that flies by day or the pestilence that stalks at darkness or the destruction that lays waste at noon. A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not approach you." Verse 11, why? "No plague will come near your tent, for He will give His angel charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways, they will bear you up in their hands lest you strike your foot against a stone, you will tread on the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you'll trample down, because he has loved Me therefore I will deliver him, I will set him securely on high because he's known My name. I will call upon...he will call upon Me, I will answer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him with a long life I will satisfy him and let him behold My salvation." That's not only true

of the Messiah, that's true of the hundred and forty-four thousand.

Their victory and their triumph is due to God's power. And so we can say in verse 1 they're there and we see that the reason they're there is because they belong to the Lamb and they belong to the Father and they're marked out and thus they are protected. And the implication is they have been faithful so that God's keeping protecting power has been committed to them.

You want to be a triumphant believer, you have to depend on the power of God. You have to depend upon Him to hold you and to keep you. And He promises that, doesn't He? He'll take care of this part, you don't have to worry about this. You want to be standing when the smoke clears, you want to be a conqueror, you want to be triumphant, you want to be a man who is a victor? Then remember this, the benediction of the book of Jude, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy." Do you believe in the power of God to keep you, to protect you, to take you through the battle, to bring you out triumphant? Do you believe what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6? "I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." Do you believe the confident words of Jesus? "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me and I've lost none of them but will raise him up on the last day." It's all related to the power of God, He will keep His own.

Do you believe that if God is for you, who can against you? He who didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, Romans 8 says, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring any successful charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yea rather He was raised at the right hand of God who intercedes for us, therefore who shall separate us from the love of Christ, tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, death, life, angels, principalities, things present, things to come, powers, height, depth, any created being?" No, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The first characteristic then of the triumphant is they belong to God. And they belong to God and consequently are His possession and are protected by His power. I would say to you that a true winner, a real conqueror, someone who is genuinely triumphant is the possession of the God of all power. And apart from Him, everybody is a big loser, right?

Well there's more to come, next week.

Father, thank You again for Your word to us. Time just goes by so rapidly, so much to learn, so much to experience through Your Word. Commit these things to our hearts. Help us to stand among the real winners, the ones who really triumph, the ones who really know what victory is, not the best that the world can offer, those heroes of men who come and go and have their little moment in the sun and fade away. Help us to stand with the real conquerors. Help us to be numbered among the hundred and forty-four thousand who belong to You who had Your name blazoned upon them for all to see, and who because of Your protecting power were invincible. Help us to know that outside of You and belonging to You we will lose and we will lose our own souls forever. But if we belong to You, we will win and we will gain our own souls and all Your riches forever. Amen.

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