defeat is never permanent
for those who serve god

(Revelation 11:1-12)

I

n the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, American sprinter Carl Lewis won the gold medal in the 100-meter dash. Just a few years later, Lewis’s father passed away. At the funeral home, as Lewis stood over his father’s body in the casket, he placed his gold medal in his father’s hand. Turning to his mother, Carl Lewis said, **“Don’t worry---I’ll get another one.”**

A year later, in the 100-meter final at the 1988 games, Lewis was competing against Canadian world-record-holder Ben Johnson. Halfway through the race Johnson was ahead of him by just five feet. Lewis was convinced he could catch him. But at 80 meters, he was still five feet behind. ***“It’s over, Dad,”*** Lewis thought. As Johnson crossed the finish, he stared back at Lewis and thrust his right arm in the air, index finger extended.

Lewis was exasperated. He had noticed Johnson’s bulging muscles and yellow-tinged eyes and couldn’t help but wonder if Johnson had been using steroids. But Lewis decided to take his loss in stride. He said, ***“I didn’t have the medal, but I could still give to my father by acting with class and dignity.”***He shook Johnson’s hand and left the track. He had been defeated and his rival had won.

But had he? Only temporarily because just hours later the announcement came that Ben Johnson of Canada had tested positive for anabolic steroids and, of course, he was stripped of his medal. The gold went to Lewis, a replacement for the medal he had given his father.

How many times have we seen that very scene play out before us? Over and over again… ------In the world of sports…
 ------In the world of business...
 ------In politics.

Nearly every day in the newspaper or on the evening news we hear about someone who does wrong and wins. The bad thing about this is that in order for the bad guy to win, there is usually a good guy who has to lose.

And sometimes, when we as *God’s people* stand for what’s right ***WE* end up losing in some way as well**------and it’s very painful when that happens.

But in our text this morning in Revelation 11, God wants to remind us that when we suffer like this, **our suffering is never permanent**. He wants us to know that—one day—He will make sure that everything is made right and that justice is done.

**Title:** Defeat is Never Permanent for Those Who Serve God

(Prayer)

(Comments on the explosion of the world’s population, the church’s failure to evangelize, and how God will eventually intervene.)

Time of Christ: 300M. It took 1800 years since Christ to reach 1 billion; only 200 years to reach 6 billion (1999); and only 50 more years to reach 11 billion (possibly) in 2050.

The church (God’s mouthpiece) is failing…
The ANSWER: A new witness emanating directly from Jerusalem—the two witnesses.

**Revelation 11:1–2**-----1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. 2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot *for* forty-two months.

[As we shall see later in this chapter, this “treading” of Jerusalem will occur after the Man of Sin murders God’s two witnesses who have been preaching for the first 3.5 years of the future Tribulation Period.]

 3 And I will give *power* to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

**What do we discover about them from God’s Word?**

**(1) Their miraculous power is from God.** “I will give power to my 2 w…”

**(2) They are prophets** (11:3----“they will prophesy”---They will have many, many messages from God. God will let the world know what is going on in no uncertain terms)

Age-old question---Who are they? (Lot of speculation… Could be Moses and Elijah, or two Jewish men Jesus brings to Himself…)

**(3) They will prophesy 1260 days** (the FIRST 3½ years---their prophecy does not end with the bringing in of “everlasting righteousness” (or, God’s kingdom) as Daniel says but ends with the bringing in of mankind’s new god whom Paul calls the Man of Sin).

**(4) They prophesy in clothes made of sackcloth---** clothes that match their message (the day of God’s judgment against mankind has come)

**(5) They are God’s light in a dark world**

Revelation 11:4-----These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

(Olive oil---Holy Spirit; lamps to shine)

**Lessons:**

1. Like the two prophets, God has called
all of us to be light in a dark world

In other words, He has something for us to do for Him. None of us know how long we will get to serve Him. These two men got exactly 1260 days. We may get a lot more or a lot less. But the important thing is that we do what He has told us to do---that we obey Him and shine before this dark world!

One time, D. L. Moody was in London and three pastors visited with him in his hotel room. They wanted to talk with him about his success in bringing people to Christ. He took the pastors over to the window and as they looked out at a park, he asked them what they saw. Each of the pastors described the different people they saw below. Then Moody turned to them as welled up in his eyes and said, “I see countless souls who will one day spend eternity in hell if they do not find the Savior.”

\* \* \*

Now over the last 39 years since I have been saved there have been just a few occasions where I have been verbally abused or had doors slammed in my face, but no one has ever tried to harm me physically. (This won’t be the case with the two witnesses…)

People will hate them AND try to harm them…b/c of their words and the disasters they are bringing on the earth.

But v. 5 tells us that that…

…if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.”

In fact, the end of v. 5 says that if anyone tries to harm these men, they **must be** killed in this manner.

God’s plans are for them to live and do His work for 1260 days---not 1200 or 1300 but 1260.

2. God’s servants are invincible
until God is through with them.

One time, Jesus was told by some Pharisees that Herod was going to kill Him and that he should get out of town. Do you remember His reply?

Go tell that fox that today and tomorrow I plan on casting out demons and curing sick people. The third day I will accomplish my mission. Doesn’t he know that no prophet has ever died outside of Jerusalem?

Folks, we need to think like our Lord thinks. When we are doing His will, it is not possible for us to lose our lives one second before He has planned because **WE ARE INVINCIBLE UNTIL HE IS THROUGH WITH US!**

**\* \* \***

Now one thing we need to know is that if we plan on following Jesus and doing His will, it’s not always going to be easy. It wasn’t for Jesus, it won’t be for us, and it definitely won’t be for the two prophets.

You see, they will be giving a message of judgment from God. And God will give them incredibly great power over nature and the conditions of planet earth---

**(1) The sky**

**Revelation 11:6a**-----These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy…

**(2) The waters**

**Revelation 11:6b**----- and they have power over waters to turn them to blood…

**(3) The land**

**Revelation 11:6c**----- …and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

And v. 10 tells us that:

**Revelation 11:10**-----…these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Jesus did miracles of mercy---these men will be called of God, like Moses and Elijah, to do miracles of judgment.

The world in that future day will absolutely hate these men. They will try to kill them but will fail. Every person who tries will be destroyed by fire. That is, except one:

**Revelation 11:7**-----7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

(Comments on the rise of the King of the North/Man of Sin)

(Share how their death might come to pass on the streets.)

Now someone might say: *“Hey wait a minute! I thought if you lived for God, everything will turn out right? It looks like the bad guys have won!*

But once again, I want you to notice that the Bible says in verse 7:

When they ***finish*** their testimony…

Folks, it only ***looks like*** the bad guys won. In reality, these men **finished** what God had asked them to do.

**3. God often allows His servants
to suffer apparent defeat.**

e.g., …the OT prophets…our Lord Jesus Christ…the Apostles…many missionaries and other faithful believers.

And the same is true of the two prophets. God allows the Man of Sin to kill them. Then, v. 8:

**Revelation 11:8–9**-----8 And their dead bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 Then *those* from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. [humiliation]

And the unbelieving world will throw a gigantic party:

**Revelation 11:10**-----10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

# The world is partying like it has never partied. They have a new leader to worship who has done what no man could do----he has killed the crazy prophets who destroyed the planet!!! Surely, he must be God, they will say!!

Yes, Satan’s man will kill God’s men. BUT!!!!!!!! God will ruin their party:

**Revelation 11:11-12**-----Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. 12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

## 4. Those who serve God can expect vindication from Him over their persecutors

The Bible says, in Job: “The triumphing of the wicked is short” (Job 20:5).

The 3½ days the two witnesses lie on the streets of Jerusalem is symbolical of the reign of the Man of Sin. For 3½ years, he will be the ruler of the whole earth with all its glory. (Yes, serving Satan and sin DOES have benefits and pleasures.) But they are **always** temporary.

Regarding the Man of Sin, the prophet Daniel wrote:

**Daniel 11:45**-----… he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; **yet** [JUST 3½ YEARS LATER] **he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.**

He will be the first human being (along with the false prophet) to be cast bodily into the lake of fire.

Folks, never forget, the triumphing of the wicked is short!!!!! GOD WILL VINDICATE HIS SERVANTS!!!!

\* \* \*

In1910, on same boat as President Theodore Roosevelt as he returned from an African hunting trip, were two life-long missionaries.

They were old, broke, and hurting physically.

As the boat pulled into port in NY, Roosevelt was greeted with a huge reception.

Man to wife: *“…all he did in Africa was hunt….we gave
 our lives for God and no one even cares.”*

Wife: *“You need to talk to God about this…”*

He did. And he came back and told his wife what God did in his heart.

“I talked to the Lord about how Roosevelt had a great big welcoming party when he got back home and how we got nothing---no one to greet us, not one person saying, “Great job!” or ‘Thank You!”

Then it seemed as if God put His hand on the old missionary’s shoulder and said to him: “Remember, you’re not home yet!”

\* \* \*

Brothers and sisters, whenever it seems like God allows failure of some sort in your life, even though you have tried to serve Him faithfully, never, ever forget this: **“YOU’RE NOT HOME YET!!!!”**

Defeat is never permanent for those who serve God!

(Shall we pray?)

The movie Gods and Generals follows the rise and fall of Civil War hero General Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson (played by Stephen Lang).

Jackson is a devout Christian. Upon his call to report for duty and lead the 1st Brigade of Virginia (the Stonewall Brigade), Jackson and his wife read from 2 Corinthians 5 and pray for God's will to be done. Again, in the early morning hours of July 21st, 1861, the day of the Battle of Mannasas Junction, Jackson asks God that His will be done.

In the early stages of the battle, things do not go well for the Confederates. In an attempt to rally the troops, someone yells to the men to look at Jackson "standing like a stone wall." Suddenly, General Jackson, sitting erect in his saddle with cannon fire exploding all around him, his left hand wounded by a musket ball, begins to rally his men. Stunningly brave, he paces back and forth on his horse across the front line, shouting orders to "charge" as the musket balls pierce the air.

At the end of the day, General Jackson and his captain return to the battlefield to survey the loss: 111 Confederates dead, 373 missing. Wearied and saddened, Jackson kneels beside a dead soldier with Captain James Smith (Stephen Spacek). Captain Smith asks, "General, how is it you can keep so serene, and stay so utterly insensible, with a storm of shells and bullets about your head?"

Jackson replies, "Captain Smith, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to be always ready, whenever it may overtake me. [If this was] the way all men...lived, then all men would be equally brave."

Research:

The second woe is past the third woe is coming quickly

What I am getting so far:

---God gives his servants a time of service

---God enables and protects His servants throughout the entire time of their service to Him

These men live in the worst of times when the Beast is rising and final rebellion is emerging and yet they are invincible as long as their work continues.

---God allows their time of service to end but only after they have accomplished what God desires for them

None of their enemies can touch them for 3 ½ years, but then they appear to be defeated. Their enemies are deliriously happy.

---God will raise His servants from the dead and bring them to Himself

Their defeat is turned into victory! They are raised and caught up into a cloud!

**Conclusion:** What we have here are principles that God has operated on throughout the centuries in respect to His servants. God protects them until their job is done. If we are walking with God and serving God we can count on God to let us finish what He has for us to do. And we can expect vindication over those who opposed us and persecuted us. But He may allow them to appear to suffer defeat. Jesus apparently did. But the defeat is only temporary. The 3½ days is symbolic of the 3½ years that the Beast will be in power. Everybody thinks these guys are finished.