

Triumph in God's New Covenant

✠ “Made perfect !” (vv.11-14)

✠ “Being made holy ...” (vv.14-18)

In the name of Christ the Champion of our faith, dear saints of God triumphing in His grace:

To **Triumph** means to win. So what would you like to win? State football championship? Speech or music competition? *Dancing with the Stars*? How many semi-talented athletes or even the best of singers and dancers fall short of their goals, then blame the coach? “If only I had a better partner!” has been the mantra of many failed marriages. And yet there are coaches who consistently train and inspire players to play beyond their best. There are marriage partners who help us live far better than we could alone. But what if you could have that kind of coach to train you personally? Would your voice swell to octaves and cadences you never knew you had? Would your coordination soar to new heights? And what if that same life coach could help you manage time and finances. Here's a news flash for you. He's knocking on your door today. He's got a new contract. **Triumph in God's New Covenant.**

✠ “Made perfect !” (vv.11-14)

This opening verse reminds me of a warm-up before a high school basketball game my sophomore year. The coach took me aside rather perturbed. “If you'd stop slamming the ball into the same spot on the backboard, it might go in once in a while!” He was always better at scolding than encouraging. I pitied his son who never lived up to his expectations no matter how hard he tried.

Like me were the Jewish priests in the temple. *“Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.”* God told them to sacrifice hundreds of innocent animals every year as a *“reminder of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.”* (10:3f NIV84) But unlike the son who always fails, God's Son succeeded. He had one shot at this. He didn't need the backboard. Three points on the scoreboard were all it would take to win the game. The Champion player here is called a *“priest.”* *“But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”*

Here's the really hard part. By nature we were *“his enemies,”* good for nothing to God except *“to be made a footstool”* for His feet. Like the team of disciples Jesus put together for His ministry on earth, none of us would have come unless Jesus came calling us. *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”* (Romans 3:10–12 NIV84) And then after three years of training with the perfect Preacher-Teacher-Coach, the big game came and none of them showed up. You need not ask, “What would Jesus do?” He did it! He died and rose. He won alone!

Let's take something harder than anything mentioned before, surfing for instance. I picture the big wave, that long tunnel pipeline where beginners can't survive. Our Champion is charging the tube like no one else. But then the big one breaks over Him. No one can survive that. Friends watching from shore whisper, “He's dead!” Meanwhile, His enemies are cheering. For hours you watch, not believing, so terribly sad He's gone. Suddenly the third day...and there He is! Against all the rules of nature, surfing, life, Christ comes roaring back from the dead and He coming in your direction. “Let's go, guys!” “But we didn't show up. We ran when you needed us!” “Forget it! You're with me. Let's go!”

That, my dear surfers, dancers, sportsmen, singers – that is the New Covenant. It cost the very life blood of God’s own Son, because **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”** (9:22) But by His **“one sacrifice”** Christ fulfilled His Father’s fullest desires and expectations. Christ alone brought us to the goal of being reconciled with God. He calls it **“made perfect forever.”** And He came back to help us live up to this gift of total righteousness, to take the uncoordinated Christian on the cruise of a lifetime with God. “Storms may howl and clouds may gather...All must work for good to me.” This He calls...

✦ **“Being made holy ...” (vv.14-18)**

For most of us in a new skill, new sport, new dance, the question is, “How do you do it?” What if you could stick your finger in a socket or take a pill and have total recall of all the right moves? And what if that same certain shock of good vibes could take away your fears of falling, failing or embarrassing yourself?

Christ our Champion gets started with your mind and heart. And we’re not the first to hear about this. The announcement was made again 700 years before Bethlehem saw the birth of our Champion. It was the Champion Spirit of God proclaiming through Jeremiah God’s new deal with real losers to make them all winners: ***The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: “This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”***

First He fires up the *want-to* when He comes back to call us His own. Then He wires all the circuits so all the lights are on and all the synapses firing in sync. The hand-eye coordination of your Christian life shoots from the minus hundreds into the thousands plus. But just when you think you’re riding the 12’ wave and ready to shout your own 1960’s “Cowabunga!” – down you go. Drowning in disappointment, choking on doubt, mashed up in the chowder of sand and surf.

You won’t find this coach pulling you aside to chew you out. He’s not going to climb all over you with ridicule for falling again. Man, the muscles on this guy! The sweet, kind smile on His face and deep in His eyes. He’s got a strong hand to lift you up again and two hands, two nail-pierced hands, to cheer you on your way. “Forget it!” He says. “Just another day at the beach. Let’s catch you on the next big one. You’ll do better this time – I guarantee it!”

See what it means when He adds this one stipulation of God’s New Deal? ***“Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”*** Since God does not remember, since all those sins of yours, mine and ours are all washed away in the blood of God’s own Son, forget it! Don’t remember them anymore than some wave that already disappeared. No reason now to be “clucked,” as the surfers call it, being scared and afraid of waves. God is right here with you to teach you day by day and hour by hour to live life for God’s glory, die to sin and live for righteousness. You ride the waves instead of drowning in life, Standing upright on God’s grace you can ride out this adventure with God for all it’s worth.

So now you have a whole new dawn patrol. You’re out there first thing in the morning, but not like the priests in the temple who had another innocent male lamb to slaughter for sins that could never be taken away. The Lamb of God has arrived. Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again! Forget about yesterday. Have no fear of tomorrow Enjoy this day of grace because your sins are forgiven and forgotten by God.

“And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.” Just big, beautiful beach, white sand and endless summer when life’s winter is finally past. Some are already there celebrating with God. That’s why we have SAINTS TRIUMPHANT Sunday to help us hear their distant triumph song. Then our “hearts are brave again and arms are strong.” Alleluia, O God, your Word, your will, your Way! Amen.