

Pastoral Letter continued...

Finally, John concludes with one of Revelation's many stirring appeals to perseverance in faith despite all affliction: "Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints" (Rev. 13:10). Here is the bad news for political beasts who seek to marginalize Christians in society: by persevering in faith, we have the victory through the grace of our sovereign God. John emphasized this same principle at the end of his first epistle: "this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4).

Christians in America should take inspiration from the many biblical examples of how stalwart and uncompromising believers received supernatural aid in the darkest of times. An example is Daniel's three friends, who refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's golden idol. Thrown into the blazing furnace, they were not consumed as everyone thought would happen. Instead, the beast of that age saw them unharmed, accompanied by one whose appearance was "like a son of the gods" (Dan. 3:25). Likewise today, Christ will come to his faithful, persecuted people with blessing and power. He tells us:

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isa. 43:1-3).

This article originally appeared in Ref 21 and is used with their permission.

CHURCH INFORMATION

Telephone: 864.232.7621

Website: spcgreenville.org

Social Media

[facebook.com/spcgreenville](https://www.facebook.com/spcgreenville)  twitter.com/spcgreenville 

Fax: (864) 232-7622 * Email: info@spcgreenville.org

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Information Centers: Church Services information 1 * Directions 2
Hospital Information 3 * Upcoming Events 4 * Church Directory 5 *
Monthly Activities 6

Church Services: Sunday: Sunday School - 10:00 AM

Morning Worship - 8:30 and 11:00 AM * Evening Worship - 6:00 PM

Wednesday: Supper - 5:45 PM * Prayer Meeting - 6:55 PM *

Adult Bible Study - 7:25 PM

The Second Presbyterian Church

105 River Street
Greenville, South Carolina 29601-2537

Return Service Requested

WORSHIP AT SECOND THE LORD'S DAY

July 26, 2015

MORNING WORSHIP

8:30 & 11:00 AM

REDEEMED WIVES

Ephesians 5:22-24

Hymns: 115, 600, 593

Anthem: Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God
Dr. Richard D. Phillips preaching

EVENING WORSHIP

6:00 PM

THE SWEETNESS OF BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

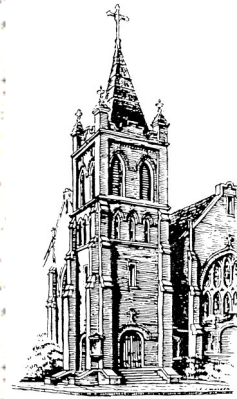
Galatians 5:16-26

Hymns: 101, 334, 335

Psalter: Psalm 84

Rev. Seth T. Starkey preaching

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The Second Presbyterian Church
Corner of River and Rhett Streets
Greenville, South Carolina

July 20, 2015

Pastoral Letter

The Rising of the Beast in America?

One of the most regrettable legacies of 20th century evangelicalism is the marginalizing of the book of Revelation as a guide to spiritual warfare during the church age. Animated by the literalism of Dispensational theology, Revelation's visions have been misapplied to one scenario after another, featuring overblown claims to identify individuals as the Antichrist and hysterical readings of historically insignificant newspaper headlines. The effect of this misuse has been not merely the discrediting of biblical literalists but also an ill-ease of many Christians regarding the instructional value of Revelation. Yet if there has ever been an era in American history when Revelation offers the most valuable insight to Bible-believers, that era is taking place now. Indeed, it is particularly the material found in Revelation 13 and its prophecy of Satan unleashing his beasts that should inform the faith of Christians regarding the present times.

Informed Bible readers know that there will not only be a particular Antichrist who arises at the end of our age (see 2 Thess. 2:3), but that there is an antichrist pattern that recurs in spiritual warfare throughout history. 1 John 2:18 says not only that "antichrist is coming," but also that "now many antichrists have come." The point is that the spiritually evil tactics described in Revelation can be expected to recur as a general pattern drawn from Satan's playbook. Thus Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that Christians should "not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs."

Revelation 13 is one place where the Bible discloses the general pattern of Satan's design. The chapter begins with bestial imagery that is familiar to readers of the Old Testament, since Daniel's visions employed beasts to describe tyrannical government



powers (Dan. 7:1-23). Daniel's beasts, like John's in Revelation, rose from the sea, which is a symbol of dark and chaotic evil in rebellion to God (Rev. 13:1). It is not difficult to see that these beasts represent government tyranny, since their heads are adorned with horns and crowns. Thus we see compulsive force employed by rulers with bestial intent. Revelation 13:2 sums up this approach by saying that to his beast Satan "gave his power and his throne and great authority."

If we are to compare the beast of Revelation 13:1-10 with forces at work in America today, we should identify the main features of its agenda. The biblical text identifies two evil aims: first, the idolatrous seeking of worship in the place of God, and, second, an insidious persecution of Christ's church and true believers. So the question is asked, Does the political left in America seek to deify government power and does it seek to oppress the Christian church?

As for the first of these aims, Revelation 13:3-5 outlines the beast's desire for false worship. Verse 3 states that one of the beast's heads "seemed to have a mortal wound," but the wound was healed so that "the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast." The general idea is that Satan sets forth his usurpers as counterfeit Christs. Moreover, there is a general tendency for tyrants to "resurrect" their regimes from apparent defeat, aided by evil spiritual power. Napoleon Bonaparte was a classic "beast" in 19th century France, using military glory to inspire raw worship from mass legions. After his armies were crushed in 1814, Napoleon executed a stunning imperial resurrection in 1815 until his bestial head was cut off on the fields of Waterloo. These awe-inspiring resurrections attend the careers of many tyrants, whether Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, or ones yet to come. The aim is a usurpation of the worship that belongs only to God. Revelation 13:4 records the adoring words of idolatrous beast-praise: "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" (compare with Ex. 15:11).

Thankfully, America has yet to witness the blatant idolatry seen in the Nuremberg rallies of the 1930's, although pre- and post-election political events can chillingly approach that level of veneration. At the same time, it is hard not to be disturbed as the political left in America seeks to make a messiah out of government. Moreover, the primary tactic of the left in recent years has been political compulsion, primarily through the edicts of a liberal Supreme Court but more recently with the threat of unconstitutional executive orders. Whenever the state is set forth as the remedy for all ills - economic, social, moral, and even spiritual - then the idolatry of the state



usurps the place reserved for God alone.[1] When secularists would have us all join to sing its new doxology, "Praise the state from whom all blessings flow," Christians should suspect the work of the beast rising in our midst.

What about the second prong of the beast's strategy, namely, the persecution of Christ's church? Revelation 13:7 says of the beast: "Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them." Note that Christians are persecuted specifically as "saints," that is, not for our sins and failings but specifically for our godly obedience to God's Word. Here is where the recent advance of the American political left is especially chilling. Not long ago, the supporters of homosexual rights argued primarily on the basis of tolerance. But now that they are armed with compulsive political power, tolerance has been forgotten. Suddenly individual rights - not long ago the very basis of the gay lobby's argument - are seen as a threat to the advance of culture. Thus Christian bakers have suffered ludicrously onerous fines for exercising their constitutional right to free association. Free speech, the very first of the rights protected by our Founders, is now openly derided by progressive law-makers and downgraded by the courts. It is literally conceivable now that the mere public reading of the Bible will be considered a criminal offense. Revelation 13:6 says that the beast "opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling." In the American media, in entertainment, in academia, and in government, gross misrepresentations and vile slanders are uttered against God and against his teaching in the Bible on almost a daily basis.

Moreover, the bulls-eye of oppression is being lowered on a single segment of the American populace: Bible-believing Christians. One might reasonably think that homosexual advocates would take special aim at a religion like Islam, given its ungodly oppression of women and violent threats against homosexuals. But it is Christians alone who find themselves the targets of a strategy designed to suppress our civil rights and silence our witness to God's Word.

The point of this analysis from Revelation 13 is not that American Christians face a unique and spiritually bizarre attack from Satanic powers. The point, rather, is that this is the typical kind of Satanic attack that Christians will often face throughout the history of the church age. There is no basis to conclude that our current president is the Antichrist or that certain other anti-Christian figures are somehow demon-possessed. Rather, this is the normal



way that unbelieving worldly powers are animated and manipulated by the powers against which Christians are warned in Scripture. According to the rule of thumb given by Paul in Ephesians 6:12, "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." The aim of Revelation with its depictions of the Satanic strategy is that we, like Paul, would not be unaware of his designs (2 Cor. 2:11).

What are Christians to do in times like ours? Fortunately, Revelation 13 provides three perspectives that should equip us in responding to spiritual warfare in America today. The first is that Christians should gain peace from the hope that is ours through our sovereign God. Notice that Revelation 13:7 says the beast was "allowed" to war on the saints and that authority was "given" to it. These are not things that are said of a true sovereign! It is God who reigns even as he permits and employs even Satan and his agents for his own holy and ultimately redemptive purposes on the earth. Moreover, John reminds us that believers remain eternally secure in God's sovereign will. He says that not that the ones who worship the beast are those "whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain" (Rev. 13:8). This reminds followers of Christ that our salvation was established before the creation of the world. Thus, by trusting in Jesus our ultimate well-being is beyond the reach even of Satan and his beasts.

What, then, is the calling of Christians under persecution?[2] John writes: "If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain" (Rev. 13:10). The point is that Christians are to submit to persecution of all kinds rather than compromise our faith in Christ and our witness to God's Word. This does not mean that we should not take prudent steps to avoid persecution. I would urge, for instance, that Christians serving in state assemblies and local governments will play an especially important role in years to come in opposing federal tyranny. But when and if true persecution comes, Christians must embrace it with faith and a resolve to do God's will. This stance centers on our continued worship of the true God and our loving witness of the grace of God in Christ, even to those who place the label of "hate speech" on our gospel testimony.

Playdate-Field Day at the Johnsons



Friday, July 24

Field Day at the Johnsons'
@ 11:30 am

Everyone bring food to share.
Rebekah Johnson
864-430-3408
rebekah@natejohnson.biz



SPC Family Night Out



Greenville Drive Game
Drive vs. Lexington Legends
July 31 @ 7:00 PM
Register online for tickets (\$10.00)
@ spcgreenville.org

Jr. High Ridge Haven Conference
July 20 - 24, 2015
Pray for the leaders and youth this week
as they fellowship and study God's Word.

Calvary Presbytery

The 127th Stated Meeting of Calvary Presbytery will be Saturday, July 25, 2015, at Eastside PCA, Greenville, beginning at 9:00 am. Visitors are welcome. Please be in prayer for the Commissioners that will be attending from Second Church: Pastor Phillips, Pastor Spears, David Bragdon and Bill Wheeler.

Serving in Our Nursery

A new nursery schedule is being prepared that will start at the beginning of September and run for 6 months. Workers are scheduled for one service every 6 weeks. This is a great way to serve Christ's kingdom! If you would like to be included in the new schedule please let Lori Schyaneveldt know right away.
lorischyaneveldt@gmail.com or 404-6072

Child Evangelism Fellowship

During the month of September the Child Evangelism Fellowship, the ministry which leads Good News Club will once again be partnering with participating Chick-fil-A restaurants in the area for a "tea and cookies promotion" to help raise funds and promote the Good News Clubs. For every half-dozen cookies or gallon of tea purchased at Chick-fil-A, a donation will be given to the ministry. Please mark your calendars and participate in this important ministry.



"...we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done."
Psalm 78:4

REVEREND AND MRS. MARK GRAVES
REQUEST THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE
AT THE MARRIAGE OF THEIR DAUGHTER
Elizabeth Chloe

to

Scott Christian Farley

THE EIGHTH OF AUGUST
TWO THOUSAND FIFTEEN
at two o'clock in the afternoon

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
105 RIVER STREET
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA 29601
reception to follow
1241 PENDLETON STREET
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA 29611

Playdate: Otter Creek Water Park

Tuesday, July 28th
Meet in the
Otter Creek parking lot
at 10:00 am.



No outside food or drinks are allowed at the park but if anyone wants to bring a lunch there are picnic tables in other areas outside the water park area.

Mark Your Calendars
PARENTING SEMINAR
August 20 and 27
Dr. Richard D. Phillips



Summer RUF @ Second

SUMMER RUF FELLOWSHIP UPDATE!

Refreshments will be served in the Church
Fellowship Hall
beginning at 7:30pm

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, July 28 @ 7:30 pm
Dr. Richard D. Phillips, Psalm 73

All Adult Summer Sunday School

Precious
remedies
against
Satan's
devices



10 am on Sundays
All Adults (9th grade and up)
meet in the Sanctuary
SUNDAY, JULY 26TH
Sadness, Doubting & Questioning (Chap. 4)
Mr. Jeffrey Windt teaching

Christian College Fair

Southside Christian School is excited to host the NACCAP Christian College Fair on Tuesday, September 22nd. This will be an evening for students to personally connect with a variety of Christian college representatives as well as learn detailed information on the College Financial Aid process. Admission is free. For complete information go to myblueprintstory.com.

Church Calendar

Sunday, July 26

- 8:30 AM **MORNING WORSHIP**
- 9:50 AM Children's Chapel
- 10:00 AM **SUNDAY SCHOOL**
(All Adult Sunday School in sanctuary)
- 11:00 AM **MORNING WORSHIP**
- 5:30 PM Season of Prayer in the Chapel
- 6:00 PM **EVENING WORSHIP**
- 7:30 PM Evangelism/Church Growth Committee

Tuesday, July 28

- 10:00 AM Playdate: Otter Creek Water Park
- 7:30 PM Summer RUF

Wednesday, July 29

- 6:30 AM Men's Bible Study
- 5:45 PM **FAMILY NIGHT FELLOWSHIP SUPPER**
- 6:55 PM Youth Bible Study
- 6:55 PM **PRAYER MEETING FOR ALL ADULTS**
- 7:25 PM College & 20's Class
- 7:25 PM **ADULT BIBLE STUDY**
- 7:30 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Friday, July 31

- 12:00 PM Men's Lunch and Bible Study
- 7:00 PM SPC Family Night Out-Drive game

Scripture Reading for the Week

Psalm 36:5-7

Your steadfast love, O LORD, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgments are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O LORD. How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
(ESV)

Upcoming Events

- July 20-24 Jr. High Trip to Ridge Haven
- July 22 CE Committee Meeting
- July 24 Playdate: Field Trip at Johnsons
- July 25 Calvary Presbytery at Eastside PCA
- July 26 Evangelism/Church Growth Committee
- July 28 Playdate: Otter Creek Water Park
- July 31 SPC Family Night Out-Greenville Drive
- August 2 Homemade Ice Cream Social
- August 3 Diaconate Meeting
- August 5 WIC Council
- August 5 Pastoral Care Committee Meeting
- August 7 Playdate: Legacy Park
- August 9 Missions Emphasis Sunday
- August 9 Worship & Music Committee Meeting
- August 10 Session Meeting
- August 11 WIC Circles
- August 11 Playdate: Cleveland Park
- August 12 Missions Committee Meeting
- August 12 Musical CAT Kids Program
- August 16 The Lord's Supper at the evening service
- August 19 Administration Committee Meeting
- August 19 Musical CAT Kids Fun Night
- August 20 Parenting Seminar
- August 23 Evangelism/Church Growth Committee
- August 26 CE Committee Meeting
- August 26 Regular CAT Kids/Covenant Kids resume
- August 27 Parenting Seminar
- August 30 Rally Day

MARK YOU CALENDARS!

World Missions Conference: September 25-27

Remembering One Another

Remember in prayer this week the following shut-in member. Also, send him a note of encouragement and/or give him a call.

Dave Maney
1721 Parkins Mill Road
Greenville, SC 29607
963-3308

Praying For One Another

Remember in prayer this week the following members.

Monique Al-Rawi

Eleanor Allen

Kip and Mott Altman
Sarah

Missionary for the Week

PERU MISSION TRIP
July 16-27

Team Leader:
Pastor Robert Spears

Team:
Christina Bianchi
Tim Johnson
Steve Moore
John Smoker

Ron Sporrer (& two adult children Kyle & Lauren)
Cas Willborn (Dr. Nick Willborn's son from PCA church in Oak Ridge)