

How to Be a Winner

By

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“This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” (John 5:4)

This matter-of-fact statement was written by John in the midst of great persecution and tribulation. The official policy of the Government was that Christianity should be banished. The “incredible Christians,” as Hugh Schonfield would call them, were to be stamped out. John was the last remaining apostle, a widely known leader of the despised sect, and therefore marked for special persecution, exile and death.

Current events indicate that the Christian faces a rising tide of militant opposition. Perhaps never before in history have there been such vast forces united in the common objective of erasing every facet of truth that is grounded in Christian conviction and, in their place, establishing atheistic, humanistic materialism: added to this are the nation’s woes. Drowning in inflation, wounded by revolution in the streets and on the campuses, frightened by the torrent of crime and immorality, and bleeding from a disgraceful no-win war, the nation lives under a sickening pall of fear and defeat. This, too, is part of Satan’s tactics, to wear down his enemy until he has no resistance.

But fear and defeat do not fit into God’s purpose for His people. “In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus declared that as the world hated Him, it would hate those who follow Him. The Christian is to expect opposition, but in the midst of such opposition, even facing betrayal and death, Jesus said, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

How can we gain this victory for ourselves?

First, we are to know that Satan has actually been over’ come. The explicit purpose of Christ’s coming in the flesh was just this: “that through death, He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). By His vicarious death on the cross, in which He met the full penalty for sin for all believers, Jesus defeated the purpose of Satan which, from the first, was to destroy man, God’s greatest work. By His taking upon Himself the death penalty which is declared by God to be due to every sinner, Jesus abolished death and by His resurrection from the grave, He brought life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10). Through this one great work of redemption, Jesus “despoiled the principalities and the powers, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15).

Hence, He could say prophetically and conclusively, “I have overcome the world”. In defeating the work of Satan (to indict every man under sin and death) Jesus won a victory for us over the world, the flesh and the devil. Satan may continue to tempt us, to lie to us, trying to seduce us to give up the faith in Jesus Christ, but he has no power to overcome us, for “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus”. (Rom.

8:1). Jesus has “bound the strong man” (Matt.12:29), thus guaranteeing victory for each Christian.

Therefore, our task is not that of taking upon ourselves the challenge of Satan as if we were expected to overthrow so formidable an enemy, whose power won the re put our trust in the fact that Jesus the conquering King has defeated Satan for us and thus won the victory for us.

Second, we must have our minds enlightened with the truth (Eph. 1:18). Satan, whose doom is sealed and who waits in dread the Day of Judgment, has only one means by which he may continue to work evil: deception. He deceives men by keeping from them the fact of his own defeat. He blinds the eyes of men with lies (2 Cor. 4:4) even as he did Adam and Eve who were told that they would not die for sin. His power over man depends entirely upon delusion. When the Christian knows the truth, he is free (John 8:32) He throws off the yoke of fear and sin, and courageously serves Christ, fully confident that Satan has been defeated.

Deception is the tool of Satan for defeat. Truth, then, is the tool of the Christian for victory. All that Satan did to defeat Adam and Eve was to tell them the lie that they would not really die. Losing faith in God for a moment, they succumbed to Satan’s power. Afterwards, they recognized their condition that death had begun to work, so they were afraid and hid themselves. In like manner today millions are driven by fear, their minds darkened by the false counsel of the devil and his agents. Even while involved in a great deal of religious activity, in the midst of busy church building and evangelical programs. The members find themselves in the throes of defeat where personal problems are concerned. They may hear erudite preaching, glowing missionary reports and enthusiastic appeals from the finance committee; they may listen to professionally trained singers and participate in the triumphant songs themselves, then go home burdened with anxiety and fear, depressed and defeated by the problems of the world.

Modern Christians, to a great extent, are so busy with promotional programs they have no place for development of personal faith. What we have called faith in most cases is nothing more than a shibboleth for “belonging to the group.” While the church may appear to be growing and gaining power, the individual member suffers from a lack of personal victory in his daily warfare with the adversary.

The need of the hour is that men know truth, that their faith be in the truth of Jesus and that such faith be increased more and more by an understanding of the purpose and work of Christ. Where there is truth — not a mere recognition of it, but a vital faith in it — Satan’s delusions have no effect. The truth is a sword which strikes fear to the heart of Satan. Faith in the truth is a shield against which the fiery arrows of the adversary are broken.

Therefore the Christian issue today, as always, revolves around faith. It is not one of social work, political reform, social equality, involvement in the world’s efforts and all the many contemporaneous idols of our day. Our fight is the good fight of the faith. We

are to contend for the faith. The church is to know it, to teach it, to grow in it, to defend it, to uphold it and to advance it. On one hand is the delusion of the devil, the false doctrines and values of the world, blaring forth from every source like a roaring lion, as if Satan, after all, were the real winner. On the other hand is the truth, the gospel of Jesus Christ, our victorious King and the eternal values revealed by Him.

It is a tragic fact that in many churches people never hear the faith presented. They may hear sermon after sermon telling them what they ought to do and how they ought to act. But this is preaching the effect. Faith must be established upon the truth, and the truth is the cause that produces the proper effect. It is in knowing the truth and understanding that Jesus has defeated Satan through His substitutionary death that gives the Christian the faith that overcomes the foe. It is not by our own human strength of will nor by our good works that we put Satan to rout, but it is by trusting the fact of Christ's victory already won that we overcome.

Finally, standing on this faith, we are to resist Satan. "Be subject therefore unto God, but resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). The Christian is not on the defensive. He deliberately stands against Satan. He should always be moving against Satan, doing the will of God, positively working His purpose, and seeking to establish truth in the face of the enemy.

To the extent that one is ignorant of the truth of Christ he is to that extent subject to the delusions of Satan. Let us seek to build faith, therefore, by a thorough study of God's word, by proclaiming it and making it the object of daily search and meditation. Then the Christian will be as a light in the world, holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:16). More than that, as the assault against Christianity increases, those who hold the truth in Christ will have nothing to fear.

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