

PRESENT VICTORY

By

Curtis Dickinson

Jesus was optimistic, in spite of knowing the calamities coming upon the world and the persecution of the church. His attitude of victory is not too readily seen in the church today.

We usually think of victory as the day of His coming, when the redeemed are raised from death and clothed in immortality. Of course, that is the final victory and blessed hope, and is never far from mind. But if that is our only concept of victory, then daily burdens and hardships become marks of defeat and life in the world is faced with pessimism.

This is quite different from the example of Jesus. His confrontation with Satan in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry was the first of a lifetime of victories. His refusal to compromise with the Jews, His choice to be their enemy instead of their king, His alignment with the humble rather than the influential people of power, and His daily submission to a lowly servant-life — every step was victory in His determination to fulfill the purpose of God.

He spoke often of the great resurrection at the last day, but the resurrection is not an isolated event. Rather, it is the end product of one's daily victory in the world. Christ's purpose in entering the stream of human life was to gain a victory over sin in His own life, that He might give that life on the cross to meet the penalty of sin for us, that we, too, might have victory over sin and death.

Christ was victorious every time He overcame the temptation to sin. He made the promise, "He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

We are victorious when we are confronted by the world, the flesh and the devil, and refuse to surrender, but remain faithful to Christ. A victory is won every time one obeys a commandment of the Lord, no matter what price he pays.

Jesus demonstrated no concern for victory that would be measured by numbers on His side. Right off, He said that comparatively few would choose the narrow way. He promised no financial victory. He accumulated no material wealth, and left none to posterity. He was not aligned with the victorious political movement and did not rely on the military defeat of the nations' enemies. In fact, he knowingly predicted the nations' destruction which came 40 years later.

His victory was personal. No one could resist sin for Him; it was His own war, but it had far-reaching results.

All true victories must be won by individuals. The greatest nation in the world is weak and worthless as long as its people are losing their individual battles with sin and Satan. The United States has the greatest potential of all nations, possessing superb resources, natural and human. We have never been invaded nor have we suffered destruction from outside sources. Yet, we now are suffering a breakdown in law, in economy, in the family, in education, and in production. Why? Because of the failure of individuals. The breakdown is nothing less than the personal defeat of individuals. It will

only be reversed when we have restored individual integrity, character, and the will to win a victory over sin in each life.

There is a religious philosophy loose which measure victory by the size of one's church, by the recognition it gets from the world, and by the social clout it is able to wield. Some are tempted to join this philosophy to be on the winning side. But, we are to remember that "that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15). One may be a part of a great organization or denomination and yet fail to win the victory in his own life. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own life?"

The kingdom comes not by observation, nor by marching armies, nor by mammoth conventions, nor performance of super-preachers. Neither does it come by announcements from the White House, nor decisions of the Supreme Court nor legislation from Capitol Hill.

Christians who look for victory according to worldly standards will always feel the stigma of defeat. Paul reminds us, "that no many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world that he might put to shame them that are wise, and God chose the weak things of the world, that He might put to shame them that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised did God choose" (I Cor. 1:26–28). Jesus did not win the great victory over sin and death as a superstar, as a general, as a president, but as a suffering servant.

Historically, the Christian has never looked for victory through collective power or worldly endeavor, but he has looked to God and realized victory by his own transformation even while being overwhelmed by persecution and oppressed by his enemies. It is just in such times of trial that the battle is most critical and victory over sin most decisive.

Victory does not depend upon the number who join the winning side. It is the broad way, crowded with the multitudes, that leads to destruction. Victory does not depend upon a great revival that turns the world to Christ. Jesus indicated that He never expected anything like this to happen.

Victory is won in two ways. First, it is won when we deny ourselves and place our full faith in Jesus Christ and the victory which He won over death and the grave. Second, it is won moment by moment and day by day as we overcome the world and its sins in order to fulfill the ultimate purpose of God to have us in His image. Christ, through His death and resurrection, through His word, and in His spirit, gives victory over sin and death in the midst of a hostile world; not a victory that removes world conditions, but a victory within and in spite of these conditions.

The final step of victory will be in that great day when we will stand, resurrected to immortality, in a new and eternal creation where God, "is all in all" (I Cor. 15:28).

While the actual victory over death and the grave can be gained only through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no promise of such victory to any but those who are willing daily to win the victory over sin. It is a deadly mistake to thin that one can leap from his confession of faith to the ultimate and final triumph of eternal immortality without having gone through the intermediate steps of temptation, obedience, and growth.

"Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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