

VICTORS, NOT VICTIMS

By

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Christians are reminded daily that we are an endangered species in a world which seeks to repeal the commandments of God and dethrone Christ the King. As unbelievers accelerate the steps toward their New World Order, they increase their efforts to outlaw the Christian order, as the two are incompatible.

From the daily news it may appear that Christians are the victims of the system identified in scripture as the “beast.” This is the message of many “doomsday” prophets, and it has sidetracked millions of believers from the purpose of God. Either they retreat into a timid defeatist lifestyle, or they align themselves with some political movement which then becomes a substitute for the Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom which is “not of this world.”

The follower of Jesus is an alien in this world. His allegiance is to Christ and His Kingdom, and his main purpose in life is to serve and obey the King, according to the will of God the Father. Such loyalty to Christ’s Kingdom will inevitably come into conflict with and be challenged by those aligned with this world. The greater one’s zeal for Christ, the greater the danger of his being targeted for persecution.

On the night in which Jesus was betrayed, and just before He was arrested and crucified, He said to the apostles, “In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Jesus was aware of the long-standing conspiracy of those who sought to destroy all rule and authority but their own, and therefore, had to get rid of Him. But instead of seeing Himself as a victim, He insisted that He was the victor, because He had overcome the world.

Later, He was to overcome death by His resurrection, but this was not the basis of the statement, “I have overcome the world.” He had lived in the world, but had never yielded to its claims and its temptations. Under all the pressure of the world, to follow its fashions, accept its standards, receive its honors, applaud its heroes, and join its quest for material wealth and security, Jesus stuck to one purpose: to do the Father’s will. It was through His obedience to the Father that He overcame the world and became the victor over those who considered Him their victim.

It is His express desire that we also triumph over the world and its wickedness. The great promises in the Revelation to John are to the over-comers. “To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7). “He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11. See also Rev. 2:17, 25, 3:5, 12, 21).

To overcome the world and become a victor instead of a victim one must understand his purpose in the world. Primarily that purpose is to do the will of God, to be transformed into His image, and uphold His truth and righteousness to all the world. Paul explains it: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience

of Christ; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled” (II Cor 19:3–7).

To be a victor does not require that one overcome political opposition, or cause justice to prevail in the courts of men. Paul did not seek to overthrow the Roman government, nor did he win his court case with the Jews, but he turned his imprisonment into a tool to serve the King of Kings, and thus defeated the evil purposes of those who had put him there. His imprisonment, He wrote, had resulted in the progress of the gospel, so that his bonds “became manifest in Christ throughout the whole praetorian guard, and to all the rest” (Phil. 1:12). His loyalty to Christ gave confidence and boldness to other Christians so they could “speak the world of God without fear” (V. 14).

It appeared that Paul was a victim of the conspiracy of the antichrists, but in reality he was destroying their false doctrines and bringing men’s thoughts into captivity to Christ. Even while a prisoner he “overcame the world,” and in the face of possible execution, wrote, “I joy, and rejoice with you all” (Phil. 2:17).

To overcome the world one must abandon its system of values and standard of success. The god of this world has convinced people that they must let nothing stand in the way of their attaining material prosperity in order to be seen as “successful;” One should take time to pray and go to church, but he is never to take Christ so seriously that His commandments deter him from whatever he has to do to get ahead.

Much of the modern church covertly embraces these worldly standards, and measures its own success, not in terms of faith and obedience, but in terms of growth and property value. How ironic that the church — founded by one who had no place to lay His head, and who preached that “a man’s life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses” (Luke 12:15) — should be known more for its material prosperity than for its benevolent activities.

The Christian is to overcome the natural desire to receive the praises of men and the world’s honors. Jesus said that the greatest among us is the one who is a servant. “That which is exalted among men is an abomination with God” (Luke 16:15). It is one thing to receive the appreciation of our brethren for work well done. It is quite another to seek the approval and emoluments of the world. Jesus once asked the Jews, “How can you believe who receive glory one of another and the glory that comes from the only God you seek not?” (John 5:44). God glories in such things as purity, humility, and obedience, the very things the world despises. Like Paul, the Christian must count the prestige and honor the world bestows as “garbage” in order to gain Christ and be identified with Him (Phil. 3:4–11).

We must overcome fear. A great cloud of fear hangs over our land. For decades it was the fear of nuclear war, and now it is the fear of being victimized by our own federal government, and eventually forced under the rule of a totalitarian world government. Christians are already martyred in many countries today, and the media ignores it.

How, then, can we live without fear? First, we have faith that our King will keep His promises, and that if He does not protect us from suffering, He will sustain us through it.

Second, in time of persecution the light of faithful Christians shines more brightly, and they are refined and strengthened in such fiery trials. “We rejoice in our tribulations; knowing that tribulation works steadfastness; and steadfastness approved-ness; and approved-ness hope; and hope puts not to shame; because the love of God has

been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given to us” (Rom. 5:3, 4).

Third, we recognize that “The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment” (Job 20:5). The New World Order is being built on sand and will fail. We are sojourners in this perishing world, and “look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness” (II Pet. 3:13).

Fourth, Christ has all power and authority in heaven and in earth. We who belong to him may rest assured that, in spite of present hardships, **we are on the side of victory, and in the last day will be resurrected to eternal life.**

I believe that our Father does not want us to live in fear, but in faith, and if we do, “The God of hope (will) fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

“Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 15:57).

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