

VICTORY THROUGH CHRIST

"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Corinthians 15:57.

Paul perpetually gave thanks to God. He actually praised God through every condition and situation from the time he was saved until his head was severed from his body by the executioner's axe. He suffered bodily affliction, persecution, imprisonment and trying ordeals and then wrote, "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Any of us can praise God when things go as we would have them, but Paul praised Him regardless of how things went. He praised Him when he was hungry, persecuted and afflicted. When he was afflicted, he was drawn closer to the Lord and received a double portion of His grace. When his friends forsook him, he felt the presence of his Lord to such an extent that he burst into praise and thanksgiving. He thanked God for the privilege of seeing the fruits of his labors. He even praised and thanked God when he faced that most ghastly of all things -- the grave.

In these tragic days of turmoil troubled hearts are asking, "What in the world is there for which we can be thankful?" Well, there isn't much in the world, for the world lies in the evil one. But we do not belong to this world. Our citizenship is in heaven; we are just pilgrims passing through this world. There is as much for which to be thankful as there ever was because the source of our blessings, the ground of our rejoicing and the goal of our hope are not affected by rumors of wars. The Christian need not move in uncertainty or in defeat for he has the assurance of victory. There is never a day in which he cannot be thankful for the victory about which the world knows nothing.

So, if you ask, "For what can we be thankful?" I answer, "We can thank God for victory through Christ." It is our duty to give thanks for all things, but especially for what pertains to our spiritual and eternal interests.

I. Victory Over Sin.

The presence and power of sin are realities in human life. Sin is native to our natures. It manifests itself in very young children. Even though they do not understand the meaning of it, they do manifest its indwelling. When we grow up we become sinners in thought, word and deed. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Try as we may, we are not able to break the power of sin. While in our helplessness and hopelessness Christ comes to our rescue. All of the tantalizing terrors of past guilt are blotted out by His precious blood. What an unspeakable relief that is! What an inner rest it brings to our hearts!. Have you had that glorious experience? Has Christ taken away your guilt and shame and put your heart at rest before God?

There are what we choose to call "outward" sins and "inward" sins. Outward sins include drunkenness, murder, blasphemy, etc. If you have

not been delivered from these outward sins, then there is no evidence that you have passed from death into life. But what we are thinking about now is inward sins, many of which the average Christian does not consider to be sins. I am referring to such sins as worry, unforgiveness, grudge-bearing, jealousy, pride, anger, wrath, malice and hatred. Doubts and fears take possession of the heart that should be filled with the rest and peace that flow from fellowship with God. Rebellion against the divine will often takes the place of complete and glad submission. Pride in our own accomplishments, and an unreasoning envy of those who have been more successful than ourselves, or who have attained greater privileges or wealth, cast a dark shadow across our spiritual experience, and chill our joy in life. Impatience and irritability bring dishonor upon our Christian profession, in spite of all our good resolutions.

Each of you have a besetting sin. You will probably overcome most of the sins to which you have been addicted. But there will be one besetting sin that will dog your steps wherever you go. It is with that sin that you will have to deal. You know what that sin is and God knows, too. It may be anger. Perhaps you lose your temper and fly off the handle. It may be unforgiveness or hatred. Whatever that sin is, you will have to deal with it if you are going to be a victorious Christian. You will never know real happiness until you have been delivered. As long as you yield to your besetting sin you will be miserable. To be continually sinning and repenting is a miserable experience.

As long as you are yielding to sin, God cannot use you. The Psalmist spoke the truth when he said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." He will not even listen to what you say, let alone use you in His service. Before you can truly enjoy God's salvation you will have to be victorious over sin.

When I think of the suppression of sin, I am reminded of a story of an old Quaker woman and a new convert. They were standing side by side. Presently a terrible provocation crossed the pathway of the old lady. But during the entire time of the provocation she continued smiling just as sweetly as she had been smiling before. After it was all over the young Christian turned to her and said, "I can't understand how you could keep your temper under a provocation such as that." The old Quaker, still smiling, and thinking she knew the secret of victory, turned to the younger Christian and said, "Ah, thee didn't see the boiling inside." You see, she really thought she was victorious, yet all of the time she was boiling furiously on the inside; she was as angry as she could be, but she kept smiling so that the younger Christian would not know it.

If it's boiling, it's boiling. If it's there, it's there. So far as others are concerned, if you can keep it on the inside, well and good; but so far as God is concerned, you might as well explode and be through with it. It doesn't matter whether you boil on the inside or the outside, if you're boiling, you're boiling. God can see it, and He knows

that, whether you boil on the inside or the outside, you have lost the victory, even though you manage to hide it from the eyes of others. Thank God, Jesus Christ can deliver us from the boiling on the inside and on the outside. You can be a victorious Christian.

Frequently we try in our own strength to overcome temptations to sin, resolving not to yield to temptation, but, if we ignore Christ, we shall not be victorious. On the other hand, if we look to Him, we shall not fail. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling" be all the glory. If you will trust Him to deal with your temptations when they assail you, He will give you the victory. When you are oppressed with the consciousness of failure in your work and testimony for Him, turn again to Him and depend entirely upon Him for the strength which you need, and you will soon be able to sing the song of victory. This blessed assurance is full of cheer for the depressed, encouragement for the despondent and hope for the disappointed.

Major Whittle one time read that hymn: "I Need Thee Every Hour." "That will never do," he said. "I need Him every moment." He then sat down and wrote:

"Moment by moment, I'm kept in His love;
Moment by moment, I've life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine."

In other words, it is a moment by moment experience. Only as you walk with God, only as you keep in close touch with Christ, will you be a victorious Christian. Victory is the result of a constant walk with God. Only those who are in daily touch with Christ are victorious.

II. Victory Over Death.

"But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is Paul's climactic, triumphant answer to the materialism, rationalism, atheism and unbelief of the worldly, wealthy and lustful Corinth of his day. It is an effective answer to the troubled world of our day. In this chapter the majestic mentality of the mighty man, Paul, moves with colossal strides along the highway of the King from the lowlands of sin, sickness and sorrow to the uplands of the soul where ultimate triumph is realized on the sunlit hills of God.

There are three elements with which man must deal - sin, the law and death. Sin begins in the moral and spiritual corruption of man's depraved nature, and then goes out of that nature into actual transgression. These transgressions of commission and omission are against the divine law, and bring upon the offender its condemning sentence. Death becomes the executioner, or minister of the law, with reference to the guilty sinner. Sin entangles, defiles, debases and enslaves. The law condemns and death destroys. Over sin, the law and death there is victory through Christ.

Death lays hold upon men of all types everywhere. It enters the homes of the high and the low, the rich and the poor. None are exempt from its power. All efforts to escape it are without avail when God's time comes. "It is appointed unto men once to die." Death is a pitiless enemy, utterly regardless of human desire or happiness. Death is a great

intruder, invading our homes without invitation or desire on our part. It is a robber in that it snatches from men all that they hold dear -- friends, loved ones, investments, business, pleasure, earthly pre-eminence, etc. Death takes us out of this world into which we are pouring so much thought, labor and effort.

Paul declares here that we can be victorious over this most vindictive foe, death. Surely this is a matter of vital interest to all of us. This is true because death is an experience through which all of us must pass. Death is no respecter of persons. It enters alike the portals of the palace and the halls of the hovels. The strongest, wealthiest and wisest unbelievers in Christ dread this ruthless foe. But this is not the case with those whom Christ has saved. They can face death without fear or dread. They know that Christ has conquered death. Because He has done so, His followers are victorious over it also. For them the grave has ceased to be a terminus and has become a thoroughfare. It is no longer a goal, but is now a gateway.

A full and final victory over death is possible through Christ only. It was His work in our behalf that rendered our victory possible. This victory is given to us. Nobody, regardless of how great or how good, has ever earned any semblance of it. Christ bought it and graciously gives it to us. It should be appreciated by us. We should express our gratitude for it. "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We weep by the graves of our loved ones in Christ but, no matter how many winter snows may cover these graves, or how many springtime rains may water them, or how many years may add moss to the tombstones, there will come a day when the trumpet shall sound, when this mortal shall put on immortality, this corruption shall put on incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.

If "we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word," every day can be thanksgiving day, for every day can be a day of victory. Every day may not be pleasant or easy, or free from pain, but every day can be an experience of His victory.

F. W. Boreham told about visiting in the home of a widow of a minister. He stayed in the room which she had previously occupied. Upon rising in the morning he discovered, cut on the window glass with a stone, the words "This Is The Day!" When he asked his hostess the meaning of it she said: "I have had a lot of trouble in my time, and I used to worry a lot. One day, very upset, I sat down to read my Bible, and came across the words, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." I looked to see what particular day it referred to, but could not find it. Then it occurred to me that it means any day, every day, this day! So I cut it on the glass where I can see it every morning when I draw up the blind."

Thank God for victory through Christ, past, present and future. While you thank Him obey the verse which follows and be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."