

VICTORY IN CHRIST

Messages on the Victorious Life

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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TIMES COMPANY PHILADELPHIA

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS YOUR KIND OF CHRISTIANITY?

AT A Student Volunteer Convention which I had the privilege of attending, we who were congratulating ourselves as being on somewhat higher ground than the ordinary church member in that we were willing to expend of our time, energy, and money to attend a missionary convention and share in our LORD's program for the evangelization of the world, were confronted over and over again, through one speaker after another, with a rather uncomfortable question, "*Is your kind of Christianity worth sending to the non-Christian world?*"

Not, "Is Christianity worth sending?" There is no question as to that. But what about your kind? - the kind that you showed by your life this morning, yesterday, last week, last year. Is that what the non-Christian world is waiting for, what is needed to revolutionize lives there?

Now there is a kind of Christianity worth sending to the non-Christian world. It is the kind that JESUS CHRIST lives, the kind that He has always lived. And the Christianity that CHRIST Himself lives is the only kind worth sending.

The kind of salvation that JESUS offers is the only salvation worth offering to anyone. So the kind of Christianity that JESUS lives, moment by moment, is the only kind of Christianity worth living.

We are sometimes helped by sheer coincidences between our own experience and some Scripture passage. We read about a certain man who had been thirty and eight years in his infirmity, and of whom JESUS asked the question, "**Wilt thou be made whole?**" And then to whom, a moment later, JESUS said, "**Rise... and walk. And immediately the man was made whole... and walked.**"

That passage means a great deal to me. For I know another man who for thirty and eight years was in infirmity of spiritual paralysis through his bondage to sin, and who longed to be made whole; and to whom our LORD one day said, "**Arise; and walk.**" I was a boy of about thirteen when I first made public confession of JESUS CHRIST as my SAVIOUR; but it was not until twenty-five years later that I even knew that CHRIST offered to anyone in this life the power that He does offer for victory over sin. And I am convinced that many Christians, sincere believers in the LORD JESUS CHRIST as their personal SAVIOUR, therefore regenerated, born again, nevertheless are in bondage and paralysis because, like myself, they have not known of

our LORD's wonderful offer.

They are paralyzed, as I was, by the mistake of thinking that we ourselves must share in doing that which only GOD can do.

JESUS, you know, makes two offers to everyone. He offers to set us free from the penalty of our sin. And He offers to set us free from the power of our sin. Both these offers are made on exactly the same terms: we can accept them only by letting Him do it all.

Every Christian has accepted the first offer. Many Christians have not accepted the second offer. They mistakenly think, as I did, that they must have some part in overcoming the power of their sin; that their efforts, their will, their determination, strengthened and helped by the power of CHRIST, is the way to victory. And as long as they mistakenly believe this, they are as doomed to defeat as they would be doomed to eternal death if their salvation depended upon their working with CHRIST to pay the penalty of their sin.

It has been well said that, while all true Christians know that they can have their justification only by faith, most of us have been brought up to believe that "for sanctification, we must paddle our own canoe." And that is why so many justified Christians are so pathetically, miserably disappointed in the matter of a satisfying, personal experience of sanctification, or walking "**in newness of life**."

Dr. Scofield in conversation was speaking of the up-and-down experience that so many Christians have, winning one day and failing the next, confessing their sins and trying again, and so going on in discouragement and defeat as a common experience. "That," said he, "is not Christian experience, but it is the experience of the Christian."

And he went on to say that "Christian experience, is wholly the result of the Producer of Christian experience: the HOLY SPIRIT." So when Christians attempt to share in the work of producing their Christian experience, instead of letting the HOLY SPIRIT do it all, they have the discouraging experience of many Christians - which is not Christian experience.

How did you accept CHRIST's offer of freedom from the penalty of your sins? You took it as an outright gift. By faith you let Him do it all. Will you not accept His offer of immediate and complete freedom from the power of your known sins, on the same terms, and do it now? This is just as much a miracle as the miracle of regeneration. And it is just as exclusively the LORD's work.

A veteran missionary friend of mine told me a few years ago that he and some other missionaries in the foreign field, not a great while before that, had said to each other that their own daily lives were not of the sort described in the New Testament as characteristic of the early Christians. They did not know what the matter was; they only knew that they longed for something they did not have. And they agreed with each other to go apart by themselves for a few days if necessary, lay the whole matter before GOD and ask Him to give them what they did not have. They did this; GOD took them at their word; and my friend, consecrated Christian missionary and veteran in the service that he had already been, came back a new man in CHRIST, with a new life and with a new CHRIST.

He told another missionary, a high-spirited, high-tempered young woman, about the whole matter. She saw the truth, and was enabled of GOD to claim CHRIST in His fullness, as get Victory, by faith, in the same way.

A few months later my friend, then at a distance from his younger missionary friend, received a letter from her in which she said that she must now tell him about the wonderful things that were going on in her life. "I wanted to write you at first," she said, "but I scarcely dared to, for I was afraid it would not last. But it has lasted, and oh, it is so wonderful! Why," she went on, "just as an illustration of what I mean, do you know that not only for three months have I not once slammed the door in the face of one of these stupid Indian servants that used to get on my nerves so, but I haven't even wanted to once in the three months!"

And that was a miracle. Not keeping from slamming the door - that is no miracle. Any ordinary, unsaved person who is half-way decent can keep from slamming the door: by setting his teeth, using his will, putting his hands behind his back, and determinedly not doing what he feels like doing. No, there is no miracle in that. But to go for three months without once wanting to: without once feeling within yourself that angry surge of irritation, of temper, that makes you want to show your feelings in some outward, uncontrolled way; does not your heart tell you that that indeed would be a miracle in your own life?

But that is CHRIST's offer to us now and here - freedom immediately and completely from all the power of known sin. That is what Paul meant as he came forever out of the seventh chapter of Romans into the eighth; when he said in the second verse of the eighth, "**For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.**" Are you rejoicing in CHRIST as your Victory in this miraculous way?

Do not misunderstand me; I am not speaking of any mistaken idea of sinless perfection. It is not possible for anyone to have such a transaction with CHRIST as to enable him to say, either, "I am without sin," or, "I can never sin again." This miracle is sustained and continued in our life only by our continuing, moment-by-moment faith in our SAVIOUR for His moment-by-moment victory over the power of our sin. But He Himself will give us that faith, and will continue that faith in us moment by moment. We can and must, as Frances Ridley Havergal has so truly said, "entrust to Him our trust."

What are the conditions of this Victorious Life? Only two, and they are very simple. Surrender and faith. "Let go, and let GOD."

Some Christians have not surrendered unconditionally to the mastery of JESUS CHRIST. They have, as Mr. McConkey puts it, surrendered their sins to CHRIST, but not their wills. If there is anything in your life this moment that you know you have been withholding from the LORD, won't you give it to Him now? Won't you just tell Him you now turn over to Him, for time and eternity, all that you have and all that you are, for His complete mastery and use and disposal? Every habit of your life, every ambition, every hope, every loved one, every possession, and yourself - all these He must have if He is to make Himself not only your SAVIOUR but your Life.

That is the first step, the first of the two conditions. But that is not the whole. Perhaps you made this surrender long ago, and have been wondering why you did not have the victory that you longed for. The reason is that the Surrendered Life is not necessarily the Victorious Life. There is no victory without surrender, but there may be surrender without victory.

Some of us know this to our sorrow. We may have "let go," but if we have not yet "let GOD" we are sure to be defeated. We may not have realized that the work of victory is wholly and exclusively GOD's.

For after you have put yourself unreservedly and completely under the mastery of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, then you must know and remember that it at once becomes His responsibility, His - I say it reverently - duty, to keep you from the power of sin.

He pledges Himself to do so. "**Sin shall not have dominion over you,**" He says, "**for ye are not under the law**" (where your works have something to do with it) "**but under grace**" (Romans 6:14) (where I do it all) and elsewhere He adds, "**My grace is sufficient for thee**" (II Corinthians 12:9). So it is that our LORD has just been waiting for you, not to pray for victory, but to praise Him for victory.

Many surrendered Christians postpone and prevent victory in their lives by praying for it, when JESUS has been waiting for them to praise Him for it. As one has said, we are not to ask Him to make His grace sufficient for us. He tells us that it is already so; and it is our part simply to take Him at His word and say: "I thank Thee, Lord."

Let us therefore claim the whole blessed miracle of the Victorious Life now, by saying this simple sentence together, prayerfully, thoughtfully, realizing the tremendous meaning of the words, and in our hearts praising GOD that it is true:

"I know that JESUS is meeting all my needs now, because His grace is sufficient for me."

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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