

Christianityworks
More Than Conquerors
0061-2
The Sweet Taste of Victory

If God is talking about some sort of victory in our lives when we put our faith in His Son, Jesus, then it has to be a different kind victory, a pure victory, a sweet victory, a good and wholesome and wonderful victory.

The Guns Fell Silent

World War II was the deadliest war in all of history. The estimates are that some 72 million people were killed. Just stop and take that in. 72 million! My parents lived through World War II in Europe. They've never spoken much about it, but just piecing bits and pieces together - the war footage I've seen on TV, the snippets from my family, the cold hard statistics - I just can't imagine it. It must have been horrific. It must have been just unbelievable.

The destruction, the fear. Can you imagine? But the thing that I try most to imagine - and I just can't imagine it - is what it must have been like the day the guns fell silent. Not the celebrations in the streets that followed, but in that instant, in that moment when the clock ticked over in May 1945 and the killing stopped. Peace! Victory! What did it feel like?

I gained a unique perspective from a Jewish woman now well in her 80's, who was there. She, her mother and her sister had been shipped off to Auschwitz. When they arrived, she was separated into a different queue to her family - she never saw them again.

She was young and strong and ended up working as a seamstress in Germany making uniforms for the soldiers. In the weeks leading up toward the end of the war, she told us about the rumours. The young women there would whisper secretly about what was going on - but none of them really knew ...

Until the day - the day when the allied forces marched into the city where she had been imprisoned and set her free. I shall never forget the look in her eyes when she shared that moment with me.

Victory! Finally! After all this - victory! How sweet must the taste have been? How sweet? When the guns fell silent, when VE Day was declared on May 8th 1945. Victory! Peace! It's all over! Can you imagine?

God's heart is for us to have victory in life. For us to have peace in life. For us to be more than conquerors as the Apostle Paul wrote:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

"For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

It doesn't matter what we're fighting against, struggling against, God wants us to have peace. But here's the problem, amongst the ranks of those who bear the name of Christ - the armies of Christian soldiers, amongst those ranks, in many units, in many places - all they know of peace, is rumours.

They've heard that peace is coming - but don't know that it's actually here. That it's arrived. Peace has broken out. The guns have fallen silent. Hostilities have ceased. The one who has placed his or her faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour has peace. Can live in peace. This one has victory. Can live in victory.

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we now stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)

When we put our faith in Jesus we are made right with God. Justified. And so we have peace with God through Jesus. This is the grace in which we now stand. That peace, that victory over death, is something that each believer possesses here and now and what's more, we're meant to live in it! We're meant to experience the sweet taste of victory. Here and now.

You know what I find scary? World wide there are billions of people who one way or another believe in Jesus. Billions. But so many in the midst of God's kingdom haven't woken up to the fact that victory is ours. The guns **have** fallen silent. Peace **has** broken out. It's time to taste the sweet taste of victory.

Now you might say to me, "Berni how can that be so? Look at what's going on in my life. Look at the battles that I am fighting on

so many fronts. How can you say that peace has broken out? How can you say to me, taste the sweet taste of victory when I don't even know if I'm going to make it through today, let alone tomorrow?"

And my answer to you is this – by faith:

*for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the **victory** that conquers the world, our faith.*

Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

(1 John 5:4-5)

You go back and listen to the Apostle Paul's words about being a conqueror - that great list of afflictions he sets out - and what you realise is that he wasn't talking necessarily about victory over his circumstances. He was talking about victory amidst his circumstances!

The victory that Jesus bought for you and for me on that Cross is a victory that is meant to make us strong in the middle of all that we're going through. My friend, we can have peace - in fact we're meant to have peace - right now. Here. Today.

The moment we believe in Jesus - and what He did for us - in that very instant the clock ticks over, the guns cease to fire and there is peace. Blessed peace between God and us.

And His victory: the victory over death that Jesus purchased on the Cross when he paid for my sin and yours; the victory of a new life that's there to be lived now. You know what I ache for? You know how I shared that look in the eyes of that elderly Jewish woman as she told me about that day she was set free. I ache to see that look in the eyes of every man and woman and child who believes in Jesus. I ache to see that freedom, that peace, that victory become the dominant reality in the life of each one who's put their faith in Jesus.

Why? Because when we live our lives in that truth, in that reality we become more than conquerors. The things that once shot fear into our hearts no longer have an impact. The trials and the encounter in the wildernesses that we walk through become opportunities to discover a mysterious God instead of ordeals of dread. My friend, Jesus came to set us free. He came to give us victory.

And He came to make us more than conquerors. After all the destruction and mayhem and mess in our lives, why wouldn't we

want to live out that freedom, conqueror the enemy and taste the sweet, sweet taste of His victory. I tell you, that's how I've decided to live my life.

I've decided to take Jesus at His Word and simply believe that He means me not to be some angry, stunted, bitter little person ... but instead to taste that sweet taste of God's victory.

The Humble Conqueror

Victory! ... Victory is a word that Christians love to bandy around. Paul the Apostle writes:

*... thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ..*
(1 Corinthians 15:57)

But what does that actually mean? What is victory? I mean, victory's nice. But on the other hand victory can be ugly too. We don't have to look too far back in history to see how victory in a war has come at a terrible price. A victory of one group of people has brought terrible pain and oppression to other groups of people. Surely if God tells us that those who believe in Jesus are more than conquerors it has to be a different kind of victory. The picture of a conquering army may conjure up images of victory but what about the death and destruction that it took to get there, to become a conqueror in the first place.

No. If God is talking about some sort of victory in our lives when we put our faith in His Son Jesus, then it has to be a different kind of victory; a pure victory, a sweet victory, a good and wholesome and wonderful victory. Because if it's not that sort of a victory then surely it can't be from God.

Question is, when God talks about victory, what sort of victory is He talking about? What does He mean when He speaks the word "victory" into our lives. What exactly is His plan when it comes to making us more than conquerors?

In the world's eyes, victory is about winning, and winning is everything. It's a winner takes all model. There's no glory in coming second in this world. In fact a lot of what victory's about is beating the other guy. It's about me thumping my chest and telling myself how great I am because I beat you.

But when God through His Word through the Apostle Paul talks about us being more than conquerors, (*Romans 8:35-39*) it's not

the world's kind of victory that He has in mind. God has a completely different notion of what victory means. Have a look to this beautiful Psalm. We don't know who wrote it, but clearly, this is a Psalm of Praise after God gave His people, Israel, a great victory. If you have a Bible, look it up.

Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre. For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. (Psalm 149:1-5)

God's given them some great victory over an enemy that's threatened them. And instead of beating their chests and slapping one another on the back and telling each other how utterly amazing they were in that battle and how they whopped the enemy and 'good on me' and 'good on you' ... what do they do?

They sing praises to God and give thanks to Him and give Him the glory. All the glory. And in that passage this one verse leaps out at me.

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. (Psalm 149:4)

God gives victory not to those who are full of themselves, but to the humble.

There's an amazing scene at the end of WW II when General Dwight D Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe addresses the British Parliament following victory in Europe. He said:

Humility must be the measure of a man whose success was bought with the blood of his subordinates and paid for with the lives of his friends.

You know something - that bit about success bought with the blood of subordinates and paid for with the lives of friends - that rings so true when I look at the victory I have in my life.

It's a victory purchased for me through the blood and the life of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God who came to this earth, suffered incredibly, was nailed - brutally nailed - to a cross and died a gruesome death for one reason and one reason alone: to pay the price of my rebellion and yours; to pay the price of our failures and

losses and defeats and, (let me call it what it is) to pay the price of my sin and yours.

That's where our victory was purchased. None of our good works, none of our virtues, none of our hard work. It was all done for us so that we might have life eternal. Paul writes:

When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

God is looking to make us more than conquerors but in a humble sort of a way. When you and I defeat sin in our lives, when we overcome this obstacle and climb over that mountain, and by faith cast that other mountains into the sea - none of that is done in our power or our strength. None of that is through our abilities. It's all about the power and the mercy and the grace of God. And this God is looking for humble conquerors.

*For the Lord takes pleasure in his people;, he adorns the **humble** with victory.*
(Psalm 149:4)

*But he gives all the more **grace**; therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives **grace** to the **humble**." (James 4:6)*

My friend, when we taste the victories in life that God brings, they are so incredibly sweet. I know - I know that there are those amongst us today who are facing absolutely impossible odds. I know that there are those caring for the mother with Alzheimer's Disease; there are those struggling to put food on the table; there are those in other parts of the world where this program is heard who are fleeing for their lives. But as the Apostle Paul writes ... "

In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come Nor power nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

CHAPTER 3. THINGS ARE NOT WHAT THEY SEEM

Have you ever notice that things aren't always what they seem. What this world holds out to be victory is not always what God holds out to be victory.

In fact the world's victory is the complete opposite end of the scale to what God calls victory. That's why the things that Jesus says - in fact many of the things that God says throughout the Bible - seem so topsy turvy. Upside down. Wrong way round.

If we look at them through the world's eyes, they appear wrong. They're foolishness through the world's eyes.

Take for instance one of the most famous of all Jesus' sermons, the Sermon on the Mount. Nowhere is this stark contrast between God's victory and the world's victory more evident. If you have a Bible, grab it.

*When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.
Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:1-12)*

Just have a think about this. Doesn't that feel completely upside down? Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are the meek ... For goodness sake! What's Jesus thinking! It definitely doesn't fit with the world's formula. It certainly doesn't fit with the victory we are often hungry for and ask God for. Blessed

are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

The world tells us that blessed are the rich and the happy and the proud and those who are full and those who have enough. But look at the crunch bit at the end. Look at the reward, the prize of this upside down, topsy turvy victory that Jesus is proclaiming to His disciples:

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:1-12)

I don't know about you, but when people revile me and they persecute me and they utter kinds of evil against me falsely because I believe in Jesus, I don't feel particularly blessed in those moments. Right, we don't because it's hard. But Jesus is saying just hang on a minute, get the big picture. Get the big picture of God's victory in our lives. Rejoice, be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

My friend, if the one is different from the other - if the world's victory is different to God's victory, so entirely different - let me ask you. Which one is the impostor and which one is the truth? Well, which one?

The one that offers pay today and nothing for eternity or the one that involves goodness and sacrifice and honour and grace today and an eternity in the presence of God?

That's something that each one of us has to decide for ourselves. I can't shove this down your throat. That's not my job. You may be surprised to know I happen to lean to one much more than I lean to the other. To me it seems pretty straightforward, it seems pretty obvious. But that's just me.

Things aren't always what they seem. All that glitters isn't gold.

Let me encourage you to put your faith not in the world but in the one Who's trustworthy, in the one Who's worthy of our trust. Let me encourage you with the reality that anyone who puts their faith in Jesus the Christ is more than a conqueror. More than a victor with an abundant, victorious life now and forever. That's the promise Jesus gives us when we lay hold of the victory that He has planned for us. God's victory, not the world's.