

“He Won, So, We Win!”

Romans 8: 36-38 / John 16:33

David P. Nolte

People are either victims or victors in life. Often the difference is one of attitude. The victims tend to adopt a “Poor Me!” outlook and blame others for their problems while the victor says, “I am blessed!” The victim rolls over and gives up, but the victor stands up and faces the trouble head-on.

It is God’s intention that we be winners but it is not His intention that we be free of affliction and troubles. Tribulations are a given in a broken world.

Paul said referring to that tribulation, and overcoming it, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He Who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He Who died, yes, rather Who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him Who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:31-39 (NASB). He won so we win!

Let me tell you a true story this morning about a young lady who was, by anyone’s assessment, more than a conqueror. She had tribulation, but was a victor not a victim. Let’s just call her Jessica.

She was only eighteen when she contracted a flesh-eating virus. To save her life, the doctor said he must amputate her feet. This he did, but the disease spread further, so he took off her legs to the knees. Later he amputated her thighs. Then it broke out again in her hands and arms: first one arm, then the other was taken off, right up to the shoulders. She was left with only her torso, neck and head, physically speaking. For fifteen years Jessica lay there in her bed. No one would deny that her's was a life into which some real affliction, some extreme tribulation had come. But Jesus didn't say it would be otherwise, did He? Jesus said, “In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 (NASB). He won so we win!

I. THE LORD ALERTED US TO CERTAIN TRIBULATION:

A. “In the world you have tribulation.” Tribulation, is from the word that suggests:

1. The stresses and pressures of the daily burdens we bear.
 2. The distress, anguish and misery we know in life.
 3. The pains, illnesses and afflictions that come to us all.
- B. Sometimes those painful and heavy things come to us:
1. From the carelessness and neglect or even the spite and malice of others.
 2. From our own choices and stubbornness.
 3. From the random, chance things that happen in life as our lives collide with circumstances beyond our control.
 4. From our enemy, as the song said,

“The enemy came against me and it caught me by surprise!
I became so fearful, for it seemed I will not survive!”

- C. We would like life to be otherwise. We are intoxicated with the idea of toil-free, painless, no-suffering lives.
1. Advertisers promise it to us if we use their products.
 2. "Name it and claim it!" preachers promise it to those who refuse to confess doubt and whose faith is strong enough.
 3. The government seems to think it can provide it through various types of assistance programs.
- D. Life is difficult and we'll not escape that -- so here are some pointers:
1. Refuse to indulge in self-pity. Pity parties alienate others and focus our energies inward where there is no real help.
 2. Don't play the blame-game. It doesn't really matter why or how the trouble happened, what matters is what you do with it.
 3. Resolve to say active in life. Instead of withdrawing into a shell, step out into the world of friends, and family, and serving others.
 4. Don't live in the past. Memories are wonderful and we all have them. But to try to live in yesterday is to fail to conquer today or to prepare for tomorrow.
 5. Remember that life is in flux. Things change. Weeping lasts for the night, but Joy comes in the morning.
 6. Remember the ability and promise of God to take the ills and use them for your good, or even, if He wills, to change them altogether in due time, if you trust Him.

Jesus foretold trouble and trouble had come to Jessica. She was reduced to a physical minimum. But what reduced her body failed to blight her spirit, and the walls of her room were covered with Bible texts, all of them affirming God's gifts of love and peace and power. That young woman mediated such grace that many people were converted to faith in Christ through her letters.

How did she write? She was fitted with an instrument strapped to her shoulder into which a pen could be inserted. We write with fingers, hand and arm: she had to use her whole body, what was left of it, but her writing became beautiful and legible. And she wrote letters to others offering encouragement and hope. She eventually collected fifteen hundred letters

telling of people blessed by her. She manifested the kind of fortitude the Lord expects of his troubled disciples. He won, so we win!

II. THE LORD ADMONISHED US TO BE COURAGEOUS:

- A. "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage." Note that in the KJV it is "Be of good cheer!" and in the NIV it is "Take heart!" The word means:
 - 1. Be of cheer: be filled with His joy as your hearts are uplifted and brightened.
 - 2. Be of courage: don't be afraid, don't be timid, don't be filled with apprehension.
 - 3. Be of confidence: say with Paul: "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day." 2 Timothy 1:12.
- B. Tribulations demand courage! In fact, problems, troubles, vexations if faced in faith actually create and deepen courage.
 - 1. We learn how to face problems by facing problems. Aristotle said, "We become brave by doing brave acts."
 - 2. Benjamin Franklin rightly said, "Those things that hurt, instruct."
 - 3. E. Stanley Jones pointed out: "Oppositions break or solidify a person. I determined they would solidify me. I wouldn't bear things; I would use them."
- C. We can be of Godly courage, too, "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline." 2 Timothy 1:7.
- D. We ought to join Paul in saying, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." 2 Corinthians 4:7-10.

Jessica faced a trouble we, hopefully, will never face. But her courage kept her pressing on. Daily she won victories many others would have failed to win because of a whiny, self-pitying, God-blaming attitude. She made the decision we all ultimately make: "Will I overcome or be overcome?" She determined to overcome and that's what Jesus told us He had done -- so in Him, we can overcome as well.

III. THE LORD ATTAINED THE VICTORY FOR US:

- A. "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Jesus meant that He had:
 - 1. Prevailed over every difficulty.
 - 2. Conquered every foe.
 - 3. Triumphed over every part of the world.
- B. Not only has He gained victory over the world, but shares it with us!
 - 1. Romans 8:36-37 "Just as it is written, 'for your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

2. 2 Corinthians 2:14 "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."
 3. 1 John 5:4 "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith."
 4. Even over death we conquer in Him, "but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57.
- C. Sometimes the reality of the tribulation is so harsh, the pain of our suffering so obvious, the blows of the enemy so severe, that we just can't see through it to the ultimate triumph of faith, but it is out there if we persevere.
- D. Our challenge and need is to remember Who is on our side and to be sure we are on His. Then we are overcomers.
1. "Though a host encamp against me, My heart will not fear; Though war arise against me, In spite of this I shall be confident." Psalms 27:3.
 2. "If God is for us, who is against us?" Romans 8:31.

Jessica was an overcomer. When asked how she managed to do all she did Jessica smiled and replied: "Well, you know, Jesus said that those who believed in Him, from within them would flow rivers of living water. I believed in Him - that's all!"

So our prayer shouldn't be for easier lives, but to be stronger in faith, and hope and courage. We often think that trouble comes to those who don't deserve it, but so does love! And so does peace! Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." John 14:27.

If the Lord leads you through dark valleys, He is with you there. If He allows troubles you cannot seem to bear, He bears them with you. If He asks of you what you don't think you have, He will provide it.

As we toil our way through one trial after another, let us be patient in tribulation, persevering in prayer, proven by endurance and powerful in our steadfastness.

Let us remember that after we have "suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us." 1 Peter 5:10.

Let us turn in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and fully depend upon Him for the grace and mercy we need.

Let us find in Him the peace that passes understanding and when we have done so, all the promises that belong to the saved will be ours. As the song said,

"I've won I've won!
The victory has come
though the enemy still makes his presence known.

I planted my feet on the word of God
He fought the battle I've won!

Well I know there be more battle s
That will come from day to day;
Lord clothe me in Your armor
as I take up the shield of faith.
Lord You are my strong hold
My heart will not fear
with Your word as my weapon I know victory is near!"

The Lord bless you in time of trouble; the Lord give you courage to stand firm and the Lord grant you the victory that lasts not just for the year, but for eternity. He won, so we win!