

What is the Victory?

By R.T. Nusbaum

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

(I Corinthians 15:54)

We always want to quote First Corinthians 15:57 rejoicing that God always gives us the victory through Jesus. Of course, in our minds we think that this refers to God giving us victory in every circumstance of life. What we fail to realize is the context of the scripture. In verse 54 it states: "Death is swallowed up in victory.... Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:54, 57).

Death is God's true means to victory. Without death there can be no true victory. What I mean is that, through death Jesus put to death our Old Man and therefore, cut off our means for living a carnal and self-centered existence. "For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

God is not in the business of giving our fleshly lives the victory. The great victory was that death and all that we were in Adam was put away and Christ came forth as Life and as our life. The true victory is that we are dead and Christ is raised. Where is He raised? He is raised in His new Body, which Body we are. "In whom ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ [on the Cross]; having been buried with Him" (Romans 6:4, ASV; Colossians 2:11, 12, ASV).

"Just as Christ was raised from among the dead by the Father's glorious power, we also should live an entirely new life. For since we have become one with Him by sharing in His death, we shall also be one with Him by sharing in His resurrection" (Romans 6:4, 5, Wey).

Victory as understood by most Christians is understood by bringing about CHANGE. That change is usually unrelated to our inward life but pertains more to the change of circumstance or of other people. But for God, victory is not defined by a change but by an EXCHANGE. The old life is not changed, but exchanged for the one that is *altogether new*.

The New Creation is not an improved version of fallen man but something *new* altogether. Second Corinthians 5:17 and 18: "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."

Many continue to live in an old life and expect God to bring about certain changes. They ask amiss. Again, God is not working to CHANGE the old life but to bring about and exchange. We see this clearly when Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it

is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me"

(Galatians 2:20, ASV).

The fact is, Jesus does not just raise us up but He is the risen life. It says, "For to *me* to live is Christ." "Christ, who is our life" (Philippians 1:21; Colossians 3:4). "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh" (II Corinthians 4:11). These verses are explaining unto us the glorious victory! This victory involves something more than God simply helping us through earthly situations. This is His victory by the Cross! It is a victory He is able to rejoice over when He sees us motivated based on what He has done at Calvary and not just proceed based on earthly motivations.

Remember how we explained earlier that death is God's means to victory? We quoted from I Corinthians 15:54 that says, "Death is swallowed up in victory.... Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies but it breaks forth into glorious NEW life. That New Life is the victory. That New Life is nothing less than Jesus Christ. In this reality of His death (and ours in Him) and His resurrection, there is always victory.

There is eternal victory in Christ's death and resurrection. The reason why this is so is because we can be assured that if we let Him live His life in us, He will live victorious over the world, the devil, our flesh, the circumstances of life, and any other thing. This victory will not be one of conquering everything that comes our way as much as Christ in us conquering any fears of the soul, covetousness over loss of things or pre-occupation with our lives in this world. The victory will be over our self-love rather than a victory over other things that tend to vex our selfish lives.

The sad fact is that, when the subject of victory is presented to most congregations, few mention a victory OVER US!!! The victory over human selfishness is one of the greatest victories accomplished by Christ on the Cross and yet it is mentioned very little.

The end result of this has been that any victory mention to the congregation are victories on behalf of fallen man — a man that Jesus went to the Cross in order to put him to death. Therefore, selfishness and self-seeking run rampant in churches because we tell them that the victory was meant for him instead of for Jesus and those who have conformed unto His image. To God, this is no victory at all! Foreigners have taken over the House of God. Infidels have vandalized His inheritance meant for the risen Christ and His Body. The victory of our death has been hidden away from God's people and they have ripped through the promises of God as burglars do through another man's possessions. The place of the Cross has been relegated to an Easter Sunday teaching.

Having read this I wonder -- How many still want the victory? Will we still be willing to seek victory but only according to God's definitions? Is living according to the nature and reality of Christ's Life more important to us than having pleasing circumstances surround

us? If you can answer "Yes" to these things then there is no question that you are headed toward true victory. The process of attaining the victory is seen in the words: "Always delivered unto death." ..."Always led in triumph." (II Corinthians 4:11; 2:14).

So what is the victory? Is the victory defined in God giving to us the things that are pleasing to our flesh? I say "NO!" The victory is that the nature of Christ has precedence over our carnal desires. This only comes by lifting up the Cross. We preach Christ and Him crucified. ***