

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Victory In Jesus

By Chris Simmons

Let us never forget that we are in a deadly battle for our eternal souls. Our adversary, the devil or Satan, continually seeks to *“devour”* us (1 Pet. 5:8). Because of our choice to sin and give in to the schemes of our opponent, we stand condemned before God. Jesus spoke in John 10:10 of Satan as *“the thief”* who *“comes only to steal and kill and destroy.”* In that same verse, Jesus contrasted His work in the great spiritual battle by saying, *“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57, *“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.”* Speaking of this battle, Paul asked in Romans 7:24, *“Who will set me free from the body of this death?”* and then by inspiration answered his own question in Romans 7:25 and 8:1, *“Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord... There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* Without Jesus Christ and His sacrificial death, we certainly have no hope for victory. Because of Him, we have hope. A hope for victory that requires something from us however.

Victory in Jesus requires the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, *“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.”* Victory is impossible without the gospel first being *“preached”* and proclaimed. Satan wins when we keep silent. Romans 10:13-14 asks the rhetorical question (because the obvious answer to each question in verse 14 is “you can’t”) of *“how”* one can be saved without someone first *“preaching”* the gospel. Once preached, the gospel must be *“received.”* We must receive the gospel as being divinely inspired (1 Thess. 2:13). We must receive the gospel with a spiritual mindset and focus (1 Cor. 2:12-3:3). We must also receive the gospel with a humble heart. James wrote in James 1:21, *“Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.”* Having *“received”* the gospel, Paul speaks of the need to *“stand”* in it. To *“take a stand”* on a matter means we’ve made a decision based on the facts presented to us. Once presented with the truth of the gospel and having received it with humility, we’re only victorious when make a decision and take a stand. We read in Revelation 12:11 of those who overcame Satan because they took a stand to the point of being willing to risk their lives. Finally, we become victorious through the gospel only when we *“hold fast”* to it. Christians are defined as those *“remain true to the Lord”* with *“resolute heart”* (Acts 11:23). Victory comes by *“holding fast to the head”* (Col. 2:19) and *“holding fast the word of life”* (Phil. 2:16).

Victory required the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, *“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.”* Paul later said in verse 20, *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”* The offering of the *“first fruits”* in the Old Testament were to be indicative of the remainder of the crop to follow. Christ’s victory over sin and death gives us confidence of our own victory through Him. Contrary to human wisdom and understanding, the death of Jesus was not His defeat but God’s means of obtaining victory for man. His death was planned by God (*“according to the scriptures,”* cf. Acts 2:23-24; 3:18) so that we might overcome through Him.

Victory requires our faith in the evidence presented to us. 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 presents the evidence of Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead through His many appearances. Though we did not see, there were many others who did and attested to His rising from the dead and ascension into heaven at God’s right hand. Indeed, as we sing, faith is the victory, but our faith cannot be blind and without substance. Paul wrote in Hebrews 11:1, *“Now faith is the assurance (substance, KJV) of things hoped for, the conviction (evidence, KJV) of things not seen.”* Our faith needs continual nourishment and edification so that, as Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:15, we can be *“ready to make a defense (meaning argument or explanation) to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”* Victory isn’t based on a blind faith but a reasoned and persuaded faith (Acts 17:2-4; 17:17; 18:4; 18:13; 18:19; 19:8-9).

Our victory is because physical death isn't final. Without Jesus Christ, and His death and resurrection, our physical death meant eternal spiritual death. In Christ, we have the hope of life beyond our fleshly existence. In 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Paul discusses the *“spiritual,” “imperishable,”* glorious bodies that await us in the resurrection. Bodies unlike our earthly tabernacles we now are burdened by. We will be *“changed”* (verse 51) and we are exhorted by John in 1 John 3:2 that *“we know that when He appears, we will be like Him (Jesus Christ), because we will see Him just as He is.”* We are encouraged by Paul about our victory in 2 Timothy 2:11-12, *“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him.”* Paul concludes 1 Corinthians 15 saying in verses 53-57, *“For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?’”*

Finally, we have victory in Jesus because He continues to reign in His kingdom. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, *“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”* Peter convicted the Jews on the day of Pentecost of crucifying the Messiah by noting that He was no longer in the grave (Acts 2:24-31) but rather had been *“raised up again”* (verses 32-33) and *“exalted to the right hand of God”* thus establishing the certainty *“that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.”* Paul spoke of Jesus Christ's reign in Ephesians 1:19-23, *“These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”* We are victorious because Christ reigns and advocates and intercedes on our behalf (1 JN. 2:1; Heb. 7:25)! Romans 8:37, *“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”* – *Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin*, May 5, 2019. ■

“Evil Suspicions”

By Larry Ray Hafley

The Bible warns against the danger of *“evil surmisings,”* or *“evil suspicions”* (1 Tim. 6:4). In 1 Chronicles 19, Nahash, the king of Ammon, died. *“And David said I will show kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his father showed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his Father.”* However, certain political leaders among the Ammonites were suspicious and said to Hanun, *“Do you think that David is honoring your father, in that he has sent comforters to you? Have not his servants come to you to search and to overthrow and to spy out the land?”*

Hanun, acting on their suspicions, mistreated and *“greatly humiliated”* David's servants. As a result, a destructive war of death and destruction soon followed. It was all caused by *“evil surmisings,”* by *“evil suspicions.”*

A suspicious attitude is hard to fight. One who has such a defiled disposition can always “justify” his reasons for feeling as he does. He sees every extended, helping hand as a clenched fist. He views your smile as proof that you are laughing at him. If you give him an egg for breakfast, he thinks you are calling him “a chicken.” If you give him a peach for lunch, he thinks you are the pits. There is just no way to satisfy a negative, suspicious state of mind. Such people spread their dark thoughts to others and cause them to become wary and unsettled. They assign evil motives to even the most harmless of words and deeds. See 1 Chronicles 19 related above.

Brethren, beware of this gloomy outlook. True love is not suspicious. It *“thinketh no evil”* (1 Cor. 13:5). It does not assume the worst. It expects that which is good and puts the best construction on the motives and deeds of others. Love builds. Suspicion tears down. Love unites. Suspicion divides. Love trusts. Suspicion doubts. Love smiles. Suspicion glares. Love attracts. Suspicion repels. Love forgives and forgets. Suspicion remembers what never happened. Love appreciates this article and its admonition. Suspicion says, “It was aimed at me.” (For once, suspicion's fears are confirmed. It was.) – *Truth Magazine*, August 15, 1996. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250