

Lesson # 9 -- The Promise Regarding the Believer's Victory.

Introduction

- A. In this lesson we wish to consider some areas of the Christian's life which cause each of us genuine concern.
- B. The use of the word "victory" in the topic is not a good choice, but I could not think of a better word. The thought I have in mind has to do with overcoming, by a practice of the truth, the areas that are a constant problem to us.
- C. While the Christian life is not easy to live, the solution is found in the living relationship that has been established with us by God, as outlined in the Scripture.

I. The Biblical Theme.

- A. The promise regarding priorities.

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Matthew 6:33*

Comment: The simplicity and profundity of this statement is overwhelming. All of life is covered in a single sentence! It is the attitude that we wish to note in this lesson -- the thought of overcoming and freedom from anxiety. The verse is a promise with a strongly worded implication regarding personal success.

- B. The promise regarding prayer.

*Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6,7*

Comment: The note of profound optimism, evidenced in the verse from Matthew is found here also. When we look at life from the perspective of the Bible there is no place for anxiety, unresolved problems, and fear. The central thought in the passage has to do with the effectiveness of prayer -- if we can pray -- there will be peace.

C. The promise regarding the new birth.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a living (living) hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

I Peter 1:3

Comment: Because of the miracle of the new birth all believers have a "living hope." The word "hope" in the Bible means a good deal more than how we use the word now. We always think of it as referring to that which is doubtful. The usage in the Scripture is the opposite -- it has to do with certainty. In essence the term "living hope" means a secure and optimistic attitude toward the future.

Summary: Each of these verses indicate a positive attitude toward life -- the very opposite to that of worry and anxiety. We must ask why this is so. What is there in the thought of the Bible that would teach us to be overcomers?

Perhaps the best way to study this subject would be to identify those problems which cause us concern. Once we understand the difficulty then we can search out the answer.

II. The Biblical Explanation.

A. The past -- the problems related to our actions.

The Christian understands how important his actions are because he believes in the authority of the Bible. Each of us realize that we have committed many sins against God, both before and after, we became believers. Some of these sins are to be classified as transgressions (sins of commission) in that we did what we knew we should not have done, and some of them were what could be called failures (sins of omission) in that we did not do what we knew to be right.

As we look back on our past each of us ask the question "what can I do to make up for my sins?" And, we also have a much more profound thought -- "What is my status before God in regard to all these sins?"

The answer is given in the Bible. We are told that in the work of Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, our sins of every kind were dealt with once and for all. The Lord Jesus suffered in our place, as our substitute, and paid our debt in full. Because God is perfectly holy He could not simply overlook our sins, nor could He forgive us without His holy justice being satisfied. What His holiness demanded His love provided -- the Crucifixion.

1. Through the work of Jesus Christ the believer is forgiven.

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . . Romans 8:1*

*. . . Having forgiven you all trespasses. Colossians 2:13*

Comment: Because Jesus Christ bore our penalty, and we have received Him as Lord and Savior -- we are forgiven. The extent of this gift of God's grace is 100%. We are no longer guilty in regard to sin. This spiritual provision has been applied to our past, our present, and our future. While we may feel guilty, and while many of the effects of our past still influence us today -- it is not a question of guilt. We are those described as forgiven.

2. Through the work of Jesus Christ the believer is righteous.

*Therefore being justified (declared righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1*

*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:4*

Comment: In the work of the Savior the provision was not only for complete forgiveness but also to provide complete righteousness. This gift of grace applies in all areas of our life but it is particularly helpful to see it as including all those times when we should have done what was right and did not do so. It is important to realize that the righteousness spoken of in these verses does not have to do with our actions. It is a free gift from God, based on the work of the Lord Jesus, which changes our status with God from being completely without righteousness (Romans 3:10), to be perfectly righteous (Romans 5:1). It is a legal transaction and a legal gift.

Summary: The believer can enter into a spiritual victory regarding the past because of the work of Jesus Christ as explained in the Bible. What we must do now is to accept this provision by faith, with gratitude, and apply the truths to our thoughts and emotions when we are again overwhelmed with our sinful past. The Christian who will take these truths and make the interpretation that sin can be committed because he is forgiven -- has not begun understand the truth.

B. The present -- the problems related to our security.

The area of security I have in mind here is not that related to eternal security -- the perseverance of the saints. The areas of our present which appear to cause each of us grave concern has to do with three subjects of vital importance: our self-worth, the problems related to temptation, and self-control. These may not appear to be as demanding as some others. However, I believe they are the sources of much of the weakness which in turn produces more obvious difficulties.

1. The problems related to our self-worth.

Because of sin the true measurement of our worth is often not utilized. Usually we judge worth on the basis of family name, beauty, finances, education, ability, or performance. It appears to be obvious -- if a person does not have one or two of these -- he has no worth.

The Bible bases our worth on our creation in God's image. Everyone, therefore, has self-worth. God created us as persons with all the rights and privileges that accompany personhood. In the Scripture the Christian is called "precious" by God, first because of creation, and then because of redemption.

*Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou has been honourable, and I have loved thee . . . .* Isaiah 43:4

2. The problems related to temptation.

The subject of temptation is a serious one for every true believer. We know how weak we are when attacked in those areas where we are vulnerable. We read in the Bible of great men and women falling into sin and that deepens our concern. We are also upset as we may witness members of our family and church beginning to live in a way that we question.

The Bible gives a basis for security. We are reminded that temptation itself is not a sin (James 1:2,12), that God is in control at all times (I Corinthians 10:13), He knows how to deliver us out of temptation (I Peter 2:9), and that the Lord Jesus met our temptations, did not fail, and offers His help to us (Hebrews 2:18). In particular we are given a clear promise.

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it.* I Corinthians 10:13

3. The problems related to self-control.

This third area is closely related to the two that I have mentioned. In particular I have in mind the difficulties that each of us face in "taking charge" of our life. We are aware of how easily we fall prey to our emotions, thoughts, and bodily desires. Sin has caused us to lose control of these functions and while we can regain control -- we are often beset by difficulties in this area.

Every serious Christian knows the meaning of the Proverb which states: "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." 25:28

It is comforting in this struggle to realize that God has given us powerful weapons (II Corinthians 10:4,5), clear instructions (II Corinthians 7:1; Philippians 4:8), and the reminder that the Holy Spirit dwells within us to develop self-control (Gal. 5:22,23).

While we may not be responsible for what enters our mind, etc., we are responsible to separate the right from the wrong and practice what is right. God's promise of help is summarized in the experience of the Apostle Paul.

*But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (without reward). I Corinthians 9:27*

C. The future -- the problems related to fear.

Nothing causes some of us more concern than to think about the possibilities of the future. For many believers this is such a painful procedure they refuse to do so. Because of the length of this lesson I can only present the bare outline of this area.

1. The fear of being alone.

*Let your conversation (daily life) be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5*

2. The fear of being in need.

*But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19*

3. The fear of being victimized.

*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28*

III. The Biblical Application.

We must accept these truths and promises not only mentally, but as the basis of our actions. It is the practice of the truth -- by faith and love -- which opens the door to God's help. The believer has been given victory for his daily life.