



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading
Week of
February 6th - 12th



Monday

- ❖ Exodus 23, 24
- ❖ Psalm 26
- ❖ Matthew 26

Tuesday

- ❖ Exodus 25, 26
- ❖ Psalm 27
- ❖ Matthew 27

Wednesday

- ❖ Exodus 27, 28
- ❖ Psalm 28
- ❖ Matthew 28

Thursday

- ❖ Exodus 29, 30
- ❖ Psalm 29
- ❖ Matthew 29

Friday

- ❖ Exodus 31, 32
- ❖ Psalm 30
- ❖ Matthew 30

Saturday

- ❖ Exodus 33, 34

Sunday

- ❖ Exodus 35, 36

Cleaning-Up the Dictionary

Defeated by "Victory"

You may wonder what I could mean by such a title.

I have carefully placed victory in quotation marks. I am in fact, speaking about the way the word is used. I believe that many Christians are increasingly defeated by the way victory is used. I think we need to clean-up the dictionary and recover a biblical use of the word.

I am finding in much of my counseling and speaking with believers that Christians have developed a defeatist attitude toward many struggles in their life. This

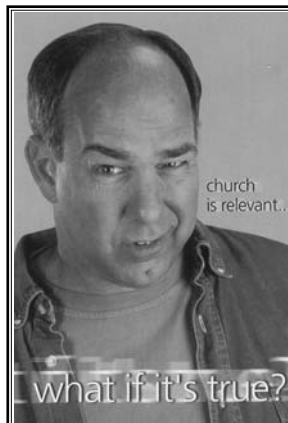
defeatist spirit is, in part, due to the misuse of the word victory. Of course, we use our words in ways consistent with our theology. For example, election (a word clearly used in Scripture) means one thing to a Calvinist and quite another to an Arminian. Well, the use of victory means one thing to a preacher or counselor who holds to a Reformed perspective and quite another to one who holds to a Wesleyan perspective.

In my opinion, the misuse of the word victory is the result of poor theology. I think it is the result of,

what we call in theology, an over-realized eschatology. An over-realized eschatology means that we bring too much of the future into our present reality. In other words, we over-emphasize some future reality in the present. Let me explain:

There are certain realities in Scripture that are held in tension with one another. One of those realities is that Christ has defeated sin, Satan and the world by the power of the cross (cf. John 16:33; Rev. 3:21). Another reality is that a

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“what if it's true?”

Facts and figures related to this campaign

Campaign runs from Super Bowl Sunday, February 5th through March 26th.

There are five separate ads that address issues like: Is the God of the universe really interested in a relationship with a peon human like me? Does the Bible really have answers for my family? Is church relevant to everyday life? Is Jesus really who he said he was?

There are 1.8 million people in the Milwaukee Television Market area. This area goes from the lake front to near Lake Mills, WI and from the Illinois border to about as far North as Fond Du Lac, WI.

There will probably be about 40 churches from at least 12 different denominations that will participate in this campaign.

We estimate that 800,000 viewers will see the “what if it's true?” ad that appears in the Super Bowl.

We estimate that over the seven week period of this campaign 97% of the population in the Milwaukee Television market will see the commercials 7-8 times.

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believer has also obtained victory over sin (self), Satan and the world by being united with Christ in his death (cf. 1 John 2:13-14). However, the tension comes when one places the future prospect of life in heaven without sin, Satan, and the world up against the reality of his life in Christ on earth. The tension is between the sweet by-and-by and the sour here-and-now.

In one sense, every believer knows ultimate victory over sin; but in another sense, every believer still must battle sin. The fight still rages. In fact, the defeat comes when certain sins plague us. For example, a Christian man becomes addicted to pornography; a believing woman finds herself embroiled in a gossip ring, loving every juicy tidbit of knowledge about people; a young couple finds themselves in massive debt after years of credit-card spending. Can they have victory? My answer here is: Be careful not to over-emphasize one of the tensions to the exclusion of the other.

If all we talked about was the fight in life to the exclusion of the ultimate victory in Christ, one would be quickly discouraged and disarmed. Without the truth that Christ conquered there is no promise to hold onto by faith. Thus, there is no means to victory. This, however, is not my concern. I do not observe an over-emphasis here.

On the other hand, if you were to place these four individuals in a church that preaches and teaches a steady diet of "victorious Christian living" they are going to come out defeated. They may just quit the fight. When all a person hears is, "You can live victoriously! You can know victory over your sin!" They are going to be discouraged when the battle drags on for years and years. They are going to be defeated when the battle with porn keeps rearing its ugly head; when the desire for gossip flares up; when the next neat toy is advertised

at Best Buy or Circuit City.

I am simply suggesting that for one kind of Christian, they may need to hear a steady dose of preaching on the fight for faith. They may need to hear that the Christian life is a life at war! They may need to know that the battle is not going away. That is the problem: an over-emphasis on victory may begin to come across as though the battle is supposed to end in this life. Then, when lust and pride and covetousness don't go away, believers grow weary in well-doing.

Christian, the battle does not end until your flesh is dealt with in death or in the transformation of Christ's return. The believer has to take up his cross daily (cf. Luke 9:23). I suggest for this crowd that we stop speaking in terms of "victory" and we speak in terms of "fighting the good fight" or "persevering to the end." After all, the requirement for heaven is that we are fighting and enduring in the end.

So how would I counsel the three scenarios already mentioned earlier? These four individuals need three principles to hang onto:

1. The Christian life is a process.

Progress in holiness happens in steps. Sanctification is progressive, ongoing, linear, etc. That means that we change from one degree of glory to another degree of glory as we are helped along by the Holy Spirit. This is the theme of 2 Corinthians 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." What a great truth.

Progress in holiness happens in skirmishes. That is to say, we grow in holiness as we increase in repentance. The more we hate our sin and love our Savior, the more

holy we are. But this happens as we battle to win the war over our flesh. This happens as we mortify our members (Romans 6) and take up our cross to die daily (Luke 9:38). I like Paul's teaching in 2 Corinthians 7:1: "Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God." Holiness is not complete until every defilement of flesh and heart has been rooted out. There will be daily (hourly) skirmishes, then, between my flesh and the Holy Spirit. This is the clear teaching of Galatians 5:17. Therefore, we need to speak to ourselves in terms of "fighting the fight for faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) at the root levels of the heart.

When God looks at his children he wants to see progress in holiness. The mantra needs to be "direction not perfection." The soul-searching question needs to be: "Am I fighting to love Jesus more than my sin?"

2. The Christian life has a power

Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33); The Lamb has defeated the beast (Rev. 3:21). The NT loves the language of victory and conquest. In fact, there is an entire word family devoted to this very concept. The Greek word from which we get victory and conquest is the word *nike* - you recognize it! Of all the NT writers, none uses the word as much as John. Between the gospel, his epistles and Revelation, John uses these words most.

In his epistles, he makes some remarkable statements:

♦ 1 John 2:13-14 "I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have **overcome the evil one**. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have **overcome the evil one**.

♦ 1 John 4:4 "Little children, you are from God and **have overcome**

them (spirits), for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

♦ 1 John 5:4-5 "For everyone who has been born of God **overcomes the world**. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith. 5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Believers have overcome the evil one, evil spirits, and the world - already! Yet, in the book of Revelation he urges believers of all ages to overcome as though they have not yet overcome. This is most notable in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2-3):

♦ **Revelation 2:7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'

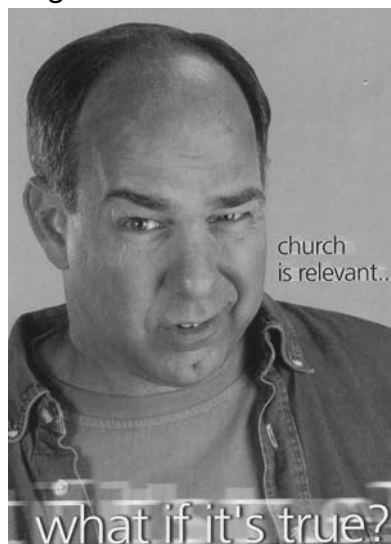
♦ **Revelation 2:11** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

♦ **Revelation 2:17** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

♦ **Revelation 2:26** The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations,

♦ **Revelation 3:5** The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

♦ **Revelation 3:12** The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.



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The cost of the four ads appearing on Super Bowl Sunday (one pre-game, one in the game, one during "Desperate Housewives", and one during the 10:00 news) cost \$60,000.

The overall budget for this media campaign was \$200,000.

AD mission is a non-profit ministry working with local churches and Christians who want to use the media to communicate the Good News. For more information on AD mission see www.ad-mission.org.

In most of the participating churches, Pastors are preaching sermons relating to the ads during the month of March.

All participating churches are posting a "what if it's true? - Find out here, March 2006" banner in front of their church building for the duration of this campaign.

As far as we can tell, this is the first time ever in Wisconsin, that churches have come together to utilize the power of the Super Bowl to launch an ad campaign to reach people with our common message.

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♦ **Revelation 3:21** The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

So here the tension is in the fight. Are you conquering? There is the already: "You have overcome." There is the not yet: "Be conquering."

3. The Christian life has a provision

A victorious way has been provided. Throughout the Bible the tension between the already-and-the-not-yet is to be lived in the power of faith. During the not-yet you live by faith in the already! Christ's conquering power yesterday is our conquering power today and ultimately tomorrow. So the means for victory is clearly spelled out by John in 1 John 5:4: "For everyone who has been born of God **overcomes the world**. And this is the victory that has overcome the world-our faith." Our faith is the

means to victory. To ask the question: "Are you conquering?" is to ask: "Are you fighting for faith?"

Gaining victory in the minor skirmishes that are waged daily (hourly) means that you are living by faith in the victory that is yours ultimately; but it is a fighting for faith. The Christian must know that there is no end-run around the fight. Saying a prayer of salvation; surrendering your life to Christ is no magic short-cut around the battle.

Conclusion:

As to our three examples, they need to know that they may gain victory over their **fruit sins**, e.g., pornography, gossip, and credit card spending as they daily fight for faith in being more satisfied with Jesus than they are with sex, self, and things. As they fight to mortify their members, they will progress in holiness to the place where those things no longer hold them captive.

However, they also need to know that though they have overcome the fruit sins, they will never gain absolute victory in this life over their **root sins**, e.g., lust, pride, and covetousness. Every man, even those who have overcome an addiction to pornography, will battle lust for life. Every woman, even those who have overcome gossip, will still struggle with pride. Every couple, even those who overcome debt, will still struggle with contentment, covetousness, and greed.

So can they know victory? My answer is Yes and No! Or, Already-but-not-yet!

In cleaning up the dictionary with regards to our use of victory, be sure to keep the tension between the already-and-the-not-yet. In this way, we will minimize the defeat by "victory."

