

Growing in Christ Lesson 6 4Q 2012

Victory Over Evil Forces

Read Memory Verse

“Now, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Romans 8:37

Thoughts?

What does this mean? What does it look like to be more than conquerors?

Does it mean that, if we eat right, rest on the right day, pray before our contest that we will win our Olympic event?

Does it mean that we will be voted into whatever office for which we run?

Does it mean we will get the job for which we apply?

Does it mean we will avoid bankruptcy, imprisonment, perhaps even torture or death?

Do people ever get discouraged because they read this text, claim this promise for such matters, but don't get the outcome they expect? Is this promise to guarantee us earthly victories – or conquering of self, fear, selfishness despite the difficulties we experience?

Were the following conquerors?

- Job
- Joseph
- Daniel and the 3 worthies
- Jesus
- The Apostles
- Stephen

What about these?

- Pilate
- The Caesars
- Caiaphas
- Annas

What determines whether one was a conqueror or not? Is it earthly success? What was it?

What about today – what does this text mean to us today? Do we sometimes, in the middle of health problems, financial problems, family problems, legal problems feel that we are failing?

Is success determined by the problems we face or how we face the problems?

Is success determined by the obstacles in life or by how we live while going through those obstacles?

Do we look beyond the immediate to the eternal?

Do we see obstacles as opportunity to reveal God's power in our lives? And what is that power? The power to love, the power to serve, the power to forgive, the power to lay down our lives for our enemies?

How do we obtain victory over evil forces? What methods do we use? Can we obtain victory over evil forces by the exercise of might and power?

What type of victory is genuine victory?

- Is it domination of our enemies?
- Is it occupation of our enemy's lands?
- Is it extermination of our enemies?

Or, is it winning our enemies to become our genuine friends?

I want to read you a passage from Scripture – it is powerful, it illuminates how we are to view and understand reality, it discloses God’s methods for victory, why Christ came to earth and how we can participate in that victory – listen carefully (2Cor 5:16-21)

No longer, then, do we judge anyone by human standards. Even if at one time we judged Christ according to human standards, we no longer do so. ¹⁷Anyone who is joined to Christ is a new being; the old is gone, the new has come. ¹⁸All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. ¹⁹Our message is that God was making the whole human race his friends through Christ. God did not keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends.

²⁰ Here we are, then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends! ²¹Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.

Notice we don’t use human standards of determination – because man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

God does not want to simply change behavior, to have a group of conquered people, submissive beings, passive beings, mindless servants or slaves who cower in the corner of his almighty presence waiting for him to command them to action – NO! God wants to change the hearts of people so that we are actually his friends!

And notice Christ came to share in our terminal condition in order that we might partake of his perfection, in order that we might be healed!

How do we gain the victory? By force, might, political intrigue? Or by truth, love and freedom – listen to these two quotes:

I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. That is why right, temporarily defeated, is stronger than evil triumphant.
Martin Luther King Jr.

Do to us what you will and we will still love you...But be assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and one day we will win our freedom. We will not only win freedom for ourselves; we will appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process; and our victory will be a double victory. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Read first paragraph, “In some parts of the world...” thoughts?

What is the Christian notion of salvation from sin taken to the world? Is it one that represents the truth about God, or do we make it harder for people to find healing of heart and peace of mind?

When Christ was on earth he counseled the religious leaders of his day that when they found a convert they made him twice the son of hell than they were. Are we in danger of doing the same? How?

I received the following on our ministry facebook page yesterday:

Tim I posted this: Whenever God has disciplined us, it has never been for punishment, but always for redemption. He does not seek to destroy, but to heal and save. Got a good deal of positive responses, but my pastor responded with: "This implies punishment and redemption are mutually exclusive concepts." I have been praying for a clear response. Don't want to mess up an

opportunity. ONLY if it is easy for you, do you have a brief response you could suggest.

How would you respond?

My response:

You could respond by saying, "it depends on what one means by punishment" if one means "discipline" action taken to heal, restore, correct, teach, redirect then they are not mutually exclusive, but if you mean actions designed to exact vengeance, inflict pain and suffering then yes, they are mutually exclusive because such punitive action actual obstructs the avenues through which God heals and saves.

The teaching of a scrutinizing, punishing God is one of the greatest obstacles to salvation - here's why. Consider the example of someone struggling with paraphelia (sexual perversion) when under scrutiny they rarely if ever act out. Why? For the same reason people don't speed when a police officer is following - fear! But, when parapheliacs have scrutiny removed they almost all relapse into their destructive behavior - why? no heart change. Just like what happens when the police officer turns off and leaves one alone.

When people worship a God who incites a sense of "scrutiny" with fear of punishment, (angels recording misdeeds which will be dealt with in the judgment) it can result in behavioral modification - classic religious person. But no actual heart change, thus no conversion - i.e. no salvation despite the many rituals and religious meetings and sermons preached.

It is only when God is presented as a God of love that a person willingly opens their heart to him to come in and cleanse, restore, and recreate in righteousness, true conversion and salvation.

So, yes, a punishing God construct incites fear, shuts down trust, and closes the avenues for salvation. Whereas, a God of love, as Jesus revealed instills trust, opens hearts and results in genuine transformation and healing.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “The Christian would...” thoughts?

What are the ungodly “powers”? How did Christ’s death expose them? How do we experience the victory over those powers?

Some theorize that the battle between Christ and Satan had legal ramifications of who had the right to rule on earth, and Christ gained a legal victory over Satan and thus took away Satan’s legal claim to be ruler of earth Thoughts?

Some permutations of the Christus Victor theology has ideas that suggest Satan has some real power, either legal or physical, which required Christ to actually defeat Satan either legally, physically, or both, in order to reclaim earth, thoughts?

Where is the battle fought? In the hearts, minds and characters of intelligent beings. Then, what is Satan’s power that holds us? Is it a legal power? Do we need a legal victory in some cosmic court? Is it physical power that holds us; do we need someone to physically fight Satan and take the strong man captive and let us go?

Or, is it a battle waged inside of us, and we need delivery from lies and delivery from our own fear and selfishness, which finds Satan and his methods desirable and resists God and his methods?

- How difficult would it be for God to physically defeat one of his created beings in a combat of physical might and power?
- Is there any evidence that Satan could ever compete with God on the level of physical might and power?
- Is there any evidence Satan could compete with God in creative power?

So, God could defeat Satan physically as easily as a child throws a penny to the ground – but that is not the problem, thus models that suggest a physical conflict distract us from the real issue.

What about legal battles – did Satan make legal claims to planet earth and the souls of human beings? Yes –

The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, **for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.** ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours.” LK 4:5-7

But does he have legal claims?

Is there a difference between making a claim and actually having a claim? Was Satan telling the truth? Or, was he lying when he said the earth was his?

Here is one Christian commentators view, which I agree with:

When Satan declared to Christ, The kingdom and glory of the world are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it, he stated what was true only in part, and he declared it to serve his **own purpose of deception.** Satan's dominion was **that wrested from Adam,** but Adam was the **vicegerent of the Creator.** His was not an independent rule. **The earth is God's, and He has committed all things to His Son. Adam was to reign**

subject to Christ. When Adam betrayed his sovereignty into Satan's hands, Christ still remained the rightful King. Thus the Lord had said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "**The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men,** and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Daniel 4:17. Satan can exercise his usurped authority only as God permits. {DA 129.4}

When the tempter offered to Christ the kingdom and glory of the world, **he was proposing that Christ should yield up the real kingship of the world,** and hold dominion subject to Satan. This was the same dominion upon which the hopes of the Jews were set. They desired the kingdom of this world. If Christ had consented to offer them such a kingdom, they would gladly have received Him. But the curse of sin, with all its woe, rested upon it. Christ declared to the tempter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." {DA 130.1}

If someone came into your house and stole your child, and then later made a legal claim that the child is theirs? Would that claim actually be true and make the child theirs?

Does Satan have a legal claim? No! It is a lie and a fraud and thus Christ did not have to defeat Satan legally.

So Christus Victor is not a legal victory it is not a victory over Satanic physical might and power – then what is it?

If someone stole your child and made a claim it was theirs, and raised the child to believe it, while the claim would be false, what would need to happen for the child to return to you? The truth would need to penetrate the lies and set them free. They would need to get to know you and bond with you.

Where does Satan actually have power, at least three places?

- power of lies, that we believe that hold us in bondage and

- the power of our carnal nature – we have bonded to sin or sinful things and like sin and don't want to let it go
- the power of the law of sin and death, which is the law of being outside of God's design for life.

What happens if someone holds your head under water? The law of respiration is being broken and that broken law holds a power over you which is non-compromising and will destroy you unless you are put back in harmony with the law.

Satan's power is the power to get us to deviate from God's law, by deception and temptation.

We have no enemy without that we need to fear. Our great conflict is with unconsecrated self. **When we conquer self, we are more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.** (Counsels on Stewardship 21)

What do you think of this statement? Where is the battle fought? Where does Christ work to achieve victory today?

In the hearts and minds of men!

The second paragraph states that those who accept Jesus will "know by experience the power of God in their lives."

What do you think this means? What is the power of God? What does it look like in the life? How will it impact those who experience it?

- Will it result in greater ability to discern truth from error?
- Will people become more thoughtful and intelligent or more mindless and robotic?
- Will it result in greater love for others and less selfishness?
- Will it result in willingness to help, give, put self in harms way for another?
- Will it result in greater peace in the face of adversity?

- Will it result in a larger perspective of reality?
- Will it result in a loving concept of God?

Read last paragraph, “As a consequence....” Thoughts?

Subjection means to be placed under the authority and control of another – was the universe not under the authority of Christ before the Cross? Is it under greater authority now than before?

At the Cross did Christ add to his inherent abilities? Or was his divine self already infinite in all abilities?

Then what happened at the Cross? Christ perfected humanity, he merged his divine nature permanently to human nature, and revealed the truth which exposes Satan and his methods in the minds of all who love truth, thus casting Satan out of the sympathy of all heavenly beings.

Truth and love defeated lies and selfishness at the Cross, where? In the hearts and minds of intelligent beings!

MONDAY

The lesson focuses on Romans 8, lets read verses 26,27:

²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. ²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.

What does this mean? How do you understand it?

Would it be like a person in the hospital, sick, writhing in pain, knowing something is wrong but not knowing what, and a doctor intercedes for him because the doctor knows exactly

what to do and makes the interventions necessary to bring healing?

What is the message of Romans 8? Is it that we have one member of the Godhead working to intercede with another member of the Godhead, or instead, the entire Godhead working together to intercede with the destructiveness of sin in order to heal and restore us?

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2

³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Romans 8:31-34

Notice we have Christ, the Holy Spirit and the Father all interceding in our behalf – interceding with what or whom, and to what purpose? How do you understand the meaning?

God intercedes with us, in our hearts and minds, with Satanic powers to protect, and with the course of sin by becoming sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God!

The lesson states the Spirit helps us in our trials – are trials different that abuse?

Jesus warned “And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.” Mk 9:42

Abuse is not a trial from God to develop character- abuse is an attack from Satan to destroy people! But, despite abuse God's grace can still heal.

TUESDAY

Read James 4:7: "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

What does this mean?

How does Satan wield power?

- Christ on the Temple tower, display of wealth – to achieve what?
- Job – Natural disasters – to achieve what?
- Job – loss of health – to achieve what?
- Jesus – attacked by the mob, mocked, beaten, crucified, to achieve what?

In all of Satan's attacks, what his goal? What is he trying to achieve? What is his target? Your power of choice! To get people to choose selfishness, to get people to distrust God! He works to confuse minds, discourage, dishearten, darken, and incite selfishness, hatred and vengeance.

What causes the devil to flee?

Surrendering to God, Jesus, does something that causes the devil to flee – what?

When we surrender to Jesus what happens in us? We are changed to be more like Christ – How? truth replaces lies in our minds and love destroys selfishness, thus we are fortified against his weapons.

But, what does it mean the devil will flee? Does it mean that if you are tight with the Lord you won't be bothered with

troubles? That the devil will leave you, your family, your health, your finances, your house, your car, your friends alone?

What does it mean he will flee? Does it mean that a particular temptation, if not given in to will lose attraction, appeal, power in your heart and mind and thus the devil leaves that approach, looking for another? Or something else?

WEDNESDAY

Examples of Victory – when we think about Christian victory, what comes to mind? What do Christian victories look like?

- Victory over fear
- Victory of bigotry, bias, prejudice
- Victory over selfishness
- Victory over addiction
- Victory over destructive habits
- Victory over self
- Victory over lies
- Victory over resentment, bitterness and hurt
- One day victory over disease and ultimately death
- What about victory over enemies – how? By love, by turning them into friends.

Read second paragraph, “It is quite interesting...” thoughts?

What do you think it means power over demons and unclean spirits?

Are demons and unclean spirits different? Why use two words?

The Greek for demons is a word which refers to demons, devils, the Greek for spirits is “pneuma” from which we get pneumonia, and in Scripture is the same word used for Holy Spirit, Christ’s Spirit, spirit of men, wind, breath, and Christ’s

last breath, giving up the ghost and ghost as an apparition on the lake.

Is it possible that the word demon refers to evil fallen angels, the sentient beings of angelic nature who operates in league with Satan and opposed to God, whereas evil spirit refers to the evil motive, attitude, longing, desire in the heart of the person?

Have you ever heard of someone delivered from an addiction that actually had the desire taken away miraculously? Could that have been removing the “evil spirit” which had been developed within the person?

How does Satan gain “possession” of a human being?

What is the actual avenue, gateway, access point to the human being? The human nervous system, ultimately the brain.

If that is so – then what methods might be necessary to get possession of the human being? Would it require affecting the human brain?

And can we describe what a human being looks like who is under demonic influence or control and contrast it with what a human being looks like under Holy Spirit control?

Holy Spirit Control: Fruits of the spirit, kind, patient, honest, loyal, loving, self-controlled, forgiving, gracious, merciful, understanding, seeking to uplift and heal others, lover of truth, respectful, loves enemies and seeks peace, humble, protects the reputation of others...

Demonic influence or control: Angry, resentful, bitter, hostile, selfish, addicted, loss of self-control, agitated, impulsive, impatient, given to fits of rage, cruel, unkind, unforgiving, exploits and injures others, bigoted, sexist, arrogant, prejudice, manipulative, deceitful, malicious, gossip...

And in general, could we categorize the types of influences upon the human brain as healthy, neutral or harmful?

And which type of influence would you surmise would move a human brain toward demonic control and thus for the person to look like the description above?

- Alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco – why?
- Believing lies – why?
- Holding resentment – why?
- Acting selfishly – why?
- Exploiting others –why?
- Rock, rap, country music? why?
- Television and movies – why?
- Sexual promiscuity – why?
- Gossip – why?
- Lying – why?
- Cheating – why?
- Sleep deprivation – why?
- Failing to rest – why?
- Junk food diet – why?
- Sedentary lifestyle – why?
- Overwork – why?
- No Bible study, prayer, meditation – why?
- Social isolation –why?

What kinds of choices, actions fortify the brain against demonic influences?

- Surrender mind to the Holy Spirit, which requires what?
- We come to a knowledge of God such that we trust him, which requires what?
- We love the truth and develop minds that are willing to pursue the truth
- Avoiding toxins (alcohol, tobacco, drugs)
- Avoiding unhealthy food choices
- Get rest

- Learn to solve problems
- Forgive others
- Set healthy boundaries
- Don't lie, cheat, steal, gossip
- Be judicious with your entertainment
- Exercise
- Bible study, prayer, meditation, fellowship

Do we see there are sound reasons to following the principles God has given us – reasons that protect the brain, the access point to demonic influences. We can open avenues or close avenues based on the choices we make, thus we gain self-mastery as we come under the influence of the Holy Spirit, or we lost self-control as we come under the influences of demonic forces.

Are there some symptoms which can present in both groups, those influenced by demons and those filled with the Holy Spirit?

- Schizophrenia
- Epilepsy
- Blindness
- Deafness
- Anxiety/depression/bipolar etc.

Can unhealthy spirituality and demonic influences be a causative factor to these problems?

Can someone who is Spirit filled have these problems?

What does this mean? Don't use these as evidences of demonic influence.

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph, "Acts 16:16-18 presents an..." thoughts?

Could this same thing happen today when various people perform miraculous healing in the name of Jesus but the Jesus they are pointing people to is not the Jesus of the Bible?

How can we tell?

How can one tell the work of the true Spirit from false spirits?

FRIDAY

Read Friday's lesson and discuss the paragraphs and questions.

What is the tempter's power? Lies, fear, selfishness?

What does it mean find refuge in the name of Jesus? Name refers to character, so we find refuge in the character of Jesus. When we surrender the heart to Jesus the Holy Spirit comes in and reproduces in us the character of Christ and the principles of Satan lose their appeal and thus the avenues of the heart become closed to Satanic attack.