

CHAPTER 16

Reigning Grace AND CHRIST OUR VICTORY



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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

CHAPTER 16

REIGNING GRACE AND “CHRIST OUR VICTORY”

³⁶Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." ³⁷But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:36, 37).



REVIEW

Where do we go from here? Many of us are embarking on a journey that began many years ago. At this point in the journey, it would appear as if “we are changing canoes in mid-stream.” If what we have studied is true, then everything changes. The implications of positional truth are far reaching. The tentacles of truth penetrate deeply and weave into the very fiber of our belief system. The gap that had previously existed between positional truth and practical experience is closed. A new reality begins to take shape. Our perspective is light, life, and liberty. No more are we chained to the three-headed monster of darkness, death, and detention.

It is the truth that makes us free (John 8:31-32).

“and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:31).

The Word of God is the active agent that Christ uses in delivering us from our bondage to whatever enslaves us (John 8:36).

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“So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

This is the mission of Christ (Gal. 5:1).

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1).

Yet what does that freedom look like in our daily experiences? Life is a series of events. Often tragedy visits us. However, it is the daily grind that zaps us of the passion for Him we crave. What are we to do with the harshness of reality in our relationships? It is the rawness of our frailty that brings us down into the pits of despair.

What makes the Christ life any different? What hope, healing, and wholeness, can be offered to those who are crushed? Why speak of positional truth when such truth does not transform?

There is no question that those who “know” Him experience emotional and spiritual setbacks. Words like, “Frustration, Despair, Resign, and Break down,” are all too real to all of God’s people; moreover, words like, “Victory, Conquerors, Triumphant, and Joy”, would seem to be allusive and distant. Consequently, what are we to do with “Life?”

Often, we want it to be better than we have it. We want to believe that the grass is really better on the other side. We want to think that if only . . .

Well, the fact of the matter is . . . life is life. So, what are we to make of our present circumstances?



INTRODUCTION

Almost without exception, everyone has heard of the theology of living the victorious Christian life. The idea paints a picture of those who enter into some kind of spiritual maturity where struggle, fatigue, and defeat are past. The victorious Christian is one who has learned to enter into His rest. Whose life is marked by “victory” and not “defeat.”

Yet what is a theology of the victorious life? In light of such a thought, I would like us to begin by noting an idea. Such an idea has a consequence. A consequence that is wrong because of its ability to place the believer in a state of bondage and despair.

One author expresses his need for the victorious Christian life and defines his need with three short statements:

- There were great fluctuations in my spiritual life, in my conscious closeness of fellowship with God.
- Another conscious lack of my life was in the matter of failure before besetting sins. I was not fighting a winning fight in certain lines.
- A third conscious lack was in the matter of dynamic, convincing spiritual power that would work miracle changes in other men's lives. ¹

What he is doing is defining for us the victorious Christian life. But by so doing, these statements become the standard by which all who pass must be measured.

Another book promising the key to victorious Christian living reads as follows:

Have you ever needed a 'that night'? Or a 'that day'? A point in time before which things were going wrong, but after which things began to go right? What are the ingredients for a 'that night'? What is mixed into the recipe? Understanding what goes into creating that moment of divine favor was Esther's ultimate secret. Esther learned how to find favor with the King! Bestselling author and internationally renowned speaker and pastor . . . reveals how intimate access to God is available to all. Finding Favor with the King is critical to preparing for your own moment in His presence.²

If you have to find it, you do not have it. If it is a moment, then most of the time you are *not* in that "moment."

Tragically, this error is depicted as a "break-through" truth. The Church of God, without discernment, is swallowing such an ideology "hook, line, and sinker." Regrettably, this falsehood is widely embraced within Evangelical circles. It is an error, whose seed, when planted in the hearts of God's people will rob them of "the freedom that Christ set us free" (Gal. 5:1).

Yet, what is the victorious Christian life? The above two statements can be multiplied many times over. As with most error, there is an element of truth in both writers. The difference between what the Scripture teaches and what they are proposing is not only in the outcome, but also in the journey. Though there is much good, the

“error” is strong enough to lead the undiscerning back into the bondage of a performance based acceptance, a merited love, a conditional forgiveness, and an unstable fellowship.

Such error makes a sharp distinction between what He is and who we are. Yet as I understand the Scripture, such a dichotomy is not to exist. In this study, I would like to note how **His Victory is Our Victory**.

I. Jesus Christ is Victorious.

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Notice the context of this verse.

- The devil enters into Judas (John 13:1-4)
- The disciples are going to betray Him (John 13:21-27)
- Peter’s denial is announced (John 13:36-38)

The tone is ominous. He reiterates this darkness in 16:32 and then gives us verse 33.

Notice where our peace is to be found. It is found **in Him**. He promises us conflict, heartache, failure, tribulation, and depression, but then He adds, BUT. The “but” says, “Though all this is true, TAKE COURAGE (A present active imperative)! Despite the enormity of the burden you are confronted with, BE OF GOOD CHEER!” In every one of its occurrences the backdrop against which this exhortation is laid is dark and foreboding (Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; 10:49; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11).

But why am I to take courage and be of good cheer in the midst of my crushing circumstances? Friend, the exhortation to take heart is not based on how I feel, but on who He is for me and who I am in Him. TAKE COURAGE, why, BECAUSE I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD! CHRIST IS VICTORIOUS!

Overcome is a perfect active indicative. The perfect speaks of an action that is completed, but the results of it continue to this day.

All that needs to be done has been done. He is reigning. He is victorious. The expression of that reign in time will be fuller, but not the quality of it.

If they fail to reign, they are simply not exercising their

rights. . . The reckoning does not produce the fact; it simply springs from the fact.³

The second idea is as follows.

II. By my union with Him all that He is, is mine by right.

This is perhaps one of the hardest truths to embrace and realize.

³ “Or do you not know that all of **us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus** have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore **we have been buried with Him** through baptism into death, ⁵ For if **we have become united with Him** in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him**, . . . ⁸ Now if **we have died with Christ**, we believe that **we shall also live with Him**” (Rom. 6:3-6, 8).

“and if children, heirs also, **heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ**, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Rom. 8:17).

“**I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20).

³ “**For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** ⁴ **When Christ, who is our life**, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory” (Col. 3:3, 4).

The believer does not have two lives. His life is my life. This is not an arrogant statement. It is a true statement. I make no boast in myself of being able to secure all that is now mine. I did not do it, He did. I simply believe that what He has done and is doing is enough. Now, because this is true His victory is my victory.

When the sinner believes and is saved he does not create the fact, he simply rests in the fact established since the foundation of the world when, as we read in Revelation, the Lamb of God was slain. Calvary was the visible expression of a fact already established by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.⁴

III. His victory is my victory

There is no victory apart from His victory. **Herein is the tragic misunderstanding as to what constitutes victory. What I am wanting is an experience that appears to be different then the one I have.** Yet I should see my experience as His victory.

"By the resurrection, God proclaimed His Son Victor over the whole realm of darkness, and the ground Christ won He has given to us.... For our part we need not struggle to occupy ground that is already ours. In Christ we are conquerors. In Him, therefore we stand. Thus today we do not fight for victory; we fight from victory. **We do not fight in order to win but because in Christ we have already won.** Overcomers are those who rest in the victory already given to them by their God."

Because victory is His, therefore it is ours.... We must not ask the Lord to enable us to overcome the enemy, nor even look to Him to overcome, but praise Him because He has already done so - He is Victor. It is all a matter of faith in Him. If we believe the Lord, we shall not pray so much but rather we shall praise Him more. ⁵

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

Think with me through these verses. Consider the context of Romans 8:37. The chapter is one of tremendous victory. For the agitated is soothed. Notice verse 37. Now notice verses 35 and 36. What is the tone? After reading verses 35 and 36 how does verse 37 begin? It uses the same contrasting word as noted in John 16:33, "BUT" (**alla**). "DESPITE" these things I OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER. How, through Him who loved me."

The word, "overwhelmingly conquer" means, "to vanquish beyond, to gain a decisive victory, to be more than a conqueror." It is the same word used of our Lord in John 16:33, but this word is on steroids! Verses 38 and 39 tell me how I can "be" this despite my emotional fallout and circumstantial hell-hole. I conquer by knowing this, "NO MATTER WHAT, JESUS LOVES ME THIS I KNOW." And no matter how bad you blow it, nothing can change His opinion of you and dealings with you. He loves you, not because of your performance, but because of your position. Glory, Hallelujah.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14).

Again, notice the context of our passage in verses 12 and 13. Jesus Christ is always leading us to triumph. This is a present active participle. This is habitual and continuous. Again, notice where this triumphal procession is found – IN HIM. He is manifesting in us and through us His fragrance. We are a fragrance of Christ to God. To the unbeliever we represent their judgment and to the believer we smell of life. I like the concluding comment, “Who is adequate for these things?” Not me, BUT CHRIST!

“but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

Again, notice the context. Notice verse 56. Then notice verse 57. I would be overwhelmed by the sting of death and the power of sin, BUT GOD. DESPITE sin and the Law, I give thanks. Why, because God is giving me (present active participle) the victory. How do I have this victory? Through and in Jesus Christ my Lord.

Despite my circumstances, situation, experiences, feelings, and emotions, I am victorious in His victory.

Is it not interesting that God's Word never tells us to live any kind of “Christian life?” If you asked Christians to describe a “victorious” Christian, would their list look like what we find in 2 Corinthians 11:25-28?

“Are they ministers of Christ? --I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:25-28).

How about "despairing even of life?" (2 Cor. 1:8, 9) Would that make the Top ten things victorious Christians do?

How about 2 Cor. 4:8-10, "hard pressed, perplexed, persecuted, struck down?" Would those make the list of Top Ten Things a Victorious Christian does?

And yet -- Paul writes (again in 2 Corinthians)

"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place" (2 Cor. 2:14).

Consider also Acts 16:22-30 with Paul and Silas praising God at midnight in the midst of a horrific situation. God was leading them in His triumph.

So God's victory must look very different from what we think it looks like, because He tells us He never is "losing a battle," not even for a moment. He is leading us in triumph while we are despairing, perplexed, crushed...

We have victory because Jesus Christ IS our life. He will have the victory. So the issue in living the victorious Christian life is whether or not I will embrace the idea that Jesus Christ is doing exactly what He means to do in and through my life at every moment.



CONCLUSION

I wish to conclude with several thoughts. As I continue to meet with people, I am always drawn back to eleven bedrock truths.

First, God is in control of the details. Know God is in control. This forms the ultimate bedrock truth on which all of life revolves. The "problem" you are currently facing is part of God's eternal purpose for your life. You must see God above all things. Think of Isaiah 6. It was in the year that King Uzziah died that Isaiah saw the Lord "high and lifted up."

Do not allow yourself to focus on the circumstances. You cannot change your circumstances, but you can have rest and peace. Learn to focus on Him.

Second, there is a purpose behind all the details that make up an individual life. Because God is in control, the events of your life are

part of His eternal purpose (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28). Never think that somehow the events of your life and the choices you make are isolated or unconnected. Life is a continuous chain from start to finish and the various events within it are the individual links.

Third, life is problematic (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Sin has made every breath we take problematic.

¹⁶ “to the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.’ ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life” (Gen. 3:16,17).

When you read the above description, it becomes apparent that we will not make it out of this life unscathed.

Job, in light of his sufferings, “cursed the day of his birth” (Job 3:1).

Jeremiah felt the same way in light of his circumstances (Jer. 20:14, 15).

¹⁴ “Cursed be the day when I was born; Let the day not be blessed when my mother bore me! ¹⁵ Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, saying, ‘A baby boy has been born to you!’ And made him very happy” (Jer. 20:14, 15).

Have you ever wished that you were never born?

As long as we are abiding in our flesh, we will have woe. Failure, however, is not fatal. Do not focus on what appears to be the problem. Chances are what you think is the problem is a fruit and not the root.

Fourth, God never makes a mistake or has an accident. You are not a mistake. You are not an accident. Your choices have consequences. The consequences can be immediate and far-reaching, yet somehow God is working all things out for His glory and your good (Rom. 8:28).

What you and I might deem as a “waste” God is using to manifest His glory and grace in you and through you.

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Fifth, there is a dimension to suffering that is irreplaceable.

There appears to be a consistent thread weaving various passages together that strongly suggest a divine providence in our present circumstances.

¹⁷ “Behold, how happy is the man whom God reprove, So do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. ¹⁸ For He inflicts pain, and gives relief; He wounds, and His hands also heal” (Job 5:17, 18).

“But He knows the way I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

⁶ “In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet. 1:6-9).

“For You have tried us, O God; You have refined us as silver is refined” (Ps. 66:10).

“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

Such a truth teaches us that nothing in life is being wasted. The difficulty we encounter is not part of His permissive will, but that of His perfect will. It is for this reason we have Genesis 50:20, Job 1:21, 13:15, and Romans 8:28.

¹⁹ “But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Gen. 50:19, 20).

“He said, “Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

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“Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless, I will argue my ways before Him” (Job 13:15).

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

We often view life as either good or bad. In so doing we seek to determine what is considered successful and what would be termed failure. Yet, if our presuppositions are correct, then God is performing his perfect will.

Sixth, perspective is everything. If you focus on your problem, you have missed it by the proverbial mile. If you see God as being in control and if you keep your eyes on Jesus, then your problem becomes an opportunity for grace to be seen (Heb. 12:1, 2).

Listen to the following observation by Michael Wells in his work, Sidetracked in the Wilderness:

The enemy would never have us fighting the battle where the front lines actually exist; he will always bring something to our attention that has nothing to do with the real issue.⁶

There is another problem with not fighting the battle on the proper line: We can unknowingly aid the enemy in his work to destroy other believers. When someone is acting in a way that is displeasing to the Lord, and we continue to bring it to his attention, what are we doing? We intensify the problem by helping the enemy place the person's eyes on something other than the solution. If we want a loving husband, a loving wife, an obedient child, honest employees, a respectful employer, a faithful friend, a spiritual pastor, what must be done? The only hope that we have is to place their eyes on the Savior who can deliver them from vexing behavior. None will find deliverance anywhere else save in Christ.⁷

It is only as we focus on Him that we can have contentment in the midst of our most grueling trial.

Often in life we want something other than what we have, yet what we have is what God wants us to have. What we want is not something we will have this side of heaven. Again, it is a matter of perspective. How do you view the problem?

Seventh, God's grace is always sufficient (2 Cor. 12:9), and He will always provide a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). Do not ever think that what you are facing is the end. Your life and its circumstances are points in a line leading you to God.

Eighth, declare your dependency on Him through prayer. Prayer is not an act of discipline as much as a declaration of our dependency on Him. Prayer says, "God I need you." God has chosen to work through prayer in the accomplishing of His will. Lean heavily on Him through this channel of grace.

Ninth, read His Word. God's mind and perspective is clearly stated in and through His Word. God gives wisdom freely, but we have to read His Word in order to hear His voice.

Tenth, be thankful for who He is, for what He has done, for what you have, for who you are, and for where you are at. Ephesians 5:20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reveal to me and through me the fruit of gratitude. If you chose not to be thankful, you will become bitter, angry, and critical.

Finally, there is always hope, healing, and wholeness in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Never believe the devil's lie that all hope is lost. There is always an end to every trial encountered.

Do not view these truths as a "magic formula" or a kind of "good luck charm." They are simple truths God wants us to know. Learn to rest in what you know to be true. Do not allow your experiences to shape your theology. Interpret your circumstances by your theology. Remember, Jesus Christ is enough.



APPLICATION: (MAKING THE TRANSFER)

Let us go back to 1 Corinthians 15:56 and 57. In light of this let us now read verse 58.

Friend, grab this truth and never quit.

Grace means that in the middle of our struggle the referee blows the whistle and announces the end of the game. We are declared winners and sent to the showers. It's over for all huffing, puffing piety to earn God's favor; it's finished for all sweat-soaked straining to secure self-worth; it's the end of all competitive scrambling to get ahead of others in the game.

Grace means that God is on our side and thus we are victors regardless of how well we have played the game. We might as well head for the showers and the champagne celebration.⁸

Whatever your past is, thank God for it and move on. I don't need to examine Bob George's life. I know all about it. It's the story of a flawed man. . . Our focus on ourselves and on our failures takes our eyes off our perfect Redeemer and His finished work on the cross. . . Our weaknesses are merely daily reminders of our need to depend on Christ.⁹

Regrets are for unbelievers, not for those who walk in Christ's righteousness.¹⁰

When we give Him all we are, which is nothing, He gives us all He is - everything. That is called the exchanged life. He paid a debt He did not owe, for us who owed a debt we could not pay.¹¹

Friend, today see yourself in Him and claim His victory. Rest knowing His will is your life.

If the experience never comes, still we will believe what He has spoken.¹²

The life that is identified with Christ will be a life of sufficiency and fullness and victory. While it must not be confused with a life of emotion or of feelings, it is a life filled with 'all joy and peace in believing.' We must learn not to live in our feelings, for these are often misleading. The Lord Jesus said, 'you shall know the truth and *the truth* shall make you free.'¹³

Perhaps today you say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23, 24). Friend, God's design is for you to rest solely in Him. May it please Him to give us knowledge of all that He is for us and we are in Him.

¹ Charles G. Trumbull, *Victory in Christ*, 18-19.

² Tommy Tenney, [Finding Favor with the King](#): Preparing for your moment in His Presence, 2003, advertisement blurb in [Discipleship Journal](#), Issue 138 Nov/Dec 2003, page 59.

³ F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1955), 15, 19.

⁴ F.J. Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, 20.

⁵ Watchman Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand*, pp. 40-42.

⁶ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 179.

⁷ Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, 180.

⁸ Donald McCullough, *Waking from the American Dream*, 116 quoted in *Amazed by Grace*, 8.

⁹ Bob George, *Faith that Pleases God*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2001), 194, 196, 197.

¹⁰ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, 170.

¹¹ George, *Faith that Pleases God*, 214.

¹² Michael Wells, *Sidetracked in the Wilderness*, 178.

¹³ Emphasis his, L.E. Maxwell, *Born Crucified*, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1945), 19.