

From Victim to Victor

We've all felt like *victims* at one time or another.

However, some of us may never have felt like a *victor*, with success or winning always just beyond our reach. Others may regularly celebrate their many victories in sports, music, film, business, or other pursuits.

But what do these two words really mean?

According to dictionary.com, a victim is

- a person or thing that suffers harm, death, etc., from another or from some adverse act, circumstance, etc., such as *victims of tyranny*, (or of a *crime, rape, abuse, harassment, or discrimination*);
- a person who is tricked or swindled;
- a person who suffers from a destructive or injurious action or agency, such as *a victim of an automobile accident*; (or *terrorist attack*);
- a person who is deceived or cheated, as by his or her own emotions or ignorance, by the dishonesty of others, or by some impersonal agency;
- a person or animal sacrificed or regarded as sacrificed, as *war victims*, or sacrificed in a religious rite.

According to that same online dictionary, a victor is

- a conqueror;
- a person who has overcome or defeated an adversary;
- a person, nation, etc., that has defeated an adversary in war, etc., as *the victor army*;
- the winner of any contest, conflict, or struggle;
- a code word used in communications to represent the letter "v."

The word *victim* comes from the Latin *victima*, meaning "a sacrificial animal."

The word *victor* comes from the Latin *vincere*, meaning "to conquer."

And herein rests the secret to our transformation from "victim" to "victor." But first, let's consider this:

Q. What does "Light" have to do with this transformation? (As in "Victory through Light")

Light has very much to do with victory.

John's gospel begins with verses wherein Jesus is there referred to as the Word, the Light, and the only begotten of the Father. He is said to contain life and be full of grace and truth. And

he radiated glory—the glorious light of the Father. He shone in the darkness of this sinful world, but the darkness could not quench or diminish his Light. He came as the true Light (not false lights that dazzle and lead astray), and he lights everyone who comes into the world. His light shines to everyone. But not all respond to that light in a way that leads to victory. (See John 1:1–9, 14.)

In John 3:19–21, Jesus talks about the difference between believers and nonbelievers who remain condemned. We all start out condemned because “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). But those who respond in faith to the Light of Jesus, are transported from condemnation (darkness) to salvation (light). They have the promise of eternal life. (See John 3:14–16.)

Jesus spells it out for us: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are worked in God” (John 3:19–21).

Thus, we have a choice to make: light or darkness, belief or unbelief, victory or victimhood. God leaves the choice to us. We must choose wisely.

In John 8:12, Jesus proclaims, “I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” To follow Jesus brings victory—the victory of walking in light. It is a victory over darkness.

In John 12:35–36, 46, we see more about this, as Jesus tries to prepare the disciples for his coming crucifixion: “Then Jesus said unto them, ‘Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you. For he that walks in darkness doesn’t know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light . . . I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believes on me should not abide in darkness.’” While we have light, while it is on our hearts, we must respond.

Responding to Jesus as Light—believing in him—brings victory. Walking in Light brings a full and complete victory.

Q. What is a full and complete victory?

A thorough answer to that question would require pages and pages. Such a victory includes mastering our emotions and desires so that we do not sin or violate God’s code of righteousness; learning to deal with past and present things done to us by others or by nature (for example, house flooded, etc.); never giving in to the devil’s temptations to sin, fear, or doubt; and knowing that we are secure in Christ and bound for heaven.

See Romans 8:35, 37. In verse 37, we see that we are “more than conquerors through him that loved us.” The “all things” in that verse refer to the things listed in verse 35, where the question is raised “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” All of the things listed would try to separate us. But none of them can. They can only work for our good (v. 28), as God makes and keeps us conquers over those would-be enemies. Additionally, there are ten more things listed in verses 38 and 39, which cannot separate us from God’s love or from the victory we have in Jesus.

As we read the list in verses 35, 38, and 39, we can substitute words used today. These are all things that we could be a victim to or of, but, because of Jesus' sacrifice for us as the ultimate Victim, we can be victors over:

Troubles	Hardship	Prosperity
Abuse	Depression	Health
Hunger	Bullying	Hopelessness
War	Confusion	Chaos
Poverty	Homelessness	Brokenness
Danger (from humans or nature)	Terrorists	Sickness
Criminals	Death	Trauma
Pressures of living	Angels	Memories
Demons	Powerful people	Future events
Heights	Depths	Loneliness
False lights/false ideas	Darkness	Any thing not listed above

We also have victory over sin and death. First Corinthians 15:57, talking about sin and death, proclaims, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In 1 John 5:4–5, we read that we have victory over the world if we're born of God (i.e., "born again.") Faith in Jesus is "the victory that overcomes the world." That victory rests on the fact that Jesus overcame the world, as he says in John 16:33: "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." Our victory over the devil is certain, as we see in Romans 16:20. Again, that's because Jesus defeated the devil at Calvary (Colossians 2:14–15).

And that brings us back to the secret to our transformation from victim to victor. We saw that believing in Jesus brings us into the true light and to a full and complete victory.

Q. But what does Jesus have to do with being a victim?

Victima vicit (Latin, "the victim has conquered")

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, willingly came to earth as a human baby, grew to manhood, taught and worked miracles for three years, and then allowed himself to be nailed to a cross in a public execution, while the criminal Barabbas was set free. Jesus was the victim, the perfect Lamb of God, of whom John the Baptist had declared three years before, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The name "Barabbas" means "son [child] of father" – hence, every human, because we all have a biological father. Thus, the Son of the Father (God) became a sacrificial victim in place of us all—setting us free.

The Israelites, the people of God, knew full well what that expression meant, for their rituals included sacrificing sheep and other animals for forgiveness of sins. They did it to foreshadow this ultimate sacrifice to forgive sins and to conquer sin and death. Even the pagans practiced animal sacrifice (and some did human sacrifice), as they sought the good favor of their false gods. The idea of the necessity of a sacrifice is inherent in humans. This is why God planned that his Son, Jesus, would become the **Victim**, so that we could become **victors**. (See John 10:10–11)

Q. How do we know this?

God tells us in his Word.

Also, he tells us in nature. Just one example is how a hen will gather her chicks under her wings in a storm or fire. She will take the brunt of the danger to keep her chicks safe. Does she consciously reason that out? Or is it instinct? Either way, she sacrifices herself for her young. The fact that we love stories of self-sacrifice and redemption is clear in the number of movies and books portraying that theme. I've heard it said in screenwriting classes that all movies are really spin-offs of the redemption theme.

In addition to our human inclinations, and nature around us showing the beauty of sacrifice, God tells us in his Word, the *Holy Bible*, both Old and New Testaments. That's the surest testimony.

In Romans 5:6, 8–9, Paul declares that when we were without strength and yet sinners (weak victims—of others; of our own misguided passions, lusts, and human desires; and of the enemy who comes to steal, kill, and destroy—even then) Jesus became the sacrificial victim (the only one who could satisfy the requirement for holiness) to make us victors in him, who is the ultimate Victor.

Because Jesus rose in triumph over the grave, we can rise with him. Indeed, we who believe in him are already “raised up together with him and seated in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 2:5–6). Spiritually, believers have already entered eternal life. This is possible because of the transfer which takes place when we are born again (see John 3:5–7). There is a complete transfer of our sin to Jesus, and Jesus' righteousness to us, making us new. Paul writes about this marvelous exchange in 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21: “Therefore, if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. . . For he (God) has made him (Jesus), who knew no sin, to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

The prophet Isaiah wrote about this sacrifice 700 years before Jesus was born. Because of that, we know that Jesus was crucified in the plan and purpose of God. That's why Jesus could say that no man was going to take his life, but he would lay it down of himself. And he was not talking about committing suicide. He willingly went to the cross, as the perfect sacrificial victim. Moreover, he was buried, and God raised him from the dead, according to God's ultimate objective—to give us new life and to transform us from victims to victors. (See Isaiah 53:5–7)

Okay, but all that eternal stuff aside, don't many people, through their own willpower and not faith, overcome what was done to them and go on to be happy, productive people? Yes, of course. But how long does that victory last? At most, only to the grave. It is victory through self-effort. It may influence individuals in another generation or two, but in the light of eternity, it falls short of being a total and lasting victory. And it's only partial. Do we want a full and complete victory—over our weakness and past traumas and over the world's attacks?

Do we want the victory we read about earlier—victory over even death? It's a victory through light, a victory through faith, a victory that lasts forever because it is based on the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God.

And that victory is free to any and all who accept Jesus as their personal Savior. If you have not done that and would like to, just bow your head and speak with God from your heart. Just tell him that you believe in him, that you know in your heart that Jesus died to save you and to

transform you from being a victim to a victor. Tell him that you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior and you want to live your life in fellowship with him. Thank him for saving you.

And then ask God to show you a church where you will hear the Word preached in truth. And then go. Read the Word on your own also. And pray often. It's how we communicate and fellowship with our lovely Lord Jesus.

Also, if you have just recently come to faith in Jesus, feel free to write to me via the contact button on this website. I would love to hear about your experience of salvation.