

How to Be a Winner 4

Sermon #1019

Study by W. D. Frazee—December 3, 1981

If Jesus is in your heart, the enemy cannot defeat you. If Jesus is not in your heart you cannot defeat the enemy. Winning depends on Jesus, our relation to Him, and our connection with Him.

There are three adversaries—the world, the flesh, and the Devil. We have the promise of overcoming all three. Thank the Lord.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" 1 John 5:4.

Speaking of the Devil:

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" Revelation 12:11.

The most important victory over these three adversaries is victory over self. I read:

"Everyone who enters the pearly gates of the city of God will enter there as a conqueror, and his greatest conquest will have been the conquest of self" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9, page 183.

Of all the foes we meet none are so apt to turn our feet or lead us into sin as the foe we meet within. If a man has the victory over self he can meet the world and the Devil. But even if everybody were to turn to God and the Devil were killed, you would still have a battle with self. Let us never blame on others the problems in our own life.

If Peter had not gotten converted he would have blamed the people who prodded and questioned him. But the problems were with himself. Thank God, he learned the lesson. He learned it the hard way, but he learned it. If we learn it, it is worth it.

The interesting paradox is that we get the victory over self not by focusing on the victory over self. Think of Martin Luther in his cell as a monk. He was trying to get the victory over self. Did he? No. You don't get it that way.

"Each one will have a close struggle to overcome sin in his own heart. This is at times a very painful and discouraging work; because, as we see the deformities in our character, we keep looking at them, when we should look to Jesus and put on the robe of His righteousness" *Ibid.*

I long that everyone here will sense our glorious privilege to renounce self and to count ourselves like Jesus. This is righteousness by faith.

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" Isaiah 45:22.

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" John 1:29.

Yes, we have a wonderful Savior.

We are seeking to win over the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Whose flesh? Our own flesh. Notice God does not give us the victory over the world by removing the world. We still have to live in the world. God doesn't give us the victory over the Devil by putting the Devil out of commission. The Devil is very active. And God does not give us the victory over our sinful flesh by changing our sinful flesh so that every morning we wake up and all we want to do all day long is ok. Some people think that if they have an experience, that is the way it ought to be, but that is not so.

"I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 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" 1 Corinthians 9:26-27.

The race of this world is uncertain. The man who sets out to win that crown doesn't know whether he is going to get it or not. He hopes so. He may or may not. But Paul says he is not running uncertainly. He keeps his body under subjection. Paul had been a Christian for many years when he wrote these words, and he still found that he had the job of saying no to himself.

Jesus had that temptation. He came down from heaven not to do His own will but the will of the Father who sent Him. Did He feel like taking the cup in Gethsemane? Did He long for some way to be found that He wouldn't have to? Did He win the victory? We must never think of Jesus as degenerate. He was never an alcoholic or a tobacco feign. But we must never think that the essence of victory is being free from those things. The essence of victory is choosing God's will instead of my own way. Jesus took our flesh with its infirmities and weaknesses, and devoted His whole life to pleasing His Father instead of following His own desires.

This is the program for us. I am so thankful for the simple way of victory over the world and the flesh and the Devil. It is by looking to Jesus. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

When Jesus and Peter and James and John came down from the mountain a great multitude had gathered. A man had brought his son to be healed. The son had an evil spirit possessing him. The evil spirit threw him on the ground, and he cried out. The disciples had tried to handle it without Jesus, but they couldn't. Christ questioned the father and notice:

"But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us" Mark 9:22.

If. If you can do something for me, Oh Jesus, do something. If you can give me the victory, please do it. Jesus said unto him:

"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" verse 23.

The if is not with Christ. It is with man. It is with my own heart. If I can believe, then all things are possible.

"And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" verse 24.

Here is a wonderful comment:

"'If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.' How many a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour's answer is, 'If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.' It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong" *The Desire of Ages*, page 429.

I do not earn acceptance by exercising faith. Faith is the gift of God. But thank God, He lets me respond how to use it. It is as if He gave me a lot of money, and I can decide how to spend it. But the money all came from Him. Grace, faith, power comes from Him. But I have the choice whether I will use it or not. It is faith that connects us to heaven and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. Christ has provided means for subduing every sinful trait.

"But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. . . . Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' You can never perish while you do this—never" *Ibid*.

The victory that God gives us then is the victory that comes in changing our focus. Sin by its nature is ego-centric. It is fixing the mind on self. Jesus is seeking to divert us to Himself. If we will look, we will be charmed away from ourselves.

This is why God has given us in the Bible so many pictures of the life and character and ministry of our Lord. He desires we shall study that, and in the very process He has arranged that our minds shall not only be fixed on Him, but that we will forget about ourselves. We even come to the place where our main focus is not that we will be saved. The most important thing in the universe is not for you to be saved. It is for you to have a

part in vindicating the character of God and carrying out His plan. What happens to God is far more important than what happens to you.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not minimizing what God thinks of you. But let God take care of you. It will work a lot better.

"When the mind dwells upon self, it is turned away from Christ, the source of strength and life. Hence it is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour, and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ" *Steps to Christ*, page 71.

Satan is constantly saying, Look at yourself. You are not doing it right. Look at those people. They are not doing it right. Anything to divert the attention from Jesus. The Devil has found some people to divert their minds in criticizing others. Some he finds to fix their minds upon their weaknesses and deficiencies.

"Many who are really conscientious, and who desire to live for God, he too often leads to dwell upon their own faults and weaknesses, and thus by separating them from Christ, he hopes to gain the victory. We should not make self the center, and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. All this turns the soul away from the Source of our strength. Commit the keeping of your soul to God, and trust in Him. Talk and think of Jesus. Let self be lost in Him. Put away all doubt; dismiss your fears" *Ibid*, page 72.

Someone says, Suppose I stumble.

Well, don't quit looking to Jesus. If you fall, fall with your face forward and get up. Ask Jesus to help you. He is right there to pick you up. The important thing is not how many times you fall. The important thing is how many times you get up.

Let's look to Jesus. To some this will take a conscious effort. We drift back into old habits and thoughts. I find this next month I have been here on this campus for forty years. I have seen a lot of people come and go. I find one of the reasons people come to Wildwood is that they are very conscientious and want to learn how to walk the pilgrim way. I find that the Devil takes advantage of that and seeks to fix the mind on self. So in Jesus' love I point you to a better way. Look unto Jesus. Commit the keeping of your soul to Him.

To commit means to turn over. Let Jesus take the responsibility of getting you through. You are not the shepherd. You are the sheep. Let Him lead. Keep looking to Him.

God has arranged something to get our minds off ourselves:

"Those who would be overcomers must be drawn out of themselves; and the only thing which will accomplish this great work, is to become intensely interested in the salvation of others" *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, page 207.

That is quite a statement. It is a sweeping statement that only inspiration has the right to make. Notice it doesn't say driven out of yourself or scared out of yourself, but drawn out of yourself. And the only thing which will accomplish this work is to become interested in the salvation of others. Do you see God's strategy? He want to get you so busy in these twin occupations of looking to Jesus and looking to help Him reach others that you won't have very much time to look to self.

If you get your head cut off in the program, like John the Baptist did, that's all right. Why not face the worse things that can happen and leave them all with Jesus? And if Jesus can take care of John the Baptist, surely He can help you if someone burns the toast this morning.

"As we become interested in the salvation of souls we cease to mind the little differences that so often arise in our association with one another" *Ministry of Healing*, page 485.

What does cease mean? Stop. It doesn't happen anymore. We cease to mind the little differences that so often arise in our association with one another. I wonder sometimes why my brethren are so slow. But the Spirit of Prophecy tells me that I am just as much a problem to my brethren as my brethren are to me. But the answer is not my getting exactly like them or they getting exactly like me. The answer is getting something far more important than that. It is getting interested in the salvation of souls.

If my brother is drowning in the lake I am willing for someone to help me rescue him, even if he doesn't eat exactly the same food I eat. "As we become interested in the salvation of souls we cease to mind the little differences that so often arise in our association with one another."

Let's look to Jesus then, and reach out to other souls. They come in that order. The unconverted heart will not make much of a success in working for souls. But when we look to Jesus and are charmed away from ourselves, He says, Do you love Me? Feed My sheep. Do you love Me? Go on the errands of mercy. I am going down to Bethany. I am going to Nazareth. I am going to Jerusalem. Will you go with Me on my medical missionary soul winning trip?

Let's go with Him. What do you say? And thus our days and nights can be filled with precious thoughts of Jesus and His love, and thoughts of the souls that for whom we are working. The more you take on the problems of Jesus the less time you need about your own problems. The more you allow your mind to be filled with your own problems the more they will take up all your time. And you will never come to the place where you will be satisfied.

I admit that I fall far short. But I am not going to take my attention in trying to spend all my time tinkering up myself. I am going to look to Jesus, and be interested in the salvation of other souls, and leave to God the work of transforming me. This is wonderful.

Everyone is in one of two classes. You are either already having an experience in soul winning, or you are not. If you are having an experience in soul winning, you know what I am talking about. If you are not, I invite you to get into it.

You say, How do I begin?

"Begin to pray for souls" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1,
page 513.

Get down on your knees, and after looking to Jesus in repentance and faith, enter into the experience that God has promised to give you. Say, Lord, what would You like to have me do? Who would you like to have me work for?

God will lay a soul upon your heart. And when God lays that soul upon your heart, keep at it. Pray, and work in harmony with your prayers.

Those who would be overcomers must be drawn out of themselves. The only thing which will accomplish this great work is to become intensely interested in the salvation of souls. If you already have a prayer list, cultivate it. If you already have a territory to work in, cultivate it. If you already have people you are visiting and praying with, cultivate it. And remember, it is God's great strategy to get your mind off self.

Lord, we thank Thee that we can look to Jesus and be charmed away from ourselves; that we can look to the needs of others and be drawn out of ourselves. We choose to do it in Christ's name. Amen.

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