

# **YOUR VICTORY IN CHRIST**

By Paul Penno

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In the Australian bush country grows a little plant called the “sundew.” It has a slender stem and tiny, round leaves fringed with hairs that glisten with bright drops of liquid as delicate as fine dew. Woe to the insect, however, that dares to dance on it. Although its attractive clusters of red, white, and pink blossoms are harmless, the leaves are deadly. The shiny moisture on each leaf is sticky and will imprison any bug that touches it. As an insect struggles to free itself, the vibration causes the leaves to close tightly around it. This innocent-looking plant then feeds on its victim.

If there is one question that we hear more often over another, it is this: Who is Jesus and what has He done for me lately in overcoming temptation? That is a very good question to ask.

What good is the gospel if it doesn’t work with some power for victory over personal sin? We have heard certain ones give testimonies about what Jesus has done for them in deliverance from addictions. Some very evil ones have had demonic habits removed to be replaced by wonderful virtuous lives.

Then again, we have known some “Christians” who have claimed to be without sin; and yet are some of the most critical, obnoxious, holier-than-thou persons to be around. Surely this attitude demonstrates no victory over sin.

Then there are struggling Christians who have repeatedly tried over and over again to gain the victory over some persistent, debilitating sin in their life. Each loss causes them to question their Christianity or the validity of the gospel. They ask, “What is the Christian’s secret to a victorious life?”

Young people are asking just such questions. They consider the older folks as beyond passions and desires, but youth want all that life has to offer. They reason that maybe they will just have to wait until they are old and dim-eyed before they can become saintly.

Even some Christian teachers represent religion as ineffectual in overcoming sin. They tell us that we cannot expect to be all-good because, after all, we are just human. We are born with a sinning nature. Human beings make mistakes. But that’s alright. Jesus will save us in spite of ourselves. We can be saved in our sins.

There have been renowned preachers who have been so exalted by their supporters that they thought they could do no wrong. They encouraged the spotlight and center of attention that was fixed upon them. However, their private lives were the direct opposite of what they preached. Occasionally they were “outed” or “caught” and they gave a black-eye to all Christianity. They also perpetuated the myth that Christ really hasn’t done them any more good than the man on the street who didn’t know Christ.

Someone writes: “I venture to approach you as my friend, and as I am in great trouble I have taken the liberty of asking you to help me. During the past few months I have given way to a sin, that is slowly but surely dragging me down, away from the Saviour. I am a Sabbath-school teacher and Christian worker, and have known what it is to enjoy fellowship with God; but at the time of writing I feel the worst of sinners. Will you tell me *how to overcome*? First, please note these facts; every time I am tempted I yield, and soon after I am filled with sorrow; I go on my knees and implore God’s forgiveness; I realize that He has forgiven me, and I promise Him that I will never do it again; but, alas, after a few days the temptation comes again, and again I yield, and so I go on. I have prayed and prayed, but I really cannot resist, much as I wish to do so; for I may tell you that I detest myself for the shameful way I treat my dear Saviour; it seems no use making resolutions, no use asking God’s help. Oh! do tell now what I am to do. I feel like giving up altogether, but no! I cannot do that; I must conquer. I cannot, dare not, go on in such a life of sin and misery. It is impossible to remove the cause of temptation; what I want to know is, when I am greatly tempted, How may I *stand and conquer*? Please help me. I do so want to be a real Christian. Yours in great distress.”

For anyone in such condition there is help for you, and abundant victory; the Bible was written for no other purpose than to afford help to people in just your condition; for there is no temptation come upon you but such as is common to man; and “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” 1 Cor. 10:13.

It is a glorious thing to know that even the weaknesses of our flesh are, through Christ, made stepping stones to infinite power. The Apostle Paul said, “I take pleasure in infirmities, for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:10); for God said to him, “My grace is

sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Cor. 12:9. Therefore, instead of losing heart, we can say, “Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” 2 Cor. 12:9.

Instead of becoming despondent, we are to “count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations.” James 1:2. This shows that the very temptation itself, instead of being against us, is a means of grace, if we look at it from God’s point of view. All power in heaven and earth belongs to Christ; and so even Satan, with all his wrath against the Lord, is but an instrument to carry out His purposes. “Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Ps. 124:8. Nothing is too hard for Him.

Your trouble is this: You are trusting to yourself rather than to the Lord. I know it does not seem so to you, because you pray earnestly, and implore God’s forgiveness, and believe and even realize that He has forgiven you. Yet the fact that you invariably fall when the temptation comes, shows that you are not trusting the Lord for salvation; for we read, “The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble; and they that know Thy name shall put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee.” Ps. 9:9, 10.

The secret of failure is revealed in one sentence: “I go on my knees and implore God’s forgiveness; I realize that He has forgiven me, and I promise Him that I will never do it again; but alas, after a few days the temptation comes again, and again I yield.” Unwittingly we all fall into the trap of thinking the best thing we can do in the face of our failures is to ask for forgiveness and promise God we will never do it again. We feel this is the natural course of things and God is pleased.

However, God has never asked us to make promises to him in terms of overcoming sin. That is all the way of old covenant thinking which is the self-sufficient heart’s response. We know God wants us to overcome temptation and sin and so we pledge ourselves to overcome. It is all focus on ourselves.

A wise writer has said, “Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. . . The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 47). Such promises and resolutions made to God are the famous old covenant. The children of Israel made the old covenant at Mt. Sinai

when they responded to God's promise by saying, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex 19:8). Sounds good, doesn't it?

And some dear people understand the Lord as approving of their making the old covenant when He later said, "I have heard the voice of the words of this people . . . They have well said all that they have spoken" (Dt. 5:28). This is often interpreted as the Lord's enthusiastic approval of their old covenant promise. But those who take this position don't read far enough. In the next verse the Lord sighs, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me [reverence Me], and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them." Paul says that the old covenant "gendereth to bondage," just as *Steps to Christ* says (Gal. 4:24). That "bondage" brings darkness into your soul, even though you try ever so hard to be good. No, your New Year's resolutions will not bring you victory and happiness. The Lord does not ask you to make promises to him; He asks only that you believe His promises to you. His promise is the new covenant; and for us to believe His promise is what makes Him happy. And in the end it makes us happy, too.

Your experience of making promises to God is that of many thousands of sincere Christians; but it is not real Christian experience, because it is not the experience of Christ. *He* "was tempted in all points like as we are, *yet without sin*." Heb. 3:15. It was not because He was of a different nature from us, for inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, "He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. 2:14), and in all things was "made like unto His brethren." Heb. 2:18. Like you He, "in the days of His flesh," "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death," and He "was heard, in that He feared." Heb. 5:7. He trusted in God, not in Himself. His words were: "I have set the Lord always before Me; because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." Ps. 16:8.

Instead of promising the Lord that you will not yield again, you must take His promise that you shall not. Your mistake has been in trusting your own promises instead of the Lord's promise. It is by the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Lord that we are made "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4. "He is faithful that promised" (Heb. 10:23), for "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, and to the glory of God by us." 2 Cor. 1:20.

Our promises can add nothing to God's promise; they are not only wholly unnecessary, but they are a hindrance. We promise that we will not do the evil thing any more; but that very promise implies the supposition of strength on our part, whereas power belongs only to God, and our strength is in recognizing that.

Remember that Jesus died for our sake, not for His own. He did not need to come to this earth and be tempted, to prove His own loyalty to the Father. He came to declare the Father's name unto His brethren. He came to show that by the faithfulness of God all flesh can be saved. "In Him is no sin;" but He was made to be sin for us, in that He bore our sins. 2 Cor. 5:21. The flesh that He took was our flesh; the sins that He overcame were our sins; and He did really overcome them. When He cried, He was heard in that He feared. And He still bears our flesh,—an High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, because "He Himself also is compassed with infirmity." Heb. 5:2.

Our oneness with God comes through the recognition of the fact that Jesus Christ is in the flesh. When strong temptation comes to us, our victory lies in recognizing that it has already been overcome. Then in the face of it we can say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15:57.

Do you desire deliverance from the temptation? That desire is the enmity which God has put in you against Satan; it is the evidence of the presence of Christ in you. You are well enough acquainted with Christ to know the *fact* of forgiveness; but what you have not yet learned is the *power* of forgiveness. There is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. Ps. 130:2. "The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." Job 28:28. When God forgives our sin, that forgiveness is the power by which we resist in the future. The life that cleanses from the sin abides with us to withstand it. Christ is a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; but His priesthood is according to "the power of an endless life." Heb. 7:16. So the faith that overcomes the world is the faith that grasps the fact that Jesus Christ, with His endless life, incorruptible life, abides in us to save us from sin which brings corruption and death. Then we say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in a flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. Mark the expression, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." The faith

that Jesus Christ had in the Father, by which He resisted sin in the flesh, is given you for the same purpose in your flesh.

It was to teach us this, that the miracle of healing the palsied man was recorded. This man was helpless, and could not move, but had to be carried. When he was let down in the presence of Christ, Jesus said to him, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. 9:2. Comfort and good cheer came to the poor palsied man with those words. He knew that he was forgiven, but neither he nor the men that sat by knew the power that was in that forgiveness. So, in order that they might *know* that the Son of man had *power* on earth to forgive sins, and that they might know the power that was in that forgiveness, He said to the palsied man: "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Matt. 9:6. And in the strength of that word he rose and walked. His rising up and going to his house was the visible manifestation of the forgiveness of sins.

The same thing is shown in the healing of the man at the beautiful gate of the temple. See how perfect an illustration this is of your condition: a man who was impotent in his feet, and never had walked, having no power to stand alone! He might promise the Lord every day of his life that he would walk, but it would have done no good. Resolutions to walk would never have helped him. But when Peter said: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." Acts 3:6-8. The name by which he was made to stand up, was the name by which he continued to stand, for the same day, as he stood in the midst of the council, Peter said: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole." And it is in this name and in this way, that we are saved.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus 2:11-13. This grace is given to us all freely, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Eph. 2:8, 9. Where sin abounds, there does grace much more abound. Rom. 5:20. Do you feel sin in your flesh, asserting its power claiming the master? Know, that the more abundant grace is there, and that from it you learn to deny

ungodliness and worldly lusts, "sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:14.

How are you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts? By confessing Christ come in your flesh. Sin comes like a slave driver, claiming you as its victim, but you say, "I am dead; it is not I who live here any longer, but it is Christ for whom sin has no power." Do you see at once that your victory is gained by your faith in Him? The old slave master may crack the whip to frighten you into submission, but you say with great confidence, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." Ps. 116:16. It is impossible for a person to be overcome while holding fast their confidence in Christ.

Let me impress this thought upon your mind. You are not to try experiments with the Lord. You must not wait to see if you have the victory, before you claim it. That is not trust in the Lord. You must have confidence enough in the Lord to know that He has gained the victory over everything for you, and must live and rejoice in the strength of it. It is the victory that gains the victory. If this message comes to you in the very moment of defeat, you can assert your liberty, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise." Micah 7:8. Then begin at once to thank the Lord for the wonderful deliverance that He has given you. Do not doubt, for it is doubt that brings defeat. Do not receive what you will do, but keep your mind on what God has already done, and you cannot help singing for the joy of it. I can assure you that while you are in this state of joyful confidence in God, having no confidence in your own flesh, but "strong in faith, giving glory to God," temptations will have no power.

Many sincere souls, earnestly longing and praying for deliverance from sins inherent in the flesh, are unconsciously working against their prayers, and providing for the fulfilling of those lusts, by their habits of life. We may cooperate with the life of Christ within us, or we may work against it and hold it down. Our business in life is to learn the secret of that life, that we may fall in line with it, and not in any way oppose its action. That life is purity and simplicity; which teaches us that all our habits should be simple, and our food and drink and air, by which life is conveyed to us, should be as pure as possible.

One thoughtful writer has said: "The humanity of the Son of God is everything to us. It is the golden chain that binds our souls to Christ,

and through Christ to God.”<sup>1</sup> For Jesus to take our tendencies and moral weaknesses to sin did not make Him a sinner. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.” Hebrews 4:15. A double negative means a positive. We do have a high priest which has been touched with our moral weaknesses. The birds of temptation constantly flew about the head of Jesus, but He never allowed them to nest in His hair. And thus He did not personally cave in to sin. He never chose to sin either in His mind or in His actions. He was and is our perfect Saviour. He is just what we need.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” 1 John 2:16. Here the world is defined as the desires of what we feel in the instruments of our body, the desires of what is aroused by what we see; and, most of all, our pride. This is what we carry about with us constantly wherever we go.

Jesus came right into this “world,” our world, and defeated sin, He outlawed sin in our flesh. And He wants to impart to you and to me His victory. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Romans 5:20.

She had struggled for years. She was an abused woman—a reject from society. On many occasions she had sought to improve herself, but always slipped back into what she knew best in order to support herself. And every time her self-worth went lower and lower until there was no glimmer of hope. And then she chanced upon Jesus, but, of course, nothing is by luck when it comes to Him. He is forever drawing the sinner to Himself. He forgave and restored her seven times, casting out the demon that possessed her. His persistent grace saved her. She was forever grateful and washed His feet with her tears and costly perfume, anointing Him a heart-appreciation of love which encouraged Him to move forward on His own journey to the cross.

God loves you, dear sinner. Jesus wants to impart His victory to you. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.” Revelation 3:21. Jesus is the Christian’s secret to a victorious life.

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 244.