

LIVING VICTORIOUSLY

1 Timothy 6:4, 10-12

Three years ago, Kent Couch of Bend, Oregon, tied 150 large helium balloons to a lawn chair, lifted off, and floated 230 miles with the clouds, before landing near McCall, Idaho.

He had with him a Red Ryder BB gun and a blow gun that shot steel-tipped darts to shoot and deflate balloons, as well as 45 gallons of cherry Cool Aid for ballast.

Actually this was his third trip. On the first he had to parachute down when he popped too many balloons and descended too rapidly. On the second he didn't manage to get out of Oregon. He was determined to float out of the state, so the third try.

He said it was so peaceful and quiet. Wouldn't you like to live above the clouds—a life free of hassles and strains? But, Kent Couch had to come back to earth and to real life.

Real life means circumstances and interruptions beyond our control, tragedy, sorrow, temptations and failures. But the good news is that God's grace is sufficient for any and every situation (2 Cor. 12:9).

His grace can give us the strength to face life as it really is, and even put smiles on our face. I am constantly surprised at the things we allow to keep us from having victorious lives.

Some of you are wrapped up in material things. You live for the latest styles, a Better Homes and Gardens house, the latest and most expensive car. But this hasn't brought you happiness.

Some live to quarrel and argue. You love to argue religion or politics. Some of you are dominated by that green-eyed monster, jealousy—of friends, family, or neighbors.

Some of you don't trust anyone or anything. You are suspicious about this or that, especially if you don't have control of it. Some are living with the consequences of bad choices.

Some of you are struggling with health issues, and these dominate your mind. Or you may be experiencing relationship struggles of some kind or the other.

All of these things are victory villains—they rob you of the joy you should experience in your Christianity. Don't blame God.

God didn't create us to live like this. God's power hasn't failed. He's still on His throne. He is able to give us power through the Holy Spirit for victorious living.

But it is up to you to appropriate that which God has graciously and abundantly provided through the Holy Spirit. It is up to you to let Jesus Christ reign in your life.

In 1 Timothy 6, Paul points out some of those things that rob us from having victory in our lives. And in v. 11 he tells us what to do: But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

1. Victory villains.

1 Timothy 6:4(NIV) he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions

(1) Pride

The Bible says, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought" (Rom. 12:3). Pride has led to the downfall and destruction of so many. It has kept many from ever becoming a Christian.

And it can be a problem even for Christians. When we don't let Jesus lead, it means we think we can do better, and we know best for ourselves.

This is why a conceited person is more interested in controversy and quarreling. Pride makes you think you know it all.

Jesus said that we must come as a little child with the realization of how utterly helpless we are without him. Only Jesus can save us, and He knows best for our life. This realization should cause us to live a life of humility before others.

(2) Jealousy

I used "jealousy" because that is what envy is. It's a lack of trust. Jealousy is a green-eyed monster that will destroy a marriage, and ruin relationships. Jealousy doesn't like it when someone receives more attention.

Jealousy is envy that someone drives a nicer car than you, has a bigger home than you, or dresses in more expensive clothes than you. Jealousy raises up its ugly head when you least expect it.

You say, “I can’t help it preacher, that’s just the way I feel.” You’re wrong. Jealousy is not simply an emotion. Jealousy comes from a mind set that is not controlled by Jesus.

Jealousy is a sin. It prevents victory in your life. If there is jealousy in your life, you need to confess to God, and get rid of it.

(3) Strife

There is good and bad strife. Paul is talking about the bad strife that robs you of victorious living—conflicts, disagreements, fighting, dissension, opposition, and struggles.

These things arise out of anger, bad temper and irritability. Strife comes when we allow other people to dictate how we should feel.

Have you ever heard someone say, “You make me so angry.” No one can make you anything. You allow yourself to be made angry, or upset, or belligerent.

Some of you have strife inside you. You are frustrated, fearful, with all kinds of problems and difficulties. There is war on the inside.

You smile on the outside; you try to make everyone think everything is okay, but inside you’re a seething caldron of anger and fear, always on the verge of blowing up.

God knows what’s going on. He knows about disappointing children. He knows about faithless spouses, inattentive husbands and nagging wives.

God knows what’s going on with you; His grace is sufficient if you will let it.

(4) Malicious talk

This is verbal abuse in whatever form it may take. It could be insults, gossip, slander, name calling, accusations, innuendo, and so on. It comes from the Greek word, “blasphemy” which means evil speaking.

Normally we think of blasphemy as only against God . . . evil speaking against God. But every one of us is capable of letting evil come out of our mouths, of speaking evilly.

It may be a bit of juicy gossip bursting to get out. Or foul language that pollutes the air. I'm not a prude. I was a bosun's mate in the navy. I was in business for many years. I've heard it all, you can't shock me.

But in the past few years the increase in cussing and foul language demonstrates how we are morally sinking and going down the tube in this country.

Quite frankly, it offends me. Malicious talk is a victory villain. It robs you of a victorious life. Victorious Christian living is a dedicated, Spirit-controlled tongue. Let God have your tongue.

(5) Evil suspicions

This is simply thinking wrong thoughts about someone else. Not necessarily like a man lusting after a woman. This is any of us thinking bad thoughts about someone else.

If you are always critical of others, or believe they can't do anything right, or that they don't deserve what they have, your thoughts are evil.

God tells us that we are to think the best of people. Try it! You'll be surprised at how much happier you are when you are not always looking at others with a suspicious, gossipy eye.

We may think bad about someone but keep our thoughts to ourselves; God knows. The Holy Spirit goes right down to the thoughts and intents of our heart (Heb. 4:12).

He sees what you are thinking as much as if you stood out on the street corner and shouted it to all your neighbors. It's a sin.

When you are tempted to criticize someone, think instead about the good things in that person. Tell others about the good in them.

(6) Love of money

1 Tim. 6:10 (NIV) "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief's" (v. 10).

You say, "I don't have any money to love." Money isn't evil. The love of money is evil. You can do that whether or not you have any. The rich young ruler loved money more than God.

In one of his sermons, Billy Graham told about a man who said to him, "I pray, read the Bible, go to church, but I have no victory in my life. What can I do?" Billy Graham asked, "Do you tithe?" He replied, "No I don't because I don't make very much money."

Billy Graham said, "You don't need to make very much. No one can rob God and expect to have victory in this life."

You can pray all day long. You can go to church every time the doors are open, you can read your Bible through a thousand times, and still not have victory because you are robbing God.

Do you think you can reach into God's pocket and rob Him, and then have victory in your life? It can't be done.

There is no victory in the life of a person who cannot be a cheerful giver, giving back to the Lord. When controlled by money and possessions, it is a victory villain.

2. Victorious living.

1 Tim. 6:12 (NIV) Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

What is needed is more people willing to take hold of their Christianity. Growing in Christ will put these victory villains in their place and you will live a victorious, Christian life. You ask, "How can I grow?"

(1) Through study of God's Word

1 Peter 2:2 (NIV) "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"

We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). Are you growing? Are you being conformed into His image?

(2) Through an attitude of prayer.

Philippians 4:6(NIV) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

This doesn't mean we have to kneel down every time we pray. We can be walking, sitting, driving or standing when we pray. It's a constant attitude of dependence on God's lordship of our lives.

(3) Through consistent Christian living.

Ephesians 4:1-3(NIV) 1As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Live a life of faith. You belong to Jesus; others should see that that makes a difference in your life. Do you remember Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? The king said, “When the trumpets blow, everyone must bow down and worship the golden image.”

Everyone bowed except these three. The king said, “I’m going to give you one more chance. If you don’t bow, I’m going to throw you into the fiery furnace.”

Do you know what those three crazy guys did? They looked the king in the eye and said, “King, we’re not going to serve your god, nor worship the golden image. And even if we burn up in the fire, we still trust God.”

So the king threw them into the furnace. God vindicated their stand. They wouldn’t bow, they wouldn’t bend, and they didn’t burn because God stood by them.

We need Christians like those three young men—men and women who will stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Application:

Run away from the victory villains, and, through Christ begin living victoriously. Because you belong to Jesus you are already victorious. Now, live like you believe it. Walk the victorious life with Jesus Christ.