

From Pastor's Desk...

Take courage: The Ultimate Victory is Already Won by Christ

Christians should expect much hatred from the world that is "out of sync" with Christ. The continuing tension between the world and the church is a reality throughout Centuries because we are "in sync" with Him. Church growth all over world was not in favorable situations but in persecutions and challenges. Jesus reminded them in this world "you will have trouble but take courage, I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Troubles include darkness of sin, death, disease, natural disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes, hunger, broken relationships, war, abuse, shame, false doctrines, etc.

We can be the overcomers in this world. Do not love the world or anything in the world because the world and its desires pass away but the man who does the will of God lives forever (1John 2:16-17). Some people think that worldliness is limited to external behavior- the people we associate with, the places we go, the activities we enjoy. Worldliness is also internal because it begins in the heart and is characterized by three attitudes:

1. The cravings of sinful man- preoccupation with gratifying physical desires
2. The lust of his eyes- cravings and accumulating things, bowing to the god of materialism
3. Boasting of what he has and does- obsession with one's status or importance.

When the serpent tempted Eve (Gen 3:6), he tempted her in these areas. When the devil tempted Jesus in the desert, these were his three areas of attack (Mathew 4:1-11). God values self-control, a spirit of generosity, and a commitment to humble service. Knowing that this evil world will end can give us the courage to deny ourselves temporary pleasures in this world in order to enjoy what God has promised for eternity. Here, we are not fighting alone but with awesome provisions of God.

- We overcome by our faith (1John 5:4)
- We overcome with God and His word (Ps 56:3-4)
- We overcome with His presence (Heb 13:5-6)
- We overcome with His power (2Cor. 4:7).
- We overcome with His Love (Rom. 8:37).

Here are a few questions for our reflections: (a). Are we still harboring worldly attitudes in our hearts while giving the impression of avoiding worldly pleasures? (2). What values are most important for us? (3). Do our actions reflect the world's values or God's values?

God bless you.

In His glorious service,

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On the Winner's side

Prabhudas Bodhuri

'These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world' (John 16:33).

During a lunchroom discussion at work, my friends were talking about past night's cricket match between India and South Africa. With 2 wickets in hand, South African team had an easy target with just 4 runs to win in 50 balls. One can score 4 runs even with just one ball delivery, and 50 balls are a lot. Victory was unimaginable to the Indian team and the South African spectators were already celebrating. As my friends disclosed the edge of the seat thriller, a wicket fell down with just 2 more runs to win in 43 balls. Suddenly the South African team lost the last wicket making the Indian team victorious. That evening, I sat down to watch the highlights of this match. It was fun to watch but not so thrilling, as I already knew the outcome. When a result is already declared, the nail-biting tension, the uncertainty and all the worry would not be there. Likewise, Lord Jesus has already revealed to us that He has overcome the world and it is already done.

How then, Lord Jesus' victory is related to us being victorious. Paul tells us (Romans 8:37) that 'we are more than conquerors through Him'. The catch, I believe, is that we are also conquerors only if we are in Him, that is, if we are on His side – the Winner's side. John 16:33 (shown above) says, 'in the world you **will** have tribulation'. It is guaranteed that we will have tribulation, and it can be in the form of sickness or financial trouble or temptations or injustice or getting hurt by others etc. But if we are confident that we are 'in Him', then we are already assured of the victory, no matter the situation. Just like the Indian cricket team had no hope, the circumstances may tell you that there is no way out, but those who are in Christ, are told to 'be of good cheer' for we will see the victory.

As 2 Corinthians 4:17 says, 'this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison'. The suffering that we are going through may be momentary, but it is preparing us for an outcome that is beyond our imagination. So, my dear brothers and sisters, let us face the tribulation that is guaranteed for us, by the grace of our Lord Jesus who gives us strength and who promised us victory. Let us always strive hard to be 'in Him'- on the Winner's side.