

A Victim No More

Random House Webster's College Dictionary

Victim:

1. A person who suffers from a destructive or injurious action or agency: War victim.
2. A person who is deceived or cheated. The victims of a fraudulent scheme.
3. A living creature sacrificed in religious rites.

Victimize:

1. To make a victim of.
2. To dupe swindle or cheat.

Introduction

Everyone who is a part of the human race has been victimized. No one is exempt. The master deceiver Satan has been at work effectively and cleverly constructing prisons of every possible description to ensnare the whole human race if that is possible. If one technique doesn't work he devises another. He is driven by hate and wants to fill every human heart with hate as well. He uses persons, positions of power, relationships, religions or philosophies to ensnare, wound, bind and curse each person on this planet.

Many people who are victims have been deceived into believing that they are not victims, thus increasing the effectiveness of their bondage. It is when one sees himself as a victim that he begins to look for a way out of his dilemma.

Some seeing victimization everywhere they look purpose to never be victims and in an effort to be free, victimize others. This is a false sense of freedom because they have become twice victims of the master deceiver, being both victim and victimizer.

Seeing the true nature of ones bondage is key to becoming a candidate of deliverance. Satan is not only a master at concealing the fact that many of his victims are indeed victims, but once it is discovered that a person is a victim, he then seeks to either conceal the true nature of the bondage or substitute a different bondage.

It was to the sighted blind that Jesus spoke his message of salvation. All men need a Savior, therefore; he came to heal the broken hearted and to set the captives free. The whole world system suffers under the oppression of misinformation.

Jesus came, the light of the world, exposing Satan's dark work by bringing it into the light of truth. It is the truth that sets us free and it is this truth that is set forth in the New Testament scriptures.

It is my desire to share with you both the nature of your bondage and the way to appropriate the freedom you both deserve and need.

God is love, and the Bible is his love letter to us. When Jesus appeared Satan had effectively convinced people that God was austere, one to dread, who was only concerned with his subjects fearfully obeying him. The religious leaders saw themselves as enforcers of God's laws, not as ministers of righteousness.

Jesus came to show us the fatherhood of God, his compassion, love and intense interest in the personhood of each individual. God is not detached and unconcerned, he has a message of hope and deliverance for everyone.

One of the methods that Satan has devised to prevent us from breaking free of his clutches is to convince us that God's ways are not practical or applicable in our situation. Let's see if we can prove him wrong. I know we can!

Chapter One

Our Lost Condition

Light and truth are synonymous in the scriptures. Jesus came into this world because humanity had lost the life of its soul. Natural life and spiritual life are not the same. Spiritual life comes to us as a result of a personal relationship with the only one who is qualified to give it, Jesus Christ. He came into this world the sole possessor of eternal life, and with a plan whereby all men could become recipients of that life.

All lost souls are victims. Satan deceived Eve into partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and having partaken gave some to Adam who also ate. From that day onward mankind has groped about, victims of the resultant darkness of his soul, deceiving and being deceived, with very little guidance and help.

Some help was available through the Jewish faith, but the master deceiver, Satan was always close at hand with some vain idol or substitute religion to distract people from the only hope there was of a measure of peace. Those who sought peace with God found him through the practice of the religion that God gave them through Moses. All too often, however, the law was seen as a way to appease God, so that, what was intended to help became a source of victimization.

The real source of the problem was that without the spirit of life, man is little more than the animals who occupy this planet with us. It takes the spirit of life to elevate us above the animals to our rightful position as sons of God. It has been Satan's passion to keep us away from the source of eternal life, Jesus Christ, because he is filled with hate. As long as he can keep us ignorant of the truth, we remain in his prison of bondage.

There are some individuals who have come to Jesus Christ for salvation, have confessed their sins, and have become recipients of the spirit of life, but to all practical purposes have remained in the same prison of ignorance of freedom and therefore have remained victims of Satan's torments. All Christians who have received Jesus possess the keys of life. No one need remain in prison, victims of oppression. Jesus said, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) We possess the keys to release us from the prisons that have dominated our lives bringing pain and misery to those around us and us.

Many Christians are still living bound by the same conditions that lost men are bound by. Christians differ from lost souls because they believe in Jesus and therefore have access to the means of deliverance. For liberty to become experience one must apply the key to the lock and walk through the door into what lies beyond. Herein lies the problem; what is the land of liberty like? It seems that Satan has convinced many people that the only safe place is prison. Fear of the unfamiliar is bondage in itself.

Chapter Two

Looking at Our Heritage in Christ

After God met Moses on Mt. Sinai, giving the Ten Commands, the Israelites journeyed on to the north to the southern border of the land of promise. They made camp there and sent twelve spies into the land to see what it was like and to see what problems they might have in conquering it.

The promise land, for the sake of our lesson, could represent the land of our soul and the promises of God regarding the sort of life and provisions to which we are called.

Twelve men of Israel were selected to go northward to look the land out. They went to a place called the Valley of Eshcol, where they cut a branch from a vine with a bunch of grapes on it that was so large that carrying it required two men. They also gathered other fruit samples and in general looked the land over. They stood at the base of the walls of the cities and looked up and said that they reached to the heavens! They looked with fear in their eyes at the stature of the men and realized they must have looked like grasshoppers to them.

It was a great land, no one could deny, but conquering it seemed out of the question to these inexperienced soldiers. All the advantages seemed to be with the occupants of the land. There were, however, two men who saw God as giving them a greater advantage than walls or height of stature. Their report was based on their faith in God and their evaluation encouraged the people to believe and obey. Without faith one can never please God. Faith simply believes that he is and that he is the giver of all good things that we need.

One preacher I heard speaking about the ten spies said that the difference was that the ten stood looking up at the walls from a natural perspective and the two looked down from the perspective of faith. (This story is found in Numbers 13-14) The nation did what people usually do when confronted with a real challenge; they listened to voices of unbelief!

Joshua and Caleb counseled the people to obey the Lord and let him lead them into the land that with the Lord's protection upon them, were well able to conquer the land. They spoke in the voice of faith. It sounded good but would it really work? The men were so big and the cities so strong, how could even God help them?

The problem is a common one. The Land of Promise is the spiritual counterpart to the life that God has given to each believer, a life of living in the Spirit. Living in the Spirit is living in a place where we are living in faith, love, peace, and joy that is the result of the presence of God in our life. Living in the Spirit seems to many people to be a "pie in the sky" idea. Many people would rather wander in the wilderness of self-defeat than to believe that God is able to keep his word in their lives. They would rather remain in the bondage of unbelief with all the resultant pain of fear, hate, bitterness, loneliness and all such negative and miserable emotions because there is a certain comfort there. It seems easier to gather manna every day, even if they are sick of the taste, than to risk conquest of the land.

Living in the Land of Promise requires that we live by faith. There were provisions in the wilderness that weren't the same once they entered the land of promise. In the wilderness they had to live in tents enduring a bleak lifestyle. In the Promised Land they would live in homes. In the wilderness they gathered their food each morning from the surface of the ground. In the Promised Land they would have to till the soil and prune the vines and trees and gather crops in their season. There would be grass for their flocks and herds and after driving out the enemies, they would live in peace.

Living in the Promised Land provides the opportunity for an enriched relationship with God. The wilderness was a place of despair, judgment, and aimless wandering. Joy was not a close companion; they longed for something more. The only answer to the dilemma was to believe that God was able to deliver them into the land and care for them once they arrived.

Where are you today? Are you living in the wilderness of doubts and fears, walking on a treadmill to obscurity? It doesn't require faith to gather manna every morning, but moving into the land requires the kind of faith that looks the giants of pride, lust, covetousness, greed, self-will, and the desire for vainglory in the eye declaring victory in the name of Jesus. It is Satan who stands in our path to victory with words of discouragement with thoughts of, what's the use of trying when failure is certain.

Satan is a deceiver, a thief, and a murderer. His purpose is to keep us from victory. He will always remind us of failed attempts at walking in victory and quickly offers consolation and counsel to return to the wilderness.

The reason this strategy usually works is because it is based on real life experiences in many people's lives. Instead of examining the reasons for failed attempts, and seeking to learn the correct method of conquest, defeat has led to despair.

There is a broad road that many travel, yes most men travel, but it leads to destruction. Getting off the road is not easy because the one who calls us to follow is the one who also told us that this is the way of the cross. Victory comes at a price and the price is death. Death, that is, to all that opposes faith in God. Death to all those negative giants who have lived in the land of our soul so long—fear, unbelief, anger, unforgiveness, pride, and self-will. There is so much pain associated with our past; how can we possibly forsake it and go on into the land of peace?

Chapter Three

Meeting the Commander of the Lord's Army

The first thing that must be established in the life of a Christian is the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the one in charge. If we are to engage in successful Christian living, we must surrender the seat of authority to him and act in worshipful obedience to his will.

After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Joshua was confronted by the commander of the Lord's army standing before him with his sword drawn. Though God had given them a mighty miracle in crossing the Jordan River, Joshua was still just a servant of the Lord. He apparently needed to be reminded of that fact.

It's easy to get caught up in the victories that God gives us and forget that they come from him. Sometimes pastors are allowed to see their churches flourish and think that it has to do with their pastoral skills, forgetting that it is a visitation of the Lord that brings about spiritual victories.

Many Christians have set out to enjoy the fruits of the land of promise without first engaging the enemy. It wasn't long until the Israelites discovered that not all enemies were outside their camp. There were also enemies within their own numbers. When they received a great victory over the city of Jericho, one of their men saw some things he wanted for himself and covetousness and greed caused him to sin. This resulted in the blessing of God being lifted from the camp of Israel and a defeat at the hand of the men of Ai.

It may not seem that little sins are really that important, but if they result in the displeasure of the Lord; they are BIG.

When the Lord is truly in charge in our lives, we will face the giants one by one, and gain victory over them. The Lord is the one who leads us into battles that confront the wrong attitudes, affections or motives we harbor in our hearts. Once he brings us into recognition of the presence of the enemy, he also shows us the means of victory. The choice is then ours. Do we engage the enemy in the approved way or do we try to deal with him on our own?

(Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.) James 4:7-10

Some people choose to compromise thinking that coexistence will do, but they tend to forget that sin has allies, that one sin always leads to another.

Achan, the man who sinned at Jericho, tried to hid his sin with a cover up, that is, he dug a hole in his tent floor and buried the things he stole. Hiding from man is not difficult, but one cannot hide from God. He sees all, and observes even the thoughts and intents of our hearts.

Every attempt to gloss over the truth about anything will result in correction by the Holy Spirit if we are walking in the Spirit. Every thought, deed, or desire is monitored and evaluated according to the will of God.

There is an energy aura that surrounds our body. It is what energizes our DNA bring about the condition of life at conception, and continues through all the stages of natural life. Once we are born again the Holy Spirit is also energizing us by his presence. The Christian has a natural DNA, and a spiritual DNA, so to speak. The spiritual DNA is what directs his spiritual development and is received from Christ. When fully developed, we stand in him in the fullness of his stature!

There is a growth process for spiritual development, and the Holy Spirit instantly detects any enemy to that development. Once a problem is detected, a method of correction is set in motion to avoid disaster to the plan of God in us. To rebel against the process is to place us in position to be severely disciplined. God does not will that any should perish; he desires that all come to repentance.

Chapter Four

Do Victims Need Repentance?

One may wonder; why is there a need for repentance of one who is a victim? Shouldn't repentance belong to the victimizer?

The fact is; victims are sinners too. Victims have been tricked into acceptance of sin as a result of victimization. Hate, bitterness, envy, an angry spirit, desires for revenge, murderous desires, and all such like are all sinful attitudes. These feelings and desires are usually very justified but they are not the necessary result of painful experiences. The victimizer has his own set of sins for which he must repent, that is, whatever motivated him to commit his sin of aggression against the victim of his sinfulness.

While Jesus was ministering among us, he taught us that forgiveness of those who have wronged us was mandatory. But, we may ask, aren't some sins so heinous that they are unforgivable? It is easy for me to agree that yes there are, but does that make it so?

The other day I heard the account of alleged crimes committed by a man in a community near by that were so gross, cruel, and detestable that it was painful just to hear what was being said. He was stopped before he committed the crimes he contemplated against innocent children, but even the idea that a person could be so corrupt as to contemplate such heinous acts would raise the question, should such a one be forgiven?

There is a difference between having a forgiving spirit toward sinners and the actual act of granting forgiveness in the sense of restoration. I minister to men at prison near where I live. Some of the men have committed heinous crimes and for this society has committed them to a life behind bars. I minister love and forgiveness to these men just as I do people in my church. I find them to be very real brothers in the Lord, men who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus just as I have been. These men remain behind bars and I have no doubt that for some at least, this is necessary. Forgiveness does not always mean that restoration of privileges is the correct outcome while in this fleshly body. .

Some individuals have very strong inclinations to sin because the tendency to sin is rooted deeply in their subconscious mind. Thought patterns, psychological wounds, mental or emotional disorders, and chemical imbalances all add up to a deep need for healing before restoration of privileges could or should be considered.

Some men and women do quite well while incarcerated but once released revert back to previous life styles almost as quick as release is granted. Does that mean that they were insincere prior to their release? I don't think so. It is my opinion that some people may always need a protected environment in which to live. If a person has a physical handicap we can accept that, but what about the person who has a mental or emotional ailment, do we fail to recognize their need?

Again, forgiveness does not always mean reinstatement but forgiveness may mean that we provide an environment where the offender can receive the help needed. Sometimes, if not always, the person who has been sinned against is not the person who should be involved in the provision of help. Cases vary of course and the degree of help needed must be considered, but in many cases it is essential that the person being wronged be taken completely out of the picture. Often neither the offender nor the offended can be healed until they are completely apart.

If a person is the object of another's obsessive behavior, removing the object is crucial to healing. Those who stay in an obsessive relationship not only prevent the obsessed person from getting help, but also put themselves in the position of being victims. This has the potential of eventually becoming a love/hate relationship. Those who are the obsessed persons will ultimately lose the very love they seek.

Obsessive behavior is not simply loving someone and desiring that persons love and attention. It goes beyond that to jealousy, possessiveness, unreasonable accountability and demands upon time. The question may arise, "If we love each other, can't we work through this?" It may be possible, but if there is to be happiness, help will be necessary from someone who is competent in Christian counseling. One must always keep in mind that the person who is the object of the obsessed person is greatly at risk of developing a squelched personality. Obsessiveness is a precursor to abusive and violent behavior.

To those who are already locked into a relationship that may be difficult to undo for reasons of marriage or children, there is hope. The person then must find an emotional place of strength and comfort. This place is found in Christ.

While on the subject of obsessive behaviors, it seems fitting to comment upon one more area of human experience, sexual abuse. Many people have been wounded because of some sort of sexual abuse. This can have a devastating effect upon the victim because it often colors all sexual experiences from that day onward.

The problem with sexual abuse often is that the very nature of the abuse is so like what is normal sexual behavior, mechanically that is, and yet is so wrong, traumatic, and often painful, that the abused person is then unable to function well in a normal way. We know that what happens to us on a conscious level becomes part of the subconscious structure from which so many functions flow.

The problem with the subconscious mind is that it does not have the capacity to judge between what is right and what is wrong until it has been taught. When a very traumatic event takes place, the subconscious will immediately conclude that everything about the event was bad unless previous experience or knowledge is sufficient to allow it to properly classify what has happened.

There are some cases where sexual abuse occurs in a non-threatening mode, or with such seductive stimulation that the person so abused may not even recognize it as abuse at the time, and may willingly become a part of the activity thinking it to be normal or okay. Later when understanding of right and wrong becomes known, to face the fact that sinful desires were stirred and participated in is not a welcome revelation. One must be cautious then that sin is not justified or that guilt does not drive that person into an even greater state of abuse. Once sin is seen to be sin, repentance is the desirable response, not a guilt that torments the victim. The purpose of repentance is to lead the victim to a healing process of cleansing and redirection to normal patterns and responses.

In the case of sexual abuse that usually happens during the young years of life, neither the conscious nor the subconscious are ready to properly determine what is normal. The conclusion is either that this is all normal but painful, or that everything that happened in this event was bad, ugly and abnormal. Both conclusions are of course wrong, but unless there is proper counseling, the subconscious mind will be negatively impacted in a very paralyzing way. Judgment will be past on all activities the subconscious has determined to be bad, and after marriage, the spouse may inadvertently find that they are being classified with the abuser over some behavior that is purely normal.

Undoing the damage done is not a job for the spouse. The spouse will then be viewed as a further extension of the abuse because their attempts will be viewed as an effort to justify the behavior that has already been firmly classified as evil.

There is without a doubt a need for expert Christian counseling with individuals who have suffered traumatic or painful events in their lives so that they do not have to live with fear, dread, shame, guilt, or feelings of revenge. Gaining our freedom in Christ is based on having a good understanding of the true nature of righteousness.

Chapter Five

The Christians Position -- "In Christ"

There is a place where people dwell in peace, love and joy. Where the tears caused by regrets, guilt, fear, painful memories, losses of property, losses of friendships or loves and all such like have been wiped away. This is a place where tears flow freely, but they are the tears of joy; tears inspired by events that cause us to rejoice in the love of God that is evidenced in our lives.

This place is called by various names in the scripture and in the common vernacular of the church. Sometimes it is referred to as the life in the Spirit. Other times it is called being an overcomer. No matter the name, it is the place in God to which we are all called.

Paul wrote of this place in the first chapter of Ephesians making numerous references to a position of being "in Christ". He describes it as the place where we are to be found, that is; it is our place of spiritual residence. In Colossians there are also numerous references to this subject. We are told that we are partakers of his resurrection and therefore we are to set our affections upon those things that are above. We are told that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him, that is, Christ. We are also told that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge dwell in him.

This is the place that we are called to, but entry is not always easy. Satan knows full well where the entry point to this realm is; it is our identification with the cross. Satan hates the cross, though he is the one who made it what it is, having had Jesus crucified on it! I don't think he realized what he was doing when he inflamed the crowd to crucify Jesus, being blinded by his hate. But now he does know and he is doing everything he can to keep us away from it because he knows it is our entry point into everything he lost at his fall.

The Jewish rite of circumcision and Christian baptism portray our identification with the cross. They speak of our putting away the manifestations of our fallen natures. Again, no matter the figure or illustration used, we are told in various ways that entry into the life in the Spirit requires leaving the life where sin or sinful attitudes are tolerated or entertained.

When we enter this place "in Christ" we must leave all that is of the flesh behind us. We cannot take it into this wonderful place, this holy place, this place of love, joy, peace, gentleness, and faithfulness; where all anxieties have been silenced, and we are partakers of his love and care.

This is not a place where religionists gather. A place where there are repressive rules and regulations, but neither is it a place where sin is tolerated. In this place the occupants reach for God by reaching for his holiness. We reach for him and become aware of our need for true manifestations of love, righteousness and holiness in our thoughts, behaviors, and affections. It is here that we find true love, even passion, but everything is always within the boundaries of approved behaviors.

God is not against our humanity; he created it. He doesn't want us to be less than his intended purpose, nor does he want us to be something we are not. To discover God is to discover what is truly wonderful, normal, and healthy. Godliness is not only found in prayer closets, it is found after the prayer closet in the daily functions of life. Being truly human is the goal of Godliness, but the "human" of which I speak, is not the human of the world.

The world's concept of "human" is to excuse flawed behavior as normal, but flaws are not normal, they are flaws. God is calling us out of flaws into health. To do this he is calling us into a relationship with himself. This is called living in the Spirit, being in Christ, or being an overcomer.

Some have treated this life in the Spirit as some sort of abnormality, but it is not; it is the only truly normal and healthy state in which to live.

Satan and his entire ungodly horde stand outside the gate to this wonderful life setting traps and barricades to discourage entry into such a wonderful place. He has false prophets too, calling to those who hunger for God, telling them lies about themselves; that they should not die to the consciousness of their fleshly desires; that they are human after all and that they just need to understand that sin is really not that bad if you are moderate in its application. So what, they say, if you are not perfect, there is only one who is perfect, but they fail to tell us that when we are in Christ we are perfect because we are now partakers of his perfection!

It's an ugly horde outside the gate, with their placards, slogans, and politically correct jargon. I'm okay, your okay, they say, as if that makes everything all right. They tell us not to go near the gate marked for us by Jesus; "there is death there," they tell us, and indeed they are right, but what they don't want us to know is that it is life giving death! They are a loud crowd shouting, yelling, singing songs of pleasure, preaching selfism, and doing everything they can to discourage entry into the dwellings of the righteous.

It sometimes seems that only violent men can enter; violent because they must force their way past all those distractions, lies, and ugliness that Satan has amassed against them. Their violence is not against the God they love, but rather against those enemies of God outside the gate!

Satan enflames them to a fever pitch, making some of them loud, angry and unpleasant and others are dressed in finery or seductively. Some he tries to call aside by offering pleasures of the world, so that the appetites of their fallen natures will hold them captive. But closest to the gate, he wants noise and confusion, because inside there is singing, sweet melodious songs of praise and worship: songs that call to the souls of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. The gate is standing open and the sound of the glory comes through, but none can enter there but those who are willing to leave all the baggage of their fallen natures outside.

There's a lot of baggage out there that others have left, petty irritations with family members, a huge pile of pride, and rebellion that seems to reach to the sky! There's lust and greed, and false motives, anger and hate. It's all there, but inside there is love, joy, peace, contentment and every good thing.

Those who live here are reveling in a treasure house of discovery, finding love gifts from Jesus that satisfy. On occasions they go back to the gate, but not to the old life. They return to tell others of the joy they have discovered. This is a happy place but sometimes the clamor at the gate causes them to weep for the ones who are still outside. They weep but their weeping is holy being inspired by love! "Come on in", they call; "life is good in here." There is ample supply for everyone. Leave your life of sin; leave death and destruction, and you will find forgiveness and pardon. Jesus is here giving freely his love and forgiveness to all who are inside.

Chapter Six

The Clothing of a Christian

Once we have past through the gate into the life in the Spirit, we discover that our mindset is different. Where we were once concerned with the things of the world now eternal values are on our minds. We have taken off the old ways that were selfish, greedy, lustful, proud, bitter, unforgiving, unfaithful and faithless, and now we must get dressed in new garments. Colossians 3:12-14 says,

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”

Compassion

Put on compassion, now that’s different! Always before it was what was best for me, or should I say, “Me” with the capital M as in God. Me is big in the world today, “To thyself be true,” is the philosophy of the world. If that were a true belief of the world then obeying God and entering the city would be the first thing we would want to do. Actually, because of the deception of the world, selfishness results in self-destruction.

True selfism is when an individual sees that the only intelligent thing to do is to embrace Jesus and all the goodness that he has to offer. Like so many things that Satan has perverted he has perverted selfism, but selfism is not always bad. For example, I love myself, enough in fact, that I am willing to die to the flesh that I may inherit eternal life. Dying to the flesh is not an act of self-destruction, but rather it is death to idolatrous selfism. Once my mind has been renewed I can see clearly that loving others more than myself is a win/win thing to do. Not only have I not destroyed my sense of self-worth, but now others love me too. It is natural to give love to those who show love.

In this city everyone is caught up in a love triangle. As a child I used to sing, “Jesus, and others and you, what a wonderful way to spell joy!” We still love ourselves, but now that comes as a last consideration.

We look back at those still outside this wonderful place, and see sinners and carnal Christians still living as we once did, and instead of being harshly judgmental, we are filled with compassion. We now put on compassion as the foundational garment of all other garments Christians wear. Without compassion there is no alternative to being judgmental. Forgiveness is blocked where there is no compassion.

Kindness

Having put on compassion it is now much easier to wear kindness! Now please understand, I do not say that this will be an easy garment to wear in every situation. If we have not truly died to the flesh, it will rub us raw! The flesh nature does not wear kindness well. Especially when events around us are irritating, frustrating and weariness has set in. We don’t wear this garment well if our mind is not on heavenly things, either.

I suppose we all have had the experience of being in a hurry, late to some appointment, driving through traffic and some other driver, bless his or her heart, is not at all in a hurry! We look at our watch, our breath becomes shallow, tension mounts, our blood pressure rises, and we start looking frantically for a way around this obstacle in our path. It is no longer a soul that Christ died for; it’s merely an obstacle in our way. They have been dehumanized in our thinking, a war mentality! The temptation is upon us to think or say unkind things. We feel safe inside our car, they can’t hear what we’re saying, but now we see a chance to get around them. As we come along side, and our glances meet—if we had just put on kindness, we would have been able to smile. If we had just had our new mind working, and compassion

and kindness on, none of the frustration we felt would have been there; we would have rested in the knowledge that God is in control.

Peace is the heritage of the saints, now we must learn to wear these garments.

One of the problems we face is the mindset of religion. Religion is something you practice at given times—at church, before you eat, at prayer time or when the pastor comes to visit. We have compartmentalized our thinking into religious thought and secular thought. Unfortunately, secular thought is outside this place called by various names, “in Christ”, “in the Spirit”, or “in the city”. Fortunately, even though we do not at once learn how to live consistently in the city, once we have been born again, Christ lives in us. He lives in us ministering the hope of glory to us, encouraging us to press on toward the mark of our high call in Christ Jesus. (See Col. 1:27, Phil. 3:14) The goal is that we be found in Christ all the time, not just at what are called “religious” times. To this end we labor with all his strength both to be found there, and to help others achieve that joy as well.

We look at the garments we are to wear and realize that the wearing of them is not as easy as we first thought. Kindness is easy at prayer time, but when the children are not cooperating, it’s easy to become impatient.

Humility

It’s especially hard to wear these garments when you are right and those around you are so stupid. You then hear the voice of the Spirit speaking in his gentle quite way, “be humble.” Oh no, is that another garment we must wear? All at once we remember reading that we are to honor others above ourselves. Okay, that’s easy we think, so we put it on. We go to work and the boss has to choose a new supervisor—he asks our opinion—we know that we are the most qualified person for the job, but there is someone else who has been in the company longer and could do the job. Do we recommend that other person or do we volunteer our services? We may think, “I sure need the raise in pay that would bring.” Then we suddenly remember we have on the garment of humility. Do we take it off and plead our case, or do we go ahead and do the right thing and trust the Lord?

Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith we cannot wear these garments. To live in Christ is to live in faith. Not the action oriented faith that focuses upon individual needs or desires, but rather the faith that embraces God—is provisions, will, and love. This faith is something we embrace as a constant condition in our lives. It’s a condition that calls for an immediate response the instant needs manifest—instinctively calling on God, knowing he is always there for us.

Gentleness and Patience

Humility, gentleness and patience – layer upon layer – blending into the most beautiful array of color and design, but it’s not a complete outfit yet however. Though these are all beautiful, we realize if we are to wear them something more is required or they will fall to the ground.

In the real world, gentleness is okay when we’re among friends—when everyone is speaking well of us, but what about those who aren’t our friends, who talk behind our backs or are otherwise an irritation to us. Can we be gentle with them? If Christ who lives in us has energized us, we can.

Forgive

Before his power can be manifest in us, we must do something unthinkable—forgive. Gentleness only works when forgiveness has cleared the path through which God’s power flows. Unforgiveness stands as a barricade preventing us from reaching our source of power, Jesus. When we need help, we need immediate access to Jesus. There usually isn’t time to go to a prayer closet to pray through all our irritations, we need him to be there for us at a moments notice. Forgiveness must be a constant in our lives if we are to wear these garments of Godliness.

Love

We look at ourselves dressed in all these beautiful pieces of clothing, but it's not complete, something more is needed. Something to tie it all together, then we see it; it is love. Love is like the salt on a steak, a cherry on a sundae, or a topcoat on a cold night. Gentleness is not intended to be worn without love, neither is forgiveness or patience.

In our "before victory" lives, we were victims of our own independence. We tried to be patient. Through gritted teeth we were gentle. But love? No way. We were victims of our fallen natures. We wanted to be humble, but business is business, you know. No one gets ahead by letting others gain advantage—so we scraped and fought, connived and sometimes lied and cheated, but we gained, only to discover that there was no glow of the glory of the Lord in it. We were victims and in the end we lost. We lost our friends, the respect of our peers and perhaps the goods we fought so hard to gain. When we reached for Jesus he lovingly called us to the altar of repentance, but we had too much to lose, we thought, so we fought on. Sometimes our struggle to retain our selfism lasted through long nights of struggle. And like Jacob who wrestled with God or his angel, we wanted his blessing, but our ability to fight prevented us from doing the only thing that would help us. The angel had to touch him, and wound him, before he could stop the futile fight against doing things God's way. At that point he stopped fighting and started clinging, appealing to the Lord.

It matters not how strong we are, how hard we fight, or how bad we want God's best; he will not give in to us; we must come to him in humility; then and only then, can we achieve the glow of glory.

Victims No More

When we come to the Lord recognizing that all the baggage we accumulated by our worldly ways is rubbish. When we long for something durable, something eternal, and we then surrender to his ways, we call upon him and he answers us. No struggling is needed when our hearts are right, he is instantly and always there for us. We are Victims no more.

Now we have a resource of power instantly available to us and love flows freely without resistance. Now we are patient, kind, enduring, gentle, tender, faithful, and always worthy of trust. We have found the source of real strength and no one can take it from us.

The world has access to our goods. They may wound our bodies, steal our reputations, harass us or abuse us, but we are no longer victims because we are hid in Christ, in God and what we now possess, "peace" was not the result of what they gave us, therefore they cannot take it away.

We now trust in Jesus knowing that whatever the result in this world, we have a future that is secure and we can rest having found his love is our all sufficiency. We are indeed victims no more.