

VICTORIOUS

LIVING



It was an eventful August of 1980 when my family and I stepped into our small single-engine Piper Comanche airplane for an adventure into our destiny. As the pilot of the flying machine, I seated myself in the cockpit, followed by five reluctant passengers who uneasily seated themselves beside and behind me. The apprehensive passengers were Martha, my wife, and clinging to her were four faithful offspring (8 to 14 years of age). All were somewhat oblivious about following this adventurous father pilot into a Twilight Zone where none of them had before ventured.

We were all destined by faith out of Opa Locka Airport in Miami, Florida in order to make our way to our new home in Antigua, a place to which Martha had never before ventured, though she had previously tasted the West Indies in Barbados and Grenada on our return from Brazil in 1978. But once the landing gear was safely tucked under the wings, the compass headed us due southeast out over the open waters of the Atlantic Ocean. We were on our way.

As I signed off with Opa Locka Air Traffic Control, and while crossing Miami Beach on a heading into the Bermuda Triangle,

I remember that all we could see before us was water ... water forever. We could see nothing but the glaring sheen of the early eastern sun off the water that morning as we stretched our faith to do God's work in the West Indies. It was indeed a flight plan of faith, for all of us were doing what faith and mission would demand of us.

We eventually made our way across endless waters to a small speck of an island named Grand Cayman, where I refueled the airplane, as well as gave the now half-airsick passengers a taste of sweet mother earth. From there our registered flight plan and faith directed us on to our new home on the small island of Antigua in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies. At the time of our departure from Grand Cayman, Antigua was still only a small dot on my flight chart. It still is.

What drove us to this daring—some have used the word “delirious”—adventure was the fact that God had better things for us to do just over the horizon. Our incurable optimistic faith had brought us to a point of launching out over the deep while we hung tightly to the hand of Jesus. We had no other options. We could do nothing less.

Yes indeed, you must take a leap of faith in order to grow your faith. This is simply the way God works to build our characters. You can pray and fast endlessly for greater faith, but until you get out of the security of the boat, Peter—or into the air—your faith will still be in the security of the boat. There can be no victory if there is no stepping on the water outside the security of the boat, or launching into the oblivion of endless skies.

I think the greatest obstacle in the life of the Christian is a lack of trust that God can work exceedingly abundantly in the life of His children who walk by faith. We are not testing God when we launch out on faith. We are testing ourselves;

we are testing our faith in God that He is always there for us. And unless we put ourselves to the test by launching out, we will never really understand the tremendous power that God will abundantly pour out on us. If we do not launch out, our faith will continually be marginal.

One will never know if God is working in his or her life if he or she never launches out on faith.

A. Faith must fly away:

Christianity is built on faith. It is a character of faith. As opposed to a legal system of self-righteous religiosity by which we would walk by sight and personal self-proclaimed performance, Christianity is a world view that is contrary to anything that this world can offer. It is for this reason that the Christian is always optimistic in reference to the future. And because Christianity is inherently optimistic, we can understand what God expects of us in reference to our faith. Listen to God the Holy Spirit:

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Rm 8:28).

“If God is for us, who can be against us” (Rm 8:31).

“But in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Rm 8:37).

“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Ph 4:13).

*“For whoever is born from God overcomes the world. **And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith**” (1 Jn 5:4).*

If you believe all these promises of God, then you must step out and forward. The promises do not work unless we file a flight plan that is based on believing that God is protecting us

on our flight into the unknown.

The peace of mind that surpasses all human understanding comes only when we file a “faith plan” with God (Ph 4:7).

The late church leader, Ralph Bumpus, once said, “We must stop allowing the knockers, knit pickers and No No Birds to run our lives.” For the Christian, it is not true that things will get worse before they get better. On the contrary, they are now great and the best is yet to be.

I suppose there is some irony in what the radio commentator Paul Harvey often said when closing some of his radio broadcasts on a negative news report: “Don’t worry about anything,” Harvey would say, “nothing is going to turn out all right anyway.” But with faith, it has turned out already for good regardless of the times. And because we know that God will eventually work all things together for our good, then we will not worry about our tomorrow. Jesus meant something as this when He stated to the multitudes, “*Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will care for itself*” (Mt 6:34).

There are simply too many people who spend half their time worrying about what they cannot do. But then there is the other half who are faithfully moving on. We need those who envision what we can do in the present, without obsessing over all the obstacles that may arise in the future. We need those who will thus behave their faith on to certain victory.

Our mental attitude determines what we get out of life. If we feel like victorious conquerors, then we will live a victorious life. However, if we come to the conclusion that the battle is already lost, then our mental attitude will make sure we operate as those in retreat rather than those who are marching onward to victory. As Christians, we must realize that God has already given us the victory. We must simply stay in the battle. In

order to enjoy the final celebration when the Lord Jesus brings to a conclusion all these things and events, we will not allow this world to deter us from our heavenly goal.

We can never really celebrate a heart-felt victory of God in our lives unless we truly know that we launched out on faith, realizing that God brought us through all turmoil in order to accomplish the victory.

B. The bad will not hold us back:

We are surrounded by too many pessimists. Someone once said, “A pessimist is a man who looks both ways before crossing a one-way street.” This is the person who believes that things are as bad as they can possibly be, and yet, expects them to get even worse. So the psychiatrist judged the pessimist correctly: “A pessimist is a man who does not choose the lesser of two evils. He chooses both.”

The story was once told many years ago that before the championship boxing fight between Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey, Tunney woke up one night before the fight in a sweat-drenched bed. He later confessed that he dreamed that he had been beaten to a pulp by Dempsey.

When he later revealed his nightmare in a conversation with a friend, Tunney said that prior to the fight he had been reading too many newspaper accounts concerning the ferocity of Dempsey. That ferocity had been eating away at this mind, discouraging him concerning the forthcoming fight. But then he made a victorious decision. That decision was to stop all input of negative information. He would focus on victory. He would concentrate on his own ferocity in order to make that victory a reality. And as you have already concluded, the result of his positive thinking was his victory, and thus he defeated Dempsey and became the heavy-weight boxing champion of the world.

If we would place Christianity in the field of philosophy for a moment, the greatest psychiatrist in the world would classify Christianity as an extremely positive philosophy of life. This inherent nature of Christianity is revealed by encouraging statements in the Christians Handbook: “Fight the good fight of the faith,” “We can do all things,” “All things work together for good,” “God is for us,” “Faith is the victory,” and a host of other positive concepts that define the very nature of Christian faith.

It is for this reason that Christians can “*do all things without grumbling*” (Ph 2:14). They can “*count it all joy*” when they fall into various trials (Js 1:2). This is the character of Christianity, and thus the reason why the Holy Spirit stated that we are more than conquerors because of our faith in the love of Jesus Christ. Gospel thinking, therefore, is identified by positive living.

The Christian does not complain along his or her journey with Jesus simply because he or she understands that God is working in our lives in order to bring us to victory.

C. The best is yet to be:

A self-centered optimist once said, “An optimist is a man who tells you to cheer up when things are going his way.” That is really not a true optimist. A true optimist is the person who spends his last dollar to buy a new billfold or purse. An optimist will even cast her last two coins in the Temple treasury. The optimist is the one about whom someone once wrote, “Optimism is the belief that even when things come to the worst, it won’t be so bad.” At least it will never be as bad as we worried that it would be.

We do live in a world that sometimes seems to have gone wrong. Sin has had its heyday throughout the existence of humanity. Sin ruined an Eden environment that could have prevailed unto this day. Nevertheless, sin reigned from the

time forbidden fruit was eaten in Eden, until the time when it was finally overcome by a cross that was posted at Calvary. And for this reason, we can live a “garden of Eden peace” in our minds until the day that we will be restored to the paradise of God in eternal heaven. Just because there is a raging war outside does not mean that we cannot have peace of mind within.

F. H. Bradley concluded, “The world is the best of all possible worlds, and everything in it is a necessary evil.” We live in a “necessarily evil world” simply because God has turned the work of Satan—a world gone wrong through sin—into a spiritual preparatory environment for those who are headed for an eternal dwelling. It is for this reason that Christians firmly believe that all things are working together for good. The Christian is even optimistic about the presence of evil and suffering in this world simply because he understands that such an environment prepares his character for eternal dwelling.

We firmly believe that all things will turn out well in the end. Really! It is not as Ken Hubbard once said, “An optimist is a fellow who believes what’s going to be will be postponed.” For the saint, what is yet to be is an eternal reward of glory in the midst of a truly peaceful heavenly environment. There will be no postponed evil and suffering stored up for those who will eventually launch into eternal glory.

We must persistently think on the positive side of life. In his best selling book, *The Results of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale once wrote,

A positive thinker does not refuse to recognize the negative, he refuses to dwell on it. Positive thinking is a form of thought which habitually looks for the best results from the worst conditions. It is possible to look for something to build on; it is possible to expect the best for yourself even though things look

bad. And the remarkable fact is that when you seek good you are very likely to find it.

And so we will, that is, keep looking for good. Someone once instructed, “Always act as if it were impossible to fail.” I think this is what Paul had in mind when he wrote from prison that we can do all things through Christ (Ph 4:13). With our hand in Jesus’ hand, how is it possible for us to fail? Paul concluded,

*For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, **will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Rm 8:38,39).*

When we understand that this is the best of all possible worlds for the existence of one who is truly free to make moral decisions, then we realize that God is there with us regardless of the hard times through which we must go.

D. Making choices for a difference:

You have a choice concerning your mental attitude. You can choose to be optimistic about life. Or, you can choose the alternative. You can choose to drink from the darkness of discouragement and despair. But on the contrary, you can feast on the brightness of that which is good and true. The world is full of those who have chosen to be happy; to look on the bright side of everything. In fact, if it were not for so many optimists in the world, the pessimists would not know how unhappy they really are.

You have a choice of being either optimistic about life or thinking that things are bad and will get worse. You can choose to be the pessimist about whom J. B. Cabell once wrote, “The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; the pessimist fears that this is true.” But as optimist who walk on water—or fly into a new ministry—by

faith, we confess that the best of all possible “worlds” is yet to come. Our “faith plan” will lead us to victorious adventures for the Lord.

You may think that the pessimist is more often right in reference to this world. However, he is not the one who is more often happy. The optimist consoles himself that things would be worse if it were not for God in his life. But the pessimist just waits in hope that things will always get worse. His mental attitude brings him to the conclusion that the worst is always yet to be. If our vision of the future is dark, then dark clouds will rise over the horizon. It is true that a negative outlook on life generates dark clouds. And people who continually generate dark clouds are usually those people who do little.

The state of our mental attitude has a habit of bringing into reality the nature of our dreams. If we see an opportunity in every calamity of life, then life will be filled with the reality of sweet dreams. However, if we focus on calamities in every opportunity, then there are only dark clouds in the future. Looking on the bright side of life leads us past feeling that we are only half way there. It leads us to believe that we are nearing the end of the worst and coming into the reality of the best. It is only a matter of time. We patiently endure, therefore, with a keen ear out for the sound of a distant trumpet.

If one becomes weary of bad things that keep happening in his or her life, then the first check one must make is to determine if one is making bad choices in reference to his or her moral conduct.

E. Store up nuts:

Squirrels store up nuts for the winter season. Therefore, when things get cold, squirrels have a store of nourishment from which to survive. So it is with our mental attitudes. We must store up positive thoughts, thoughts of good times. Therefore, when winter comes, we will then have a host of pleasant thoughts from which to draw in order to make it through the

winter. We can then be as the tea kettle when it is up to its neck in hot water. It just whistles.

It was once said of a trapeze instructor who had a difficult time in training a young student. The student kept complaining, "I can't do it. I can't do it." The wise instructor encouraged, "Just throw your heart over the bar and your body will follow." We must train our minds to learn to expect, not to doubt. This was what Jesus said to a father who had brought to Him an afflicted son. Jesus said to the desperate father, "**All things are possible to him who believes**" (Mk 9:23).

Many of us are in the same situation as the pleading father concerning our faith. Nevertheless, in the presence of Jesus, the father recognized his pessimistic outlook in reference to his weak faith. He then burst out to Jesus, "**Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief**" (Mk 9:24).

"Help our unbelief." It is not natural for the Christian to suffer from unbelief. Unbelief is a cankerous leaven that will destroy our positive mental attitudes. I think Paul had this in mind concerning the leaven of sin among the Corinthian disciples. His instruction to correct the problem was, "**Purge out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump**" (1 Co 5:7).

We need to be purged of unbelief, purged of negatives, purged of doubts, and thus purged of fear. Once we have purged ourselves of those things that hinder us from reaching our greatest potential, then we will aspire to what God would have us be. Therefore, after the Hebrew writer just took his readers through an odyssey of faith, he concluded, "**Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us**" (Hb 12:1). And while we run this race, we must not forget that "**the LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge**

in times of trouble” (Ps 9:9).

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling.

(Ps 46:1-3)

In 1953, Ira F. Samphill wrote the following song:

I traveled down a lonely road and no one seemed to care,
The burden on my weary back had bowed me to despair;
I oft complained to Jesus how folks were treating me,
And then I heard Him say so tenderly,
“My feet were also weary, upon the Calvary road;
“The cross became so heavy, I fell beneath the load;
“Be faithful, weary pilgrim, the morning I can see,
“Just lift your cross and follow close to me.”

“I work so hard for Jesus,” I often boast and say,
“I’ve sacrifice a lot of things to walk the narrow way,
“I gave up fame and fortune; I’m worth a lot to Thee,”
And then I hear Him gently say to me,

“I left the throne of glory and counted it but loss,
“My hands were nailed in anger upon the cruel cross;
“But now we’ll make the journey with your hand safe in Mine,
“So lift your cross and follow close to me.”

Oh, Jesus if I die upon a foreign field some day,
Twould be no more than love demands, no less could I repay;
“No greater love hath mortal man than for a friend to die”;
These are the words He gently spoke to me,

“If just a cup of water I place within your hand,
“Then just a cup of water is all that I demand.”
But if by death to living they can thy glory see,
I’ll take my cross and follow close to thee.

Group Review Discussion Questions

[After reading the text of this bookito, answer the following questions in a discussion group with others.]

1. Why does our failure to launch out on faith hinder us from perceiving the extent to which God works in our lives?
2. Why do we doubt the promises of God because we do not launch out in faith?
3. Why is it difficult to give God credit for our victories when we know that we did not fully trust in Him to give the victory?
4. Why does negative thinking often lead to the failure of accomplishing our goals?
5. What are some of the promises that are made to Christians in reference to their living a positive and victorious life?
6. Why is this world the best of all possible worlds for the existence of a person to make free choices in reference to moral behavior.
7. Why is positive thinking necessary in order to enjoy a life with peace of mind?
8. Why do bad choices lead to a life of constant turmoil?
9. Why does our unbelief in reference to God working our lives steal from us our faith that He is truly working in our lives?
10. What sinful behavior or choices must we set aside in order to live the abundant life about which Jesus promised that we would have if we trusted in Him?

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Ci**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pi**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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