

tion, sin, or need, we look dependently to Him, from our heart acknowledging and accepting His ability in place of our inability.

WE MUST REJECT OUR SUPPOSED ABILITIES TO DEPEND ON HIM IN EACH NEW TIME OF NEED.

We need to be careful not to depend on our words. Often what our hearts say is quite different from what our lips say.

We need to spend hours alone with Him, not so much telling Him anything or asking anything of Him as seeking Him, letting Him make us poor and needy (Matthew 5:2-6) ... willing to accept Him as the supply of all we need.

Coming to this place is a much longer and more difficult process than we expect. The hard, often crushing circumstances of life play a more vital and helpful role than we could ever anticipate. So do the disappointments, even the disappointments in our prayer lives.

Most people will never get very far just because of this. They want the road to Christian victory to be easy, they expect it to be easy, to be pleasurable. And when the difficulties, disappointments, and discouragements continue for a prolonged period of time, they give up. They may blame their teachers. Most likely in their heart of hearts they'll blame God. All of which demonstrates that God was right. They needed to be brought to the end of themselves before He dared give them more of Himself. If they weren't, they would only try to use God for their own aggrandizement, making themselves look good.

WE DARE NOT STOP

A widely-known Christian leader of days gone by in his early days wrote some of the most beautiful music, poetry, and prose about the deeper things of God. In his later years, nothing. Instead, he developed a

deeply treasured reputation in a given field of ministry. It seems something else became more important than His relationship with Almighty God. It seems he stopped depending in each moment of recognized need on the Lord Himself for victory over His fleshly sinfulness. He became just another professional clergyman, albeit a tremendously successful one.

I'm in constant danger of falling by the wayside too. So are you. I've recognized even today ways in which I've succumbed. I've sought the Lord again for His help for this day, this minute.

This isn't the answer you want, is it?

No, nor is it the one my fleshly human nature wants. But it's the only real answer we'll ever get.

GET ON YOUR FACE BEFORE GOD.

Let Him teach you your sinfulness, your incapacity, your need of Him. Let Him show you Himself as the answer you need. Your only hope. Your very life. Enough for you and all your needs right now, in every right now between now and eternity. And never, never quit. There's nothing else so important, nothing else so eternally rewarding for you and all the others you may ever be able to touch for God. Don't ever quit.

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and request extra copies for distribution.*

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Genuine Victorious Living

By Pastor Ron Marr

I remember her so well. She worked for me in the computer department of the *Christian Inquirer* newspaper.

She was young and lovely. She loved the Lord and wanted to please Him.

I couldn't help noticing it. ...She despised the bad reactions she found welling up in her when things weren't to her liking. And she secretly despised herself for allowing it.

It seemed she'd been led to believe Christians were expected always to act like saints.

Instinctively my heart went out to her in her so-unnecessary hurt . . . and to hundreds of thousands of other Christians who, with her, suffered unnecessarily due to well-meaning but mistaken guidance.

GRANDMA NEEDED HELP TOO

Years later I was deeply touched by the need of a great-grandmother, one whose son had pastored a member of our family at one time.

As she wrote me from a couple of thousand miles away, it became clear that she was uncertain of her salvation though she'd served the Lord nearly all her life.

Out of love, I phoned her. She'd been taught that without holiness no one would see the Lord. She knew her imperfections. She knew she wasn't wholly sanctified as she'd been taught she needed to be or as she felt some of the old saints were.

What a delight it was to point her to the *finished* work of Christ and the grace of God as all she needed for her hope of eternal salvation. How thrilling to see her slowly respond, and, her fears subside into rest in the Lord and His unmerited favor for salvation.

GOD'S PERFECT STANDARD VERSUS OUR NATIVE SINFULNESS

Now, it's true that godliness is frequently not stressed enough. As one well-known pastor said, "I got saved, and I was told, 'Now go to work for the Lord. That was it.'"

God's standard is nothing short of perfection. Not now. Not ever.

Therefore, to please Him, it should be our aim to be nothing short of perfect.

But, Paul hadn't attained, neither was he

already perfect according to Philippians 3:12. Nor has anyone else except our blessed Lord Himself ever been until they arrived in heaven.

Instead the closer we get to the Lord, the more we'll see the awfulness of our sin.

We need to accept our continuing sinfulness after our salvation as the reality it is.

GOD'S VICTORY PROVIDED, IF SOUGHT

On the other hand we need, even more, to accept the victory that we have in Christ.

But we need to be careful not to mistakenly think it is something that is instantly and constantly evidenced in our daily walk.

True, we are complete in Christ. True, the Father sees us through the blood of His Son as blameless. True, we are dead to sin and alive to righteousness with Christ, and this is an accomplished reality. But walking in this righteousness on a daily, momentary basis is an ongoing work of grace and sanctification by the Spirit. To use the language of Philippians chapter three, we must respond to His completed work by *counting all things beside Him but loss* that we might know Him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, and (in actual practice) be made conformable unto His death and *attain unto* the resurrection of the dead. We need to *follow after* Him so that we may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of us (Philippians 3:7-12).

Many Christians see themselves as abject failures spiritually because they recognize how often they displease the Lord and hurt others. This need not be. It must not be!

FORSAKE FALSE HOPES

Now, most place any hope they have for a victorious life either on a one-time experience such as initial salvation, or filling, or baptism of the Spirit, or on disciplined effort that,

when continued over a period of years, will surely result in new and godly habits being formed. Then they expect to find themselves naturally pleasing God and living an impressively victorious Christian life.

But, in fact, few find the instantaneous experience spontaneously producing the constant victory they long for. And, as for depending on disciplined effort, it seems to end up being the work of the flesh and the new habits being little better than might be produced by well-meaning non-Christians. A corrupt and selfish self remains at the center of the improved habits.

What is the alternative?

HOW CAN GENUINE VICTORY BE OURS?

Read II Corinthians 3:5,6,16-18; 4:6,7,15-18; 5:1-5. Yes, please do take the time to read these verses carefully. They're essential if you're to get your thinking aligned with God's on this so-important matter.

Our biggest problem is ourselves. We think we can do what needs to be done . . . or at least have a significant role in it. Instead we need to see that only God can give us the victory we long for. We need to see that our lowly role is simply ever and always to look away to Him in recognition of our inadequacy and His adequacy.

HE IS OUR VICTORY, NOW

Spiritual transformation can never be any other than this: Jesus, His life, His power doing here and now what we can never do. He does it as we stop looking to ourselves, depending on ourselves, to look to Him and depend on Him to do whatever is necessary here and now.

Jesus doesn't give us a lifetime supply of godliness. He gives us Himself, and with Him just enough of His enabling for this minute. He does it as, in each new time of tempta-