

Characteristics of True Christianity Part 4

Characteristics That Define Our Victory

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I. Introductory Remarks.

In this series of messages we have been looking at the characteristics of true Christianity.

- In the first message we looked at characteristics that define the transformation process in our lives.
- In the second message we looked at those characteristics that define who we are in Christ.
- In the last message we looked at those characteristics that define our actions.

We have been using Peter, one of Christ's early followers and disciples, as our example and illustration of true Christianity. Peter's life was transformed from a profane fisherman to a mature Christian, who had all of these defining characteristics operating in his life. Peter was not perfect, yet we see him as one who as striving to walk in these Christ-like characteristics.

2 Corinthians 2:14 *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

In the final message in this series, I want to look at those characteristics that define the victory we have in Jesus Christ.

One of the most important characteristics of a Christian is that we are called to be victorious. We have the victory and Christ wants us to walk in a manner that characterizes this victory in our lives.

We will be looking at those specific characteristics that help to define this remarkable trait in our lives. What is it that causes us to be people of victory?

II. Characteristics That Define Our Victory.

1. Victory Is Characterized By Running The Race With A Winning Attitude.

We must understand that as Christians, Christ has entered us into a great race. It's the longest marathon that has ever been known to mankind, because it stretches into eternity.

Columnist Herb Caen wrote in the San Francisco Chronicle: "Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will

starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle; when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

Spurgeon wrote likewise: "If you are not seeking the Lord, the Devil is seeking you. If you are not seeking the Lord, judgment is at your heels."

In the Christian life, it's not enough to simply to wake up. We are called to run, to become more like Christ, to press ahead in godliness. (*Bill Effler, San Mateo, CA*)

1 Corinthians 9:24 *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one (one kind of person) receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.*

We are told here that we are all entered into the race, but there is only one kind of a person who actually wins. I believe this is the person who is running with the winning attitude. He knows that no matter what obstacle may present itself in the race, Christ has given him the sufficiency to overcome and win. The writer of Hebrews gives us some helpful hints on how to win.

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

In this part of the passage there are three key elements that help us to maintain a winning attitude in the race. They are:

- ***We must lay aside the sin that hinders us.*** We must be willing to be honest and brutal with ourselves in dealing with those sins that are hindering us, because Christ has given us the victory over sin. Allowing known sins to persist in your life affects your confidence of who you are in Christ and makes you feel like a loser rather than a winner.

Romans 6:12-14 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

- ***We must run with endurance.*** Endurance has to do with taking the time to pace ourselves. It is a long marathon; therefore we must take the time to mend our wounds as we go. There are many obstacles along the way that have a tendency to break us down. We must constantly be taking the time to refresh ourselves in the Lord along the way otherwise we burn out.

Hebrews 10:36 *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:*

- ***We must keep our eyes focused on Jesus and the goals that He has for our lives.***

Many people have heard of the outstanding exploits of Blondin, the tightrope walker. Blondin amused and amazed thousands of people as he made his way over Niagara Falls on a slender rope stretched from shore to shore.

He never faltered or failed.

But Blondin had a secret. As he made his way over the rope, he would keep his eyes fixed on a large silver star which he had erected at the far end. The star was the center of his attention and guided him to the other side.

In running the heavenly race the believer must look to his Star - the bright and morning Star, the Lord Jesus. He has run the race and now bids his followers to run the race, keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus as the goal. Paul talks about the importance of keeping our focus in the midst of this great race.

1 Corinthians 9:25-26 *And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.*

To stay focused we should ask ourselves these questions and then listen seriously to the answers.

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| 1. What do I want? | 3. Am I willing to pay the price? |
| 2. What will it cost? | 4. When should I start paying the price? |

If you don't have an answer to the last question and haven't made a commitment to start, the first three questions don't really matter.

Keep in mind that if you are scattered in your focus, it will be extremely hard to maintain a winning attitude in the midst of this great race. We have been designed in such a way that we need goals to focus our attention. The mind will not reach toward achievement until it has clear objectives.

To focus correctly there are four things you need to do:

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| 1. Recognize your strengths. | 3. Recognize your limitations. |
| 2. Establish your priorities. | 4. Organize your journey. |

2. Victory Is Characterized By Faith, Belief & Obedience.

1 John 5:3-5 *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

Once again, we see that it is truly God's desire that we be overcomers. If we have truly been born of God, then one of our major characteristics is that of being an overcomer.

But it says here that it is our obedience to Christ and our faith and belief in Him that characterizes our victory. These three are all connected. Our belief gives birth to faith and faith produces the obedience.

It's important to understand that being an overcomer does not mean that we walk with a sense of pride and arrogance, but rather just the opposite. An overcomer is one who walks in a deep sense of humility, putting your confidence and trust in Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1 John 4:4 *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

It is the Holy Spirit working in us who causes us to triumph in Christ.

3. Victory Is Characterized By Our Assured Immortality.

1 Corinthians 15:54 *So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

III. Summary and Concluding Remarks.

As we conclude this series, we need to take inventory of our lives and ask God in what areas do we need to be strengthened in true Christian characteristics.

- Are we growing in God's transforming grace and putting on the new man as God has ordained?
- Are we acting like true sons and daughters of God, putting our relationship with God and his family first and foremost in our lives, or do our relationships with our naturally families overshadow our spiritual relationships?
- Are we walking in the kind of true fellowship with God and one another that He desires for your life or are we simply existing?
- Are you growing in a continuous revelation knowledge of Christ and His word or have you lost your desire for a higher education in the Spirit?

- Is your life a testimony of sacrifice and serving or is it a testimony of filling your own needs?
- Are you waging a good warfare or is the enemy getting all the victory?
- Are you walking as a victorious Christian who has entered the race with a winning attitude or are you simply trying to limp through the race – hoping you will somehow make it to the finish line?
- And finally is your life characterized by faith, belief and obedience or is it characterized more by unbelief and disobedience?

Whatever area you are falling short in, I encourage you to come to Christ and receive the grace and mercy that is needed to finish the race as the apostle Paul did.

2 Timothy 4:7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*