

# Faith Pulpit

## Biblical Foundation for Victorious Christian Living

There is a great deal of confusion today regarding what is involved in victorious Christian living and what makes it possible. Some of the answers being given out are plainly wrong, and many others are only partially true. It will be in the teaching of the Scriptures that God's answers will be found. It is not possible in this brief treatment to mention everything which could be said, but a framework will be developed to note God's wonderful provisions for us in this area of victorious Christian living.

### **Provision #1: The Work of Jesus Christ**

The death and resurrection of Christ are at the very heart of the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4) "Christ died for our sins . . . and He rose again the third day" the Apostle Paul declares. How are these benefits applied to us? Again, the Apostle states, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). It is by personal trust in what Christ has accomplished through the shedding of His blood and His bodily resurrection that salvation is appropriated. This is God's gospel; yet there are false gospels abounding, such as the sacramental gospel—"I need the Church's sacraments in order to be saved", the legalistic gospel—"I must do something or obey some set of rules in order to be saved", the whole gospel—"Social involvement is necessary in order to be saved", or the full gospel—"I must have an emotional experience with the Holy Spirit in order to be saved". The Bible's attitude toward diverse gospels and their proclaimers is clear: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9).

One of the main reasons why there is uncertainty about Christian living is due to the fuzzy thinking about the Gospel and the significance of trusting in Christ's death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins. There are times when tolerance may be a virtue, but this is not true when it comes to Biblical teaching.

Christ's death and resurrection are not only the basis for the forgiveness of sin, but also are the basis for breaking the power of sin in the believer's life today. The Scriptures declare, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:9–11).

### **Provision #2: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

The Bible teaches that every believer in this present age is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9 & 15; John 14:16 & 17). He wants to minister to us and through us to others. These ministries are varied, but one such ministry has to do with enabling the believer to live victoriously. We are commanded: "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" (Ephesians 4:30), but, rather, "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18b). This speaks to the issue of *yieldedness* on our part and of *control* by God's Spirit. Romans 6 teaches, "yield yourselves unto God ... yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (verses 13 & 19), and Romans 8 says, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (verse 2). In yet another place we read "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust or the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:16 & 17).

When the believer attempts to live victoriously in one's own power, failure is the result. This often leads to either discouragement or redefining what sin is so that we can excuse ourselves. Victory is not possible in the energy of the flesh. It is only when we recognize that supernatural power is needed and we yield to the Holy Spirit's control that genuine spiritual victory will take place. The result of yieldedness is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–25) exhibited in one's life.

### **Provision #3: The Influence of the Local Church**

When the Apostle Paul gave his farewell address to the pastors at Ephesus (Acts 20:17–35), he urged them to "feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (verse 28b). He speaks to pastors within a local church context here and reminds them to "take heed ... to oil the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" (28a). He speaks of the Corinthian congregation as "the temple of God" (1 Corinthians 3:1–17), and he reminds Timothy that the local church is "the house of God," "the church of the living God," and "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15). All of these passages indicate that local churches are the provision of God, and they are intended to benefit believers in their walk with God.

Note what we are told specifically in Acts 2:41 & 42. Here we see a pattern for growth—both for the believer as an individual and also for the local church corporately.

1. The assembly is made up of those who “gladly received” the apostle’s message (vs. 41). They were believers who loved the Lord and wanted to obey Him.
2. They were baptized (vs. 41). They were willing to publicly identify themselves with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-17), reject the old lifestyle and affirm God’s way, and be recognized as a part of the people of God.
3. They became officially identified with the local believers (they “were added unto them ...” vs. 41).
4. They developed in their walk with the Lord through four provisions of the local church.

a. The Apostle’s Doctrine—They sat under the teaching/preaching ministry of the apostles as careful systematic exposition of the Scriptures took place. They listened and learned from God’s Word. This is the beginning place for growth, and it is the foundation upon which these other provisions rest. The preacher with love and concern for the spiritual well-being of the flock faithfully teaches the great truths of the Bible.

b. Fellowship—They received encouragement and support from their brothers and sisters in Christ who were also learning and growing in their walk with God.

c. Breaking of Bread—While a common meal was often practiced (see 1 Corinthians 11:20–22, 33,34), this is a more specific reference to the observance by the local church of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 11:23–30; Acts 20:7). This was a frequent time for reflection on one’s own life and walk, and it was a time for meditation upon our Lord’s giving of Himself for us. It was intended to result in self examination and confession of sin in one’s life (1 Corinthians 11:28).

d. Prayers—This does not appear to be a reference primarily to one’s own personal private life, but it is, rather, to those times when believers gather together to pray within their local church. Acts 4:13–33 serves as a good example of this kind of praying. When we pray together and ask God to work, and when we see God answer specific prayers, we grow in our walk with Him.

One further point needs to be made. In Acts 2:42 it states that these believers “continued steadfastly” in their local churches and actively made use of opportunities for hearing God’s Word taught, opportunities for fellowship with one another opportunities to partake of the Lord’s Table, and opportunities to be involved in times of prayer. This speaks to the fact that these believers understood that these were provisions from God for their welfare, and they were committed to these means for growth.

Is it possible for believers today to experience victorious Christian living? God’s answer is a resounding “yes!” He has made victory possible through the death and resurrection of His Son, through the indwelling and controlling ministries of the Holy Spirit, and through the provision of New Testament Bible-believing local churches where believers have opportunity for growth and service.

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