The Victory of the Lord Jesus is also our Victory

In recent years "triumphalism" has become an attitude to be shunned. If by this term you mean a proud bragging superiority, then it ought to be renounced by all Christians. The trend however has been to develop a "theology of failure" that sees the Cross as the pattern of humble submission to failure.

Nothing could be further from the joyful affirmation of the New Testament. The "gentle Jesus meek and mild" (however true that may be of the beauty of His character) is none other than the Lord of glory – the Lord Omnipotent who sits on the throne of glory waiting until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet (Ps. 110:1) – a graphic reference to the old practice of the victorious king treading on the necks of the vanquished in battle who lay in the dust before him. (Joshua 10:24)

We need to recover the Biblical perspective. One hymn writer has expressed it as follows:

"Thine be the glory, Risen Conquering Son!
Endless is the victory Thou o'er death has won!"

The incarnation of our Lord Jesus was the long awaited majestic invasion of the world by the King of Kings – a rescue mission to throw back Satan who had usurped sovereignty over a world not his own. ***"The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."*** (Ps. 24:1)

"When the time had fully come …." (Gal. 4:4) It was a mighty mission to redeem the world. It was an all-out attack on the satanic forces of evil with one object – ***"To destroy him who has the power of death – that is the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death"***. (Heb. 2:2-14)

The uncompromising starkness of the language is heart-warming. Satan's destructive reign of tyranny that keeps the world groaning in bondage will be destroyed! The thief who ***"comes to destroy"*** (Jn. 10:10) will himself be destroyed. ***"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."*** (1 Jn. 3:8)

It is significant that the first to recognise this were the very demon serfs of Satan, ***"What have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? We know who you are – the Holy One of God."*** (Mk. 1:24) In Matthew 8:29 they add, ***"Have you come here to torment us before the time?"*** They knew the time was up. They had known it all along.

- **The Gospel of the Kingdom**

This theme rings through the Gospels like a trumpet call demanding attention. The first words of Jesus proclaim it, ***"The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"*** (Mk. 1:15) The good news is that the long-awaited King has come. Mankind is summoned to repent of its rebellion and believe the truth! The same message is proclaimed by the Risen Lord Jesus all through the 40 days before the Ascension. (Acts 1:3) It lies behind the thrust of the apostolic preaching in Acts 2 where Peter preaches the Resurrection and quotes Psalm 110:1. His appeal is striking, ***"Save yourselves from this corrupt generation"***!

In his letters Paul explains that the Cross, rather than the Resurrection, was the moment of victory. In Colossians 2:5 he states that on that first Good Friday Jesus, ***"Disarmed the powers and authorities and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the Cross."*** The Cross was no failure! It was victory! What the world could not see, the eye of faith sees clearly directed by Scripture.

Our majestic Saviour climbed Calvary's Hill to do battle with Satan and all his demon hordes. He took them on single-handed as, in the darkness of that day, Satan summoned all his strength to destroy the Son of God. But Jesus, ***"Disarmed them … and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing***

over them by the Cross." It is a magnificent statement! This is reason we call the day Good Friday and not bad/tragic Friday. The glorious Resurrection was a demonstration of the victory already won on Calvary. That is the victory of the Gospel! The King has come! The war is over! Alleluia!

- **The Context of the Victory**

Scripture teaches that Satan's hosts are heading for doom, ***"Kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgement on the great day"***. (Jude 6) The victory has been won. The end could not be more secure! We live in the 'in-between' days as we wait for that final judgement. But Satan and his hordes are still dangerous even while they are being led off to judgement. Get near them and you are likely to be hurt. The discipline of victory is to have nothing to do with Satan and to put to death rapidly the very thought of falling into line with him. (Read Col. 3:5 and the following verses.)

The world, so cruelly torn and twisted by Satan's destructive meanness, has still to be re-made. The day is still in the future when there will be ***"new heavens and the new earth"***. (Is. 65:17) Paul tells us that, ***"Creation groans and travails right up to the present time waiting to be liberated from bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."***

"Not only so, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved." (Rom. 8:21-24)

We are called to live out our days in the 'in-between' times looking eagerly for the day when the victory won at Calvary is applied and consummated throughout all of God's Kingdom – ***"the glory that will be revealed"***. (Rom. 8:18) But future glory is seen in the context of present suffering. The suffering may be persecution from those who refuse to bow to the King of the Kingdom. But for all God's people suffering involves living in a world yet to be re-made where Satan can scream and shout even though he is in chains.

Commentators have often pointed out that there are past, present and future aspects to our salvation. ***"We have been saved"*** looks back and sees the Christian 'ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven' through the finished work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross. ***"We are being saved"*** looks around at the challenges we will face through Christ's victory applied in every situation.

There is a well-loved illustration: three sailors in a lifeboat see their ship sinking beneath the waves and one of them shouts, **"Thank You God we have been saved!"** Another sailor seeing the mountainous waves being ridden by their lifeboat cries, **"Thank You God we are being saved!"** A third sailor catches a glimpse of land nearby and cries out, **"Thank You God we will soon be saved!"** The security of the Christian is in Christ's victory.

- **The Discipline of Victory**

'Riding out the storm' requires discipline and courage. Nobody ever said the Christian life would be easy – least of all the Lord Jesus. Jesus said it is like taking up and carrying a large heavy wooden cross. The hostile wind of the world still blows and the stinging salt spray whips the face and threatens the boat. Only a fool would be careless in such a situation. The Christian may often wish he were home and dry. Down through the ages the repeated cry of countless Christians has been, **"How long Lord? How long?"** But the Christian is safe in the Lord Jesus and because he is safe, God leaves him where he is to stretch out a helping hand to others on the sea of life. The Lord Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father, ***"My prayer is not that You take them out of the world, but that You protect them from the evil one"***. (Jn. 17:15)

So the Christian is "in the world but not of the world". Such a situation will naturally demand discipline. The world and its attitudes are still strongly influenced by Satan – the Prince of this World. He is constantly seeking to pull the Christian back into its clutches. James says the Christian must learn to resist. ***"Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near***

to you." (James 4:7-8) So the discipline is twofold. On the one hand **resist Satan** and on the other hand **stay close to God**. The first action is done by the second action. The two can't be separated!

It is a matter of orientation. Paul says, ***"Set your minds on things above not on earthly things"***. (Col. 3:2) To have our thinking determined by the world, the flesh and the devil is a recipe for disaster. But to have our thinking determined by the Spirit of God is victory. Paul tells the Galatians, ***"Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."*** (Gal. 5:16) It is a good discipline to check constantly which agenda we are working to.

The tensions we encounter in this fight of faith – to shut out the clamour of the world and to open and keep open the windows of heaven – are part and parcel of the discipline of the Christian life. They are the mark of true spirituality. But the Christian is not just left prone to the temptations of the world. He is powerfully aided and defended, prompted and empowered by the Lord who is the Spirit. To be wholly oriented to Him so as to live a life ***"led by the Spirit"*** (Gal. 5:18) is to know Christ's victory in our own experience.

The Resurrection: the Final Victory

The best is yet to come! In his magnificent chapter on the Resurrection of believers at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, Paul makes it clear that this is the truest expression of Christ's victory. Speaking of the resurrection of believers he writes, ***"Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** (1 Cor. 15:57)

When that promised resurrection takes place the saying that is written will come true, ***"Death has been swallowed up in victory! Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (1 Cor. 15:54)

However hard the struggle may prove and however long the fight, the end is secure and in sight. God gives us the victory! The coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of all God's people will signal an end of Satan and all his hosts and the whole of creation will know the liberty of the children of God.