

Victory in Jesus
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
June 17, 2007
FBC Waynesboro

Jesus says, “in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” Jesus teaches us to pray, “lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” It is as if in the same breath we are taught to ask that God would not take us into temptation while at the same time acknowledging that it is going to come. Paul puts it this way, “all of us who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus are going to be persecuted.” And in more than one place this apostle who knew all about trials and tribulations, temptations and testing would speak of them as being used of God as a gift of grace to bring glory to His Name and to build into us the character of Christ. Jesus would experience the glorious presence of the Father in baptism and then immediately be driven by the Spirit of His Father into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Count on it. Mark it as one of the clear characteristics of every child of God: temptations are going to come and tribulations are a part of the course of our lives in this world as the children of God. But know this: the same God who is absolutely sovereign over every situation in your life and my life wants us to know right in the midst of tempting and testing that overwhelming victory that is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. Too often you and I read of Paul’s struggles as he portrays them for us in Romans 7: doing that which he does not want to do and not doing that which he so much desires to do and we simply don’t read far enough. Listen to the crescendo of his conclusion in this chapter, 7:21-25. So this morning we turn from how sin works and where it leads toward this wonderful and precious victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The principle of this victory that is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed plainly in this passage in 1 Corinthians 10 and the process for us experiencing and expressing this victory that is ours is enunciated in James 1. Let’s look briefly this morning at this passage in 1 Corinthians 10 and then spend some time with the remainder of James 1. The first five verses of 1 Corinthians 10 reminds us that goodness and grace of God are manifest to all but not all respond to and receive the goodness and grace of God. Listen to the repetition of the word “all” in the first four verses. God revealed Himself to all. God showed to all His power and His provision and He gave His protection to all but He was not pleased with all of them. The

word that is used here is a word for being accepted by and acceptable to God and with most of them the Bible says God was not pleased. In fact, we know that a whole generation died without going into the promised land because they were under the judgment of God even though they had seen and shared in the marvelous redemption of God.

Then in verses 7-11 God gives us the meaning and the message of these things that had happened in the past during the period of the Old Covenant. The word “warning” is found in verse 6 and 11 and here is the meaning. God is at work through these various events to bring to us a word of warning. He is calling us to look closely at our the character of our confession and the course of our commitment lest we be among those who are being carried off by the enemy while thinking that we really are being faithful to Jesus. He sets before us here four kinds of people who all fell under the wrathful judgment of God while sincerely thinking themselves to be those who blessed God and were blessed of God. The sin of the first was IDOLATRY, 7. These are the ones who from every outward appearance seem to love God and give Him worship while their hearts are set on the pursuit of their own pleasure. The sin of the second group was IMMORALITY, 8. These people are set before us in Numbers 25 and although the symptom of their sinful hearts is sexual immorality the source of their sin is a compromised commitment where they really do want to belong to God while at the same time they want to be affirmed and accepted by the people of the world. The third group are SELECTIVE AND SEDUCTIVE, 9. Their God is the one who is for them and with them to do for them whatever they want him to do. He is the god of the health, wealth, and prosperity people of our day. Get sick and pray, you get well. Get in debt and pray and you get rich. And when you have all that you want and desire you raise your hands to heaven and when you don’t get what you want, you raise your fist. John Piper says that the only biblical response of biblical people toward this most prevalent false gospel in our day is hatred. Those who believe cannot be believers. And the fourth kind of person is the SELF-CENTERED AND SELFISH, 10. Their god is the one who always does things their way and when he doesn’t they just grumble and complain. So God says that He shows us this truth so that we would be warned and that we would learn.

Look what comes next. The conclusion to this teaching about what has been and why it has been is a word about testing and temptation. Why here and why now? Because one of the most certain characteristics of every

child of God that will not ever go away until you get to heaven is that you are going to be tested and you are going to be tempted so Paul here gives us the principle, the plan, and the purpose of God in the midst of our trials and temptations. The principle is that we should never think that we won't fall. Pity the man or woman who think themselves above doing what others have done under the deceit of the devil. The plan is that the pattern of testings and temptations is the same for every human. There are different testings and temptations but the direction is the same. And here is the purpose of God for His people in the midst of them: He gives us everything that we need to endure. He gives us what we need both to be patient and to persevere, both to wait upon Him and to let His work have its full force of weight both in us and through us. And James teaches us how this is to happen.

First, we must see what God sees. Three things here. We must see that God is at work in our trials, 2-4. Look at verse 4: when sin has its full effect, it produces death but when perseverance in the midst of tough times has its full effect it produces a person who is perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. God is at work in our trials to perfect the experience of His person in us and the expression of His purpose through us. What do you most want as a believer? Isn't it right here? We want to know Him and we want to serve Him, and God uses trials to deepen our relationship to Him as we do the work that He has called us to do. Second, we must see God's wisdom in our trials, 5-8. Verse 6 is central and critical. To ask in faith is to ask as one who is faithful; who is the one who isn't faithful? That one has compromised commitment, that one who lives under the Word when it is convenient but lives by the way of the world when it is convenient; that one who uses the Bible to justify a way of living that is clearly not biblical. James says such a person is unstable and will receive nothing from God. So we must see that God is at work in our trials and it is the wisdom that God gives us that enables us to see it. So that when we do not see God at work in our trials, it could well be that we are not looking at our trials from the perspective of the word of God and thus do not have in the midst of our trials the true wisdom of God. Third, we must see God's way through our trials and His ways are not our ways as His thoughts are not our thoughts, 9-11. James recognizes here a perpetual problem among all peoples: we are prone to attach blessing to what is material and monetary and thus both misunderstand and misrepresent God. So, he calls the humble man—here one who has little of this world's wealth----to glory in his exaltation and the wealthy man to his humiliation and the source for both is God. The poor

man who has nothing can look at his little and know that it does not matter to God and the rich man can look at his lots and know that it does not matter to God. When you are the maker and the owner of the universe, a buck or a billion is not impressive. But James knows the problem is not with the poor but with the rich and the problem is not the riches but the failure to see the fragility and mortality of life in this world. Thus, the rich man without the wisdom of God is pursuing more and more and failing to see that the more and more means nothing at all in the eyes of the great judge of the universe. But getting this one right is a problem for the people of God in every period, 2:1-4.

If you are going to see and sense victory in the midst of temptations and testings, you must see that God is at work in our trials, you must see God's wisdom for our trials and you must see God's way through our trials so that you never measure meaning in life in relationship to God by the way that the world measures meaning in life. To see God's work in our tough times we must have God's wisdom and we must never assess the meaning of life the way the world assesses the meaning of life.

To know the victory of God in the midst of our times of testing and temptation, we must not only see what God sees, we must know what God shows us. We must know first that God works in our trials for that which is good, 16-18. God is good and He does that which is good. He has brought us forth by His will that we might represent Him upon this earth until He takes us home with Him forever. Your whole life here as a believer could be filled with perpetual problems that never pass away, and if the real meaning of life is tied to this world; then you have every reason and right to be miserable. But the meaning of life for us is not tied to this world. We are living in time from eternity where there will be no problems, no pain, no trials, no temptations, no tears. The image here of a God who never changes would have been very vivid for the people of that period: they would go to the hills where the representations of the gods were placed. One god for almost every need. There would be for example a representation of Asclepius the god of healing. And the worshipper would sit before the icon until the sun would cast its rays on the icon and thus a shadow over the worshipper and then the worshipper would leave because the shadow meant that the god had changed to give the worshipper whatever he or she desired. Aren't you glad we don't serve a deity like that over which we are in control? He is good and He does that which is good for His people.

Not only must we know that God works in our trials that which is good, we must know that it is through our trials that God brings us His word to grow us, 19-21. He describes here a person who is not pleasing to God who is quick to speak when he doesn't get what he desires, even to get angry if his prayers are not heard and answered in his way. James says that our anger does not work what is right from God. Get mad all you want, it doesn't change God. It just shows the filthiness and wickedness inside our souls which can only be cleansed and consecrated by the Word of God which we receive into ourselves and it changes us from the inside out. So, God works in us that which is good and that work in us produces growth for His glory and it manifests itself in some very specific ways, 22-27. We become doers of the Word. It is seen in our speech, 26. It is seen in our service, 27 and it is seen in our sanctification, 27.

I want to wrap up this little mini-series that sprang out of our study of Exodus by showing you and us seeing what is the most present and persistent problem in our not seeing and understanding trials and temptations as God sees them and understands them. I believe it is the reason that trials torment us and temptations trip us up. James says that if we are going to have victory in the midst of trials and temptations we must see that God is at work in our trials and we must see His wisdom for our trials and we must not see life in this world as the world sees it through the categories of the monetary and the material. James says that if we are going to have victory in the midst of trials and temptations we must know what God shows us that He is a good God who is doing a good work in our lives even in bad times so that we speak His praise and we serve His people while keeping ourselves unblemished from the world. We have such difficulty with trials and temptations because we are too much influenced by the world and its ways. And it is exactly what Satan wants. Because the world and its ways is the primary source of all our temptations and the primary reason that we are so devastated when trials come. But the child of God does not live with the perspective of this world only so that in the midst of times of testing and times of temptation we give praise to God because we know that our good and glorious God is doing a good work that will bring glory to His name and good to His people. And we know that a life-time of trial is not even worth comparing to the glory that one day is going to be revealed in us when we see Jesus. Listen to the world and you will be very limited in how you see trials and temptations; listen to the Word and you will know that although you can neither sense nor see it, understand it or explain it; God is doing a good work because it is impossible for Him to do otherwise.