

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my wonderful children Janine, Matthew and Benjamin. May you always triumph in Christ as you follow hard after Him.

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Victim to VICTOR

The Power of Attitude

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Chapter 1

What Did I Do to Deserve This?

Introduction

I had occasion to drive past the huge Boeing Field construction area in Everett, Washington State and saw some union strikers at the curbside protesting some management issue at the time. They were prepared to lose pay in order to get more – something that could take years to recoup. They seemed to have had some strong feelings about it all. A few weeks later I drove past the same spot again and noticed another interesting sight. This time there were no live protestors, but nearby a large bronze statue of a group protesting with placards caught my eye. This had been there all the time and stood outside the union headquarters. The thought that crossed my mind was that perhaps the statue stood as a testimony to a mindset that feeds off protest at best – and victimization at worst.

Judging by the radio, TV billboard and magazine ads I see for personal injury lawyers, victimization seems to be fast growing industry. Statistics show a marked increase in injury lawsuits. Today so many specialists get rich as they spend their days in a career that identifies, represents, interviews, counsels, insures and treats victims. Things have gone so far that, in many cases, even perpetrators of crime are hiring experts to defend them as victims of some other previous situation that drove them to crime... and so it goes!

Some Questions

Have you ever tried something and it did not work out? Did you then try something else, and that didn't work out either? Then what did you do? What were your thoughts at that point, and were you then afraid to try something new? Everyone I know has faced some failure or other. Some have overcome, others have really not recovered from their setbacks. Their 'todays' are bogged down and stuck in the mud of the bad experiences of their 'yesterdays' and even their 'tomorrows' look murky.

Shifting the Blame

When we examine the responses to failure we can trace a pattern all the way back to Adam. Since Adam fell, the world has experienced a lot of pain and suffering. It does not seem fair that we should suffer for someone else's transgression. After all, wasn't it Adam's fault that the world is in the mess it is? We may be tempted to push our problems away and shift the blame to another. If we adopt this line of reasoning then we should realize that the flip side is equally unfair. We enjoy God's forgiveness, cleansing and hope through what Jesus did. He paid the price and did it all, but we are the ones to get all the benefits! It cuts both ways. The solution is not to look at life in terms of fairness. Rather look at it this way. In Christ all things can be new! What a promise and statement of fact for those who accept Him. The key is that Christ is the start of something brand new. There is nothing better than a completely new start, a fresh, clean and untainted new start! Fairness is not even an issue when we are swept up in the love of God and our consciences cleansed from guilt and shame.

In Short

A 'victim' is someone who has suffered some wrong. A 'victim mentality' is the 'mindset' that develops when that person does not respond correctly to their injury. When this mentality develops, it can program you to react in certain ways. A pattern of hurt, rejection, despair, cynicism and discouragement can follow with lifelong consequences. We all experience relational conflict and trauma at some stage in life. Some things are even out of our control. In these cases, how we respond will make the difference the next time we go through something similar.

Life Proverb

It is not what happens **to** you, but what happens **in** you that is most important.

Response is Everything

Life has rough and smooth edges to it. When good things happen we say: "What did I do to deserve this?" When bad things happen we switch it around and say in a different tone: "What did I do to deserve this?" How we perceive or see things becomes critical if we are to properly respond to life's situations.

Most people pride themselves in being able to see things as they really are! For example we are so sure we know exactly what was intended when someone says or does something. Sometimes things are obvious, but there are times when because of our way of thinking we can process something completely wrong. If we are not careful we can go through life perceiving things in the wrong light.

For example, a minister friend traveled to Hawaii on vacation and was warned about the supposed pervading evil presence there. Well, he had no problems at all – and had a wonderful vacation. He spent his time enjoying God and His creation, and did not spend his time in fear of the evil that was supposed to saturate the air. His attitude, and faith, caused him to see *and experience* things differently.

This side of heaven there is enough good to overcome evil, enough light to dispel darkness. The key is to focus on the good whilst eradicating the evil through the preaching of the gospel and good deeds. The choice is ours to starve evil to death by giving it no place to grow. Fear is the seedbed for evil to grow. We are to deal with it by developing a faith that is rooted in the love of God.

‘Indebtedness’

Many people feel that the world owes them something. They feel that they have been dealt a bad hand and deserve to be compensated. This feeling is even found among some Christians who have a shallow understanding of the significance of what God has already done for us through Christ. The truth is we are indebted to everyone else, beginning with God!

I believe some perspective is useful here. We owe our dads for the seed of life, our moms for nine months free ‘board and lodging,’ the teacher for teaching us to read and write. The list goes on: the employer for giving us a job, the road engineer for building the road we drive on, the Lord who bled and died for us, giving us His life. We owe thanks to God and our fellow human beings. Sure you may argue that the bad things that have happened to you need to be dealt with. The issue is where and how? Only when we truly understand the depth to which God went to deal with human suffering on the cross, can we focus on the good, and what we can do to help others. Through Christ, God

provided for our total well-being: spirit, soul and body. We are complete in Him, and our needs provided for in the covenant. We receive God's provision by faith through His promises. When we enjoy God's abundance in Christ we have enough to freely give to others. We are freed from a mindset that seeks to get all it can from others. This poverty mindset is based on a fear of doing without. Conversely, if we live to give, because we are grateful for God's provision, then there is no time or inclination to be on the defensive.

Personal Testimony

When our family left the relative comfort of our homeland with its familiarity and job security, we experienced some good and bad things on our journey. The good things stem from faith and the mercy of God. The bad things were rooted in our ignorance, foolishness, presumption and pride as well as a dose of 'good old fashioned' persecution. Our responses were varied. There were times where we did not handle our circumstances well at all. We knew that God was with us and cared about us, even though it didn't seem that way. In looking back it became clear that God was also interested in what was developing in our hearts. Of course He cared about the difficulties associated with moving and settling in a foreign country, but these were small in comparison to what He wanted to do through us. Time and again God reminded us to develop and maintain a positive attitude, and to be thankful for what we did have rather than complain about what we did not have. There were times where we felt things were just plain unfair, but that didn't help much. We still had to drop that approach and take hold of His hand and press on in faith.

The Goal

A plant is supported and fed by a root system. In the next chapters the goal is to identify the 'root and fruit' of the 'victim mentality' and show from the Word of God how it can be overcome.

Chapter 2

Pity Me

Throwing the Spotlight in the Right Place!

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Heb 4:12

We are made up of the inner and outer man. God speaks to our hearts – the inner man. However what it hears is processed through the mind – the realm of intellect, emotions and will. The mentality or posture people adopt towards life is found in the soulish or mind realm. If we have a way of thinking or a mindset that does not line up with the word of God, then confusion prevails. The Word of God is given to divide, pierce, or separate out the spirit from the soul or mind. Much like a ruler, it becomes the standard against which all our thinking is measured. God and his Word are one. When we become one with God through Jesus, we become one with His Word. Our thinking has to be renewed to the Word.

The Importance of Recognizing the ‘Victim Mentality’

A person with a victim mentality will have a twisted view on life. Let me illustrate. As a sportsman I sustained injuries to my back on a couple of occasions. My back reacted by cramping up in muscle spasms. It was trying to compensate for the injury and in some way try to balance out the pain. It literally caused me to twist up and I could not even walk upright. Fortunately through time and therapy, things came right and I straightened up and regained my strength.

Likewise, the inner man can adopt a posture or attitude that compensates for emotional and spiritual pain. Relational hurts, harsh words, disappointments and family strife, for example, can cause people to react and become ‘bent.’ Subsequently even good things are now viewed with distrust, and misunderstood.

If we are not watchful, we may harbor hurts that cause us to look at life with less and less hope and optimism. We begin to view things in a cynical light

and develop what we feel are defensive postures designed to protect us from further harm. The next step is to feel sorry for ourselves and ask what we did to deserve all this. If we do not get the Lord's help at this stage we shift the blame onto others and start building a destructive victim mentality.

Our relationship with God and others becomes warped, and we lose perspective of the way things really are.

The 'Fruit' of a Victim Mentality

A tree is recognized by its fruit. When a person struggles with a victim mentality they usually show certain symptoms. First of all, there is a tendency to 'shift the blame' onto anyone else when things go wrong. This started early back in the garden when Adam would not accept responsibility for his own sin, and so shifted the blame to Eve.

The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. Gen 3:12

In our day we can see this tendency all around us. Think of how the government is blamed for everything from the price of gas to the level of reading and writing in schools! Look at who gets blamed for failures in church, marriage, business, and even some sporting events. Referees get blamed, the coach...and so it goes. I have heard people blame their parents for in some cases what they did, or then in others for what they did not do. The point is not really where the blame is or is not, but what happens to our hearts in times of difficulty. Unjust and unfair things do happen but if our faith in God's forgiveness is secure, we avoid playing the blame game. We will focus on moving on, and do what is necessary to ensure that our tomorrows will be free from yesterday's hurts.

Criticism and fault-finding is another fruit of the 'victim mentality.' When the focus is shifted to others we don't have to face our own faults. It is easier to point the finger at someone else than at oneself. I have found that whenever I get to the point of admitting my mistakes and failings, there is a sense of release, and I can build on what God wants for me at that point.

Frequent use of the words 'It's just not fair' or 'why did this happen to me?' are further victim expressions. Some people spend a lifetime trying to equalize

things out, yet the Bible reveals that God has already squared up all unfairness through the sacrifice of His son Jesus Christ:

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Rom 5:18

He paid the price for unfairness. To many it is unfair that we suffer so much because of what Adam did. Think of all of the ravaging consequences of sin: sickness, distress, murder, pillage, famine, and earthquakes. Yet it is equally unfair that we enjoy the wonderful benefits of God's salvation because of what Jesus did. The awesome thing is that we enjoy God's forgiveness, provision and protection even though we don't deserve it! Life is not about fairness, but about faith.

A 'victim mentality' causes warped relationships with God and man. Correction and discipline is seen as rejection and punishment rather than an expression of love. Love and discipline are not mutually exclusive. Earthly fathers educate, train, and discipline their natural children, and our heavenly Father does no less. He not only nurtures, but also admonishes. There are two sides to the coin of growing up in the Lord.

People who suffer with feelings of victimization generally struggle with being generous with their words and substance. They find it hard to praise God freely and pass on compliments to those around them. They display a subtle tendency to pull others down by speaking negatively about them. Some describe this as the 'Crab bucket' syndrome. If you can't get out the bucket yourself, make sure that no one else does!

Frequent 'pity parties' and depression is another choice people make in an attempt to validate their suffering. They attempt to drown out the feelings of despair with diversions that do not address root issues. Substance abuse: drinking, drugging, even obsessive eating, are physical attempts to avoid facing reality. The Bible has several examples of people that have run from their problems only to find themselves and the problem at the end of the run! Think of Moses, Elijah, Jonah, and Peter. They all ran at some time in their lives, but God brought them back to reality and faith, restoring them all back

to their calling and ministry. Thank God He is patient, and challenges our pouting behavior.

Escape is another symptom of the victim mentality. Hope is lost of ever changing things, and so comfort is found in food, alcohol, or other substance abuse. These represent short-lived efforts to swamp or dull the pain, but really do not provide real escape. So another dose has to be taken and so on. Only God can provide the true lasting way of escape.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Cor 10:13

Summary

A person who feels victimized in life will struggle to relate to God and other people. They will not see the positive opportunities that every setback presents, and will stick on the treadmill of self-pity, rather than step up on the back of their problems and turn them into stepping-stones.

Chapter 3

Victimized by God?

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials...

Let no one say when he is tempted 'I am tempted by God...

James 1:2, 13

The 'Prophet's Pity Party'

Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

Rom 11:1-4

Elijah enjoyed a great victory over the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel. Queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, then threatened him with death and he ran over 50 miles away to Beersheba – a day's journey into the wilderness. He becomes suicidal, but in the despair of sleep, an angel mercifully strengthens him. He continues his journey and eventually lands up in a cave, his dark place of deception. It is here that he can no longer see the big picture and collapses in on himself and bemoans his fate and supposed isolation. Remember, we are talking about a great prophet of God!

His extreme disappointment over Israel's lack of repentance after God's great display of grace brings on a feeling of isolation. He complains to God about how only he was the only one left! With his faith weakened, he has a 'pity party.' When questioned by God, he even goes so far as to stick to his story twice.

So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." 1 Kings 19:10, 14

The Lord graciously shows him in an object lesson with the earthquake and storm that he is not to look to the dramatic, but focus on the still small voice. God refuses to join Elijah's pity party and commissions him to get up and get busy doing what he was supposed to do as a prophet: anoint some kings and a successor!

***The Apostle Paul and His 'Thorn in the Flesh'-
Taking the Pity out of his Party***

Saul, later to be renamed Paul, had a bad start in ministry: he was very religious, so much so that he was an accomplice to Stephen's martyrdom. When Stephen was stoned to death, Saul was the coat holder in this deadly deed. He thought he was doing God a favor by killing Christians. His zeal was without knowledge of God's plan in Christ. Later, on his way to Damascus, he fell off his horse and went temporarily blind in an encounter with the risen Christ! What an introduction to 'Ministry 101.' Despite all this, God had a wonderful plan for Paul.

God started with the end in sight. He shows Paul what was going to happen in advance. He was to bear God's name before the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel as a chosen vessel.

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15

Paul becomes part of a dynamic church in Antioch as an associate, and is later propelled into apostolic ministry with Barnabas as probably the greatest apostle in New Testament times. He had been turned from being a zealous, religious fanatic; prepared to resort to murder, to an anointed Christian, now prepared to lay down his own life for those he once persecuted.

Paul's ministry flourished as he established churches all over Asia Minor. He also writes most of the epistles in the New Testament. Yet all was not plain sailing for Paul. The pressure got intense, and at one point he cries out to God about this 'thorn in the flesh,' described as a messenger of Satan. He pleaded to God for it to be removed, thinking that God was somehow involved in the suffering. Paul eventually understands what was God was saying to him. God reminded him that the grace he already had was enough to face the buffeting he was experiencing. It was sufficient! In short, he was to stop whining and use the grace he *already had* to be a winner in the situation.

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart

from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Cor 12:7-9

In context, we see that he faced troubles, persecution and opposition to his ministry wherever he went. The Judaizers tried to undermine what he did by coming in after him and spreading doctrinal dissension. Their spoiling tactics were of great concern for Paul whose love for the new believers he had left behind weighed him down. At times these men were able to get Paul beaten up and thrown in prison. In addition, he was also shipwrecked three times and stoned once. He lived under threat and in perils of all sorts from man and beast. Not your regular pew-sitter type of Christianity. Pioneering proved to be pretty exacting work for Paul.

From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 2 Cor 11:24-28

God was not prepared to join Paul's pity party, even though it might have seemed that He did not care. He did care, enough to remind Paul that he already had what it takes to fight the fight of faith. In the heat of his spiritual battle, Paul had lost perspective and needed to have it lovingly restored. The blunt truth we know and accept sets us free.

Later on, Paul got to the point in his walk with the Lord where even though he was in prison for his faith, he could write these words to encourage us.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:13-14

He had learned to forget, and turn misery into ministry, lemons into lemonade, and setbacks into service! His spiritual and emotional posture was forward looking as he focused on his call. He recognized the price he had to pay for his call was great, and was prepared to pay it gladly.

Paul learned that contentment was not dependent on circumstance. He found his contentment in his relationship with God and came to understand that his covenant rights in Christ, come with responsibilities. He learned that to 'maintain' the anointing he had to have matching character.

Chapter 4

The Power of Attitude!

Our attitude towards difficulty determines our altitude, or how high we go in God! Any pilot will tell you this is true when flying an aircraft. For example aircraft have an ‘attitude indicator’ that shows the attitude or orientation of the aircraft as it relates to the horizon. When you have a ‘nose high’ attitude your performance is affected. When ‘nose down’, your performance is also affected. ‘Nose level’ is the key for level flying. If the nose or front of the aircraft is properly positioned the rest of the craft follows on behind and flying is smooth and efficient.

I had an opportunity to pilot a single engine plane for a while over Southern California one day. My instructor taught me to keep the craft level according to the horizon indicator. I did so and it was easy to keep the craft level. When the nose dipped, all I had to do was correct the attitude a little to line up with the indicator and the plane leveled out. I found that a little meant a lot when it came to attitude.

The same is true in life. If we have a nose high attitude of pride, we can’t live straight and run into problems. If we have a nose down attitude of dejection, we spiral downwards. The position we adopt in our thinking towards ourselves, other people and things is critical and we must use the Word as our ‘attitude meter’ to help us live straight.

Some hide behind the excuse that they have little control over their disposition or attitude. Yet the Bible teaches that we can adopt Christ like attitudes by an act of our will. We can choose to think like Him!

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
Phil 2:5

Here ‘mind’ refers to attitude. It is possible to adopt attitudes that reflect Christ. If this were not so, God would be asking too much of us to grow up spiritually and become like Him.

When we consider the attitude David had towards Goliath’s threats, it was completely different to that of the soldiers. Their attitude was something like this: ‘He’s so big we can never kill him!’ In contrast, David’s attitude was:

'He's so big I can't miss!' David chose to believe in His covenant God more than in the giant's threats. He adopted the attitude: the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

Attitude is an inward feeling expressed in outward behavior. It may be masked for a while, but sooner or later it shows up through habits. Sad to say, too many Christians troop into church and mask their bad attitudes with outward smiles and greetings. Inside they are broke, busted and disgusted. Their attitude generally shows only when the heat is on outside the church when they are at work or at home.

Our posture in life ought to be positive when we trust God to help us at all times. Attitude should be tied to the person of God and his promises, and not the circumstances. Circumstances certainly change, but God does not. When our faith is rooted in the Word of God, we can maintain a good attitude and avoid being swayed by circumstances.

Attitude Determines Our Approach to Life

Two buckets at a well had a conversation. One said "Life is so disappointing, I always come back to this well empty." The other replied, "Life is so rewarding, I always leave the well full of water." Attitude makes all the difference.

One time a grandpa visited his grandkids who played a practical joke on him by putting some stinky Limburger cheese under his nose on his moustache while he was sleeping. When he awoke he said, "This room stinks." He then went through to the kitchen, and said the same thing. Going outside he exclaimed, "The whole world stinks!"

Most people think and talk themselves into a bad attitude. If your mind is not renewed to the Word and controlled by the promises of God, you will tend to be negative. God's word is positive. It provides not only the hope of change, but also the power to change! It helps us see things from God's point of view. Lost perspective is what drives most people under pressure to make hasty decisions that push them further into the hole that a bad attitude has got them. I have found that when I get into the Word and see things in God's light, it helps me keep a good attitude.

Attitude Determines Our Relationships with People

We are created for relationships: with God and our fellow man. If we stay in close fellowship with God, then it is much easier to relate properly to our fellow man. If you are at peace with God, and get your strength and fulfillment from Him, it is so much easier to be strong in everyday matters.

People who think badly about themselves feed abusive relationships. They tend to treat others from a defensive standpoint, and withhold the love that is so badly needed to make things better. Hurting people hurt people. The cycle is broken only when the love of God is released in any relationship through faith. Faith adopts a positive mindset that things are changing even when circumstances say otherwise. Faith must be fed by continually hearing the Word of God: His promises and encouragement to believe and trust.

If we chose to let the love of God run its full course in our lives, then it works for us. If we don't then our stubbornness stops the flow of love that makes our faith work for us. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Rom 5:5

...faith working through love. Gal 5:6

Attitude Often Determines the Difference Between Success and Failure.

History shows that men who excelled only slightly above the rest have made great achievements. The slight edge that history makers have – often has to do with attitude alone. Many people have talent and aptitude, but only a few possess an attitude that puts them above the rest.

Attitude and perseverance are closely connected. The person who presses through obstacles always comes out ahead of the person who shrinks back from a challenge. A bad attitude short circuits destiny and reduces us to making excuses for our failures. Aptitude or raw ability for success must be matched with attitude.

Let me illustrate with a situation I remember when playing on a top sports team in our rugby league back in South Africa. I played alongside a teammate who was more talented in his kicking skills than me. Yet because he lacked

consistency, (his attitude toward practice and general team discipline) he fell far short of his potential. I landed up doing most of the kicking and getting better results even though I did not have the raw talent that he had. I was what you might call somewhat of a 'plodder' in this department: always at practice, and always doing what the coach wanted. The net result was that I got better results than he did. My perseverance and discipline paid off.

Furthermore, the distance between success and failure is often quite small. Winning in a situation often involves small attitude adjustments. These are within our grasp. God will not expect us to do things that are not within our reach. The difference is that our reach is extended when we have faith that in Christ all things are possible. It takes faith to change. The responsibility is ours. We cannot expect God to do that which we must do. Faith is not passively waiting for God to change our attitude. We must make the effort and change as an act of our will. Feelings have little to with the process. We change because we get a vision of what can be, and what it will take to get there. There is a price to pay. It is measured in the currency of humility and determination. The walk of faith is not marked by 'quick fixes' but a determination to succeed.

*And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. **Heb 6:12***

Chapter 5

Building a 'Victor' Mentality

The Building Blocks of Attitude

A 'victim' mentality is usually built by default over a period of time, whereas a 'victor' mentality is built on purpose. Both have the same basic elements. The one is marked by 'giving up', the other by 'getting up'! The power to choose is in our hands.

Who we associate with is foremost in the process of building a good attitude. Those closest to you either make or break you. Friends and associates, family members can either sharpen or blunt your resolve to win. Be sure to spend intimate time with those that encourage you in the Lord, and not with those who offer no hope, or who have a negative disposition. The wounds of a friend who tells it like it is are better than the kisses of an enemy disguised as a friend. Your friend's carnal advice, no matter how well intentioned it may seem, actually harms you. Truth that cuts to the point of a problem is 'faithful', whereas the kiss of agreement is 'deceitful'.

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend,
But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful. Prov 27:6*

The second building block involves the thought realm. The way we think is so important that God teaches us that we are to take every negative thought captive!

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor 10:4-5

If we give ourselves room to think negatively we allow strongholds to be built in our consciousness. If we focus on our problems, and not the solutions, then we will be trapped in a cycle of defeat. Rehearsing them over and over does not solve problems. You solve them by looking diligently for a way of escape.

And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them

repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

2 Tim 2:24-26

This process usually requires some help from someone who already knows the way out. It is the truth we know that sets us free. If you knew the truth, you would not be in trouble. So be humble enough to receive help, and follow the way of escape. Also choose to think on positive things. The power of choice is very powerful. Take the promises of God and think about them. Think positive thoughts, and in time you will see things change. Even your feelings will start to line up with your thoughts. This is Biblical!

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things. Phil 4:8-9

In addition be sure to watch what comes out of your mouth. We dig ourselves into and out of holes with our tongues! The word declares that even life and death are in the power of the tongue. We either speak words that bind or loose the favor of God in our lives. The victor in Christ will speak words of promise and hope and refuse to speak words of doubt and failure.

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit. Prov 18:21*

Most people speak **about** their problems instead of **to** them. Jesus taught that we are to attack the mountain of adverse circumstance with our tongue. Mountains move when we take the promises of God and speak them over our situations.

Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. Mark 11:22-24

What we say moves mountains. God has already spoken, and now expects us to speak. It is our responsibility to speak over our situations and bring about change through our faith. Faith finds expression through our mouth! When we

believe something from God's word, and say it out of our mouths in faith, it will come to pass. God will back up His promises.

The account of how Paul and Silas got delivered from prison provides a powerful example of maintaining a positive attitude in extremely trying circumstances. They were bound hand and foot after being severely beaten. Their imprisonment was totally unfair, and if ever there were two people who could have developed a victim mentality, it was those two.

Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. Acts 16:21-27

They chose the way of the victor: prayer and praise! Their praise activated their faith and God responded by inhabiting their praise. The jailhouse began to rock and their chains were loosed. Their praise turned tragedy into triumph.

Vision is another building block of a positive mindset. Vision is a picture of a desired future. If you can see a ray of light you want to move towards it. Keep looking up. If you let your head hang in dejection you will not see the ray of light that leads you towards the way out. Let Jesus be the lifter of your head. He will impart a vision of a better future if you look into His face. Follow Him.

Most often Jesus will place someone in your life that is more positive than you. They have learned to be that way despite the challenges they have faced. There are not too many people that I know of, who were born with a silver spoon in their mouth and never had anyone try to take it out! We have all faced difficulties; so don't be stubborn and hardheaded. Reach out and take hold of the helping hand.

The Process of Building a New Attitude

Rebuilding a positive attitude is a process. Begin by taking one day at a time. God does not intend for us to live each day with yesterday's burden hanging over us. Look forward to tomorrow, but live today to the full. If we fear that tomorrow will be like yesterday, will spoil today! As we factor in the bad memories of the past, tomorrow seems intolerable. It is all a matter of hope. Guard your hope one day at a time. Start each day fresh and refuse to spoil today with yesterday's disappointments.

Persist despite setbacks. Everyone fails at times. It is common to all mankind. Capture failures and relegate them to the file entitled: "Experiences I don't plan to repeat!" Get up and go on. Others have done it. Be inspired by their persistence. You have not exhausted your 'failure quota.' God has enough forgiveness for over 490 mistakes every day!

Paul learned the lesson of persistence and chose to press on. He forgot what was behind and reached forward to the future, keeping the goal in front of him.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:13-15

Refuse to blame God. He is not your problem. On the contrary, He is your solution. Draw near to Him. He is your greatest resource. Protect your relationship with Him. Know how to reestablish close fellowship with Him through confession. Be cleansed of all unrighteousness as you go to Him for help.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

Confess any traces of a victim mentality as sinful. God's love will cover a multitude of sin! There is no place in your heart that He is not willing to go. Let Him bring healing and restoration to your soul. It is His will for you to prosper and be in health even as your soul prospers.

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 John 2-3

Chapter 6

Called to Greatness

*...the people who know their God shall be strong,
and carry out great exploits. Daniel 11:32*

Greatness and fulfillment is guaranteed when we know God. When His vision dominates our thoughts, speech and actions and we truly know who we are in Christ, we will have the faith to do mighty exploits for Him. Do not let a victim mentality cloud your vision. Faith and vision join to set us on the path of victory. We are called to thrive in God's kingdom. He sent Jesus to give us an abundant life free from pity and depression. We are called to rule and reign as kings in this life, so circumstances must bow their knee to the King of Kings living in us. Rise up and let the victor lead you out of despair into triumph, and diffuse through you, a new fragrance of victory.

*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.
2 Cor 2:14-15*

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