

DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

MAY 2024 | COLOSSIANS 3:1-3

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3

CONSTANT TRIUMPH

It is common for Christians to be confused about where we fit in God's story - the "metanarrative." Because of this, we often misinterpret what it means to live in light of the finished work of Jesus. We know that the kingdom of God came with the arrival of Jesus (see Mark 1:14-15.) But we also acknowledge that creation continues to groan while waiting for the consummation brought about by His final coming (see Romans 8:18-25). The tension between these truths have led to some false conclusions by believers.

Some have drifted into "triumphalism," which is the belief that since Jesus has defeated the devil in His death and resurrection, we are not subject to trials, suffering, sickness, or the effects of creation's fall.

This belief would contend that any failure to live above such discomfort is the result of not believing enough or of willful sin.

Others have concluded that we just don't win on earth, and that the kingdom is future-oriented in its entirety. This belief lends itself to a defeatist attitude and the conclusion that Satan's lie is stronger than Jesus's gospel. We may win in the end, but for now we can expect things to get worse until we are rescued from a doomed creation either by death or a rapture. The salvation we proclaim gets us into heaven, but does not give us hope of any kind of victory now.

I don't believe either of those conclusions are consistent with the New Testament

gospel. So, what does triumph look like now while we anticipate the final coming of Jesus?

Remembering the original purpose of God in creation, we read in Genesis of how God created humans to be His partners in the discovery and development of His creation. **The scene in Eden was God and man in partnership.** Through the temptation of the serpent, Adam and Eve sinned and experienced fear, shame, and alienation. To protect them from eating from the Tree of Life and living forever in a defeated state, God removed them from the garden. It appeared as though God's plan to rule creation through human instrumentality was ruined. But consistent with His nature, God revealed that He was using these failures to weave the better story of redemption and restoration. There would be a human Son who ruled the way God intended. In the most quoted Psalm by New Testament authors, God declares that He will seat Him on the throne ruling in the midst of His enemies.

*The Lord says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your
footstool."*

*The Lord sends forth from Zion
your mighty scepter. Rule in the
midst of your enemies!*

Psalms 110:1-2, ESV

New Testament writers knew this to be a royal Psalm and that it was speaking of Jesus as the one who fulfills it. **The scene in the New Testament is God as man.** Jesus was born of a woman. He was also an Israelite. He was able to represent both all of humanity as well as all of Israel. He lived up to the stipulations of the old covenant, and as a perfect sacrifice He took our place on the cross, in the tomb, in the resurrection and upon the throne. Finally, God had a human on the throne to rule over His creation. Jesus is the eternally unique God-man. From that throne He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell those who are in Christ through their faith in Him.

After Pentecost, **the scene is God in man.** God's present program is to rule in the midst of His enemies through the redeemed people who are equipped to win while they wait. They have been forgiven and thus able to forgive any offense, so people's offenses can't defeat them. They carry a Spirit-empowered message, so people's lostness can't discourage them. They have been captured by a love that never fails, so people's hatred can't stop them. They are indwelt by the eternal light of truth, so people's darkness can't intimidate them. They are new creatures. The world has never seen anything like these sons of God. They are a new species. They are humans who, because of the new birth, have the very Spirit of God in them.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

2 Corinthians 5:17, ESV

The challenge of this new people of God is to live now in light of what God has done in Jesus Christ. Since they are in Him, they are seated with Him on the throne in authority, but walking the earth in their bodies. As the apostle Paul says, they are “ambassadors” for Christ. Living as citizens of the heavenly realm, while abiding in the realm of a creation waiting for full adoption.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3, ESV

The text that is often at the crux of understanding the concept of triumph in life now is 2 Corinthians 2:14-17. Paul, the author, uses the metaphor of a Roman Triumph to describe the dynamic of the gospel ministry that he and other Christians are called to embrace. The context is that some in Corinth are questioning Paul's apostleship. He was not one of the

original twelve disciples.

He experiences all kinds of hardships. He gets stoned. He is jailed often. He is shipwrecked. His co-workers get sick. He gets bitten by a snake... He isn't a model of triumphant living in their eyes. Yet he is leading a movement that is changing the known world. So he explains new covenant ministry in terms of a triumph that looks weak, but in fact is the most powerful force in the universe:

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17, ESV

The Roman Triumph was an event that was very special. It didn't occur often. It happened when a General won a significant victory that included the death of at least 5000 enemy soldiers, the capture

of significant new territory, the establishment of peace in the conquered land, and the capture of defeated soldiers and spoils of war. The parade went through the streets of Rome with the Senate and governmental officials leading, trumpeters playing, and priests dispensing burning incense. Following the procession were the chained captives and the chariot of the conquering general. He stood tall in the chariot dressed in regal attire, while shouts of triumph filled the air.

Paul uses the imagery of the Roman Triumph to say to believers: "This is what is really happening." It might look like a bunch of rag-tag preachers being ignored or persecuted, but it is actually the march of the gospel through the earth. The conquering general is Jesus who has defeated the enemy, taken the territory, and established peace where He rules. He is being celebrated in heaven and among His people on earth.

Paul and all other gospel people are free from peddling religion. There is no competition for market share. We are not doing it for profit. We know we have been commissioned by God to carry a message that, when proclaimed, has Spirit-empowered transformation in it. We are aware of living in the conscious presence of God, and we dare not exalt anything or anyone except the King who won the battle. We are part of His parade. He won. We exult in it, and we are content to be a fragrance that gives life to some and smells like

death to those who reject the King's rule.

The believer's life is about announcing that the battle has been won. We rule in the power of love, but we don't rail against defeated foes. We fear not the darkness because it has been exposed as being nothing but the absence of light. One word of light diminishes any darkness that is present. Trouble is an opportunity for those around us to see the stark difference in being a child of God. We live in the same world as unbelievers, but we live with a hope they do not and cannot have. We embody a kind of love that is otherworldly. It cannot be stopped, and it will not fail. It abolishes hate, ignites passion, reconciles offenses, serves without complaint, and rejoices in the triumph of truth. Circumstances can't defeat it or dampen it. Rejection does not prevent its progress. It changes people from living for themselves to living for the glory of God and the benefit of their neighbor. That's a life of constant triumph.



KERYGMA VENTURES

P.O. Box 2022
Colleyville, TX 76034
(817)267-9224
Email: Contact@kerygmaventures.com
www.KerygmaVentures.com