

Are You a Winner?

Written by Mac Hammond

Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, is famous for saying, "Winning isn't everything - it's the only thing."

That was definitely my philosophy when I was growing up. From the time I was a small boy, I loved to win and detested losing. I used to get downright upset over a lost game of marbles!

Later, it was Little League games, swimming, and ultimately flying in the military. Whatever I was involved in, I wanted to be a winner at it.

I don't think I'm unusual in that respect. I believe most people in our society (at least in secular society) want to be winners.

With believers, it's another story. Somehow many Christians have been conditioned to believe that winning is not a valid goal for them. They're convinced that winning is unimportant at best and positively unbiblical at worst!

If that's what you've been told, I have news for you. God created you to win, not just spiritually but financially, professionally, in your relationships and in every other area of life.

I'll go one step further. If you're not at least in the process of becoming that kind of winner, you're not fulfilling God's whole purpose for your life. And you're missing out on the contentment and sense of fulfillment God wants you to have.

"That's a pretty strong statement, Pastor Mac. Can you back it up with scripture?" You bet I can.

God Created You to Win

In Genesis 1:26, God says:

"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

So God created man in his own image...

Would you agree that God is a winner? If we are made in His image and likeness, then redeemed man must be designed to be a winner, too.

In fact, after God made Adam and Eve He commanded them to go win! Look at the very next verse, Genesis 1:28:

"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

God's very first marching orders to mankind were "subdue" and "have dominion." In other

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words, "Go out there and win!"

Likewise, as a born-again, restored child of God, you are to exercise dominion over your world. That means every aspect of daily living, every circumstance in your life should be in subjection to you, just as you are in subjection to God.

Far too many believers are living under the dominion of the world's system. They live in bondage to circumstances like poverty, oppression and sickness. This should not be. Psalms 8:4,5 says: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour."

The translators of the King James Bible really made a mistake (actually, they chickened out) on this verse when it came to the phrase "a little lower than the angels." The word translated "angels" there is actually the Hebrew word Elohim and it is one of the Old Testament names of God.

The New American Standard gets it right: "Yet thou hast made him a little lower than God ..."

God meant for you to be in a position of authority. A position in which all things are under your feet and you are in bondage to nothing. Sadly, very few believers are actually living that way.

Play to Win or Don't Play at All

Many Christians even try to make themselves feel better about their losing lifestyles by thinking that suffering defeat makes them more spiritual. They say things like, "It doesn't matter whether you win or lose but how you play the game."

That's baloney! If you're not going to try to win - and I'm talking about winning God's way - then don't even play the game.

There's nothing noble about losing. It will leave you frustrated, unfulfilled and perhaps, worst of all, totally ineffectual as a witness.

The world is not going to be influenced by a bunch of losers. That's one of the main reasons the Church hasn't had a greater impact on our culture. Who wants to join a movement that doesn't have victory as its objective?

Let's face it. Until you and I start moving into the realm of the winner, our influence on the world will be severely limited. That doesn't mean, however, we must adopt a worldly, cut-throat, win-at-any-cost mentality. In fact, winning for the believer has a quite different meaning.

According to the world's way of thinking, when someone wins, it means everyone else has to lose. Worldly winning is exclusive. "It's lonely at the top," we're told. There can be just one "number one" - only one chairman of the board.

The world's concept of winning also implies the domination of others. We're told that we have to

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climb over people to get to the top, to put others down in order to put ourselves over. A best-selling book in the business world a few years ago was entitled, "Winning Through Intimidation."

God's concept of winning is far more wonderful.

First of all, it is not exclusive. There is room at the top for everyone in God's system of winning. Secondly, instead of dominating people, a godly winner dominates circumstances. That's because in the kingdom of God "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

God's winners realize that even though another person may seem to be behind a negative circumstance in their life, that person is not the root of the problem. They understand that God hasn't promised them dominion over other people, but He has guaranteed them dominion over circumstances and the demonic forces behind it. So it's those forces and circumstances the real winner puts under his feet.

The Reward of the Winner

Because it is neither exclusive nor dominative, God's concept of winning is good news for everyone! So we can all joyfully agree with Romans 8:37 and say, "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." We are born (again) winners!

At this point, a religious mindset often takes over and says (very piously), "Yes, I'll be a winner someday because my reward is in heaven."

Well, of course, we have an eternal reward waiting for us in heaven. It's a reward that is marvelous beyond description. But God's provision of victory doesn't begin when we leave this body. Redemption applies now, to every area of human existence.

We've been granted dominion here in this early life. How can I be sure? Because we are "in Christ Jesus" and He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth" (Matt. 28:18).

The power we have in Jesus makes us winners in this life! Where our bodies are concerned - it brings us health. Where our finances are concerned - it provides us with all sufficiency in all things. In our relationships - it supplies peace and harmony. In short, the reward of the godly winner is victory in every area of life.

Winning Ways

Okay now. Let's get practical. It's one thing to know that God wants you to be a winner. It's another thing to know how to become one.

Fortunately, God has given us His Word to guide us and great men of faith to be our examples. And when it comes to being a winner, few can teach us more than the apostle Paul did in his letter to the Philippians.

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Philippians is a book about winning written by a winner. Yes, Paul experienced many difficulties in his life. In fact, he was in a Roman prison when he wrote Philippians. Yet Paul never lived under his circumstances. Instead, he lived above and controlled them.

We see this even in the issue of living and dying. In Philippians 1:23,24, Paul says he's having a hard time deciding whether to go on and be with the Lord or remain in his earthly body a while longer. He ultimately decides to stay because "...to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (my Philippian partners)."

Later, in 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul says, "I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." Nobody could take Paul's life until he and the Lord decided he was finished. That's what I call being over your circumstances.

Your Divine Destiny

What is it that made Paul such an outstanding winner? I believe we can find that answer to that question in Philippians 3:12-14. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Look again at the first portion of that verse; "... that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Paul is saying there that he knows he has been apprehended, or captured by Jesus for a special purpose.

Likewise, Jesus Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, chose you for a reason. You have a unique, divinely appointed destiny. If you want to be a winner, you, like Paul, must purpose in your heart to pursue that divinely ordained destiny.

Notice that Paul also says, "... I count myself not to have apprehended." In other words, "I haven't arrived yet."

We should have the same attitude. Don't ever rest on your laurels. When it comes to enjoying everything God wants you to have, you haven't arrived yet. So don't ever get satisfied with the status quo.

Source: *The Way of The Winner* by Mac Hammond

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