

AND THE WINNER IS.....

Romans 8:35-37 *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who love us."*

Sometimes we get the wrong answer because we ask the wrong question. In these verses, the question isn't whether or not I am a conqueror but rather Who is the Conqueror. I have thought for a long time (erroneously!) that being a conqueror or being victorious in my Christian life had to do with me; that it depended on what I did; that I could have it or not. It turns out that having the victory or being a conqueror has nothing to do with me and everything to do with Christ. I can't lose it because it's His and I have it automatically when I am in Christ Jesus. It doesn't come and go according to my performance. No matter what comes against me, whether I win or lose, succeed or fail, the victory remains in tact because it's His and will be forever. *"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"* (I Cor.15:57) See, the victory trickles down to us *"through our Lord Jesus".* We are only recipients of what *He has* not something we earn. When I feel defeated or discouraged, that doesn't mean I've lost the victory. It is where it has always been because it comes to me *"through Christ Jesus"* and it's still there. There are multiple reasons I can feel like I've been defeated but one of the big ones is because I think having the victory depends on what I do. Wrong! Yes, we will sin, make bad choices, and stupid mistakes but those are not related to not having the victory but to being human and having a sin nature.

I have never been very good at playing with a yo-yo. I could get it to go up and down a few times but I've seen people do some amazing tricks with one. There is one particular trick called "walking the dog". Maybe you've seen it. The yo-yo comes down and just spins around on the ground under the control of the one holding the yo-yo. When he is done, he jerks his wrist and the yo-yo comes back up to his hand. Victory *"through Christ Jesus"* isn't like a yo-yo that God lets come down to us for a time ("walking the dog") and then jerks away from us when we mess up. It isn't dependant on circumstances, situations, or me in any way. It's all about Him. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus

says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." I think Jesus is talking about taking on responsibilities (burdens) that *He* was meant to carry; those things that we can have no control over but we pick up anyway. We carry them around on bowed shoulders, dragging our feet, because the responsibility was not ours in the first place. We don't have a clear picture of our job vs. God's job. Having or not having the victory is one of those things we worry about that is not necessary; it's a heavy yoke to carry alone. Christ died to have the victory and it is ours automatically when we are His. It doesn't come and go no matter how we feel. We have to see the distinction between Who God is and how He works and who we are and what He expects from us. When we get our roles mixed up, we set ourselves up for defeat and to feel as if we've failed. Me, zero; the enemy, one. If my being a conqueror or having the victory is dependent on me and how I act, I'm lost already. I don't have that kind of power and I really don't want it. I want having the victory to be all about God; then I am safe because I'm not depending on myself. Christ is always the winner; always has the victory; is always the Conqueror. That's how I want it. That can be one less thing on my "worry about it" list. God, the eternal Victor; the enemy, the eternal loser. Our team wins!

Blessings on your week,
Georgia