

Don't Be a Victim

Prov 25:28

1

28 Like a city that is broken into and without walls, is a man who has no control over his spirit.

I would imagine that at one time or another we have all experienced a robbery or break-in or some sort of thing like that. Maybe into your house or having a car window smashed or a purse or some other object stolen. That makes us all victims. Webster defines that term as...

Victim

2

1 A living being sacrificed to a deity or in the performance of a religious rite

2 One that is acted on and usually adversely affected by a force or agent <the schools are victims of the social system>: as

A: As

1) One that is injured, destroyed, or sacrificed under any of various conditions <a victim of cancer> <a victim of the auto crash> <a murder victim>

2) One that is subjected to oppression, hardship, or mistreatment <a frequent victim of political attacks>

B: One that is tricked or duped <a con man's victim>

C: *One upon whom a crime is perpetrated*

For the purposes of this lesson we will be using this last definition. The idea is that whenever someone does anything against us, whether as a crime or some other sort of slight, we become a victim, through no fault of our own, because in those circumstances we have no control at all of what occurs.

Our discussion though, is not going to be focused on what others may or may not be doing to us, but rather on our reactions to what is being done. When someone butts into a line in front of us, how do we react? When someone cuts us off on the freeway, how do we react? When someone gossips or slanders us, when we are judged unfairly for something we haven't done, when our thoughts or suggestions aren't followed, how do we react? I've tried to pick circumstances or situations here that might be common to all our experiences. Sometimes, through no fault of our own and whether intentional or not, we find ourselves in a situation where we feel that someone has somehow wronged us. How do we react? This is what I am talking about when I say...

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Don't be a Victim

Our response to the things that are happening, situations, other people all work together to define if we make the choice to be a victim. For the sake of this discussion, I am defining a victim as someone who has lost their control, and I am not talking about just the things that happen over which we have no control, theft or accidents or whatever, I am talking about those things and any and everything that happens around us and not even necessarily to us. We see something or hear something and we have a reaction to it, what that reaction is determines if we have decided to be a victim.

Let me try to explain it this way. A close friend of mine was sitting in his truck with his trailer hooked up while we were checking into an RV park in Monterey, Pacific Grove, actually. There was a rather large motor home whose owner was also in the park's office trying to check in. He didn't have a reservation and the park was sold out and had been for 6 months. He gets angry, comes out to his motor home to leave and discovers that he can't turn around in the entrance so he has to go through the park to come out. This exacerbates his anger. He drives through the park, way too fast, and as he is coming out, he cuts his left turn way to short and the left rear of the motor home, from about the tire back, hits Larry's truck. I'm sitting in my truck watching this happening. This guy jumps out of his RV cussing and waving his arms around. He goes to where the damage is on the RV and begins screaming at it, at the manager of the park, and at Larry, who was still sitting in his truck with his hands crossed on his steering wheel. This guy begins to kick the motor home and finally tears a piece of it off and throws it, all the while cussing at the park and its manager and blaming her for what has happened.

Now both this guy and Larry are victims. Larry is the victim of this guy's out of control rage and negligent driving, but his reaction to the situation showed restraint and control. The other guy was also a victim, a victim that he himself made. His anger and rage took control of his response. He blamed everyone else for his own lack of preparation in making a reservation 6 months prior. It wasn't the manager's fault for his lack, but that's who he blamed. It wasn't the park's fault, but he blamed it. It wasn't Larry's fault for sitting in his parked truck, right where he was supposed to be parked, but this guy blamed him. He made himself a victim by blaming everyone else for his reaction.

That's what I am talking about in this lesson. Who do we blame for what we do or say. When I react with anger, frustration, jealousy, or whatever my response is, the question isn't who DO I blame, it's who SHOULD I blame. Who is in control of me? Who do I give that control to? That guy at the RV park relinquished his control of himself to what he perceived to be unfair circumstance and inconvenience and chose to respond with out of control rage. When he chose to give up his control of himself, he made himself a victim of his own emotions. When I respond to a circumstance in such a way as to exhibit a lack of control, I have effectively allowed the situation to take control of me. When I allow someone else to upset me in such a way that my response to them is one of sin and lack of love, I effectively allow that person to take control of me. I make myself a victim. Blaming someone else for what I have chosen to be.

James writes in...

James 1:19-20

4

19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; **20** for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

God tells us through James that there should ever be only one person who controls us, and that is us. We choose to be quick to hear, we choose to be slow to anger, and we choose to be slow to speak. We choose our response; no one else chooses that for us. It is nothing but a copout and lousy excuse to try and blame someone else for our lack of control.

The scriptures are full of warnings and encouragements concerning our responses. Note what the Psalmist says in...

Ps 37:8

5

8 Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing.

The statement is to..

6

“Cease”

If the statement is seen as an imperative, a...

7

“Do This”

Then it must be understood that we have the ability to “Do This.” God doesn’t tell us to do something we can’t. So when we see statements like this from God’s Word, we need to know that this is something we can do, if we choose to.

Prov 19:11

8

11 A man’s discretion makes him slow to anger, And it is his glory to overlook a transgression.

Here again the Psalmist is implying that a man controls his own responses. We control if we are angry, we control if we overlook a perceived wrong, we control. When we allow others or circumstances to affect us in such a way that we lose control, that is sin. That is what the Psalmist was saying in **Psalms 37:8**.

We can’t emphasize the importance of control enough. Paul says in...

Eph 4:25-27

9

26 BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **27** and do not give the devil an opportunity.

As with the passage we saw from **Psalms 37:8**, “CEASE” from anger, being an imperative to be heeded, we have here a commandment to all Christians, if something happens that makes you angry, OK, but don’t allow that anger to cause you to sin, because that is one of the ways that Satan gains an opportunity to invade our hearts. Paul goes on to say in this passage...

Eph 4:29

10

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification

Paul’s point is that when we are in control of our emotions, then we are in control of our actions. The point isn’t that we are to have no emotions, but rather, that we are to control our response when we have them. That’s what Paul is talking about. Be angry, don’t sin. Get upset, don’t sin. Control our reactions.

James 1:26

11

26 If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless.

James brings this discussion to a head here. If we choose to not control our reactions, we deceive our own hearts. We deceive ourselves into thinking that our reactions are righteous, and then, we deceive ourselves into thinking that someone else is to blame. No one has the power to control our reactions to anything. Why, then, would we want to offer that kind of power to them? Why would we want to allow someone else to dictate how I am going to respond to any situation?

That is the question at the heart of this discussion. Am I making myself a victim by allowing events or circumstance or words to dictate who and what I am?

Think of the ramifications of what was just said. The guy who butts into the front of a line is being rude and unthoughtful, so, why would we allow that kind of callous inconsiderate person to cause us to lose control. The person who cuts us off on the freeway is unthinking and dangerous, so why would we let that kind of person cause us to act in the same manner? Pick any situation that causes outside stimuli to assail us, to bombard our senses, arguments with brothers and sisters in Christ, financial difficulties, problems at work, fights between spouses or in the family, the specific isn't relevant, what is relevant, is how we respond to them. Do I lose control? That's what James is talking about when he says...

12

“Does not bridle his tongue”

He is talking about maintaining control in the face of any adversity. Note what Peter has to say in...

1 Peter 4:11

13

11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Now, I have said all that to bring us to this next discussion. All of these things we have been discussing are absolutely vital to our having a proper relationship with God through Christ. But all of these things speak to our relationship with the world, with people and or circumstances of the world, but what about our spiritual relationship with God?

Rom 8:37-39

14

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. **38** For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul makes an enormously important point in this passage, nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate the faithful believer from God, nothing. That is, nothing except our own choices. Not even Satan has the power, the authority, to forcibly tear us away from God.

James 4:7-10

15

7 Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. **8** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you

double-minded. **9** Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. **10** Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.

What a beautiful statement James makes here. This is a wonderful summation of the life that, as Christians, we should be seeking. Submit to God. Give ourselves to Him through Christ. Draw near to Him through the Word and the closer we get to Him, the closer He gets to us. Avoid sin, and repent through Christ if we do, letting the Word of Truth guide us into all perfection and purity. And here is where James speaks about what we have been talking about in this lesson, maintain control. Whatever the circumstances, be they grief, anger, frustration, family, spouse, or just the everyday tribulations the world brings. Grieve, but don't let it consume you. Mourn, but don't let it become your reason to live. Be angry, but sin not. Seek to improve your lot, but don't let it become an obsession. Enjoy, but don't allow it to overwhelm you. Love, but do so morally and scripturally. Speak, but speak the Words of God, making them your mantra, your creed, your religion, your life. Know that everything we choose to do and say in this life will be what judges us in the end. Regardless of the reasons that I think I have, if I respond with an unkind word or deed, I have chosen to sin. I have chosen to relinquish my control to something other than myself and God. There is never any justification for sin, ever. That is the ramification of what Paul says in...

Rom 2:5-6 16

5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, **6** who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

We don't have to be victims of any circumstance. We don't have to be victims of our own weaknesses. We don't have to be victims of the travails of this world. We can choose the alternative...

Col 3:15-16 17

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you,

Christ offers His peace to any and to all who would have it. All we have to do is...

18 ***“16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you”***

Eph 4:29 19

29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

What is our reaction to this world? When we get overwhelmed with motivations of this world, do we give in and respond in sin, or do we choose to not be a victim and to do as God commands? That is the choice we all must make.

20 ***Don't be a Victim***