

Characteristics of True Christianity #4 Characteristics That Define Our Victory

In this series of messages, we have been looking at the characteristics of true Christianity.

- In the first message we looked at **characteristics that define the transformation** process in our lives.
- The second message we looked at those *characteristics that define who we are in Christ*.
- In the last message we looked at those **characteristics that define our actions**.

We have been using Peter, one of Christ's early followers and disciples, as our example and illustration of true Christianity.

Peter's life was transformed from a profane fisherman to a mature Christian, **who had all of these defining characteristics operating in his life**.

Peter was not perfect, yet we see him as one who as striving to walk in these Christ-like characteristics.

2 Corinthians 2:14 - 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 Corinthians 2:14 CEV - I am grateful that God always makes it possible for Christ to lead us to victory. God also helps us spread the knowledge about Christ everywhere, and this knowledge is like the smell of perfume.

In the final message in this series, I want to look at those **Characteristics That Define Our Victory** that we have in Jesus Christ.

One of the most important characteristics of a Christian is that we are called to be victorious.

- **We have the victory!**
- Christ wants us to walk in a manner that **characterizes this victory in our lives**.

We will be looking at those specific characteristics that **help to define this remarkable trait** in our lives.

What is it that causes us to be people of victory?

Characteristics That Define Our Victory

1. Victory Is Characterized by Running The Race With A Winning Attitude

We must understand that as Christians, **Christ has entered us into a great race**. It's the longest marathon that has ever been known to mankind, because it stretches into eternity.

Columnist Herb Caen wrote in the San Francisco Chronicle:

"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed.

Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death.

It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle; when the sun comes up, ***you'd better be running.***"

Spurgeon wrote likewise: ***"If you are not seeking the Lord, the Devil is seeking you. If you are not seeking the Lord, judgment is at your heels."***

In the Christian life, it's not enough to simply to wake up. **We are called to run, to become more like Christ, to press ahead in godliness.**

1 Corinthians 9:24 - The Need for Self-Discipline - Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

We are told here that we are all entered into the race, but there is only one kind of person who actually wins.

- I believe this is the person who is running with the winning attitude.
- They know that **no matter what obstacle** may present itself in the race,
- Christ has given them **the sufficiency to overcome and win.**

The writer of Hebrews gives us some helpful hints on how to win.

Hebrews 12:1-2 - The Race of Faith – 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, **let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.** And **let us run with perseverance** the race marked out for us, 2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.** For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In this part of the passage there are **three key elements** that help us to ***maintain a winning attitude*** in the race. **They are:**

- We must lay aside the sin that hinders us. We must be willing to be honest and brutal with ourselves in dealing with those sins that are hindering us, because Christ has given us the victory over sin.***

Allowing known sins to persist in your life affects your confidence of who you are in Christ and makes you feel like a loser rather than a winner.

Romans 6:12-14 - 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** so that you obey its evil desires. 13 **Do not** offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather **offer yourselves to God** as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. 14 **For sin shall no longer be your master**, because you are not under the law, **but under grace**.

b. ***We must run with endurance.***

- Endurance has to do with **taking the time to pace ourselves**.
- **It is a long marathon**; therefore, **we must take the time to mend our wounds as we go**.
- **There are many obstacles** along the way **that tend to break us down**.
- **We must** constantly be **taking the time to refresh ourselves** in the Lord
- ***Otherwise, we burn out.***

Hebrews 10:36 - You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

c. ***We must keep our eyes focused on Jesus and the goals that He has for our lives.***

Many people have heard of the outstanding exploits of **Blondin, the tightrope walker**.

Blondin amused and amazed thousands of people as he made his way **over Niagara Falls on a slender rope** stretched from shore to shore.

He never faltered or failed.

But **Blondin** had a secret. As he made his way over the rope, **he would keep his eyes fixed on a large silver star** which he had erected at the far end.

The star was the center of his attention and **guided him to the other side**.

In running the heavenly race, the believer must look to his **Star** - the bright and morning Star, the Lord Jesus.

He has run the race and now bids his followers to run the race, **keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus** as the goal.

Paul talks about the importance of **keeping our focus** during this great race.

1 Corinthians 9:25-26 - 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 **Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly**; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.

To stay focused we should ask ourselves these questions and then listen seriously to the answers.

What do I want? – 2. What will it cost? – 3. Am I willing to pay the price? – 4. When should I start paying the Price?

If you don't have an answer to the last question and haven't made a commitment to start, the first three questions don't really matter.

Keep in mind that if you are scattered in your focus, it will be extremely hard to maintain a winning attitude during this great race.

- We have been designed in such a way that we need goals to focus our attention.
- The mind will not reach toward achievement until it has clear objectives.

To focus correctly there are four things you need to do:

Recognize your strengths – Establish your priorities – Recognize your limitations – Organize your journey.

Characteristics That Define Our Victory

2. Victory Is Characterized by Faith, Belief & Obedience

1 John 5:3-5 - 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world— our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Once again, we see that it is truly God's desire that we be overcomers. If we have truly been born of God, then **one of our major characteristics** is that of being an overcomer.

But it says here that it is our obedience to Christ and our faith and belief in Him that characterizes our victory.

- These three are all connected.
- Our belief gives birth to faith and faith produces obedience.

It's important to understand that being an overcomer does not mean that we walk with a sense of pride and arrogance, but rather just the opposite.

An overcomer is one who walks in a deep sense of humility, putting your confidence and trust in Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1 John 4:4 - You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

It is the Holy Spirit working in us who causes us to triumph in Christ.

Characteristics That Define Our Victory:

3. Victory Is Characterized by Our Assured Immortality

1 Corinthians 15:54 - When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: **“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”**

CLOSE: As we conclude this series,

We need to take inventory of our lives and ask God in what areas do we need to be strengthened **in true Christian characteristics.**

Are we growing in God's transforming grace and putting on the new man as God has ordained?

Are we acting like true sons and daughters of God, putting our relationship with God and his family first and foremost in our lives, or do our relationships with our naturally families overshadow our spiritual relationships?

Are we walking in the kind of true fellowship with God and one another that He desires for your life or are we simply existing?

Are you growing in a continuous revelation knowledge of Christ and His word or have you lost your desire for a higher education in the Spirit?

Is your life a testimony of sacrifice and serving or is it a testimony of filling your own needs?

Are you waging a good warfare or is the enemy getting all the victory?

Are you walking as a victorious Christian who has entered the race with a winning attitude or are you simply trying to limp through the race – hoping you will somehow make it to the finish line?

And finally, **is your life characterized by faith, belief and obedience** or is it characterized more by unbelief and disobedience?

Whatever area you are falling short in, I encourage you to come to Christ and receive the grace and mercy that is needed to finish the race as the apostle Paul did.

2 Timothy 4:7 - *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

