

Fourth Quarter Strategies – Saturday, September 2, 2017

I imagine most of us have felt victimized at some point in our lives. Victimization is a fairly new word to the English language, but synonyms like abuse, ill-treatment, discrimination and persecution have been used for centuries. This newly found word lends itself to a feeling, a perception that others are out to get you and take advantage of you without any concern at all for your well-being. I find this whole idea of victimization to be quite bothersome. Yes, I know there truly are victims in this world, but I believe there are many out there who perceive they are victims when they are not being victimized at all. Just because we may go through tough times doesn't make us victims. Tough times are an integral part of life.

The Book of Job, which many believe is one of the oldest life accounts found in the Bible, sheds light on the tragedies of this wealthy, godly man who lived during the time of the patriarchal period after the Great Flood. Job lost his wealth, all his children and his health. Things were so bad that we hear a discussion in Job 2:9-10 where *"His wife said, 'Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and Die?' He replied, 'You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?' In all this, Job did not sin in what he said."* Job was a godly man who took whatever came his way and trusted God implicitly in all matters.

We would be wise to follow Job's response when we feel victimized. Job understood that God was in control and he gladly accepted whatever circumstance beset him. In Philippians 4:11-13 Paul proclaims *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him, who gives me strength."* The Him Paul refers to is the Holy Spirit! He's our Comforter and our Redeemer. I can hardly imagine going through life without knowing that He is right there by my side in all circumstances that I face in life.

Let me share a real life situation that I continue to follow as my family prays for a local family that the world would certainly consider victims of an unfortunate turn of events. A few months ago, the son-in-law of one my wife's closest friends was medevaced to UCLA Medical Center with a rare infection to his heart that nearly took his life. At 29 up to this point, this young businessman was in excellent health and was simply going about his daily routine when he started feeling ill. That evening, his wife had to call the paramedics to their home and he was rushed to a local hospital emergency room. His wife and five children, all under the age of ten, had to stay behind! Hundreds have been praying for this family for the past few months and it looks as though he will make a full recovery and be back to work soon. For some unknown reason God allowed this family to go through this traumatic experience.

You see, we can handle adversity like Paul and Job or fall into the negative energy of the world and consider ourselves victims if we choose. Frankly, I prefer to handle the challenges of life as they come and not succumb to the pattern of this world. In Romans 12:2 Paul instructs us *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

As believers, we have a great opportunity to handle adversity with grace and confidence. The world is watching us closely and my hope is that they may find Jesus through our example as His followers.

Passages to Ponder: Job 42:1-6; Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Romans 8:35-39; 1 John 2:28-29

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Job 42:1-6 New International Version (NIV)

42 Then Job replied to the LORD:

²“I know that you can do all things;
no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

³You asked, ‘Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?’
Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴“You said, ‘Listen now, and I will speak;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.’

⁵My ears had heard of you
but now my eyes have seen you.

⁶Therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 New International Version (NIV)

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;

⁶in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 New International Version (NIV)

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:35-38 New International Version (NIV)

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 2:28-29 New International Version (NIV)

²⁸ And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.