



How to live the VICTORIOUS LIFE

by
Dr. Billy Graham

SINCE the memorable Crusade at Harringay a year ago I have received scores of letters from people who then received Christ as their Saviour. My greatest encouragement has been to know not only that so many took the decisive step at that time but that they have since gone on in the Christian life and have been winning others for the Lord. For this, I thank God.

But I know that in the case of many others who made a profession of faith at Harringay there has been little or no progress in the Christian life. They have been struggling along in a confused and bewildered manner and seem to show little evidence of true conversion. They are looking for further help in order that their Christian life may be a more joyous and victorious experience.

It is primarily to such people that I wish to direct this message—to those of you who are young in the Christian faith and want to know how to go on with Christ.

I want to remind you that the Scriptures teach that the moment you received Christ as your Lord and Saviour you started on a period of spiritual growth. You were not supposed to stop spiritually just where you were at the moment of your conversion. You were intended to go on into a fuller and richer Christian life. The Apostle Peter says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." The Apostle Paul remarked to the Thessalonians, "Your faith groweth exceedingly."

Is this your happy experience? Are you full of joy because you are filled with Christ? That is the heart of the matter. Salvation is certainly not something to be endured. It is something to be enjoyed. But you will only enjoy it as you discover God's purpose and plan for your life. The most miserable people I meet are those Christians who are living outside the will of God. They have not been growing in grace.

This is my story . . .

HARRINGAY CONVERTS BEAR TESTIMONY TO THE VICTORIOUS LIFE

a chartered accountant

"As a church official, I asked the person who counselled me after the meeting to record me as one who had reaffirmed his faith. But to my joy and amazement I found, as the days passed after my decision to receive Christ, that my very nature had undergone a transformation. The chains of certain habits, forged in selfishness, had been struck away. My heart overflowed with prayer and praise, the Bible, once dry and uninteresting, leapt into life for me—I had never known such happiness before.

What happened? My eyes opened through God's Word; 'Behold,' says Jesus, 'I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in.' 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. God hath given us eternal life. Who His own self bare our sins in His own body . . . If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, all things are become new.'

Mine was no reaffirmation of faith. Previously I had given mental acknowledgment to these promises, but now, having received the Son of God for the first time, God's plan of salvation became a living reality.

"These last few weeks have been the happiest ones of my life, to have peace of mind after so many years of loneliness."

a business woman

"I had been searching for God a long while . . . trying to find a way to Him . . . trying to understand about Him. I had been to many churches and listened to many people.

Quite unexpectedly I found the answer at Harringay. The message was so simple and yet such a challenge I could not ignore it. I just had to decide and after the meeting I received Jesus Christ as my Saviour.

My life has been completely changed and I have found a deep joy that I did not know before. Now my life is positive—no more drifting along. God is guiding me and I know that as long as I obey Him I shall be in the centre of His will. It was at Harringay that I realised that Christianity was not a matter of accepting a theory or set of ideals, but it's the fact that Jesus Christ lives and has taken charge of my life."

"It's just wonderful to know that God is with you and helping, and that everything can be left to Him."

"When I pray I know that I am talking to a real God Who has a personal interest in the smallest details of my life."

Now if you are going to live a joyous and victorious life, you must discover what to do about temptation. You were tempted, no doubt, just a few minutes or a few hours after you received Christ. And very likely you were puzzled by it. You thought it strange and unnatural. Perhaps you were discouraged and disappointed.

Well, let me say this to you. There is nothing unusual or abnormal about a Christian being tempted. Indeed a Christian should expect it. The Christian who is never tempted should question whether he is spiritually alive! Say this to yourself: "Christians are tempted, that much I know. I am now a Christian and not different from other Christians. Therefore I shall be tempted. What provision does God make for me?"

In seeking to answer that question for you I would ask you to remember certain things.

1. The first thing to do about temptation is to *recognise it as a normal fact of experience*. The Bible says that temptation is "common to man" (1 Corinthians 10. 13). It is part of our ordinary human experience. Christ as the perfect Son of Man was "tempted in all points like as we are" (Hebrews 4. 15). Moreover, He felt the spiritual and mental anguish that temptation occasions, for we read that "He Himself hath suffered being tempted" (Hebrews 2. 18).

Now remember that God never tempts any man (James 1. 13). That is the devil's business; he is the tempter; and he tempts us along the line of our natural desires. These desires exist in all of us, because God made us that way. Many of them are good, such as the desire for food, rest, fellowship, self-preservation, conquest, and so on. But, because we are members of a sinful and fallen race, we also have certain wrong desires; for example, to cheat and lie and hate and be avenged of our fellowmen.

These good and evil desires are mixed together in the chemistry of your soul. Satan operates on the basis of using what you already want as a means of leading you into sin. Of course, it is not so difficult to recognise temptation when it is based upon wrong desires. If it is a wrong desire, you may be certain that it will lead you—if you yield to it—to a wrong act. Therefore never give way to a wrong desire.

But it is not so easy to identify temptations based upon good and legitimate desires. Remember at the very outset that Satan is interested in taking that which is good in your life and using it for his own evil ends.

Here is a little formula that I use when I am in doubt. I ask myself a few questions, such as these:

Does it glorify God?

Can I do it in the Name of Christ?

Can I offer a prayer of thanksgiving over it? Does it make me more preoccupied with the things of the world, or does it draw me nearer to the feet of Christ?

Does it build me up in my Christian life or hold me down?

Will it hurt other folk or cause them to stumble?

If you will honestly ask yourself these questions, I believe you will be able to recognise temptation when it comes. And having recognised it, the next thing is to resist it. Ask yourself, "Do I really want victory over temptation?" The Scripture teaches that God gives special strength and provides a way to escape to those who are determined to resist temptation. The moment you are tempted, you should call to God for help immediately.

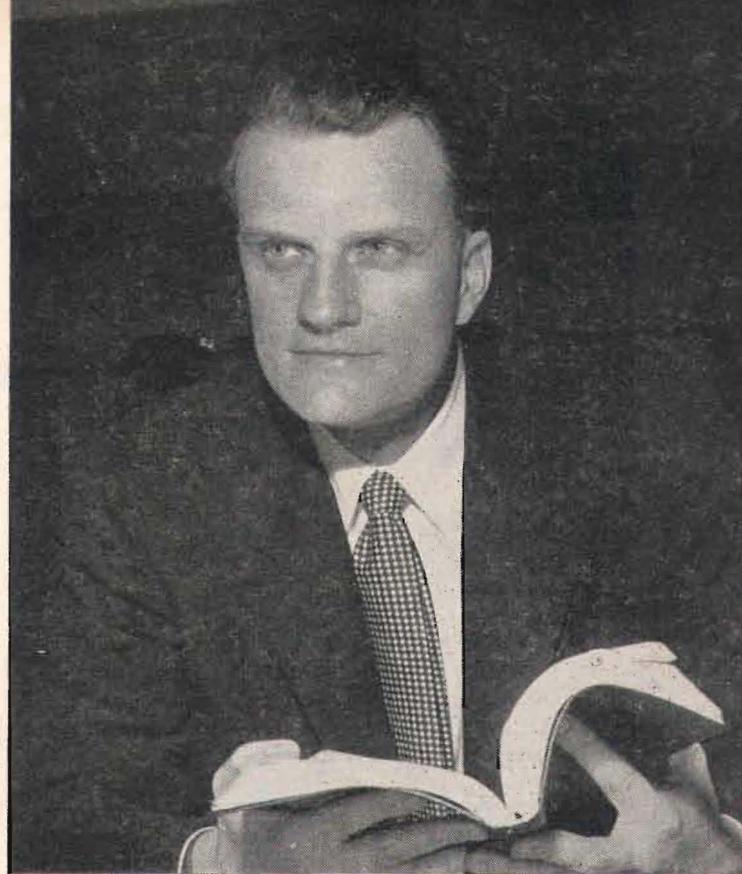
2. The next important thing is to recognise *the place of the Word of God in Christian growth and in meeting temptation*. The Scripture says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word . . . Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119. 9, 11). We grow in grace and find spiritual strength by reading and studying the Word of God. We are changed by the Word. We are cleansed by the Word. We are kept by the Word. We share God's life through the Word. We defeat the devil through the Word. We are told that the Word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6. 17). To the Christian the Bible is no longer just a holy book to be placed on the shelf in solitary state. It is a mighty weapon to be taken hold of with both hands and to be used in defeating the enemy.

Do not entertain doubts as to whether the Bible is God's Word or not. *It is!* Treat it as such! Read it, study it, memorise it. Get a well printed copy of the Scriptures with good, readable type. I would also suggest that you make use of a modern translation to help you in your understanding of the book. In any case, make up your mind that you are going to read your Bible every day from now on. You would not expect to lead a healthy physical life unless you ate your meals regularly. Show the same amount of common sense about preserving your spiritual life in a vigorous and healthy state. Daily Bible reading is the one great essential to victorious living and real Christian growth.

3. *Learn the secret of prayer*. Christ's prayer life was one of the most amazing and impressive features of His earthly ministry. Throughout the days of His life He was a man of prayer. He prayed with his disciples. He prayed in secret. Sometimes He spent all night in prayer. In this let Him be your example. If He, the holy, sinless Son of God could not live His earthly life without constant fellowship with God, *you* certainly cannot do so.

Perhaps you say, "But I don't know what to say when I pray." God does not mind your stumbling and halting phrases. He is not interested in your grammar. He is interested in your heart. I have a little boy only two years of age. He stumbles and falters in trying to express himself to me; but I think I love his little words that I cannot understand even more than I will appreciate his correct grammatical sentences when he grows older.

I would like to suggest that you have a time for secret prayer each day. It should be made a regular



Dr. Graham says: "Recognise the place of the Word of God in Christian growth and in meeting temptation."

habit and become as vital and necessary to you as your daily food. Another thing I would suggest is that you learn to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5. 17). That means almost all day long you are breathing a prayer to God. Another thing: make a prayer list of people and subjects to engage your prayers. Above all, be sure that your motive in praying is always the glory of God.

4. *Yield and consecrate your life to Christ*. The Bible says, "Consecrate yourselves this day unto the Lord" (Exodus 32. 29). Again, the Scripture says, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12. 1, 2).

Get on your knees before God and ask Him if there are any areas of your life that are still unyielded. The searchlight of God's Spirit will probe the inner depths of your soul and reveal things that you thought were yielded already but in fact are not. Spend time praying and thinking about the things which your eyes look upon, your ears listen to, your tongue utters. Ask God to take your eyes, ears, tongue, hands, your social life, your friends, every area of your life, under His control and yield yourself completely and unreservedly to His obedience.

This is pleasing to God. The Scripture says, "to obey is better than sacrifice." God wants your obedience and love more than anything else. The consecrated life is the victorious life.