

Keys to the Victorious Christian Life

What is the "High Calling" or the "Victorious Christian Life"? It is fulfilling God's purpose for your life, which He planned even before you were born, but many Christians **never reach that goal of walking in and fulfilling the plan God has for them.** It is the same as the Israelites in Moses' time - God lead them out of bondage in Egypt, but what **should have been a two-week journey** turned into a lifetime of wandering in the wilderness, and a whole generation never entered the Promised Land! **God's Promised Land for you is the "Victorious Christian Life,"** and He wants you to enter it and enjoy it. There will be battles along the way, just as there were nations for the Israelites to drive out of Canaan, but God has promised you the victory. The victorious life in Christ is what is meant in Philippians 3:8, "That I may gain Christ." Obviously, Paul already had Jesus Christ in his life, so what is he referring to? He means **having Christ become the dominating power in your life!** When he talks about not having already attained or arrived at, or not already being perfect, he is talking about becoming LIKE Jesus Christ in everything you do. This is our goal - to become Christ-like in all that we do and say. Have any of us totally and completely reached or attained that goal yet? No, of course not, but it is God's desire and plan for our lives (Romans 8:29).

•**Philippians 3:7-14** "But what things were GAIN to me, these I have counted LOSS for Christ. But indeed I also count all things LOSS in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, **that I may gain Christ** and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law (keeping religious rules), but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.....if by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were **already perfect**; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind**, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark (goal) for the prize of the **high calling** of God in Christ Jesus."

•**II Timothy 1:9** "Who has saved us and called us with a **HOLY CALLING**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began."

•**Ephesians 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained (prepared beforehand) that we should walk in them."

•**I John 5:4-5** "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And **this is the VICTORY** that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

Key #1 - Forgive Yourself – Paul says "Forgetting those things which are behind," we must press on towards the goal (Philippians 3:13). Why is it that so many Christians drag their past around with them, and have such a hard time forgiving themselves? Maybe it is because in their past experiences, no one has ever offered **true unconditional love and forgiveness**, so it is a foreign idea. However, **you MUST receive and accept by faith** your complete forgiveness and cleansing, just because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, not because of anything you did to deserve it. It is vitally important that you not only believe that God has forgiven you, but that you also **FORGIVE YOURSELF!** There are no sins that are worse than others - sin is sin, in God's eyes. Some people will say that this or that sin is worse, because the Bible calls it an "abomination" to God, but you will find Scriptures which state that **MANY** things are an

abomination to God. Abortion and homosexuality are not worse sins than lying and coveting. Drunkenness is not worse than gluttony (overeating). PRIDE is always an abomination to God, and so is lying. Jesus really lambasted the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, self-righteousness, pride, and for leading others astray. In I Corinthians 6:11, Paul speaks to Christians, showing us that the Church of Jesus Christ is made up of SINNERS, because he says, "such were some of you." **It is only by the BLOOD of Jesus Christ that we are forgiven** and CLEANSED of those sins. A person who has NOT trusted Jesus Christ for salvation and forgiveness of their sins has NO PART in the kingdom of God. Jesus said, "Unless a man is BORN AGAIN, he cannot [even] SEE the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3)

•**Proverbs 6:16-19** "These six things **the Lord HATES**, yes, seven are **an abomination to Him**: a proud (haughty) look, a LYING tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."

•**Ephesians 5:5** "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor **covetous** man, who is an IDOLATER, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

•**I Corinthians 6:9-11** "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers (users of abusive language), nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of YOU. But you were WASHED**, but **you were sanctified (made holy)**, but **you were JUSTIFIED** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

•**John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, **He is faithful and just to FORGIVE us our sins**, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

•**Psalm 103:10-14** "He has NOT dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, **SO GREAT is His MERCY** toward those who fear Him (reverence Him); as far as the east is from the west, so far has **He REMOVED our TRANSGRESSIONS from us.**"

•**Colossians 2:13-14** "And you, being dead in your trespasses (sins)..... has He made alive together with Him, **having FORGIVEN you ALL trespasses**; blotting out (wiping out) the handwriting of requirements (God's laws that you could never keep) that was against us, and took it out of the way, **having nailed it to His CROSS.**"

•**Hebrews 10:16-17** "'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,' says the Lord. 'I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, '**Their SINS and their lawless DEEDS I will REMEMBER NO MORE.**'"

•**Isaiah 43:25** "I, even I, am the One who **WIPES OUT** your transgressions **for My own sake**; and **I WILL NOT REMEMBER your SINS.**"

•**Colossians 1:14** "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His Beloved Son, in whom we have redemption **through His blood**, even the **FORGIVENESS of sins.**"

The following true story is an example of understanding God's forgiveness and forgiving yourself: Brian, a former Jehovah's Witness, got saved in March. He had been in that cult for 30 years -- since he was 16. In fact, he had been a pastor and District Overseer at one time. He had become strangely disillusioned with his religion during the last year or so, and began searching for what his heart was hungering for -- a real relationship with God. One day, he decided to look up his aunt's church on the

internet, and there he read the Bible's teaching on salvation, and read the testimonies -- and his heart was stirred. He wanted what they were talking about, even though he himself had taught -- and had been taught -- that "salvation" or a relationship with God was not possible. He contacted his aunt, whom he had not seen in many, many years, and came to her church. He prayed hard on Friday night and again on Sunday morning, but **found it most difficult to forgive himself** -- and to believe that God would forgive him for all the false doctrine he had spread and the people he had led astray. On Sunday night he was discouraged, but the preacher got up and spoke about Saul of Tarsus, and how God had called him and used him despite the damage he had done. Saul of Tarsus, who later became the Apostle Paul, said about himself, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, **putting me into the ministry; although I was FORMERLY a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and an insolent man**; but I obtained mercy, because I did it IGNORANTLY in unbelief" (I Timothy 1:12-13). That was all Brian needed. In a few short minutes he prayed to receive Christ, and **wept with relief** as he realized he had received salvation and forgiveness.

Key #2 - Renew Your Mind & Grow in Grace – What does a new Christian need to do **AFTER they have been born again and MADE a new creation in Christ**? They need to grow and mature in Christ. Each one of us is responsible for our own GROWTH, and God does not want us to STAY spiritual BABIES forever! He wants us to GROW and MATURE in Christ, but it doesn't happen automatically. YOU must **FEED your re-born SPIRIT with spiritual food, the WORD of GOD**, in order to GROW. The SOUL and SPIRIT are closely linked together, so you must also **renew your MIND**, which is part of your SOUL. You will truly see **spiritual GROWTH** and you will be TRANSFORMED into the likeness of Jesus Christ, as you renew your mind with the word of God.

- **I Peter 2:2** "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of **the WORD, that you may grow** thereby."

- **II Peter 3:18** "But **GROW** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

- **Ephesians 4:23-24** "And be **RENEWED in the SPIRIT of your MIND**; and that you put on the NEW MAN, which was CREATED according to God, in righteousness and true holiness."

- **Romans 12:1-2** "And do not be conformed to this world, but **be TRANSFORMED by the RENEWING of your MIND** that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

- **I John 2:14** ".....I have written to you, young men, because **you are STRONG, and the WORD of GOD abides in you**, and you have overcome the wicked one (Satan)."

- **Hebrews 5:12-14** "For though by this time you OUGHT TO BE teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles (word) of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is **unskilled in the WORD** of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who by reason of use (continual practice) have **their senses exercised to DISCERN both good and evil.**"

- **Hebrews 4:12** "For **the WORD of God** is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the DIVISION of SOUL and SPIRIT, and of joints and marrow, and is a DISCERNER of the THOUGHTS and INTENTS of the HEART (emotions)."

Key #3 - Keep Your Focus on Jesus & Not on the Past – Paul says, "But what things were GAIN to me, these I have counted LOSS for Christ. But indeed I also count all things LOSS in view of **the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish." You must keep your focus on Jesus, and **NOT on the things of your past**. No matter HOW desirable those things once were, you must consider them as TRASH - get rid of them! Don't think of yourself as **being deprived** of some wonderful thing for the sake of Jesus, but think of yourself as being SET FREE from BONDAGE to a lot of harmful things. Jesus says, "**Let him DENY himself**" and "Whoever loses his life for My sake, the same will save it." He is talking about giving up all the old desires of your flesh, "**denying**" yourself those things, and walking away from them. Some of those old things may still have a hold on you, but God's word says you have to "**put to death**" those things from your "lower" life that stand in the way of your walk with Christ. That means you STOMP IT OUT, like Smokey the Bear on a lighted match! Then, you take up your cross, which means the plan and purpose God has for your life, and you follow Jesus in the HIGHER life.

•**Colossians 3:1-5** "If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. **Set your AFFECTION on things ABOVE**, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory. **Put to death** therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil desires, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

•**Hebrews 2:1-2** ".....Let us **lay aside** every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith...."

•**Luke 9:23-25** "And He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **DENY himself, and take up his cross DAILY**, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake, the same will save it.'"

•**Matthew 16:24-25** "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him DENY himself**, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'"

•**Galatians 2:20** "I have been CRUCIFIED with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but **CHRIST LIVES in ME**; and the life which I now live in the flesh (in my human body) I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Key #4 - Understand How Temptation Works – Satan is the "Tempter" (Matt. 4:3, I Thess. 3:5), and he will try to DECEIVE you and trick you, and "push all your buttons." He knows that **what you BELIEVE about who you are determines your behavior**, so he wants you to think that you're still just a rotten old sinner, because then **you will think it is NATURAL to still sin!** But it is NOT "natural" anymore for you to sin, because you have a NEW NATURE! You are a **new creation in Christ in your SPIRIT**, and the POWER of sin has been broken over you. James 1:14 says "one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires." You might say, "How can they be 'my own' desires, if old things are passed away and I am a new person in Christ?" They are "**your own**" in the sense that **YOU EXPOSED your "FLESH"** (your physical body, and mental-emotional makeup) to something, whether it was alcohol, nicotine, drugs, certain sexual behaviors, pornography, **negative destructive thoughts**, over-eating, or other "compulsive" behaviors, until a HABIT was developed, and after enough times of exposure, **your FLESH was TRAINED to DESIRE or want those things**. Then, Satan, or the "old tapes running in your mind" or your uncontrolled emotions will keep bringing up "old desires" **AS IF you were still subject to them**, telling you that you are NOT free, but still in

bondage to old habits, and that you CAN'T HELP YOURSELF, you **can't stop** committing that particular sin, etc. **You have a CHOICE of WHO you will believe - GOD or SATAN!**

In dealing with the "flesh" there is a three-fold way to resist temptation:

(1) BODY - Discipline your body, keep it in submission to your will - tell IT what to do (Colossians 3:5, I Cor. 9:27),

(2) MIND - renew your mind with the word of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ (Romans 12:2, II Cor. 10:3-5), and

(3) EMOTIONS - refuse to live by your feelings - your feelings and emotions are highly unreliable (Jeremiah 17:9, I Cor. 3:1-3).

Then, you must do what Romans 6:12-13 says, and **"Do not LET sin reign** in your mortal body, that you should **OBEY IT** in its lusts. And do not **PRESENT your MEMBERS** as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but **PRESENT yourselves to God** as being **ALIVE from the dead**, and your MEMBERS as INSTRUMENTS of righteousness to God." "Reign" means to **have authority or CONTROL OVER**. You have a CHOICE of whom to obey, and the flesh or "mortal body" is referred to as an "IT" — it is not the "REAL YOU." The REAL YOU is your SPIRIT within you which was born again and is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

•**II Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is IN CHRIST, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away (died); behold, all things have become new."

•**James 1:13-16** "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted **when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed (tricked)**. Then, when DESIRE has conceived, it gives birth to SIN, and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth DEATH."

•**I Corinthians 9:27** "But I **DISCIPLINE my BODY** and **bring it into submission**, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified (lose my testimony)."

•**Galatians 5:24** "And those who are Christ's **have CRUCIFIED the FLESH** (body) with its **PASSIONS and DESIRES**."

•**I Corinthians 6:19-20** "Or do you not know that **your BODY is the TEMPLE of the Holy Spirit** who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore **glorify God in your BODY** and in your spirit, which are God's."

Key #5 - Learn How to Take Your Thoughts Captive – You've heard that before, but HOW do you cast out wrong thoughts and take them captive to the obedience of Christ?" Jesus Himself gives us an example in Matthew 16:21-23. Peter had tried to tell Jesus that He wouldn't have to go to the cross and die (same temptation as Satan gave in the wilderness, Matt. 4:8-10). Jesus immediately RECOGNIZED that suggestion was AGAINST the will of God for Him, and He said, **"Get behind Me, Satan!** You are an offense to Me, for **you are not mindful of the THINGS of GOD**, but the things of men." You could say something like this, "I command these thoughts to get out of my mind, in the name of Jesus! These thoughts (suggestions, temptations, negative thoughts) are AGAINST God's will, and I WILL NOT entertain these thoughts." Then immediately, replace those thoughts with the TRUTH from God's word regarding that particular temptation or doubt, by saying those scriptures out loud! With your FREEWILL, **make a DECISION** and **CHOOSE to believe God's word ahead of time**, BEFORE you get in the middle of some crisis, or you will end up **believing your emotions** and going with your feelings.

•**II Corinthians 10:3-5** ".....the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (merely human), but mighty through God to the **pulling down of strongholds**; casting down imaginations, and every high thing (thoughts, lies from Satan) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity EVERY THOUGHT** to the OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST."

IN SUMMARY: What you must do is **YIELD the members of your body to God as instruments for His USE**, and PRESENT your BODY as a LIVING SACRIFICE (Rom. 6:13-19, Rom. 12:1-2). **You must SURRENDER your FREE WILL to God** completely. You must be willing to place on the ALTAR those things that do NOT please God, and completely, totally SURRENDER your spirit, soul and body to God, for His use, and live your life to glorify Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit (whose temple your body now is). **Give up trying to live for God in your own power**, and give up your free will to Him.

Let this be your prayer every day:

•**Psalm 119:33-38** "Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I shall keep it to the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; indeed, I shall observe it with my whole heart. Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it. Incline my ear to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness. **Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things**, and revive me in Your way."