

26-0524a Transcript

26-0524a - *Victim or Victorious, Choosing Your Response to Hardship*, Tom Freed

Bible Readers: John Nousek and Roger Raines

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Victim or Victorious

Choosing Your Response to Hardship

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 1:04): John Nousek

Genesis 50:19-21: (0:04) Well, good morning. So this morning, God's Word comes to us in the book of Genesis, (0:12) the 50th chapter. That's the last chapter in Genesis. And it's verses 19 through 21, (0:23) which reads, But Joseph said to them, Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? (0:32) As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, in order to bring about this (0:45) present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid, I will provide for you (0:54) and your little ones. So be comforted. So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them. Amen. (1:04)

2nd Reading (1:09 - 1:53): Roger Raines

Romans 8:35-37: (1:09) Good morning. I'll be reading from the book of Romans, chapter 8, verses 35 through 37. (1:19) Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will it be tribulation, or distress, or persecution, (1:26) or famine, or nakedness, or pearl, or sword? Just as it is written, For your sake we are being put (1:36) to death all day long. We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered. But in all those things, (1:45) we overwhelmingly conquered, through him who loves us. So this conclude this reading. (1:53)

Transcript (0:04 - 16:59), Preacher: Tom Freed

(1:58) Good morning. Sorry I was late, but I was testing you. (2:05) The Bible says be prepared in season and out of season. So here's somebody who came up with a (2:12) sermon, but you know I'm always late, so sorry about that.

It's my turn in the preaching rotation. (2:21) We got six guys preaching. We got John preaching tonight, so come back and support him if you can.

(2:31) My sermon is called, Victim or Victorious? Choosing Your Response to Hardship. (2:38) This week I came across Ben Kerr's powerful story, and it really touched me. Ben is a star (2:47) of the Angel Studios movie, Standout.

He was born with Cousin Syndrome, (2:54) a condition that caused his skull and face to develop differently. (2:59) From a young age, he faced constant stares and harsh bullying. Not just from kids, but even from (3:07) adults.

So even adults bully people. That's a sad thing. Even as we grow up, we still got bullies.

(3:16) One day at the store, while buying candy by himself for the very first time, (3:23) a father

pulled his children away from him and warned him that he might be contagious, treating (3:30) him like a monster. This incident was so painful that Ben went straight home to hid in the bathroom. (3:38) In his despair, he wanted to do anything to remove his deformed face.

(3:44) He felt like he had to get rid of his face and was willing to do anything to do it. Before he (3:52) could act on those dark thoughts, his mother walked in, hugged him tightly, and cried with him. (4:00) She wasn't a coddler, she was a cuddler.

And there's a difference between the two. A coddler (4:07) would have told him, this world is a cruel and dangerous place. Stay home, hide your face, (4:14) and don't ever go out again.

We have a lot of people in this, you know, I guess this current (4:22) time that are coddlers. They don't want their children doing anything. They don't want to put (4:26) them in danger.

You know, and she didn't do that with them. She comforted him and spoke words that (4:35) shifted his whole life. She told him, God didn't make a mistake.

He made you this way for a reason. (4:44) The world was going to notice him because of how he looked, and he might as well use that (4:49) attention for something great. And she said, you can be the victim or you can be the victor.

(5:00) Ben chose to become the victor. He stepped onto the wrestling mat and became a champion. (5:08) That story is powerful.

But today we're not just talking about Ben Caird, we're talking about (5:16) every one of us. We have all faced hardships in life, bullying, broken relationships, (5:25) sickness, betrayal, loss, or worse. No one gets through this life unscathed.

(5:33) We've all been knocked down by hardship. You know, some have it worse than others, but (5:40) everybody has dealt with issues. Everybody's probably been bullied.

You know, I've been (5:45) bullied, but you know, we've all faced pain. We've all faced trials. The world and the enemy (5:56) want us to stay stuck in a victim mentality defined by what happened to us.

But through (6:03) Jesus Christ, we have a better choice. We can become victorious. The victim mentality tells us (6:13) because this happened, my life is over.

I'll never rise above it. I'm ruined. (6:20) Have you ever said this to yourself? Have you ever felt like a victim and, you know, (6:26) you'll never get over it? The devil loves this mindset.

He wants us depressed, bitter, angry, (6:35) and helpless, replaying our trauma instead of God's promises. Our culture often encourages (6:45) this too, wanting us to stay defined by past wrongs, even things that happened before we were (6:54) born. But hear this clearly.

Being a victim of circumstances is not the same as choosing to (7:04) live as a victim. Pain comes to us all. The real question is not if we will face hardship, (7:12) but how we will respond to it.

Let's look at a few people in the Bible who faced tremendous (7:21) hardship, but chose victory instead of staying in the victim mentality. (7:28) First, think about Joseph. He was sold into slavery by his own brothers, falsely accused, (7:36) and forgotten in prison for years.

He had every right to live as a bitter victim. (7:44) Yet when he finally faced his brothers again, he declared, (8:03) Think about that for a moment. If that were me, I probably would have spent years plotting my (8:10) revenge.

I would have been waiting for the perfect moment to make them pay for what they did to me. (8:18) I'm a petty person, so people have had to do a lot less for me to rank them up. (8:25) But Joseph isn't that kind of guy.

He did in his life a lot of things the right way. (8:36) He chose a different path than revenge. He chose to see God's hand in his pain instead of staying (8:43) bitter.

He forgave his brothers and rose to power, eventually saving nations, (8:50) including the very family that hurt him. This is victorious living. Then there's the story of Job.

(9:01) He lost everything in a single blow, his children, his health, his wealth, and his reputation. (9:10) In the deepest part of his suffering, even his own wife told him, Curse God and die. (9:18) Most of us would have given up right there.

Can you imagine that? The only person that's supposed (9:25) to love you and take care of you and even tell you, Curse God and die. Yet while Job wrestled (9:34) with God in question while it was happening, he never cursed God or turned away from him. (9:41) In the middle of his pain, he declared, Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him.

(9:49) Job 13, 15. Job refused to let his losses turn him into a victim. He kept trusting God (9:59) even when he didn't understand.

In the end, God restored him and blessed him even more than before. (10:10) Job's story stands as one of the greatest examples in the Bible of a victim becoming (10:16) victorious through faith in God. The apostle Paul is another powerful example.

He endured (10:28) incredible suffering, beating, shipwrecks, stonings, constant danger, and multiple imprisonments. (10:38) In one city, he was stoned by a mob and dragged outside. The city gates left for dead.

(10:45) Most people would have stayed down and gave up. Paul got back up and went right back into the city. (10:54) He refused to let hardship stop him.

So you can see how tough Paul was and how much his faith was. (11:02) He was stoned and they thought he was dead. And he just got up and ran right back where they stoned (11:08) him.

Even in the midst of all his pain, he boldly declared, thanks be to God, he gives us victory (11:19) through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15, 57. Paul refused to let his suffering define him (11:30) as a victim.

He kept getting back up and pressing forward in his mission for Christ. And of course, (11:43) the greatest example is Jesus himself. He was betrayed by a friend, falsely accused, (11:53) mocked, beaten, and nailed to a cross.

No one in history was more unjustly treated. (11:53) On that cross, he had every right to claim ultimate victim status. Instead, he prayed, (12:11) Father, forgive them.

And three days later, he rose from the dead, completely victorious over (12:18) sin, death, hell, and the grave. Because Jesus is the ultimate victor, we don't have to stay victims. (12:29) The Bible tells us plainly, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loves us.

(12:35) Romans 8, 37. Hank Care took his mother's words to heart and used his difference as fuel to stand (12:49) out for good. In the same way, we could take our pain and let Jesus turn it into purpose.

(12:58) So how do we move from victim to victor? Here are five practical steps. Bring your pain honestly to (13:08) Jesus. Don't hide it.

Let him hold you and cry with you just like Ben's mom did. The Bible says, (13:17) the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (13:24) Psalm 34, 18.

Stop rehearsing only the trauma. (13:32) Quit telling the old victim story and start telling the greater story of what God is doing now. (13:38) God says, forget the former things.

Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing. Isaiah 43, (13:47) 18 through 19.

How many of us dwell on all the negative stuff that's happened in our lives? (13:54) I know I do that. But every day, we have new mercies from God. Every day, God has prepared (14:01) something new for us.

We need to forget about the bad things that happened in the past and (14:09) look for the new thing that God has prepared. Look for God's purpose. Ask him, Lord, how can you use (14:20) this pain for good and for your glory? Remember, in all things, God works for the good of those (14:27) who love him.

Romans 8, 28. This is one of my favorite verses. No matter what has happened to us, (14:37) even the worst things, God can turn it to good.

Our darkest times, God can turn around (14:46) and bring something good out of it. If it wasn't for my lowest, (14:52) you know, darkest time in my life, I wouldn't have become a Christian. (14:55) So God uses the bad things in our lives for good.

Walk in forgiveness and freedom. (15:04) Relieve those who hurt you, just as Joseph and Jesus did. Be kind and compassionate to one another, (15:13) forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

Ephesians 4, 32. Stand daily on (15:23) God's word. Fill your mind with the truth of scripture every day.

As the Bible tells us, (15:31) do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (15:38) Romans 12, 2. That's one of the greatest things we could do. We could read the Bible, (15:46) study it, meditate on it, and change our lives.

(15:55) This morning, Jesus stands before each one of us with the same choice bend face in the bathroom, (16:02) victim or victorious. You don't have to carry the heavy weight of past burdens anymore. (16:11) Jesus already carried it on the cross.

(16:16) He rose victorious so you could walk in victory too. Today is the day to make your choice.

(16:25) If you're tired of living defined by your pain, if you're ready to stop being a victim (16:32) and become a victor through Christ, this is your moment.

If you've never given your life to Jesus, (16:42) or if you need to rededicate your life to him, or if you simply need the prayers of this church, (16:49) I invite you to come forward as we stand and sing. (16:53) Come lay your burdens at his feet. Let today be the day you choose victory in Christ. (16:59)