

Victims or Victors

James 1:2-8

The magnetism of the island is not so much the clear, distinctly blue Caribbean ocean with its rhythmic waves falling upon the sandy beaches as it is the people who live there. There is something about the island culture that stands in stark contrast to the world that surrounds a tropical paradise. The attraction is not the glitter and wealth of the region, for it is a picture of raw nature; and the unpretentious people living there are, for the most part, living in what we would call poverty.

So what is the attraction of this Blue Mountain strip of land 50 miles wide and 150 miles long named Jamaica? It can be captured by a simple phrase which defines her people, “No problem mon.” These three words (no problem mon) are revealed in most every area of life from their walking pace, to the time it takes for a hot cup of coffee to turn warm, to the hour or so delay in the taxi arriving at the hotel. This is an always smiling people with no ulcers and few wrinkles.

One can't help but ask the question, “How can this characteristically poor country, not known for its orthodox Christian beliefs, seem to have a better grip on facing what we call crises than we who claim to serve a sovereign, all-sufficient God?” I'm sure a sociologist could give us reasons and explanations. There are some theologians who would say that “no problem mon” is their religion intertwined with voodoo, drugs, and a smattering of Christianity. But it still begs the question, “Why do **they** appear to face *problems* with a more biblical attitude than most of us *informed, believing Christians*?”

Just how strongly do we truly believe what we say we believe? How far are we willing to go to see His provision become a reality? What time limits do we place on Him to demonstrate His faithfulness in answer to our prayers? What limits do we set in our willingness to “suffer,” “hurt” or live with our disappointments or loneliness? How many times do we allow our crisis to trump His sovereignty in working His plan? How often do we choose to be controlled by our emotions rather than reveal our conviction of His eternal plan?

We say we believe in “His sovereignty;” we trust in “His all-sufficient grace.” Our greatest desire is to “glorify God in our bodies” because we know He “. . . is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.” But then we place *our* limits, set *our* time tables, and follow *our* hearts and miss the whole point of our faith, purpose, and the mysterious, mystical work of God only to say, “Well, I gave God His chance and He failed.”

Each of us in our most honest moment can identify with this issue—consistency in living what we say we believe. Perhaps Paul's warning to Timothy applies to us in the midst of trials when he said men will hold to a form of godliness but deny its power. Today we will attempt to get a grip on what God has done to make us **VICTORS** rather than **VICTIMS**.

Life Response

1. This week MEMORIZE and MEDITATE on James 1:2-4 “*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*”
 - (a) What are some “trials” you can think of that are exceptions to this passage? How about *your* trials?
 - (b) How would you define the contrast between the choice and emotions in considering it all joy in the circumstances you face?
2. What are a few of the most challenging trials you presently face which require a total choice, void of emotions? What (who) is your focus?
3. Is it possible to experience God’s “perfect result” without the trials and subsequent testing and endurance? What significance does this question have for you right now in your trial?
4. Read and meditate on Romans 12:1-5. Note the parallel with James 1:2-8. Focus specifically on Romans 12:5. How does it encourage you? What are the time limits?
5. The difference between becoming a victim or a victor will always be based upon *choice*—a choice to, by faith, trust God’s divine provision and sovereign care or by “human reason” to trust in impulse. Which will be your choice?