

# **JESUS PROMISED VICTORY**

Why Does It Seem so Elusive?



# JESUS PROMISED VICTORY

Why Does It Seem so Elusive?

Ken Gould

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I thank God, who in His mercy sought after me in many ways. At times, my spiritual journey resembled the lost coin. I did not know I was lost, but God sought me. At other times I was more like the lost sheep, not knowing the way, and God provided someone to show me the way. At other times I was more like the rebellious prodigal, and God, like the

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prodigal's father, waited to welcome me home when I would not allow Him to show me the way.



# MY PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I was an atheist for twenty years, even though my parents raised me in a Christian home and sent me to Christian schools through the twelfth grade. Every sermon I heard about the crucifixion of Jesus during those years focused on the blood, the gore, and the violence, claiming God required His wrath to be appeased and every sin must be punished before God could forgive us. These sermons included a description of how bringing the blood of Christ to the Father and reminding Him of the suffering we caused Jesus appeased God's wrath and made Him gracious, merciful, and forgiving. Each of these depictions of the crucifixion moved me farther from God. As a result, I graduated from Auburn Academy, a Christian school, an atheist. Consequently, I didn't go near a church in a serious way for twenty years.

Many people point to a particular time when they surrendered their life to God and the struggles involved. For me it was different. I had bad habits and evil desires, but not bad habits or evil desires that I loved. Life had taught me they were destructive, so I didn't love them. So deciding to give them up wasn't a struggle.

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The issue for me was, “Is God real?” How does someone with a Christian education decide people made up religion and the Scriptures to manipulate the masses? It wasn’t because I didn’t know the Scriptures, for during my Christian education, we studied the Old Testament in the odd years and the New Testament and church history in the even years, and life taught me they were good counsel. However, what teachers and pastors taught about God from the Scriptures didn’t make sense, and because it didn’t make sense, I decided people had made up religion and the Scriptures to manipulate the masses. This is how I became an atheist. A brief description of my journey back to God follows.

While going through a divorce, my now ex-wife threatened to use the fact I was an atheist against me in child custody proceedings. So I started attending Frazer Memorial United Methodist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, with her. I enjoyed the services and John Ed Mathison’s sermons, which contained practical life lessons. This started my journey back to God and answered Mother’s prayers, for she had long been praying for my salvation.

A few years later I was talking with some coworkers in a chemical plant. A Baptist fellow confessed that he was once an atheist. He explained how God had revealed His existence to him.

It happened at the top of a distillation unit, when he talked with God about his lusts; God reprogrammed the neural pathways in his brain, and his inappropriate sexual desires left in a heartbeat.

Later I was watching “The Party Machine” on MTV, which consisted of a group of half-naked women jumping up and down. While watching, I talked with God about my lusts, and God reprogrammed the neural pathways in my brain; my inappropriate sexual desires left in a heartbeat. My sexual desires haven’t been the same since. This experience has made God real to me, and since then, the search to know God and find truth has become serious business to me.

## My Personal Testimony

God didn't handle all my problems in the same way. Gaining control of my tongue took a few years, for I had picked up a vocabulary incompatible with Christianity. Although the vocabulary of my coworkers is like my old vocabulary, I now seldom revert to my old patterns.

The search for truth has continued since God revealed His existence to me, and truth always makes sense. My spiritual growth continues as the Holy Spirit reveals truth from many and various sources. This book shares the most significant truths learned during my spiritual journey.



# INTRODUCTION

At a pastors and elders retreat in the spring of 2013, we were asked to divide into small groups to discuss our needs and the needs of our congregations, so we could collectively pray for them. Half the people in my group asked us to pray for their own personal victory. I did not know these men, but pastors and elders are typically seasoned Christians. From their request, I could tell these men were struggling. They either did not know how to achieve victory, or did not recognize it. However, it struck me as odd because as we will discover, Jesus expects us to be victorious, and pastors and elders should be teaching others to be victorious.

This experience was the catalyst for writing this book. If Jesus expects us to be victorious—and He does—then maybe we either don't know how to achieve victory, or we don't recognize victory when it occurs. One possibility for why we don't recognize victory is that the way we usually define victory makes it unattainable. Another possibility is that the methods taught to gain or achieve victory naturally lead to defeat.

However, when we understand God's natural laws and apply them correctly, victory is achievable. Not only is it achievable, but it occurs

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naturally when we cooperate with the laws of nature instead of trying to achieve victory in unnatural ways. Imagine that we have a business that specializes in digging ponds near rivers; however, our design basis includes digging the ponds on a high point near the river and pushing water uphill to fill them. We might succeed in filling a few ponds, but only with great difficulty and much hard work. We could even decide filling ponds is impossible. Those understanding that water runs downhill would either try to help us by explaining how water interacts with the law of gravity, or they would laugh at our ignorance. If we learned to dig ponds with channels where water ran downhill from the river into our ponds, filling them would become easy, and our success rate would be high. Where we once believed filling ponds was impossible, we would now believe filling ponds is easy and routine.

I believe most of Christendom's search for victory is contrary to the laws of nature. I believe Satan tricks us into believing the best way to fill the pond is to push water uphill. While we stay convinced of this lie, successes will be minimal and victory will be unachievable. Additionally, I believe the demons laugh at us as we try to fill our spiritual pond by pushing water up the channel, for they tricked us into believing that digging ponds on highpoints and pushing water into them was the best plan.

The goal of this book is to show that victory is achievable and occurs naturally when we cooperate with the natural laws governing the universe. Ultimately the book provides guidance and instruction for using natural laws to obtain victory by cooperating with the Holy Spirit.

A little about me and my perspective: I am a chemical engineer. I am involved in producing ingredients for personal care products. These products include all manner of lotions, creams, and gels. Specific examples include dishwasher detergent, shampoo, and baby lotion. You have these products in your home and are up close and personal with them regularly. My work includes designing and installing equipment

to make these products. I am also involved in process improvements and troubleshooting. In the chemical industry, you have three choices: (1) You make product, (2) You make junk, or (3) You make junk and destroy equipment. The results are not subjective.

Engineering is about results. We design and build many things you enjoy; however, the public and our employers expect success, and failures aren't acceptable. You expect the bridges we design and build to provide long and useful service. You expect the aircraft we design and build to fly and be reliable. You expect the fuel we produce for your automobile to perform properly. Our world demands success, and it's not subjective. Bridges stand strong or they collapse. Airplanes either fly or they don't. Fuel either powers engines properly or it doesn't. Sometimes bad fuel even damages engines. Our failures, if spectacular, end careers. The results are not subjective, and spinning them doesn't work.

When we fail to get the needed result, either the result is unachievable, or we need a new approach. Take manned flight, for example. When the Wright brothers and their peers discovered that airfoils (wings) provide lift while moving through the air, manned flight became a reality. People had been trying to fly for centuries. When the approach changed, flight became possible and is now common. Today, people fly using wings configured in many ways—from wing suits to jet aircraft. How we approach something controls whether we succeed or fail.

Jesus told us about the road to eternal life. “But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt. 7:14 NIV). This text does not say the road is difficult. Nor does it say the road is hidden. What it is saying is that few will *recognize* the road leading to eternal life. I believe Satan puts misleading road signs around it, pointing us in other directions that keep us enslaved in our sins and leave us defeated.

The good news is that Jesus directed us to be victorious. He told us it is easy to be victorious. Jesus told us the approach to victory is usually

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overlooked—not hidden or difficult—and Jesus prayed for us to be victorious. He also told us that God the Father, God the Son—that is, Jesus Himself, and the Holy Spirit will help us be victorious whenever we allow them. There is nothing they want more than for each of us to be victorious.

Before we begin, I want to make two things clear. First, I want to be clear that without Christ's life, death, and resurrection, victory is impossible. Second, this book's purpose is to help maximize our cooperation with the Holy Spirit in achieving victory or gaining salvation. Our escape from Satan's slavery absolutely requires the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is always ready, willing, and able; however, without our cooperation His help is of little value. It's like having the key to the door of our cell lying in the middle of the floor. If we refuse to use the key and escape, it is useless to us. Similarly, without our cooperation the Holy Spirit is of little value to us, and we remain defeated.

The intent of this book is to maximize our cooperation with the Holy Spirit, maximizing the results of His efforts. Cooperating fully with the Holy Spirit guarantees our escape from Satan's slavery, and this is victory. In chapter 9 we will discuss the Holy Spirit's role in our escape.



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Part 1

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**UNDERSTANDING HOW  
VICTORY IS ACHIEVED**



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**D**id you know Jesus promised victory? Most of you know God the Father sent Jesus so we would not perish. Jesus tells us in this familiar text, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The saved are those that don’t perish. So Jesus told us if we believe in Him we will be saved. So Jesus and God the Father guarantee or promise that if we believe in Jesus we will be saved. Since believing in Jesus is what guarantees or promises salvation, we need to be sure we know what it means to believe in Jesus.

For the Bible tells us, “You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror. How foolish! Can’t you see that faith without good deeds is useless?” (James 2:19-20 NLT). This text tells us there is a belief or faith that doesn’t save us; it’s useless, and this is the belief or faith that even the demons have and it terrifies them. The demons know Jesus is the Son of God, and it terrifies them and doesn’t make them victorious or Christlike. So let’s explore and learn what the Bible teaches about belief and victory.

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The apostle John tells us the saved have victory over the world. “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?” (1 John 5:4-5, emphasis added). So those born of God, the saved, overcome the world or are victorious. Faith has the power to overcome the world. The faith or belief that overcomes the world is the belief that Jesus is the Son of God. So rightly believing in the Son of God doesn’t terrify, but it gives victory over the world. Jesus guarantees or promises victory or salvation to those who believe in Him. This promise is only to those whose faith or belief overcomes the world. This text makes it plain that salvation *is* victory, and salvation without victory is a deception. This text also tells us that *rightly* believing Jesus is the Son of God is the key to victory.

Why would Jesus being the Son of God provide victory or salvation? What did Jesus tell us was the key to salvation or eternal life? Jesus said, “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life is the reward of the saved or victorious. So knowing God is the key to victory. Then what does Jesus being the Son of God have to do with knowing God? Jesus answered this question while speaking to His disciples in the upper room the evening before His crucifixion. Also when reading this text, I hear disappointment in Jesus’ voice.

Jesus said to him [Philip], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:6-9)

The character of God the Father is exactly like the character of Jesus. “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” The only way to know God is to know Jesus, who said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” We only come to know people by spending time with them. Jesus is the member of the Trinity who came and lived among us so we could come to know Him, and by knowing Jesus we come to know the Father and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is by coming to know Jesus that we come to know God, which is life eternal, salvation, and victory.

The next three texts support the conclusion that knowing Jesus is knowing God and life eternal.

I and My Father are one. (John 10:30)

Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. (John 17:11)

And that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:21)

These texts express the thought that Jesus and the Father are one, and that we are to be one with Jesus and the Father. To be one with someone is for our character and purpose to be the same as theirs. To be one with Jesus is being Christlike, or being a victorious Christian.

The word *Christian* means a follower of Christ or associated with Christ. Our next text comes from the Amplified Bible. The Amplified Bible uses a system of synonyms, punctuation, typographical features, and clarifying words or phrases to reveal shades of meaning for key words in the original manuscripts. This puts the various shades of meaning together and makes it easy to see the various thoughts, ideas, and

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understandings contained in the original manuscripts. The Amplified Bible translates John's description of Christ's followers in his first letter this way.

And this is how we know [daily, by experience] that we have come to know Him [to understand Him and be more deeply acquainted with Him]: if we habitually keep [focused on His precepts and obey] His commandments (teachings). Whoever says, "I have come to know Him," but does not habitually keep [focused on His precepts and obey] His commandments (teachings), is a liar, and the truth [of the divine word] is not in him. But whoever habitually keeps His word and obeys His precepts [and treasures His message in its entirety], in him the love of God has truly been perfected [it is completed and has reached maturity]. By this we know [for certain] that we are in Him: whoever says he lives in Christ [that is, whoever says he has accepted Him as God and Savior] ought [as a moral obligation] to walk and conduct himself just as He walked and conducted Himself. (1 John 2:3-6 AMP)

From this description, a follower of Christ or a Christian isn't just someone who knows about Christ; it is someone who is following Christ's teachings or someone who is becoming like Christ. So the name we are called, Christian, claims we are like Jesus. As Polycarp, a companion of the apostle John and bishop of Smyrna, once said that a Christian loves what Jesus loves.<sup>1</sup> What does Jesus love? He loves people. Jesus loves being considerate, kind, and merciful to us. Jesus spent His life doing for others. When we love what someone loves we naturally become like them, which in this case means being like God the Father and the Holy Spirit also. Here is the Bible record of Jesus expressing this thought: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). This text says we are to be victorious, Jesus expects us to be victorious, and He believes it is within our grasp. We can read this verse either as a promise or a command. I prefer reading it as a promise.

Does Christ expect victory to be difficult? Let's look at what Christ said about the path to victory and how difficult achieving it should be: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

Christ says, "If you are discouraged, depressed, and burdened with the assorted problems and concerns of life, and you want relief, come to Me. I have the solution, and I can give you rest." Are you tired? Do you have trouble sleeping? Is the stress of living in this world consuming you? This text says the solution is to come to Jesus, and He makes it easy. This text is also telling us Jesus didn't place the heavy burden we carry around on us, for His burden is light. We will discuss the difference in burdens later; however, here is a clue: Believing Satan's lies makes our burden heavy.

What have we discovered so far? Salvation without victory is a lie. Victory isn't supposed to be difficult. Jesus expects us to be victorious, Jesus taught victory is easy, Jesus promises victory if we trust Him, and those who trust Jesus follow His counsel.

So why does a victorious life seem so elusive? Could it be our definition of victory is wrong? Usually we define Christian victory in one of two ways: either a perfect performance or perfect forgiveness. We think of a perfect performance as a life without sinful acts, and we think of perfect forgiveness as being perfectly forgiven for our sinful acts.

Both are wrong and not just wrong, but fundamentally wrong. As you will see, accepting either definition guarantees defeat because a perfect performance is impossible, and perfect forgiveness isn't victory. Eventually we realize that victory as perfect forgiveness is a deception, for forgiveness is neither success nor victory. Neither success in business nor victory in sports requires a perfect performance.

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Golf champions have bogeys during the tournament. A bogey is the result of mishitting the ball. The champion never intentionally mishits the ball, but the champion mishits the ball, usually more than once on the same hole, for each bogey. Perfect performances don't include bogeys, but victorious golfers with bogeys on their cards still get the check or the green jacket. They didn't have a perfect performance, but they were victorious. Their commitment and determination are beyond question. The total commitment required is only acceptable if they love the game.

In both sports and business, excellence requires a total or complete commitment, not a perfect performance. Now, let there be no misunderstanding: The committed do perform, but not perfectly. Without a special performance there's no green jacket or trophy, and special performances do not occur without putting forth serious effort. When one loves to play the game, it is enjoyable to put forth the required effort.

Success in our spiritual life requires effort, just as success in all other endeavors requires effort. The Bible doesn't teach that we find God when we casually look for Him. It teaches we will find Him when searching with all our heart. "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). And "But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 4:29). These are both promises that when we turn from the world's foolishness and seek God seriously, we will find Him. When we are ready to seriously seek God's guidance, counsel, and instruction with a willingness to follow, He promises victory.

Also, let's review the familiar text, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Here Jesus tells us God the Father sent Him to prevent our defeat/perishing, and He promises everlasting life for those who believe in Jesus. Everlasting life is the reward of the saved or victorious, for we have already discovered the saved are victorious. So this text tells us God the Father and Jesus promise victory



to all who believe and follow the teachings and counsel given to us by Jesus. For if we don't follow Jesus' teachings and counsel, we don't trust Him and we don't believe in Him.

The messages from Jesus to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 make it clear that to receive the rewards of the saved, we must overcome or be victorious. The following Scriptures describe the rewards of the saved and who receive them:

From the letter to Ephesus:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who *overcomes* I will give to *eat from the tree of life*, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7, emphases added).

From the letter to Smyrna:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who *overcomes* shall *not be hurt by the second death*” (Rev. 2:11, emphases added).

From the letter to Pergamum:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who *overcomes* I will give some of the *hidden manna* to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone *a new name* written which no one knows except him who receives it” (Rev. 2:17, emphases added).

From the letter to Thyatira:

“And he who *overcomes*, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will *give power* over the nations” (Rev. 2:26, emphases added).

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From the letter to Sardis:

“He who *overcomes* shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the *Book of Life*; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Rev. 3:5, emphases added).

From the letter to Philadelphia:

“He who *overcomes*, I will make him a *pillar in the temple of My God*, [not a marble pillar. A pillar like Joe, who was a pillar in the community. Joe was an exemplary citizen] and he shall go out no more. [Our allegiance to Jesus and his teachings will be complete and total, no wavering, or waffling.] I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name” (Rev. 3:12, emphases and comments added).

From the letter to Laodicea:

“To him who *overcomes* I will grant to *sit with Me on My throne*, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Rev. 3:21, emphases added).

In each case, it isn't the forgiven, but it's those who overcome, the victorious, who receive the rewards of the saved. So to be saved we must overcome or be victorious.

Summarizing, the rewards of the saved or overcomers include:

- eating from the Tree of Life (Rev. 2:7)
- not experiencing the second death (Rev. 2:11)
- eating the hidden manna and receiving a new name (Rev. 2:17)
- given power (Rev. 2:26)
- their name being in the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5)

- being part of God's temple (Rev. 3:12)
- sitting with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3:21)

So we now know God the Father promises or guarantees victory to the saved—all who believe in Jesus. We know the saved are victorious. We know Jesus expects His followers to overcome or be victorious. We know God the Father sent Jesus to prevent our defeat, or God the Father sent Jesus for our victory. We also know Christian churches commonly teach that victory or perfection is impossible; therefore, achieving the victory Jesus promised requires a new approach.

How hard is gaining victory supposed to be? To find the answer we will examine the places where Jesus most clearly told individuals to live victoriously for the rest of their lives. In John 5:14 we find the record of Jesus telling the man who was healed near the pool of Bethesda to “sin no more,” or to be victorious over sin’s slavery for the rest of his life. “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well. *Sin no more*, lest a worse thing come upon you.’” In John 8:11 we find the record of Jesus telling the woman caught in adultery to “sin no more,” or to be victorious over sin’s slavery for the rest of her life. When He asked who condemned her, “she said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and *sin no more*.’” Jesus didn’t indicate He was asking them to do something difficult or impossible. Jesus didn’t indicate they would struggle, and He clearly told or directed them to be victorious.

What did Jesus say about the difficulty of following His instructions? “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30). Here Jesus clearly tells us He doesn’t place heavy burdens on us. However, most of us believe what Jesus told these people to do is impossible or is a heavy burden

## JESUS PROMISED VICTORY

we can't carry. However, these texts show that Jesus not only expects us to be victorious, but He expects victory to be easy. Helping people understand the approach that makes victory or escaping sin's slavery easy is the purpose of this book.

The world seeks love, joy, and peace, and the Scriptures tell us these are the fruit of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> The world seeks love, joy, and peace by following Satan's lies or using his methods. We know Satan's goal is to defeat us. The natural result of using Satan's methods is pain, misery, sorrow, and defeat, for Satan's methods come with guilt and fear. The basis of Satan's methods is the principle of selfishness—me first at others' expense. Me first at others' expense naturally leaves a trail of destruction. The trail of destruction left by living life based on the principle of selfishness produces guilt and fear. Guilt and fear produce anxiety. The anxious, ridden by guilt and fear, have no peace and no joy. When we have no peace and no joy, love is hard to find. When we look for love, joy, and peace in all the wrong places, we can't find it. However, when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, we have love, joy, and peace, for it is the fruit of the Spirit. As we will see, the natural result of ignoring God's counsel, laws, and instruction is pain, misery, sorrow, and defeat.

The intent of this book is to help us cooperate with the Holy Spirit and God's natural laws. Victory is supposed to be easy, yet many of us find it elusive. When we cooperate with natural laws instead of fighting them, our spiritual journey becomes easy and pleasant instead of feeling like a heavy burden or a prolonged battle. Yes, long journeys require endurance and effort, but like a walk on the beach, a hike in the mountains, or a long bicycle ride, we enjoy the journey and don't ever consider turning around. When we fight natural laws, life is difficult and we lose, because natural laws don't get tired and wear down. They are simply statements about how life works. Fighting natural laws is like putting water in your lawn mower's gas tank and working hard, tugging on the rope to start it. No matter how hard you or your team

try to start the engine, it will not start, because it doesn't work that way. It will wear you down, and you will come to believe your lawn mower can't be started. You can even pray about it, but until you accept the conviction of the Holy Spirit, remove the water from the gas tank, and put gas in it, all your efforts will be useless. However, God the Father and His Son guarantee success or victory when we cooperate with the Holy Spirit and the laws of nature.

Victory starts with a commitment to seek God. God promises all who seriously seek Him will find Him. Jesus told us the key to eternal life, or victory, is knowing God. Knowing all this, will you make seeking to know God a priority in your life?

The next chapter is about a natural law Satan uses to keep us trapped and defeated in his strongholds, making victory seem elusive.

