

MESSAGE 1-3-21
A FORMULA FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY IN 2021
LESSONS WE CAN LEARN TO HELP US

Intro: As we enter a new year 2021, we do not know what lies before us. It is good for us to meditate on where we have been in this life and to look to the future for God's blessings. The problem with life is that it is full of uncertainties. Who could have planned out 2020? Who could have imagined the disruptions we would have gone through? According to the inflated records of WHO there were 1.8 million people who supposedly died last year due to Covid, but during WW II, 70 Million people died over a period of 6 years because of the war. That was 11.5 million a year. So we can assuredly say there have been worse times than what we have seen in 2020, and we can assuredly say there will be worse times in the future because the Bible predicts it.

I once was counseling a man who was in great despair and really discouraged. He was worried about this and that, complaining about this and that. Finally I said, you know how you can stop being depressed? He said, how? I said, if you would be able to face your greatest fear and trial with ease, then everything else you face would be like a walk around the block. If a person with ease could run a 10 mile marathon, what would it be for him to run a 100 yard race. If you could bench press 200 Lbs, what would it be for you to bench press 50 Lbs.. So if you are prepared to face your greatest trial with resolve and calm, than what could 2021 ever bring into your life to trouble you? The greatest spiritual victory that a person can attain to in their Christian walk is where they have come to the point where they can say they have taken up their cross to follow the Lord. This is what we call living a crucified life. This is our morning text and lesson:

Matthew 16:24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matthew 16:25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

FORMULA FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY IN 2021.
THINGS WE MUST LEARN FOR THE NEW YEAR.

- I. LEARN TO TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS.**
- II. LEARN TO INVEST IN THINGS THAT CAN NEVER BE TAKEN FROM YOU.**
- III. LEARN TO LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN.**
- IV. LEARN TO NOT LET MEN DISAPPOINT YOU (Look To Christ).**
- V. LEARN THE LESSON OF ENDURANCE AND HARDSHIP (In it for the long haul).**

I. LEARN TO TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS

I have heard more people say to me that this year has been the craziest year of their lives. With all the lockdowns, and Black Lives Matter riots, and all the drama on the news, most of us have seen nothing like it in all our lives.

As we enter 2021 we can only wonder what is in store for us. So I thought it good to share some biblical principles that I hope will help us in the New Year.

My first word of advice in making 2021 a year of Spiritual victory is to learn to take up your cross and follow Jesus.

The cross in the day that Jesus lived was probably the worst form of death that any man could suffer. Yet it is this instrument of defeat that has been taken as a symbol of victory for Christians around the world for 2000 years.

How can taking up an instrument of suffering like the cross produce victory for the New Year?

The answer is simple. What is the worst thing that can happen to any person? The answer is DEATH! But if you are already dead in Christ, and Christ defeated death itself, then how can even death itself defeat us? If you consider your life crucified with Christ, and the life you now live is for God through Jesus Christ, than what can defeat you?

The greatest fear that men have is death. Again I say to you, what worst thing could happen to you? Jesus defeated death itself and now says to His disciples take up your cross and follow me.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,
Romans 8:39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What can you threaten a dead person with, DEATH? They are already dead. In other words, the world has nothing they can threaten a truly 100% committed Christian with because they consider themselves dead to the world.

When a person takes up their cross to follow the Lord, they are declaring:

1. THEY ARE DEAD TO THE THINGS OF THE WORLD.

Lust of the flesh.
Lust of the eyes.
Pride of life.

Romans 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Romans 6:4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Romans 6:5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Romans 6:7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Romans 6:8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

Romans 6:9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

Romans 6:10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

Romans 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

When Jesus died on the cross He took all our sins and nailed them to the cross. Everything that offends God was nailed to the cross. All our sinful lusts and passions were nailed to the cross. He bore our sins on the cross.

The world rejected Him.
The world despised Him.
He became sin for us.

To the world no greater punishment and rejection could be given any man then to hang on the cross to die.

So by taking up that cross and identifying with Jesus, you are saying I don't care what the world thinks of me.

Even the disciples did not understand this. Peter tried to keep Jesus from going to the cross and Jesus had to rebuke him. They wanted Jesus to be exalted in this world. Jesus knew that before He could be exalted, He needed to be crucified. It was necessary. Therefore we read:

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In other words, the suffering and shame of the cross was a light thing in the eyes of the Lord. He despised it, thought little of it, did not even let it hinder Him from doing the will of God, because He knew that what followed was far more glorious.

Look, if you are looking for a reward in this life, than you are going to be disappointed in 2021. But if you are crucified with Christ and 2021 turns out to be more of what 2020 was, (a trial and challenge) then you won't let that distract you from following the Lord and obeying the Lord!

Jesus came into this world to suffer and die on the cross.

If you think you came into this world to be rich and famous you don't understand what it means to take up your cross and follow the Lord.

Before I was saved I had dreams and ambitions in this world. I had goals. I had my little list of things I wanted to accomplish. When I got saved I had to tear up that list and I was crucified to these ambitions because they were of the world, they were part of the world system which involved the ambitions of the world. I am crucified with Christ, dead to those things. But now I am alive to God.

Matthew 10:38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Before I was saved, I found my life in this world, but someday I would lose my life in and ambitions at death. Instead, I died to my life in this world and someday when the Lord takes me to Himself, I will find my life in Him for eternity. This is what it is to live the crucified life.

WHAT IS THE WORST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU IN 2021?

Some say I could get Covid and die. Paul, who said, he was crucified with Christ said,

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Tuesday morning, I will be making a trip to Indian Town Gap to conduct an interment service for the burial of Art Demuyser. The truth is, the only ones that will be there will be his son, and Lou Parise the funeral director. I will be traveling 2 hours there and 2 hours back. Now we know that Art, if he was saved, is with the Lord and no prayers conducted over his dead body are going to make it better for him or worse in the after life. I am not going for Art, I am going for a few people that will be there and for a

testimony for the Lord. Art had no money, so I do not expect to be paid to do this. I have a lot other things I could be doing to make money on that day, but this is what the Lord wants me to do and I will do it. The choice is not mine, it is made for me by the Lord. I am crucified with Christ, and what I do, I do for the Lord.

I am not trying to impress the world. We need to be dead to the world. This is what it is to be crucified with Christ.

2. TO BE CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST IS TO BE DEAD TO SELF AMBITIONS.

The ultimate dedication that any Christian could have is to be crucified with Christ.

When you are crucified with Christ, your desire is to please Christ.

This is why when the early disciples were martyred for the Lord they rejoiced that they were worthy to suffer in the name of the Lord.

You can be victorious for the Lord in 2021 if you reckon yourself to be dead to sin and crucified for Christ and are now a living sacrifice. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

This is what it is to be crucified with Christ. To live a life where you are a living sacrifice, living a life that is wholly acceptable unto the Lord, which is your reasonable service.

After all, He died to make it possible that you could spend eternity in His presence. He died so you might live. He died and paid your hell on the cross. It is only reasonable now that you live for Him.

3. TO BE CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS LORDSHIP OVER YOU.

I Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

I Corinthians 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

To be crucified with Christ is to acknowledge that you are bought with a price. The price is God's only Son's life on the cross. It cost HIM HIS life to liberate you from this satanic system. He owns you. He owns me.

Now there are a lot of Christians out there taking possession of stolen property. You are His property. Which of you who own a car would appreciate it if someone just took your car out for a joy ride without your permission? Every time you use your life and body, which is God's, for some ungodly activity, you are stealing something from God.

I Corinthians 6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Whatever you do remember you are God's servant first.

I Corinthians 7:23 Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.

4. TO BE CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IN THIS LIFE THERE WILL BE SACRIFICES AND SUFFERING.

The cross is an instrument of suffering. If you are trying to avoid suffering in this life, you will be repelled by the concept of being crucified with Christ.

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

If you are trying to avoid sacrifices, you will never take up your cross to follow the Lord.

If you are trying to avoid suffering, you will never live the crucified life.

If you are trying to live a life of comfort and ease, then living the crucified life is not something you will attain to.

II Timothy 2:12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

Jesus said,

John 16:33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

To take up your cross means, there will be sacrifices to follow the Lord.
There will be suffering.
There will be hardships.

II. LEARN TO INVEST IN THINGS THAT CAN NEVER BE TAKEN FROM YOU.

There are many choices we will be making in 2021.

What we choose to do in 2021 will either be eternal or temporal.

Jesus, said to Martha,

Luke 10:40 But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.

WHAT WAS MARY DOING?

Luke 10:39 And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word.

BUT MARTHA THOUGHT THIS A WASTE OF TIME, AND SHE CONSIDERED WHAT SHE WAS DOING MORE IMPORTANT! NOTE WHAT JESUS SAID TO HER:

Luke 10:41 And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things:

Luke 10:42 But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

Mary chose to be involved in things that would never be taken from her.

What were those things, that would last? That was listening to the Word of God preached.

III. LEARN TO LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN.

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

How do you lay up treasure in heaven?

We all understand what it is to lay up treasures on earth. We do so, by making money, getting gain, investing, and storing up these for your own pleasures and worldly lusts.

This is the point of the parable Jesus shared about a rich man who laid up treasures on earth,

Luke 12:16 And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

Luke 12:17 And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

Luke 12:18 And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

Luke 12:19 And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

Luke 12:20 But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

Luke 12:21 So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

There is nothing material that you can take with you to Heaven. So to be rich towards God is to take some of that material wealth and trade it for spiritual gain and wealth in Heaven. Someday your soul will be required of you. Each of us are going to stand before the Lord and have to give an account for the things we have done in the flesh whether good or evil.

There will have to be a trade off of earthly riches for heavenly riches.

I do not believe there is any Christian who will not have to sacrifice some earthly gain to be a dedicated Christian.

Now rich is a relative term. In some parts of the world even the poorest of us in America are rich. There are some places of the world where we can support a national preacher for as little as \$200.00 per month. Which of us in America could live on \$200.00 a month?

There are many parables that Jesus spoke that were based on the illustration of money and finances. We can understand money, sometimes easier than spiritual truth.

Jesus said of the foolish virgins that they failed to purchase oil in their lamps and did not make it in the day of reckoning because of their neglect.

Matthew 25:8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.

Matthew 25:9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.

Matthew 25:10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.

Matthew 25:11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.

Matthew 25:12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.

Matthew 25:13 Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.

In this parable, the foolish virgins failed to spend their money on oil for their lamps. What is that oil? That oil represents the Holy Spirit and all that goes along with it. It represents the fruit of the spirit. God's treasures, involves spiritual things, not physical.

But we need to sacrifice the physical material things of this world for spiritual. There are some people that sacrifice nothing in this world unless it benefits them.

So these foolish virgins represent carnal Christians who live for themselves, but outwardly look good. They do not spend money on spiritual things. Now this parable was spoken about 2000 years ago, and the Lord has not returned in those days, but a lot of people have come and gone in these 2000 years. So the application is not only for the Lord's return but for our reckoning with Him. So whether we meet the Lord after death or in life, we all have an appointment with the Lord. When that day comes there will be no time to go and exchange our earthly treasures for Heavenly. That must be done before our reckoning with Him.

I can't begin to tell you how many times I have thought I had another opportunity to talk to people, but God's appointment superseded my schedule. When you have an opportunity to invest your earthly treasure for Heavenly, do it quickly before it is too late.

Jesus gave another parable illustrating this. This was in the form of a unjust steward who was trying quickly to make up for lost time before his day of reckoning.

Luke 16:1 And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

Luke 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.

Luke 16:3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.

Luke 16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.

Luke 16:5 So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord?

Luke 16:6 And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.

Luke 16:7 Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.

Luke 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Luke 16:11 If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?

What is the lesson to the children of light? The lesson is simple, take that filthy mammon, or money and use it to store up treasure in Heaven, by doing some spiritual good for the welfare of others and in turn secure your eternal habitation in Heaven some day.

I Timothy 6:17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;

I Timothy 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

I Timothy 6:19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

This is not buying your way into heaven, it is actually exchanging earthly treasure for heavenly.

Ways you exchange earthly treasures for heavenly:

1. THE AGE OLD WAY IS TO BE FAITHFUL IN GIVING GOD A TITHE AS ORDERED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND EXEMPLIFIED IN THE NEW.

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3:9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

Malachi 3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

I know that some would argue that since we are no longer under the law but under grace that we are no longer under the command to tithe. I would argue that under the new commandment the law is written in our hearts so why would Jesus command us to do less than what He commanded the children of Israel.

2. WE LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN BY SUPPORTING GOD'S MINISTERS WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

We do this by supporting missionaries around the world.

3. WE LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN BY HELPING A BROTHER IN NEED.

I John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

I John 3:17 But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?

IV. LEARN TO NOT LET MEN DISAPPOINT YOU (Look To Christ).

If you are going to live a victorious Christian life, you need to get your eyes off of men and onto God.

1. IF YOU PUT YOUR TRUST IN MEN YOU ARE GOING TO BE DISAPPOINTED. In fact, to put your hope and trust in men is to be cursed.

Psalms 118:8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

Jeremiah 17:5 Thus saith the LORD; **Cursed be the man that trusteth in man,** and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

Jeremiah 17:6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

Jeremiah 17:7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

Jeremiah 17:8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

I am never surprised about what people will do, and how wicked people are. I am surprised when men do what is right and good. Paul put it this way.

Romans 3:11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

Romans 3:12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

If there are some that seek God and do good it is by the grace of God. Why are you surprised when you find out the Bible is true about human sinful nature? If you live by principle you will be safe. What you do for others you should do in obedience to God and not expecting anything in return.

I have found more people who have gotten bitter in their Christian walk because they were disappointed by people, especially by people in the church. People are people.

You need to put your trust in the Lord and not in people. People will discourage you and let you down. Praise the Lord for those who don't but those people are few and far between.

Paul the Apostle said of everyone he could think of:

Philippians 2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Now the Bible says evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse. You need to seek to be that Timothy. Seek to be a Paul. Seek to be like Jesus.

Remember when Jesus went to the cross everyone forsook Him!

Matthew 26:56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

Now here we have a dilemma. The Bible commands us to be the total opposite of what the majority of people are by nature. So what happens is that people will affect you in a negative way and keep you from obeying the Lord. So if you put your trust in man, you are going to live a defeated life and become bitter. You will not want to obey the Lord in regards to your duty to love and do good to others. You will become vindictive; you will allow a root of bitterness to destroy you from within. You will justify living a selfish life. You will go into self preservation mode. You will find it hard to want to do good to others realizing for the most part it doesn't do you any good. In fact the Bible predicts that this will be the prevalent attitude of end time Christianity. It says, **“Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.” Matt. 24:12**

LOOK!!!

The reason you should love your neighbor is because God told you to!
The reason you should do good to others is because God told you to.

Jesus said,

Luke 6:32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

Luke 6:33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

Luke 6:34 And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

Luke 6:35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.

Luke 6:36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

We have too many people that have turned bitter because of what they have observed in mankind. You will live a defeated Christian life in 2021 if you let others affect you, and defeat you spiritually. God has been too good to let Him down. Get up, stop feeling sorry for yourself, stop licking your wounds, and start serving God.

It was said that Jesus stayed the course because of what He knew about mankind.

John 2:23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

John 2:24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,
John 2:25 And needed not that any should testify of man: **for he knew what was in man.**

Paul the Apostle said,

Romans 3:3 For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

Romans 3:4 God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

What if others stop serving God, will this cause you to stop serving God? When you stand before God you will stand before Him alone. The excuse that no one else was serving God will not hold up in the courts of Heaven. God is looking for men and women who will serve Him no matter what!

There are few people that stay the course when their friends don't stay the course. I can think of one man that did, in our church. That was Jake McKeeby. He stayed in this church in the early days when just about every friend he had left. He reminded me of a soldier who stayed loyal to his Savior till the day he died.

What kind of commitment does God expect of you and me? Read the book of Revelation. He said to the church at Smyrna,

REV 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

V. LEARN THE LESSON OF ENDURANCE AND HARDSHIP (Be in it for the long haul).

II Timothy 2:3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Remember the famous words of Esther when she realized that she had to obey God and risk her life to obey God. She said,

Esther 4:16.... and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and ***if I perish, I perish.***

Who is like Paul who endured such hardness.

II Corinthians 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

II Corinthians 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

II Corinthians 11:26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

II Corinthians 11:27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

II Corinthians 11:28 Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

II Corinthians 11:29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?

II Corinthians 11:30 If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.

Look, why are we surprised that sinful men will act sinful?

Why are we surprised that what the Bible says will come to pass?

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Hebrews 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

How few people end their life victorious? How few leave this world with a good testimony and a good name? I met a man at a preacher conference his name was Evangelist Wayne Henderson. Shortly after I meet him he started praying for me and conversing with me in text messages. I meet him October 2018 and not a month went by that he didn't send me a text telling me he was praying for me. I received messages from him right up to about a month before he died. Here was a man faithful unto death.

Praise God there are some great servants of God that have gone on before us that have left us a witness and a testimony. In 2021 we need to vow to be one of these few.

Paul said “All seek their own except Timothy. He was the exception. If you are going to be faithful to the Lord you need to vow to be the exception to the norm!

Be in the spiritual fight for the long haul. Seek to be faithful right up to the day the Lord takes you home. God commanded the saints at Smyrna, BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.” I believe He demands that of every one of His servants.

These are the virtues we need for the New Year in order to be a victorious Christian. Do these things and you will have a profitable year spiritually. It does not depend on a pandemic, a year of scandal in the political arena, or financial prosperity, good health, or any other circumstance. It only depends on your character.

**FORMULA FOR SPIRITUAL VICTORY IN 2021.
THINGS WE MUST LEARN FOR THE NEW YEAR.**

- I. LEARN TO TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS.**
- II. LEARN TO INVEST IN THINGS THAT CAN NEVER BE TAKEN FROM YOU.**
- III. LEARN TO LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN.**
- IV. LEARN TO NOT LET MEN DISAPPOINT YOU (Look To Christ).**
- V. LEARN THE LESSON OF ENDURANCE AND HARDSHIP (In it for the long haul).**