

### ‘Victory in Jesus’

A man is driving down a country road, when he spots a farmer standing in the middle of a huge field of grass. He pulls the car over to the side of the road and notices that the farmer is just standing there, doing nothing, looking at nothing. The man gets out of the car, walks all the way out to the farmer and asks him, ‘excuse me mister, but what are you doing?’ The farmer replies, ‘I’m trying to win a Nobel Prize.’ Puzzled, the man asks, ‘How?’ ‘Well,’ said the farmer, ‘I heard they give the Nobel Prize, to people who are out standing in their field.’

Let me tell you about a man who was outstanding in the field of music, his name is **E. M. Bartlett**, he was born **December 24, 1883** in Waynesville, Missouri. From a very young age, he dedicated his life to the Lord and his life is a testament of commitment to the Lord. He attended the Hall-Moody Institute in Martin, Tennessee and William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, where he studied to be a music teacher.

Sadly in **1939** he suffered a stroke, but after that stroke, he went on to write one of the most famous and moving songs, Christians still sing today. That song is called, ‘**Victory in Jesus.**’

You see, it never ceases to amaze me how tragedy can occur in someone’s life, but then they go on to praise God anyway. It never ceases to amaze me how difficulties come our way that can actually draw us closer to God.

**E. M. Bartlett** had just suffered a stroke, but he understood where true victory comes from. He understood that the real victory doesn’t come from things of this world. He understood that real, long lasting victory doesn’t come from having a successful career or amassing great wealth. He totally understood that the real victory only comes in Jesus.

So, what I want to do today is go through the words of this hymn because I believe it tells the story of the Gospel like no other. Before we get into text of the hymn, let me ask you, when we sing any hymn, **are we making melody in our hearts or just miming the words? Do the words of the songs, move us and put our minds on heavenly things?**

Because sometimes I’ve heard some songs sung as if we were at a funeral service. We sometimes sing slow songs, fast and fast songs, slow. Songs like ‘**Oh happy day**’ and one line from that song says, ‘**Oh Happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away!**’ If I were a visitor coming into our assemblies, by the time we’ve finished singing that song, I would be questioning just how happy these people were, when they had their sins forgiven!

Another song is ‘**Marching to Zion**’, it’s supposed to be a marching song, the second line of the song says, ‘**and let our joys be known**’, we sometimes sing this song as if we we’re on a walking along the beach on a rainy day.

What about the song, ‘**I surrender all**’? **Do we really mean it when we sing, ‘All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give’?**

What about the song, ‘**Count your blessings**’, one line from the last stanza says, ‘**Count your many blessings, angels will attend.**’ **Do we even believe angels exist? Do we really believe that angels will help us in our time of need?**

The list could go on, but the point is, if we really believed what we’re singing, we would be more convicted about what we believe. And so, when we come to any song we sing, we should think about the words, whilst trying to understand what the writer is trying to share with us. Or as Paul would say in **1 Corinthians 14:15** “**I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.**”

I want to thank you for asking to me to speak on this topic because it actually helped me to really think about and understand the words of **E. M. Bartlett** in this beautiful hymn. Let’s read the first stanza.

I heard an old, old story how a Saviour came from glory,  
How He gave His life on Calvary to save a wretch like me;  
I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood’s atoning,  
Then I repented of my sins and won the victory.

Ah, the old, old story, the story of Jesus, the story about how God came in the flesh, to die for sinners like us. Paul would put those words, this way, ‘**Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.**’ **1 Timothy 1:15**

Let me ask you, **is that how you see yourself? Do you see yourself as the worst of sinners or do you see the sin in others as being worse?**

When Jesus walked into Simon the Pharisees house, He shared a parable with Simon about the two debtors and Simon understood the parable but look at what happens next. **Luke 7:44 “Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman?”** Jesus looks at the woman but asks Simon, **do you see this woman?**

Now that may sound like a strange question, after all, how couldn't he see this woman, she's standing there right in front of him. You see, the problem was, Simon saw a tramp, Simon saw a woman who didn't deserve the grace of God, he saw a woman whose debt was huge, in comparison with his own. But loved ones, Christ came from glory and died on Calvary for all of us, regardless of the amount of debt we are due.

Let me ask you, **how many sins does it take to condemn someone to hell?** One. So, if it only takes one sin to condemn us, **what difference does it make if someone's list of sins is greater than our own?** Jesus died to save a wretch like me, He died to save a wretch like you, we're all wretches. Or as Paul would say in **Romans 3:23 ‘all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.’**

You see, we're busy pointing out people's sins and flaws because we've taken our eyes off the cross. **Mark 10:45 “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”** We know what giving His life means, **don't we?**

We talk about the cross, we sing about the cross, but we've forgotten about the power of that precious blood that was shed on that cross in order for us to be reconciled back to God. We try to encourage people to become Christians by pointing out the flaws in other religious groups.

But loved ones, it's all about Jesus and we should be pointing them to the cross. Because people will never understand the cross as something done for them, until they understand it was something done by them. It's only when we see ourselves as sinners, can we come to repentance. Now that word, **'repentance'** is almost out of fashion these days and for years it's been used in a very negative way. **'Repent, the end of the world is near!' 'Repent or you'll go to hell!'**

But the truth is, the word **'repent'** in Greek is the word, **'metanoeo'** and it simply means to reconsider. In other words, reconsider the way your living your life, reconsider the direction your life is going in. But after you've reconsidered, do something about it, change the way your living your life, change the direction of your life.

There's a town called **Wabush in Canada**, and it was completely isolated for some time. Recently a road was cut through the wilderness to reach it. **Wabush** now has one road leading into it, and thus, only on one road leading out of it. If someone wanted to travel the unpaved road for six to eight hours to get into **Wabush**, there is only way they could leave, by turning around.

You see, each of us, arrive in a town called sin in our lives and there is only one way out. It's the road built by God Himself, but in order to take that road, we must first turn around. That complete about-face is what the Bible calls repentance, and without it, there's no way out of town.

Faith in God has legs attached and repentance has legs attached, in other words they lead us somewhere. **2 Corinthians 7:10 “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.”** The world thinks repentance is all about feeling sorry for yourself, or sorry for the sins you've committed but the only place that kind of sorrow leads to is death.

**A newly converted Christian was asked by her friend, ‘what difference is there in your life since you became a Christian?’ To which she replied, ‘oh before I was a Christian I used to run towards sin, now I spend most of my time running away from it.’**

Real repentance is more than just feeling sorry, it has legs attached and leads us to salvation. When we focus on the cross and see ourselves as sinners and repent, then we're on the road to victory. But the old, old story doesn't end there, **E. M. Bartlett** goes on to write.

**I heard about His healing, of His cleansing power revealing.**

How He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see;  
 And then I cried, 'Dear Jesus, come and heal my broken spirit,'  
 I then obeyed His blest commands and gained the victory.

You can't help but wonder if he was pleading for God to heal him after he had his stroke. But as the second half of this stanza suggests, he's not speaking about physical healing but spiritual healing. **Remember when Jesus went to Bethesda and met a man who was laying by a pool?** This guy had been paralysed for thirty-eight years.

And Jesus comes up to him and ask him, what on the surface seems like a cruel question. Jesus asks him, **"Do you want to get well?"** John 5:6 **'Well hello! Of course, I want to get well, I've been like this for 38 years.'** But you see loved ones, Jesus wasn't just speaking about his physical ailments, he was speaking about his spiritual ailments too. John 5:14 **"Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."**

I believe that's the question we should all be asking ourselves, **do we want to get well?** Psalm 34:18 **"The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."** If we're honest with ourselves, we will admit that we all struggle with some kind of sin in our lives and some have given up fighting against it. But loved ones, we cannot avoid or remove the topic of sin.

A man named **Dr. Howard**, from Australia preached very strongly on the subject of sin. After the service, one of the church officers came to speak to him in his study. **'Dr. Howard,'** he said, **'we don't want you to talk as openly as you do about man's guilt and corruption, because if our boys and girls hear you discussing that subject they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin'.**

The minister picked up a small bottle and showing it to the visitor said, **'You see that label? It says cyanide, and underneath in bold, red letters the word 'Poison!' Do you know what you are asking me to do? You are suggesting that I change the label. Suppose I do, and paste over it the words, 'Essence of Peppermint', don't you see what might happen? Someone would use it, not knowing the danger involved, and would certainly die. So, it is, with the matter of sin. The milder you make your label, the more dangerous you make your poison!'**

Sin is a poison that's destroying our world and the individuals within it. It's a poison that's destroying our brothers and sisters in Christ. And in some cases, it's a poison that destroying our churches and dividing our churches. James 4:1 **"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"**

Let's stop blaming the devil for our sin, let's stop saying, **'well, I'm only human'**. Being a human, created in the image of God is a blessing not a curse. Let me ask you, **is it possible to live without sin in our lives?**

Romans 6:3-7 **"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin."**

You see, we come to this passage to emphasise and point out the importance of baptism but that's not Paul's main point in these verses. To understand his point, we need to keep it in its context. Romans 6:1-2 **"What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"**

The main thrust of these verses is all about sin and the reasons why it's possible for us to live without sin in our lives. And Paul is asking, **do you want to know how to live without sinning?** Here's how. Remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Remember that we too died, were buried and were raised to a new life with Christ Jesus. Remember that we crucified that old nature, we died to sin and no longer live ruled by it. It's because of what Christ has done, that we've been set free from the power of sin.

**Do we really believe that Paul would command us in Colossians 3:5 to "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry," if God hasn't given us the power to do so?**

Do we really believe that James would command us in James 4:7 to “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”, if God hasn’t given us the power to do so?

We can live without sinning because the Gospel gives us the power to do so. We can live without sinning because of His death, burial and resurrection. We sin because we haven’t allowed God to totally heal our broken spirit. We sin, not because God hasn’t given us the power to stop sinning, but because we still choose to do so.

Now the reality is this, I’m just as guilty as anyone else when it comes to sinning but thank God for the second law of forgiveness. 1 John 1:8-9 “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

You see loved ones, it’s all about obedience, it’s about my will, surrendering to His will. We used to have a dog named Oscar who loved nothing more than doing his own thing, no matter how much telling off or training he had. And I take my hat off to all those who have dogs who totally listen to their owners and do as they are told.

Archibald Rutledge wrote about how one day he met a man whose dog had just been killed in a forest fire. Heartbroken, the man explained to Rutledge how it happened. The man said, because he worked outdoors, he often took his dog with him. That morning, he left the animal in a clearing and gave him a command to stay and watch his lunch bucket while he went into the forest.

His faithful friend understood, for that’s exactly what he did. Then a fire started in the woods, and soon the blaze spread to the spot where the dog had been left. But he didn’t move. He stayed right where he was, in perfect obedience to his master’s word. With tearful eyes, the dog’s owner said, ‘I always had to be careful what I told him to do, because I knew he would do it.’

Victory only comes when we completely obey and submit to God’s commands. E. M. Bartlett obeyed Jesus’ blest commands and gained the victory and then he writes.

I heard about a mansion He has built for me in glory.  
And I heard about the streets of gold beyond the crystal sea;  
About the angels singing and the old redemption story,  
And some sweet day I’ll sing up there the song of victory.

John 14:1-3 “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

The KJV version says, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” Now Jesus here has the Jewish temple in mind, the temple which had around 70 rooms within it. He’s literally saying, ‘listen death is no big deal, I’m just going from one room to another’.

And I love those words where Jesus says, ‘if that were not so’. In other words, He wouldn’t lie to us about something so important as this, no matter how comforting it would be. He’s going to die, but He promises to come back for us, so that we can live with Him forever.

And let me say this, if we believe that there are literally going to be rooms in heaven, we’re going to be disappointed. If we literally believe what John describes in Revelation 21:21 as streets of gold, we’re going to be disappointed. If we literally believe what John describes in Revelation 4:6 as a Crystal sea, we’re going to be disappointed.

A man named Richard Baxter expresses his thoughts of heaven in these words.

‘My knowledge of that life is small,  
The eye of faith is dim,  
But it’s enough that Christ knows all,  
And I shall be with him.’

C. S. Lewis said this, ‘If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.’

A singer, song writer named **Chris Rice** wrote a song called, 'Deep enough' and he portrays himself falling into a deep sleep and starts to dream of heaven.

Cause peace is pouring over my soul  
See the lambs and the lions playin'  
I join in and I drink the music  
Holiness is the air I'm breathin'

My faithful heroes break the bread  
And answer all of my questions  
Not to mention what the streets are made of  
My heart's held hostage by this love

And these brilliant colours I have never seen  
I join a billion people for a wedding feast  
And I reach out and touch the face of the One who made me  
And oh, the love I feel, and oh the peace  
Do I ever have to wake up?

Loved ones, I don't care what heaven is going to be like, as long as I find myself in God's presence forever. But I too long to reach out and touch the One who made me. And to those who have learned to love and trust Jesus, the prospect of meeting Him face to face and being with Him forever, is the hope that keeps us going, no matter what life may throw at us.

Now I don't know how **E. M. Bartlett** heard about the angels singing because there's not one single Bible verse that even alludes to angels singing anywhere. But when we do get there, we'll be singing what those victorious saints sang. **Revelation 15:3-4** "Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

No wonder **E. M. Bartlett** writes.

O victory in Jesus, my Saviour, forever.  
He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood;  
He loved me ere I knew Him, and all my love is due Him,  
He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.

Here's a man who knew that the victory is only found in Jesus. And notice he doesn't write, victory is found in the church, or anywhere else, it's found in Jesus. Jesus is the one who came to seek the lost, and Paul reminds us in **1 Corinthians 6:20** that "we were bought at a price." Jesus was the one who bought us with His blood, shed on that cross.

We couldn't do anything to save ourselves, He was the one who loved us, way before we loved Him. **Romans 5:6-8** "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

We couldn't save ourselves, we were powerless do to anything. And Jesus didn't wait until we got our lives straightened out first before He loved us. He loved us 'while we were still sinners'. When you were sleeping around with people you shouldn't have been sleeping around with, He died for you. When you were out there stealing from the shops, He died for you. When you were telling lies, getting drunk or getting high, He died for you.

And the only way to demonstrate our love for Him is to do the same for Him. We need to be 'plunged beneath the cleansing flood', in the waters of baptism to have the victory. Notice how he writes in every stanza, 'I heard, I heard, I heard.'

How does faith come about? **Romans 10:17** "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ."

Do you see how the Gospel is being told throughout this hymn? He heard the Gospel, the death burial and resurrection of Jesus. He believed the Gospel and then repented of his sins, he confessed that Jesus is the answer to his sin. He was plunged beneath the cleansing flood, baptised and now longs to be with Christ in heaven.

A guy named, A. B. Simpson said that the Gospel, 'tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner cancelled, the curse of the Law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide, the power of sin subdued, the guilty conscience healed, the broken heart comforted, the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone'.

Most of us have been Christians long enough to know that old story very well. How Jesus left His heavenly home to live here on earth. We know how He gave His life on a hill called Calvary. We know that He gave His life to save the wretched people of the earth.

But if you're not a Christian today and you want to have victory in Jesus, then you too, like E. M. Bartlett need to believe that Christ, died, was buried and rose again. You too, need repent, you need to reconsider your life and begin to change the direction of your life. You too, need to confess Christ as Lord of your life. You need to do spiritually what Jesus did physically, you need to die with Him, be buried with Him in the waters of baptism and rise again with Him, for the forgiveness of your sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus loved us from the beginning of time, and as followers of Him, He is due our love. Jesus walked this earth healing people of diseases, making lame men walk and caused the blind to see, but no healing is as great as the healing He does of our broken spirit, our lost souls.