

# OVERWHELMING VICTORY

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Have you heard or seen the acronym YOLO (You Only Live Once)? The term has regularly trended on Twitter, showed up in Facebook news feeds, and quickly become part of the pop culture vernacular.

A modern *Carpe Diem*, “YOLO!” is the cry of a generation that seeks to squeeze all the possible goodness and excitement from life. If the end of your one life is death, and that death is the final end, why deny yourself happiness now?

It makes sense. If this is our only opportunity to taste life’s fruit and pleasure, then we should indulge. Even Paul affirms this in his letter to the Christians in Corinth: “*If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’*” (1 Corinthians 15:32). It would seem that, in a closed system in which a final death is life’s final outcome, “YOLO!” is a reasonable response.

But what if the system isn’t closed? What if this life is not the beginning nor the end of our existence? What if there’s more?

## **What is Power?**

Hitler’s Nazism was an example of such a closed system, in which the value of human life was degraded to the level of vermin. In the great film, “Schindler’s List,” the gulag commandant, Amon Göth, practiced his marksmanship on the prisoners as they moved around the prison yard, as if they were only rabbits in the field. He claimed, “Control is power.”

“Is that why they fear us?” asked Oskar Schindler.

“They fear us because we have the power to kill them,” the commandant shot back.

In a restrained, but passionate, effort to rescue the prisoners’ lives from such indignities, Schindler suggested that there was a greater power than the power to control others and take their lives arbitrarily. He explained, “Power is when we have every justification to kill, and we don’t. That is power.” [View the video clip: <http://tinyurl.com/cneve2n>]

The New Testament makes a distinction between two types of power: might and right; power and authority. The word for might and power is *dunamis*. The word for right and authority is *exousia*.

Mark Batterson explains it this way: “*Dunamis* is the ability to do things beyond your natural ability. *Exousia* is the ability to not do things you have the ability to do. And the Cross is the ultimate example of this second kind of power.” (Soulprint: Discovering Your Divine Destiny, page 78).

Why is that? How does the death of Jesus portray real power, the power of good?

Just consider that final week of His life...

Jesus could have taken the City of Jerusalem by force, and enthroned Himself as the rightful king of the Jews. Who could have withstood Him? Not even the mighty armies of Rome! Instead, He arrived riding a donkey, like a man of peace.

Jesus could have defended Himself before His inquisitors. No one knew the commandments of God like He did. But He who had defeated Satan’s taunts with a word remained silent, signing His own death warrant.

Jesus could have judged and executed His captors, rightfully, evil-minded hypocrites that they were. When Jesus was arrested in the Garden, Peter put up a fight for Him, but He said, “*Do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and that he would send me more than twelve legions of angels right now?*” (Matthew 26:53; NET). Jesus could have escaped His suffering with one call for angelic backup, but that would have aborted His redemptive mission.

Scripture is explicit: no one took Jesus’ life from Him. The Jewish leaders wanted Him dead, the Roman military drove the nails through His flesh, and it was our sins that necessitated His death. But Jesus plainly said, “*No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again*” (John 10:18). The word “authority” is from *exousia*. Four times in John 10, Jesus said that He was voluntarily sacrificing His life. Using His authority *not to resist*.

His death was not a tragedy; it was a sacrifice of worship. He sealed it by His prayer to God in the Garden of Gethsemane: “*Not what I want, but what You want*” (Luke 22:42). He entrusted Himself to the plan and care of our Heavenly Father. The Father’s will be done.

We’re all impressed with the *dunamis* of Jesus. He made the lame walk and the mute talk. He healed the sick and raised the dead. But we should be even more impressed with His *exousia*. It’s not what He *could do* that changes lives. That may get our attention, but it’s what He could have done but *chose not to* that changed me and will change you.

He could have judged and punished us for our wrongdoing, but instead, He chose to forgive us and give us another chance. He chose to set us free.

## Freedom for What?

Jesus' first sermon clearly mapped out His mission: to set captives free. We have learned to think of that statement in judicial terms only: Christ's salvation is our Get Out of Hell Free card. But it's so much more than that.

"Jesus didn't die just to get us off the hook. He also died to resurrect the person we were destined to be before sin distorted the image of God in us. God's primary concern is who you're becoming."

And who you are becoming has nothing to do with your circumstances. You are not defined by your circumstances. You grow from undefined existence to defined destiny as the character of Christ being formed within you, "until you look and act and feel and talk and dream and love just like Jesus." According to Batterson, "The end goal is not a revelation of who you are. The end goal is a revelation of who God is" (Mark Batterson, *Soulprint: Discovering Your Divine Destiny*, page 12).

## Everything Contributes

This is why Apostle Paul could firmly declare, "*We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God—those whom he has called according to his plan*" (Romans 8:28). "All things" in your life—the good, the bad, and the ugly—are all subject to masterful formation by the hands of Almighty God. He is far bigger than your circumstances and able to make them contribute to His ultimate design: Christ in you.

We know this because it was proven by Jesus' death and resurrection! All the things that He endured could not break Him down or keep Him down. Even death—generally regarded as the sum of all things bad—could not hold Him.

The fact that Jesus rose from the dead changes everything. His death and resurrection triumph over "YOLO!" It was an overwhelming victory!

There is a life to be lived that we who have been born of the Spirit have only tasted (and those who have not yet been born again have never known). The life that Jesus gives begins here and now and extends beyond the grave.

## Securely Loved

Romans 8

<sup>31</sup> *What can we say about all of this? If God is for us, who can be against us?* <sup>32</sup> *God didn't spare his own Son but handed him over [to death] for all of us. So he will also give us everything along with him.* <sup>33</sup> *Who will accuse those whom God has chosen? God has approved of them.* <sup>34</sup> *Who will condemn them? Christ has died, and more im-*

portantly, he was brought back to life. Christ has the highest position in heaven. Christ also intercedes for us.<sup>35</sup> What will separate us from the love Christ has for us? Can trouble, distress, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death separate us from his love?

<sup>36</sup> As Scripture says: “We are being killed all day long because of you. We are thought of as sheep to be slaughtered.”

(That means: life can be hard!)

<sup>37</sup> The one who loves us gives us an overwhelming victory in all these difficulties.<sup>38</sup> I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love which Christ Jesus our Lord shows us. We can’t be separated by death or life, by angels or rulers, by anything in the present or anything in the future, by forces<sup>39</sup> or powers in the world above or in the world below, or by anything else in creation.

Did you catch all that?

- God is for us, so who can be successful against us?
- Our loving God has given US an overwhelming victory in all our difficulties.
- Nothing—no trouble or opposition—can separate us from the love Christ has for us!
- Nothing in our past. Nothing in our present. Nothing in our future.
- Nothing human. Nothing spiritual.

NOTHING.

This is a resurrection present given to us through Jesus Christ! His overwhelming victory is also OUR overwhelming victory.

## **One Life to Live**

I believe we only live once. The Bible says so.

And I believe life is to be enjoyed as much as possible.

But if that is your ultimate goal, then you haven’t begun to live. Pleasure does not build character. And to have real joy you must serve someone other than yourself.

Jesus makes that happen. That is the Good News—G.O.S.P.E.L. (God. Our. Sins. Paying. Everyone. Life.) [View the video: <http://tinyurl.com/cfjwsmn>]

The life you receive is God’s gift to you, and the way that you live it is your gift to God. Live it well.

I consider life on earth as prologue; it’s definitely leading somewhere.

Don't live it from the perspective of one who has but one life to live. Instead, live it from the perspective of one who has but one life to *give*. Live like someone who has risen from the dead! Live like someone for whom God has secured an overwhelming and eternal victory.

How do I do that?

It starts when you invite Jesus Christ to take charge of your heart and life. Entrust your past, present, and future to His loving care.

Then, practice trusting Jesus in everything. Practice thanking Jesus for everything. Practice praising Jesus at all times.

Walk with Him and talk with Him, all along life's way.

Plug yourself into a local church like this, where you can learn about God and serve alongside others who know and love Him.

You can make a real difference, once Christ has made a real difference within you.