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VICTORY FROM THE ASHES OF DEFEAT

“The war to end all wars” was what H.G. Wells wrote in his 1914 book, “The War That Will End War”. It was used to identify World War I. Sadly, we are all too aware that war didn’t end there or then. The brutality evidenced in the first world war was unlike anything previously seen on the battlefield. Any number of take aways from the conflict can be seen, but perhaps none more so than the remarkable attitude of a French general and military theorist by the name of Ferdinand Foch.

The German army was pressing hard against the French army which caused a full retreat. Foch and those under his command were left to fight a series of defensive actions to prevent a full on German invasion. At one point he sent a communique which read, “My center is yielding. My right is retreating. Situation excellent. I am attacking.” Rather than to succumb, his troops held ground and within time found victory. Foch’s words were seen as evidence of his determination and leadership. In March 1918 he was appointed Allied Commander in Chief. He was able to unite the British, Americans and French into a cohesive unit which thwarted the Germans and eventually brought them to the point of surrender. Victory from the ashes of defeat.

Without a doubt there are times in life when it seems as if we are hemmed in on every side. Issues at work. Pressure on the home front. Financial concerns and a host of other situations demanding attention. Jesus, well aware that mankind, regardless of the time frame of history recognized such and offered the following. “Do not be anxious then, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek, for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first

His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” (Matthew 6:31-34) In other words Jesus is saying to His disciples take another look. Re-adjust your priorities and then realize your “Situation excellent.”



Consider as well that Paul did not bemoan his circumstances as he was in Roman imprisonment. Notice what is found in the first chapter of Philipians and verse twelve. “Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.” What a remarkable mind set. Was he beaten? No. In fact he would go on to point out that other disciples of Christ were gaining fortitude as a result. Later on in Philipians he would pen, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (4:13)

Think back to what Foch had stated when all seemed to be lost, “Situation excellent. I am attacking.” On an individual as well as collective basis, we must never allow Satan and his cohorts to defeat us. Our mind set must embrace what is seen in Romans 8:6, “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.” With such a mind set there is then the awareness of, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?” As the rest of chapter eight of Romans unfolds, it spotlights in essence that victory is within the grasp; and the only one who can separate us from God is self. There will be external influences and trials but with the proper spiritual mind victory can be realized. “But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.” (v. 37) Indeed, that is a most excellent situation. (wbe)