

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to part four in our series grace powered living. This is the series where we explore God's wisdom and human emotion. What does the Bible say about some of the deepest level emotions in our lives. This is where we make our choices. This determines the type of person we will become.
- B. Let's get right into our topic for today.
 - 1. **Victimology**
- C. What is victimology?
 - 1. Victimology is a function of the darkside (the flesh), by which a wounded person lashes out in vengeance against themselves, God, and others — whether those wounds are real or imagined. This spirit of vengeance neutralizes the activity of grace in their life, and sends them on a frustrating, demeaning, demanding, and frantic quest for help in all the wrong places.
 - 2. **Victimology is locked-in, steady-state bitterness.**
- D. We are witnessing a meteoric rise in victimology in our society. You see this in people who are enraged at everything. In people who take responsibility for none of the garbage in their lives. In people who blame others for everything that's wrong in their lives. And people who are constantly demanding favors, and help, and special treatment, and who are bitterly angry when they are told no. Victimology goes hand-in-hand with entitlement, and entitlement is the death of grace.
 - a) *Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.* (Hebrews 12:15, NKJV)
- E. Nobody has ever suffered like Jesus, but Jesus was nobodies victim. No matter who hurt him and no matter how unjust the violence was against him, he never saw himself as a victim. Even his death, he said no one can't take my life from me.
- F. This is the emotional state that we are after as mature believers in Jesus. It is called dominion. It is a function of free will. It entails taking 100% responsibility for the quality of your life. And as it is the most liberating and empowering way of life possible.
- G. So let's get into God's wisdom and victimology in five warnings.

II. Five Warnings About Victimology

- A. **Victimology is bitterness and bitterness is a simmering cauldron of toxic anger.**
 - 1. All human emotions are actually good at their core. This is because God created them. God gave us emotion to motivate us out of the pit of sin and into the abundant life of grace.
 - 2. But as we have seen in this series, we all have a dark side called the flesh. The flesh is the garbage dump of your soul. It is the place where you store all your nasty thoughts and habits. So your flesh will pop up as your inner brat, your inner bully, your inner thug, or your inner Pharisee. The flesh wears a thousand masks.
 - 3. God created anger to spot injustice. Your anger is an early warning system when someone is treated unjustly, with cruelty, or with abuse. That righteous anger motivates action. We work in holy and righteous ways to stop such injustice. This is the purpose of anger.
 - 4. But when the flesh takes charge of your anger, all bets are off. Now instead of working in holy and righteous ways to stop injustice, anger is weaponized in the service of revenge.
 - a) When that revenge turns outward, it results in cruelty and disproportionate penalties inflicted on supposed enemies. So there is backbiting, slander, malice, and anything to destroy a person's reputation.
 - (1) **The flesh uses unresolved anger in your heart to spew the devil's acid spit on other people.**
 - b) When did revenge turns inward, it results in self-destructive addictions. It is dysfunctional. It wrecks families. It is depressing. And it is all consuming.
 - (1) **That acid spit from Satan rains down on you too.**
 - 5. This is bitterness.
 - a) Bitterness can also turn upward. I'll show you God. And so we turn away from him as an act of revenge, justifying it all because of some supposed injustice in our lives from God's hand.
 - 6. Unless you are part of the criminal justice system or in the military, God never put vengeance into your hands.
 - a) *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.* (Romans 12:19)
 - 7. Anyone who has gotten stuck in victimology has done it to themselves. They are not looking for a solution to injustice. They are not looking for healing for their wounds. They don't want that. What they want is an excuse to get even. What they want is to capitalize on their struggles and capitalize on injustice. They rationalize vengeance and so put themselves in the place of God.
 - 8. Bitterness is the single most toxic force on earth.
- B. **The unholy triad of bitterness, vengeance, and victimology opens up even the child of God to demonic attack.**
 - 1. No Christian can be possessed by a demon, because you are the possession of God himself. No Christian can be inhabited by a demon, because you are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit of God. Those things are impossible.
 - 2. But the devil can get a foothold in your life. That foothold is in your thoughts and your emotions.
 - 3. It is totally possible for you to have a new and perfect nature in Christ, and a mind filled with old and destructive ideas form the world.
 - a) *"Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.* (Ephesians 4:26, 27)
 - b) *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,* (1 Timothy 4:1)
 - 4. There are all kinds of gateways for the devil to mess with a person's life. But by far the most common one is bitterness. Letting the sun go down on your wrath. Nurturing a grudge for a lifetime.
 - 5. Bitterness, vengeance, and victimology — these things give a foothold to the devil.

6. He gets into your head through doctrines of demons. He gets into your emotions through toxic anger that you embrace long-term.
7. The good news is that all of these things can be reversed. They can be reversed completely. And they can be reversed really fast. We'll talk about that in a minute.

C. Victimology sucks in Christians and anyone with a heart who thinks they are helping when they are not.

1. When God created Adam and Eve, he gave them dominion. Dominion is the authority and the power to rule your own sphere of life. God gave Adam and Eve the scepter of their lives.
2. When sin entered, Adam and Eve threw their dominion in the dumpster. Satan picked it up and has been beating the human race over the head with it ever since.
3. When you are saved, God restores your dominion. He makes you the captain, the ruler, the regents, the primary driver of your life. He put you back in the driver seat, and gives you your scepter back.
4. Every bit of victimology is a giant retreat from that. A denial of that.
 - a) Instead of defining yourself as a ruler, you define yourself as a slave.
 - b) Instead of claiming your dominion, you make your problem, struggle, or loss the dominating force in your life.
 - (1) Your victimology sits on the throne.
 - (2) Instead of your problems bowing before your throne, and you bowing before Christ's throne, you set up a nasty, dysfunctional inversion. Christ bows to you, you bow to your problem, and your problem is your god.
 - c) Instead of believing you can do all things through Christ who gives you strength, you tell yourself you are helpless and pitiable and clueless and weak.
 - d) Instead of trusting God to handle those who have hurt you, you take matters into your own hands becoming mean and vengeful in the process.
 - e) Instead of claiming your God-given status as competent and fully enabled, you cloak yourself in a demonic robe of incompetence and pathetic self-induced disability.
5. A person who has stuck themselves victimology is sad and pitiable.
6. This is exactly the reason why so many Christians want to rush in and help. They see the neediness expressed on social media. They hear the sad stories of victimology. And because Christians are essentially compassionate, we want to help.
7. This is a hard truth and it really takes a discerning spirit to understand. In these cases — not in all cases, but in these cases — the best help you can give is to let them bottom out. They have to hit rock bottom. Like any other addict they are addicted to licking their wounds. They are addicted to the attention and the pity and the handouts. And every time you help, or take their side, or let them tell you the same tired story again, you are subsidizing their self destruction.
8. The proof? The sure sign of this?
 - a) Needless drama.
 - b) The verse in Hebrews that we started with says that bitterness “brings trouble to many.” The Greek word for trouble here means a riot. A mob scene.
 - c) Chaos. Either internally and externally. It's a sure sign of bitterness, of victimology at work.
 - (1) *When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.* (Proverbs 29:9, NASB)
9. If you really loved them, you would back off, express your concern, and trust God to turn their heart around.
 - a) You won't fix them. You won't change them. You can't help them. They are not open to it. They are not willing for it. They think that everyone and everything else in the world is the problem. Everyone but themselves.
 - b) They have surrendered dominion to their problem, and that's a bigger problem than the problem itself.
10. Don't get me wrong. There are times when we help. There are times when we open our wallets and give aid. Yes yes. But not when a person is locked in bitterness. Not when a person is locked in self-pity. Not when a person is embracing bitterness. Not when they love their wounds more than they want a solution.

D. People in victimology enlist allies who only makes things worse.

1. In hockey, when two players are fighting, the refs will let them fight till someone falls over. But as soon as a third player joins the fight, the fight is stopped, and the third player in is ejected from the game.
2. There is a principle in Scripture that is sometimes called “taking up an offense.” When one person hurts another person, God immediately moves into the situation. God gives the person who is hurt the grace to handle the situation. In addition God gives a person who is hurt the grace to forgive the one who hurt them.
3. On top of that God also gives the person who caused the offense the grace to recognize the harm they did, to apologize, and to seek reconciliation if it's possible.
4. In other words the grace is there for both people involved in an offense.
5. But if you're the third person in, there's no grace for you. You're on your own. And that means you will enter the situation with an activated dark side, and all the nasty forces of your flesh on parade.
6. You're only hearing one side. You don't know what really happened. You don't know the other side. Don't get sucked into the victimology con job.
 - a) *The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.* (Proverbs 18:17)
 - b) *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.* (Proverbs 18:13)
7. Never take sides when you only have one side of the story.
8. Never be the third person in. When you are invited in, you can simply say, “I am sure that God is giving you the grace to find victory in this situation. I will pray for you.” They won't be happy with that. They will interpret it as hatred. But God sees it for what it really is, though love.

9. Never make yourself someone else's Messiah. They already have a Messiah, in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he has already given them dominion. It is on them to take it back.

E. People stuck in victimology routinely invalidate the struggles of other people in order to validate their own.

1. We are talking about God's wisdom and human emotion. We are talking about getting healthy, spiritually and emotionally. Here is one of the most important, life-changing promises of God to help us do this.
 - a) *No temptation [trial, trouble] has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.* (1 Corinthians 10:13)
2. Everybody has trials and troubles in their lives. Everybody has suffering. Scripture flat out tells us that suffering is common to humankind. We are given no permission to compare our suffering with anybody else's suffering. We are given no permission to feel sorry for ourselves.
3. And yet this is the common and expected practice with people who have stuck themselves in victimology. It sounds like this.
 - a) You just can't understand this.
 - b) It's easy for you, you don't know what I'm going through.
 - c) You don't have it as bad as I do.
 - d) Nobody really understands unless they've been through it.
4. Now listen, it is true that some troubles are simply more difficult than others. Some problems create more complications than others. Some have to overcome more difficulties than others. Yes that's all true.
5. But it's also true that you don't know my secret pain. You don't know my losses. You don't know what I've suffered.
6. And...
7. Even if I have not had exactly the same struggles as you, I have still had my own struggles. And if I have even an ounce of human compassion within me, I can feel for you, I can feel with you, and my heart goes out to you.
8. But that does not give you an excuse to minimize anybody else's struggle.
9. What goes on here is your flesh takes control of your particular struggle. And then your flesh plays a game called "Mine's Worse." We do this to get attention. We do this to get pity. We can even do this to get money. It's a con job. Every time a person plays Mine's Worse, they are shirking responsibility for the quality of their life. They are disrespecting the struggles of a friend. And they are delaying positive action, to actually get unstuck.
10. But it's deeper.
 - a) Because they are also saying that God is not faithful.
 - b) They are saying that their particular struggle is *uncommon* to mankind.
 - c) They are saying that God truly *has* tested them beyond their capabilities.
 - d) They are saying that God doesn't care so if there's going to be payback they have to do it.
 - e) They are making excuses for a messed up life and for every form of sin.
 - f) They are denying that God has made a way of escape.
 - g) And they are denying that they are able to bear it.
11. In other words not only do they invalidate the sufferings of another, they even invalidate God and his Word.
12. And and this is the deeper problem than any other problem they might have. So let's turn the corner now and talk about escaping the toxic waste dump of victimology.

III. Escaping Victimology and Restoring Dominion

- A. You've heard me say it before. I'm going to say it again.
- B. There is the problem. Then there is the problem behind the problem.
 1. The problem is the problem.
 2. But the bigger problem is always the problem behind the problem.
 - a) **The problem behind the problem is the spiritual immaturity with which you approach the problem.**
- C. Let me just boil this down. The solution to victimology is to be saved and to be sanctified.
- D. Salvation is a gift and it happens once.
- E. Sanctification is a journey to wholeness and holiness — to live a Christ-centered — God-blessed life, and it lasts all life long.
- F. I can't stand up here today and give you a simple switch to flip to escape the prison of victimology. But I can give you three goals to start praying for right now.
 1. **Pray right now to forgive and release the persons who hurt you.**
 - a) Forgive them as best as you can. That doesn't mean you need to trust them or be their friends or even stay close to them. But you do need to forgive them. Let them go. Give up your right to take revenge. You never really had it in the first place.
 2. **Pray right now that you will quit feeling sorry for yourself.**
 - a) Repent of the sin of self-pity. Repent of the sin of entitlement. Tell God that you're sorry for all those times you have compared yourself with other people and felt sorry for yourself.
 - b) Tell God that he's been faithful. And you believe that. Tell God you know that his grace has been there for you, and it's your own damn fault for not using it.
 - (1) I know this sounds hard nosed, but I promise you it is tough love. And I promise you this is Gods way to set you free.
 3. **Pray right now to consecrate yourself to God, and to a path of spiritual growth.**
 - a) When you take beneath all the layers, the real problem isn't that thing that hurt you, it isn't that wound, it isn't even that person, and most especially is not God.

- b) The real problem is that you have put God at the sidelines. You have put prayer on the sidelines. You have put Scripture on the sidelines. You have put church on the sidelines.
 - (1) As long as God is just your emergency kit, you'll never escape victimology.
 - (2) And as long as your life is hit or miss with Christ, you'll never truly regain your dominion.
- G. So I want to lead you in exactly that kind of prayer right now. This is not a prayer of salvation. It is a prayer of consecration. A prayer of sanctification. So I invite you now to pray with me.