

V-I-C-T-O-R-Y

We've all encountered a victorious moment in our lives. Maybe we won a debate, overcame an obstacle, aced a test, made the first cut, adopted a puppy, or found a way to get along with an enemy. Although those are just a few examples, there are tons of ways we can achieve personal victories in our lives. Can you remember a time when you tasted the sweetness of victory?

Not down a few thoughts below.

Abraham had a grandson named Jacob (later named Israel by God.) Jacob, er I mean, Israel, had many sons... twelve as a matter of fact. One of those sons—Joseph, (you know, the guy with the multi-colored coat...) came to be a high-ranking official in Egypt (after a handful of harrowing years.) Eventually, after another decade of angst, Joseph's Dad and brothers (along with wives and kiddos) joined him in Egypt and they all settled, victoriously, in this new land.

Over the years, and then decades, and finally centuries that followed, Israel's family grew to be super large... as in the millions. Their massive numbers freaked out the Egyptian rulers and so to control these Israelites, the government enslaved them. As is the pitfall of most slave situations, these descendants of Jacob were mistreated by their masters, overworked, undernourished, and the subject of Egyptian scorn... For many generations.

But, God heard the collective cries of this chosen people and rose up Moses. This guy, Moses (after a harrowing escape made possible with a few miracles from God), led the nation of Israel out of the land of captivity and back to the land originally promised to their patriarch Abraham way-y-y back in the book of Genesis.

Although it took several hundred years, this was a victory, indeed!

In your unfailing love

You will lead the people you have redeemed.

In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling.

~ Exodus 15:13

The above scripture is taken from a song sung to the Lord by Moses and the Israelites upon finally escaping the clutches of Pharaoh. You might also recognize this scripture, as it was placed on the final page of Impervious. Fran's final escape at the end of Impervious was another victory in her battle.

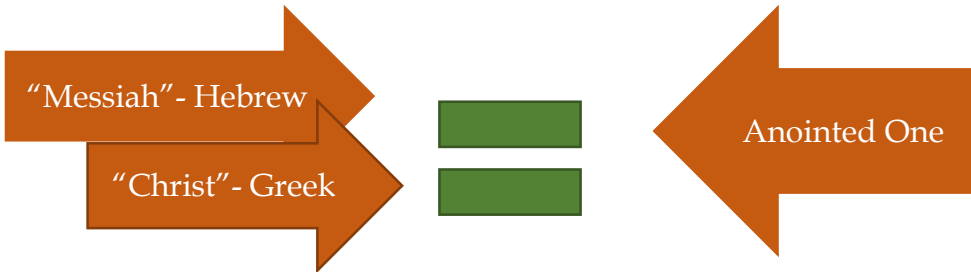


D - E - F - E - A - T

Unfortunately for the Israelites as well as our heroine Fran, the delicious moment of victory all too soon faded. The challenge wasn't yet over. As a matter of fact, it had only just begun.

Think about a time when you thought you had been victorious only to find out the victory was yet to be won. How did you deal with your feelings of defeat?

Biblical history shows several centuries coming and going before the descendants of Israel ever *really* found the true victory they sought. They wandered the desert for *decades* before even entering the Promised Land where they eventually established borders, elected judges and finally anointed the first king of Israel. But, alas, tribes clashed, kingdoms split, and after some time, the Israelites found themselves, again, in captivity. This time at the hand of the Babylonian empire... for seventy years. *They really needed a savior.*



Over the centuries, prophets had foretold of the Messiah. The nation of Israel awaited His coming with high hopes.

Have you ever wished for a hero? Or, even better, been heroically saved from a perilous situation? Name some characteristics of your true life hero, or ones you would like to see in a true-life hero.

Similar to our character, Retter, who was born outside of Impervious and free from the poisons which led to death for the residents, Jesus was also otherworldly. Sent from the kingdom of heaven, fully man yet fully God, he was clean! Free of the very poison that separates us from heaven.



How awesome is that??

THE
FIGHT
AIN'T
OVER
YET

SIN = MISSING THE MARK

Hang on a sec. I didn't mean to imply that sin is awesome. Quite the contrary! When we sin, we become dead to the very *giver of life*. "Gah!"

In order to stave off this death, it would probably be a good idea to investigate what this thing called sin really is.

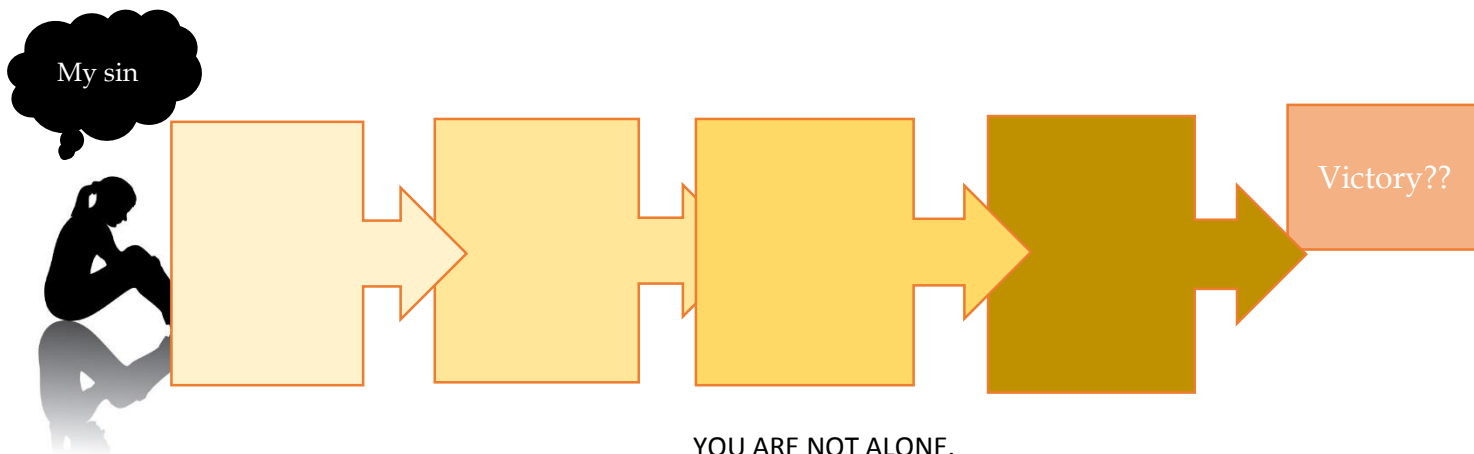
The word "sin" literally means to miss the mark... originating from marksmanship in archery. In the context of the divine, therefore, we can see that sin is simply an action or deed (or even a thought!) that misses the bull's-eye of God's holiness.



Holiness = Spiritual Purity

Even the tiniest droplet of sin in an ocean of righteous deeds will need to be cleaned.

Pick a sin or you can remember committing at least a year ago. On the timeline below, chart how the sin, or your feelings about the sin changed over time.



We ALL sin. Every, single, solitary, human being who has ever lived on planet earth... Even popes and saints are sinners. Sin has consumed this earth since God created mankind.

So, what sets Jesus apart?

Do you remember why Retter was the only one from outside who could enter Impervious? Jot down your thoughts below.



Don't forget that The Ascension Series is an allegory. Therefore, although we see similarities to the Gospel message, there will also be differences. One important difference and an important component of the Gospel message is this:

Unlike Benjamin Leibin (AKA Doc), God the Father did not inhabit the earth. He has lived in Heaven fo-evah! As well, Jesus has lived with God the Father in Heaven fo-evah as well. Kind of a mind-bending

Spiritual Purity = Holiness = Righteousness

The key to salvation is this: We need a savior, a hero, who is pure from the contamination of sin. The only one eligible for that job, is God.

John 3:16 (NIV)

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal
life.*

FULLY MAN & FULLY GOD?

Um... how does that work?

Jesus fulfilled every prophecy ever written about the coming messiah (Um, there are like over 300!)

My new favorite dog is called a Pomski.... It's a cross between a purebred Pomeranian and a purebred Huskie. It's like an itty-bitty super-furry huskie. Or a thick legged Pomeranian with the piercing eyes of a Huskie. Now, not to compare our Lord and Savior with a dog, but...

Jesus came from the earthly bloodline of Jacob. (Matthew 1:1-16) **And**, he came from the spiritual bloodline of God. (Mathew 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:35) He is 100% man, yet 100% holy. And he is the **ONLY** one.

Life can get pretty rough here on planet earth. Like in the city of Impervious, the Beast chases us all. I don't know about you, but like Fran, I used to get very frustrated with life and fear the sting of death. But then I learned about the other side. Another world where we will see our loved ones again and live in peaceful harmony with our creator. To get there? We need to follow Jesus. He is the Way.

Deep thoughts...

Take some time to think through all that we've uncovered. Jot down a few thoughts you have about Jesus and the Gospel message. AND, always feel free to contact me via my contact page if you just need a little more encouragement!

Coming up in the next installment...

**And
then
things
got
a little
weird**

Why in the world did Retter drink the water????