***Playing the* *Victim* or *Faithfully* *Victorious***

I read last week (from a satirical source) that Harvard was now offering a four-year degree on feeling oppressed.

Why are we so prone to view ourselves as, and act like, “victims”? More often than not and at least in and from our perspective, being a victim means that whatever is wrong or has failed is “Not *my* fault!” The sad reality is that it usually is exactly *my* fault! In this regard, consider King Saul in 1Sam.15. His instructions from God’s prophet Samuel were clear, vv.1-3. Initially, he did well, vv.4-8. But somewhere along the way, “the wheels fell off” Saul’s resolve, leadership, and obedience, vv.9-12.

When Samuel came to Gilgal, Saul:

1. Pretended nothing was wrong, v.13;
2. Then blamed *the people,* v.15a;
3. And next tried to *minimize* his failure by *maximizing* his partial obedience (aka “accentuating the positive), v.15b;

Samuel wasn’t having it, nor was he going to let Saul “off the hook,” vv.16-19. So, Saul:

1. Doubles down on his (partial) “obedience,” v.20;
2. And does likewise on “shifting the blame” to *the people,* v.21.

Samuel still wasn’t having it, vv.22-23. Saul:

1. Finally admitted *his* failure, v.24a;
2. But still blamed *the people* for it, v.24b; and,
3. Wanted Samuel to help him *save face,* v.30!

Saul “played the victim” to the end.

Are we really *that* different when we *see* and *portray ourselves* to others (and/or to God!) as “victims”? Don’t we often view and present ourselves as “victims” in similar ways and for much the same sort of reasons? How so? We consider ourselves as **victims of:**

1. **Genetics** (“just the way I am” or “God made me this way”- thus, “I can’t help it”). Moses had a touch of this early on when presented with a “job” by God, Ex.4:10; but God wasn’t “buying it,” vv.11-17.

We “play the victim” with **genetics** by excusing our failures or rebellions on the basis of “That’s just the way I am” or “I get *it* from my ancestors/race/nationality.” Moses may have suffered from *“slow speech”* or *“slow tongue,”* but if so:

* God knew it already and selected him for the job anyway;
* God made *provisions* for it, vv.14-17; and,
* God “helped him” *overcome* or *grow out of it,* cf. Deut.31:22,24ff.

We cannot help or change our genetics or what inherent *strengths/weaknesses* that come with them. But, genetics are not responsible for our sins or weaknesses, Ezk.18:20; and if we are willing to *hear* and *obey* God, He will *strengthen* and *help* us overcome any obstacle or impediment in the way, Eph.3:14-21!

1. **Chance** (“I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time”). Is there really a “right” time to be in a “wrong” place? If we stay out of “wrong” places, we don’t have to be so concerned about the “time”!

* King David wasn’t where he should have been at the time, cf.2Sam.11:1, however, he was no “victim of chance,” vv.3-4; and he *eventually* knew and admitted as much, 2Sam.12:13.
* We MUST also realize that **our** failures are just that- ours to own and wear, Jas.1:12-15. And we should *be deceived,* or *deceive ourselves,* about it, v.16!

“Yes,” there are things that happen *to* us that are truly accidents of chance- and thus beyond our ability to control, or even influence. But, more often than not, the things we *can control* ***but don’t***are much more of a problem than the ones we truly *cannot control.* Either way, we still have to make a choice: Will we retreat to “victimhood,” or move forward in and through *faith* to victory*,* cf. Matt.6;25-33?

1. **Circumstances** (“It was the best I could do under the circumstances”). 1Sam.13:1-12,13-14. This whole event is predicated on Samuel’s instructions (from God, of course) in 1Sam.10:5-8. Saul was to *“wait seven days until I* (meaning *Samuel*) *come to you and show you what you should do.”* But from 1Sam.13:

* Saul only *partially* obeyed, v.8;
* Which means he *disobeyed,* vv.9-11a; and then,
* Played the “victim” by blaming the *circumstances,* vv.11b;
* In essence saying, “I did what I *had* to do because of the *circumstances,”* v.12.
* But God didn’t accept this excuse, vv.12-13.

So, what’s the lesson for us? Even in bad/difficult circumstances, there will ALWAYS be a “right thing” to do, 1Cor.10:13! The *“way of escape”* He provides may not be *easy-* in fact, it may be the most difficult thing you’ve ever done, but it is ALWAYS there. God will never leave us with nothing but “wrong” choices- it is our job to *seek, find,* and *walk through* the “door” He promises will be there! Don’t *play the victim* and blame the circumstances, *find* and *enter* the *“way of escape”!*

1. **Other’s Failures** (“If he/she hadn’t done *this* or *that,* then I wouldn’t have been in this situation or reacted the way I did.”) It is true that we can suffer for other people’s failures to know and do what is right. But, we are neither responsible for nor held accountable for, *other* people’s sins, though they may affect us- even dramatically so.

* Moses’ *patience* was surely *tried* by the weakness and sinfulness of Israel in the wilderness, cf. Num.20:1-5; but Moses was prevented from entering the Promised Land because of **his failure to react** in the right way and do what God said, vv.6-12.

We, just like Moses, are responsible- not for other people’s failures, but for how *we react* to them, Rom.12:17-21.

**Conclusion: The *choice,* as always, is ours- we can *see* and *play ourselves off* as “victims” (of *genetics, chance, circumstance, other’s failures,* or *whatever else* we can imagine). Or, we can *listen to, trust,* and *obey* God- accepting responsibility for and correcting our mistakes as best we can, and depending on His *grace, mercy,* and *strength* for the rest! Which will it be for you: *victimhood* or *victory?***