



BRIDGES

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“Jesus Christ Victory”

People have always loved to show off their personal victories and accomplishments. This desire is as old as history itself. Recently, I returned from a trip to Turkey and Greece, and one of the most striking sights we visited was the Parthenon in Athens. Built between 447 and 432 BC, the Parthenon stood as a grand memorial celebrating the Greek victory over the Persians at the Battle of Plataea (481 BC). It also served as the state treasury. The Athenians purposely designed it to be as large, beautiful, and impressive as possible, reflecting the rising power and prestige of their empire. Along its edges were engraved scenes of battle victories and depictions of triumph, meant to remind both themselves and every visitor of their greatness.

We are not so different today. People still love to put their victories on display. A modern example can be found at Huntington High School. As you drive up the road to the Huntington "Acropolis" (Huntington High's Hill), you pass signs listing the many state championships the school has won. Then, as you step into the building, the very first thing that greets you is a collection of trophy cases and pennants—each proudly enumerating the victories the school has collected over the years. Like the ancient Athenians, we build our own monuments to success, eager to remember and proclaim our moments of triumph.

I share all of this because of what I encountered while visiting a 1,000-year-old monastery in Meteora. In contrast to the normal

human instinct to display victories, this monastery chose to display something very different. When I entered, I saw not images of triumph, but images of suffering and defeat. Painted across the entryway walls were dozens of small, vivid depictions of the persecutions endured by Christians from ancient times up to the present. The scenes of humiliation, torture, mutilation, and execution were so graphic that I hesitate even to describe them here. They revealed not only the brutal nature of Christian persecution but also the horrifying depths of human evil.



Can you picture the contrast? The natural impulse is to celebrate victories; yet here, the monastery displayed its history of defeat. But that was not the end of the story. High above all the scenes of suffering, above the door leading into the sanctuary, was a cross. And around that cross, written in Greek, were the words: “Jesus Christ Victorious.”

The story told by the monastery's walls is profound: our true victory is not in earthly triumphs but in Jesus Christ Himself. Regardless of what persecutions we face, what suffering we endure, or what defeats we encounter, our victory remains secure in Him. Jesus Christ has defeated the powers of evil, darkness, and even death itself. And if you belong to Him, you too stand victorious—not by your own accomplishments, but by His. ***Jesus Christ Victorious!***

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1 Corinthians 15:57)

Grace and Peace - Pastor Trent Eastman