

## Charles G. Trumbull: The Victorious Life, or The Life that Wins

Paraphrased and expanded by Dan Trygg from *They Found The Secret*, by V. Raymond Edman, with additional information on *The Fundamentals* from Wikipedia and *The Life That Wins* by Charles Trumbull.

Two of John Bunyan's leading characters in his allegory of the Christian life, *Pilgrim's Progress*, are **Mr. Valiant-for-Truth** and **Mr. Standfast**. These are seventeenth-century portraits that together could be combined to describe twentieth-century Charles G. Trumbull. Dr. Trumbull (1872-1941) was editor of the *Sunday School Times* from 1903 until 1938. **He was a prominent leader among evangelicals.**

**A significant controversy of the early 1900's was the infiltration and influence of a liberal theology into colleges and seminaries.** These "modernists", as they were called, proclaimed a "fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man" moralistic teaching, but they denied the truth and inerrancy of the Bible. They did not believe in the deity of Christ, His miracles, or His resurrection. They did not see a need for a spiritual rebirth, or a life empowered by the Holy Spirit. **Many of those who were faithful to the Scriptures stood up to these false teachers.** One of their campaigns to attempt to turn the tide of this movement was to produce a twelve-volume set of 90 theological articles that clearly set forth Biblical teachings. Christian businessmen organized around this project and provided enough to see that every pastor and church in America could receive their own copy of this publication, entitled *The Fundamentals*. **Charles Trumbull was an energetic and effective voice in his stand for the faith** "once delivered to the saints" (Jude 1:3). Because of his leadership and his influence, he was asked to write an article on the evangelistic impact of the Sunday school, published in volume twelve. **He was a valiant champion for Truth, and stood firmly against the tide of error.** In spite of the often heated controversy of those days, however, he remained friendly, approachable, courteous, always considerate and fair with those with whom he had to disagree because of the truth.

Most of all, **Mr. Trumbull was a living example of "the life that wins", his description for the victorious life in Christ.** This is the life that experientially knows the reality of Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; yet no longer do I live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

So dynamic and satisfying was the transformation that came to Dr. Trumbull by the indwelling Savior that **everywhere, ...by life, word, and pen..., he gave credible testimony to the life that is Christ.** He was a key factor in the formation of the Victorious Life Testimony, which began as a series of conventions on the deeper life in Christ. In 1920, property was donated to this organization to develop a conference center in New Jersey to host an American version of the Keswick Convention.

**Those who knew Dr. Trumbull in his later years remember a buoyant, joyous, earnest, unassuming, Spirit-filled Christian journalist and leader.** The life that abides in Christ and draws all of its resources from the risen Savior was a *wonderful reality* that he experienced. It was certainly not some *fantasy* or *fanaticism* to him.

**Fortunately, Dr. Trumbull's testimony has been retained for us in the very excellent little pamphlet: *The Life That Wins*.** Originally, this testimony was given before the National Convention of the Presbyterian Brotherhood of America at its meeting in St. Louis in 1911.

**"There is only one life that wins; and that is the life of Jesus Christ. Every person may have that life; every person may live that life.**

"I do not mean that everyone may be *Christlike*; I mean something *very much better* than that.

"I do not mean that a person may always have Christ's *help*; I mean something *better* than that.

"I do not mean that a person may have *power* from Christ; I mean something *very much better* than power.

"And I do not mean that a person shall be merely *saved from his sins* and *kept from sinning*; I mean something *better* than even *that* victory."

**The pattern of Dr. Trumbull's experience is like that of nearly every other child of God who has come to know the truth of Galatians 2:20, ...that "Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God."**

**That pattern is first failure, then a sense of need. Then comes an awareness of the secret of the indwelling Savior, ...a secret so simple that most Christians stumble over it or are unaware of it.**

**Then follows a definite meeting with the Lord Jesus and the surrender of heart and will** that brings one into personal *realization* of the life that is Christ.

**Thereafter there is the outflow of that life,** likened by Dr. Trumbull and many others to the "rivers of living water" spoken of by the Lord Jesus in John 7:38.

Dr. Trumbull candidly told of the conscious needs that existed in his life:

**First, he was aware of great fluctuations in his spiritual life.** On occasion he felt like he was in conscious fellowship with the Savior, and then again he plummeted down in the depths of defeat. There were seasons of lifting up because of a searching message or a Spirit-filled book, but soon after came the decline. He

observed: "Sometimes by a single failure before temptation, sometimes by a gradual downhill process, my best experiences would be lost, and I would find myself back on the lower levels. ...**It seemed to me that it ought to be possible for me to live habitually on a high plane of close fellowship with God**, as I saw certain other people doing. ...and as I was *not* doing."

**Secondly, there was the matter of "failure before besetting (habitual) sins."** He had come to believe that in certain areas he could be more than a conqueror, but not in others. **Despite earnest prayer for deliverance, abiding victory had not been his experience.**

**The third conscious lack was "in the matter of dynamic, convincing spiritual power that would work miracle changes in other people's lives."** He was an active Christian, engaged in many duties and responsibilities. He had to say, "I was even doing personal work -- the hardest kind of all; talking with people, one by one, about giving themselves to my Savior! But I wasn't seeing results." He tried to rationalize his lack of effectiveness with the old assurance (so much used by the enemy of souls) that it wasn't *for him* to see results. He could safely leave that to the Lord, if he did his part. Such rationalization over spiritual barrenness left him heartsick, however.

**Dr. Trumbull knew that he had received the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior.** Certainly he was most sound in the faith, and active in Christian service. He sought to satisfy the hunger of his heart and to excuse his ineffectiveness by emphasizing his orthodoxy of theology regarding the Person and work of the Savior. At some level, because he had not compromised the Biblical teachings, he thought of himself as a faithful Christian. He may not have the power and success he longed for in His Christian walk, but he carefully studied to maintain right belief. Yet, there seemed to be *something more*, ...something *he did not understand*. He wrote,

"About a year before, **I had begun to notice that certain men, whom I recognized as conspicuously blessed in their Christian service, seemed to have a conception or consciousness of Christ that I did not have, ...one that was beyond, bigger, and deeper than any thought of Christ I had ever had.** I *rebelled* at the suggestion, when it first came to me. 'How could *anyone* have a better idea of Christ than I? (I am just laying bare to you the blind, self-satisfied workings of my sin-stunted mind and heart.) Did I not believe in Christ and worship Him as the Son of God, and one with God? Had I not accepted Him as my personal Savior more than twenty years before? Did I not believe that eternal life was in Him alone? Was I not trying to live in His service, giving my whole life to Him? Did I not ask His help and guidance *constantly*, and believe that in Him was my only hope? *Was I not championing the very cause of the highest possible conception of Christ*, by conducting in the columns of "The Sunday School Times" a symposium on the Deity of Christ, in which the leading Bible scholars of the world were testifying to their personal belief in Christ as God's Son?' I was doing *all* of this. **How could a higher or better conception of Christ than mine be possible?** I knew that I needed to serve Him far better than I had ever done, but that I needed a *new conception* of Him I would not admit.

**The hunger of heart became more intense when he heard a preacher speak on Ephesians 4:12,13,** especially on those words, "Till we *all* come..., unto a mature person, ...unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Dr. Trumbull testified:

"As I followed the teaching I was amazed, bewildered. I could *not* follow him. *He was beyond my depth.* **He was talking about Christ, ...unfolding Christ..., in a way that I had to admit was utterly unknown to me."**

This hunger was sharpened by his observation of another servant of the Lord *who enjoyed habitual consciousness of the presence of the Savior with him always*. **The climax of his spiritual need came** at the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910) **when he went eagerly to hear a message on "The Resources of the Christian Life."** Said Dr. Trumbull,

**"I expected him to give us a series of definite things that we could do to strengthen our Christian lives,** ...and I knew I needed them. But his opening words *showed me my mistake*, while they made my heart leap with a new joy. What he said was something like this: **The resources for the Christian life, my friends, are just -- Jesus Christ."**

"That was *all*. But that was *enough!* I hadn't *grasped it* yet; but *it was what all these men had been trying to tell me!*" **There was more to Christ than he had presently understood, or comprehended!**

"Before leaving Great Britain I was confronted *once more* with the thought that was beyond me, ...*a Christ whom I did not yet know*..., in a sermon that a friend of mine preached in his London church on a Sunday evening in June. His text was Philippians 1:21:

'To me to live is Christ,'

It was the same theme – the unfolding of 'the life that *is* Christ,' ...Christ as the *whole life* and the *only life*. **I did not understand all that he said, but I knew vaguely that what he was telling us about I did not have as my own.** I wanted to read the sermon again, and I brought the manuscript away with me when I left him."

**The crisis of the deeper life came to God's needy and trusting servant that summer.** He was attending a young people's missionary conference; and, in his own words, "was faced by a week of daily work there for which I knew I was miserably, hopelessly unfit and incompetent." In the providence of God, the first message was on "The Water of Life," from John 7:37-39. "The speaker told us that **it was Christ's wish and purpose that every follower of His should be a wellspring of living, gushing water of life all the time to others, ...not intermittently, not interruptedly..., but with continuous and irresistible flow.** 'We have Christ's own word for it', he said, as he quoted, 'He who believes in me, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.' He told how *some have a little of the water of life*, ...bringing it up in small bucketsful and at intervals, like the irrigating water-wheel of India, with a good deal of creaking and grinding..., *while from the lives of others it flows all the time in a life-bringing, abundant stream that nothing can stop.*" And he went on to describe a little old native woman in the East whose marvelous ministry in witnessing for Christ put to shame those of us who listened. She had known Christ for only a year, but she clearly exemplified this 'wellspring-life' Jesus spoke of here.

Again let Editor Trumbull speak for himself,

"The next morning, Sunday, alone in my room, I prayed it out with God, as I asked Him to show me the way out. **If there was a conception of Christ that I did not have, and that I needed,** because it was the secret of some of these other lives I had seen or heard of, ...a conception *better* than any I had yet had, and *beyond me...*, **I asked God to give it to me.**

"I had with me the sermon I had heard, 'To me to live is Christ,' and I rose from my knees and studied it.

"Then I prayed again. And **God, in His longsuffering patience, forgiveness, and love, gave me what I asked for. He gave me a new Christ** -- wholly new in the conception and consciousness of Christ that now became mine.

"**Wherein was the change?** It is hard to put it into words, and yet it is, oh, so new, and real, and wonderful, and miracle-working in both my own life and the lives of others.

"**To begin with, I realized for the first time that the many references throughout the New Testament to Christ in you, and you in Christ, Christ our life, and abiding in Christ, are literal, actual, blessed fact, and not figures of speech.** How the 15th chapter of John thrilled with this new life as I read it now! And the 3rd of Ephesians, 14 to 21. And Galatians 2:20. And Philipians 1:21."

**No longer was Dr. Trumbull's faith only in the Christ who had died on the cross for our sins. His faith was now also in the Savior who dwells within the believer.** "At last I realized," he declared, "that Jesus Christ was *actually* and *literally* within me! Even more than that, He had made Himself to *be my very life*, taking me *into union with Himself* -- my body, mind, and spirit -- while I still had my own identity and free will and full moral responsibility. ...**It meant that I need never again ask Him to help me, ...as though He were one and I another...; but rather simply to ask Him to do His work, His will, in me, and with me, and through me.** ...Jesus Christ had made Himself *my life*--not as a figure of speech, remember, but as a literal, actual *fact* .... "

From deep and vital experience with the risen Savior, and because of the constant drawing on His life, the believer in Christ realizes experientially the life that wins. **Dr. Trumbull learned that the flow of that life was dependent on two simple conditions.** After having received the Lord Jesus as personal Savior **there is first, surrender**, an absolute and unconditional surrender to the Savior as Lord and Master of one's life, irrespective of the cost; **and second, the quiet act of faith**, apart from any feeling or immediate evidence, that God *does* set the trusting soul wholly free from the law of sin.

**And how does this fullness of life, the life that is Christ, demonstrate itself in the experience of the believer?'** Let Dr. Trumbull speak for himself:

"**The three great lacks or needs of which I spoke at the opening have been miraculously met.**

"**1. There has been a fellowship with God utterly differing from and infinitely better than anything I had ever known in all my life before.**

"**2. There has been an utterly new kind of victory, ...victory-by-freedom..., over certain besetting sins** --the old ones that used to throttle and wreck me-- whenever I have trusted Christ for this freedom.

"**3. And, lastly, the spiritual results in service have given me such a sharing of the joy of heaven as I never knew was possible on earth.** Six of my most intimate friends, most of them mature Christians, soon had their lives completely revolutionized by Christ, laying hold on Him in this new way and receiving Him unto all the fullness of God. ...A white-haired man of seventy found a peace in life and a joy in prayer that he had long ago given up as impossible for him. Life fairly *teems* with the miracle-evidences of what Christ is willing and able to do for other lives through anyone who just turns over the keys to His complete indwelling.

"**Do not think that I am suggesting any mistaken, unbalanced theory that, when a man receives Christ as the fullness of his life, he cannot sin again.** The 'life that is Christ' still leaves us our free will. With that free will we can resist Christ. But I have learned that the restoration after failure can be supernaturally blessed, instantaneous, and complete. **I have learned that, as I trust Christ in surrender, there need be no fighting against sin, but complete freedom from the power and even the desire of sin.**"

**"Jesus Christ does not want to be our *helper*; He wants to be our *life*. He does not want us to work for Him. He wants us to let Him do His work through us, using us as we might use a pencil to write with -- better still, using us as one of the fingers on His own hand."**

Such indeed is the life, that wins; and Dr. Trumbull was able by that life to lead many others into the life of victory. Very properly did the Victorious Life Testimony select as its scriptural motto, Philippians 1:21 -- "To me, to live is Christ."

## **Observations From Charles Trumbull's Life**

He had been a Christian for more than 20 years.

He was a well-established Christian leader.

He became increasingly aware of a need for more in his spiritual life.

He struggled with inconsistency in his walk with God, areas of defeat regarding sin, and lack of fruit in his ministry. This drove him to seek for more from God.

He began to notice that other effective believers seemed to have something he did not.

He proudly resisted the idea that his theology may be defective regarding Christ.

Over time, began to realize that there was more to Christ than he presently understood.

A copy of a sermon he heard in London was instrumental to helping him understand.

He humbly asked that, if he was missing out on something, God would reveal it to him.

God revealed to him the reality of the indwelling Christ in a new, fuller understanding.

He came to see that Christ literally was living inside of him.

Came to see that Christ wanted to literally live in and through his life.

The keys to experiencing this abiding life were

(1.) absolute, unconditional surrender to Jesus as Lord and Master of your life, and,

(2.) a quiet act of faith, trusting that God *has* set you free from the power of sin and that He is present in your life, ready to work out His life through you.

The possibility of sin is still present. As you abide it Christ, however, you don't want it.

Christ desires to work through us, as though we were a finger on his hand.

## **God Hunt 7: Christ in You, the Hope of Glory**

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink." <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." <sup>39</sup> But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:37-39

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Galatians 2:20

Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, <sup>26</sup> that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, <sup>27</sup> to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. <sup>28</sup> We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. Colossians 1:25-28

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for God is the one working in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12,13