

VICTIM

Among the definitions of a victim is a person or persons who have been cheated, fooled, or injured through unjust circumstances. Examples include the Jews who were victims of the Holocaust during World War II; and for that matter, the many who were displaced, imprisoned, pressed into slavery, tortured and killed in some cases. Victims or victimization has occurred throughout history in the matter of war and conquest, but also in less obvious or overt ways in societies among citizens as well as families.

The Bible offers a variety of victims such as Joseph, who was a victim of sibling jealousy and a dysfunctional family, to the entire Hebrew nation in the bondage in Egypt. Many additional cases of victimization could be identified and discussed both directly from the Bible and through known history; but for the limits of this letter, the two specific examples will be applied for learning and perhaps application in your lives.

Joseph was clearly Jacob's favorite and, with preferential treatment, was subjected to the envy and eventual plot of his brothers. As you are aware of the story, the details can be deferred in view of the clear victim status passed to Joseph in a foreign land. Though remaining faithful in his worship of God, Joseph was subjected to many years of injustice and even imprisonment before emerging to a commanding position in Egypt. What is very important is not that Joseph was dealt such injustice; rather, that he responded in faithfulness in spite of the injustice and praised God in the adversity.

Of course, Joseph's journey led the way for the relocation and survival of his family; and in time, this family or nation would be enslaved under a tyrannical and oppressive government. The victims of an oppressive leader, the Hebrews placed their hope in God's deliverance and their return to the promise land. In this plan, God appointed Moses as the leader and used supernatural powers to prepare and lead the way. The Hebrew people were victims but the merciful God answered their prayers with deliverance and redemption.

The particular beauty that I find in these two cases of victims or victimization is that God set them free and enabled joy and praise in periods where human despair and pity would have been more likely. Not to say that such human behavior did not occur in these two cases but, still, was not of such degree that it resulted in rejection or denial of God; on the contrary, their faith was developed through hope in God alone.

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