

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Session 21: Our Triumph in Christ, part 2

2 Corinthians 2:14 **Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ,** and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

The triumph is spiritual; it is in our inner man. This is not a guarantee of money or jobs or promotions or any kind of worldly success. In this dispensation of grace, God does not promise us anything in the physical realm, nothing. Not health, or prosperity, or a long life, or a trouble-free existence; or anything else.

It is true that God did provide some physical things to Israel when they were under the law, but that program is not in force right now, and even if it was, it was conditional upon their keeping the law, it was limited in scope as it was only for Israelites, who were living in the land, under the law.

We are none of those things. We get no physical blessings for keeping the Law of Moses. We get no physical blessings for serving God. We are promised no physical blessings of any kind by God. And the sooner you understand that, the better.

And even though God dealt with Israel by physical things as children under the law, once the prophetic program resumes, the believing remnant (BR) will be dealt with as the “firstfruits” of those under the New Covenant.

James 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, **that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.**

What is this talking about? It is talking about the BR being the firstfruits of those who are under the New Covenant. When the prophetic program resumes, the believing remnant are going to get some spiritual things, as described in Jeremiah 31:31. The emphasis on how God deals with Israel is going to change from being about physical things (childhood) to spiritual things (adulthood).

In Paul's epistles, the way God is working is always in our inner man. Once you come to grips with that truth, it will change a lot of things that you probably do not see as connected to what we are studying.

Here is another principle: The work that God does in our inner man is always in response to the doctrine we are applying.

This is the process by which we are edified. This is the process that God has ordained for us who are living in this dispensation of grace. We understand the doctrine and we respond to it by applying it to our daily lives. The word of God, by the work of the Spirit in our inner man, effectually works to transform us and conform us to the image of Christ. We call that process edification. And this only works for saints. God does not work in the inner man of a lost person. Edification is not an issue they can have working in them.

One more thing, the edification process does not happen automatically. We must intelligently cooperate with it; it will not happen accidentally, and it will not happen on its own.

Now, let's take a look at the breakdown of the passage. In verse 14, Paul sets forth a truth that becomes his "saving reality" when he is under any of the sufferings of Christ (SoC). And if we are going to endure the SoC and not be adversely affected by them, then like Paul, we need to understand that there is a victory (triumph) which God always gives us (causes us to have) in Christ. That fact that our triumph is "in Christ" should tell us that the triumph of verse 14 is not a physical thing.

Let me give an example: in this dispensation of grace (DoG), God is not fighting America's military battles for us, and neither is He fighting them for the nation of Israel. In fact, God is not fighting anyone's battles.

But what about Israel? Israel, during this DoG has fallen to the level of the Gentiles. God is not supernaturally defending America or Israel today against their enemies. Stamping "In God We Trust" on our coins does not get God to take our side and assist us to victory.

There are two things we must understand properly, for if we do not, we will ask God to do some things which He is not going to do, and when those things fail to materialize, Satan will use that circumstance to undermine our faith.

The first thing we must understand is the intended effect of any of the sufferings of Christ.

Satan puts us through the SoC to discourage us. And if we do not have the sonship doctrine working in our minds, when those attacks come, we will be discouraged. Satan is seeking to get us to quit or be disappointed or frustrated.

The second thing we must understand is what Paul means when he says that God “always causeth us to triumph in Christ.” The reason we must understand this properly is because this is a truth that comforted Paul when he was under attack, and kept him from the intended effects of the SoC, which we have already listed. If we are expecting the wrong thing, such as a change in our circumstances to our benefit, there will be no comfort and there will be no salvation from the effects of the attacks of the policy of evil (PoE).

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When Paul says that God “always causeth us to triumph in Christ,” this is not a promise that God will intervene in any physical way to produce your desired outcome. The triumph is in the inward man, not in our outward circumstances.

But let me ask you a question: Has there ever been a believer in Jesus Christ who did not triumph when he was faced with adversity? The answer is “yes.” So, how then can verse 14 be true? Is it just one of those verses preachers quote, but no one really believes it?

My point is that “always triumphing” is not automatic. Everything that is automatic and guaranteed for us to have in this life on earth, we already possess to its greatest degree. Did you get that? For example, we have already been given the Spirit of God to take up residence in our human spirit. We have all of

Him we will ever get. Being “filled with the Spirit” is not about getting more of the Spirit than we already have.

We have been forgiven. We cannot be any more forgiven than we are right now. Our forgiveness is complete and finished.

We have been made righteous in our new identity in connection with our justification. Our positional righteousness in Christ is perfect and complete. We cannot improve upon it, nor will it ever be improved upon. It is His righteousness and God the Father has imputed it to us so that in His eyes, we are justified.

We have unlimited and unrestricted access to our heavenly Father in prayer. There are no caveats to this. We already have it to its fullest degree. Nothing you do hinders this access.

So what about Psalm 66:18?

Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me*:

This is written to Israelites who are under the law, where how God deals with them hinges upon whether they are obeying the law or breaking God’s law, which would be iniquity. One of the principles of living under the law is this: If they (Israel) are disobeying God and walking contrary to Him, God will not hear their prayers. If they delight in sin, if it is in their thoughts and desires, so that they do not confess it and turn from it, God will not hear their prayer. Why? Because that is the nature of God’s relationship with them under the law.

We, as members of the body of Christ, living in the DoG, are not under the law, but under grace. And the nature of our relationship is not vested in our obedience, but upon our unchanging position in Christ.

Do you see a pattern for those things which are automatic and guaranteed? They are spiritual things, which are part of our new identity in Christ, or they are part of the spiritual blessings, which are ours in Christ. Thinking about all of the things which are ours in Christ, is there anyone who can take these things away from us? For example, can anyone take the Spirit of God from you? Can you yourself expel

the Spirit of God from your human spirit? Can you transfer Him to someone else? The answer for all of these is “no.”

We are forgiven. Can anyone take that forgiveness from you? Can you take away your own forgiveness? Can you transfer it to someone else? Again, all answers are “no.”

We are seated with Christ in heavenly places. Can anyone, including yourself, take that away from you? Can you give it away to someone else? No.

We are given the adoption of sons. Can anyone take that away from you? Can you give it up? Can you give yours to someone else? No.

These are all spiritual in nature. We have no such promises for the physical things of life.

When verse 14 says that God always “causeth us to triumph,” is it talking about positional truths? I don’t think so. If this is right, then the “triumph” of verse 14 is not automatic, it is not something we already have in its fulness.

Remember what is happening with Paul, he is under the sufferings of Christ. While it is true that these attacks cannot in any way alter or diminish any of the things which are true for him positionally, Paul’s triumph has to do with his sanctification.

Or to put it more specifically within the context of what verses 14-17 are about, Paul’s triumph is over the intended effects of the sufferings of Christ. For Paul, the SoC were against him in two ways: 1) against him personally (that is what is going on in 2 Corinthians 2), and 2) against his ministry.

There are many ways in which we can “triumph in Christ,” but I want to stick close the context of what 2 Corinthians is about; the sufferings of Christ.

For Paul to triumph against the personal attacks would mean that Paul would not become discouraged and inclined to quit. Instead, he triumphs by continuing with his life and message for the sake of those he is ministering to.

To triumph means his motivation is not found in the response to him and his message, but in the Lord. What does that mean? It means that Paul knows that

his faithfulness to continue will glorify God, and Paul wants that above all else. Paul will use both his successes and sufferings to exalt the Lord Jesus. Paul's motivation is not vested in outcomes, but in faithfulness to what God has called him to do.

To "triumph" means Paul would not allow himself to be provoked into abandoning his ambassadorship to conduct himself in anger and retaliation. Paul endures as a faithful ambassador.

Paul will not allow his flesh to respond to the provocations of untrue accusations, but instead he will respond in godly love and charity with the "good" of those he is ministering to in mind. Paul is not thinking about what is happening to himself, he is thinking about what can happen to the Corinthians (spiritual good) if he remains faithful.

To triumph means that even when Paul is hurt and wounded by the words and conduct of the Corinthians, his response will be godly, sacrificial (a living sacrifice), and a testimony of what the power of God's grace can accomplish in us.

To triumph means that Paul counts it a honor to "suffer with Christ." He is single-minded; he will not be deterred. He understands this is what it means to live for God and conduct ministry in this present evil world. He has settled the issue that there is a price to pay for godly living...

2 Timothy 3:12 Yea, and **all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**

...and he knows what that will result in.

2 Timothy 2:12 **If we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*:** if we deny *him*, he also will deny us:

Paul also knows the price for conducting a sonship ministry. Paul has counted the cost and determined that "the sufferings are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Look again at verse 14 and let me ask you a question: “If the word “always” really means always, do the saints always triumph in the ways we have described here? Is Paul just talking about himself, or is he including us.” I believe he is including us.

So, if sometimes we don’t triumph in the ways we have just described, how is this verse true? It is true because there is a caveat: we don’t just automatically triumph; our triumph is “in Christ.” In other words, we are guaranteed to always triumph when our response to things happening to us are the response of Christ in us.

And how can we have Christ’s response to our circumstances? Paul had Christ’s response to the accusations of the Corinthians. How can we have the same response Paul had? By putting Paul’s doctrine to work in us.

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For God, when we respond to the SoC in godliness, we win; we triumph and that is a “win” to God? A “win” is not us firing back against our critics with a snappy comeback, or an accusation of our own. Paul wasn’t even thinking about how he could get even, or shut them up. The Corinthians were not his enemies, but his brothers and sisters in the Lord. They were family.

Let’s make sure we are getting this. Normally, when we talk about being “in Christ,” we are talking about our unchanging *position* in Him. But here in 2 Corinthians 2, Paul is not talking about our position, but our practice; he is talking about an element of our sanctification. When Paul adds that phrase “in Christ,” he is using that as a “short hand” way of describing his response to the attacks.

It starts with his thinking. If we are going to respond like Paul, then we must have our minds renewed by the doctrine so we can think about our situation the way our Father does, to think about those who are opposing us the way our Father does.

Understand what has happened in 2 Corinthians 2. Satan is attacking Paul personally for the purpose of either making Paul quit, or convincing the Corinthians to reject Paul’s ministry to them. He has used false teachers to

question Paul's authority as an apostle, to question Paul's message (it seems very radical), and to question Paul's motives. Some within the assembly have been very vocal against Paul and now their attacks are personal; they say Paul does not love them, does not exhibit care for them, and is not concerned about them.

But everything Paul has done is an exhibit of his great love for them and that he cares for them. That is why he wrote the severe and tearful letter. He knows that they could read that letter and turn away from him even further. And while Paul wrote the truth to them, his goal was very evident; his overwhelming love for them both individually and as an assembly.

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