

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 2:14

Session 22: Our Triumph in Christ, part 3

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.

Since the sufferings of Christ (SoC) are meant to intimidate us and discourage us so that ultimately we might quit our sonship life, the “triumph” is over the “effects” of the sufferings of Christ. What are some of those effects?

By the SoC, there are two ways Satan is trying to affect Paul: 1) in how he thinks about the Corinthians, and 2) how he thinks about his own ministry.

Let’s start with the first one: What Satan is really after here is to break Paul’s relationship with the Corinthians. What kind of effect was Satan hoping to have on Paul’s thinking toward the Corinthians by the false accusations against him?

Anger: If Satan can get Paul to deal with them out of anger, he might have driven them even further away; he might have returned immediately to judge and punish the Corinthians. Instead, Paul was motivated by “his great love for them” to write the severe and tearful letter. Because Paul was driven by his love, and not by his anger, he was not overwhelmed by the attacks against him.

Two more points to make about this: 1) Paul’s triumph was not in the Corinthians’ deciding to return to him, but it was over the effects of the sufferings of Christ. The triumph which God allowed Paul to have was over the hurt, betrayal, and rejection of the Corinthians. Satan always wants to use these things to provoke us to respond out of our flesh.

Take a look at the following list and let’s point out which ones could have been Paul’s response, if he was living out of his flesh.

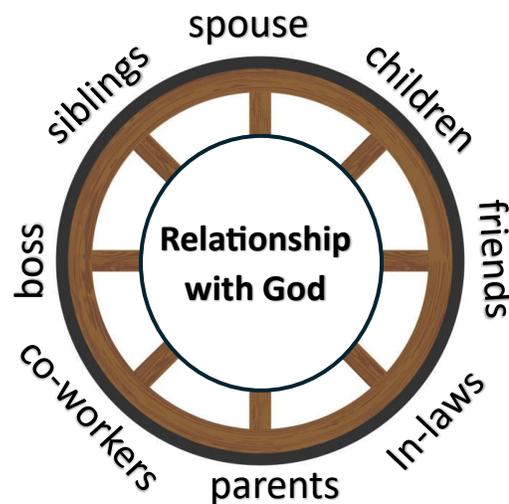
Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, **hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife**, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings,

murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

To triumph means Paul is not devastated by the things happening to him, but through those things he becomes more than a conqueror (Romans 8). What does it mean to be more than a conqueror? It means that by going through the particular suffering, we have grown stronger spiritually, and our ability to endure suffering and hardship has increased because of what the doctrine is working in our inner man.

Because Paul's response to their treatment of him was "in the Lord," he did not respond to them in his flesh. We will talk more about that shortly.

And 2) Paul's love for the Corinthians was unchanged by their bad treatment of him, demonstrating that Paul's relationship with them came out of, and was governed by, his relationship with God. That is a critical point. All of our relationships should issue out of our relationship with God.



Resentment: Satan wanted to bait Paul into becoming bitter against the Corinthians, even to the point of stopping his ministry to them. Paul was triumphant over this attack; he did not allow himself to be provoked into anger and retaliation. Instead, Paul exhibited the same faithfulness to the Corinthians as God does to the body of Christ because his response was Christ in him.

When we attempt to duplicate Paul's response by our own effort, we are missing the point. Firstly, that attempt will reach a point of failure, sooner or later because our flesh will only do so much – only put up with so much, before it fails. Patient endurance that surpasses the best efforts of the flesh is only produced by the doctrine working in us.

Secondly, God is not glorified by the best efforts of our flesh. He is only glorified by His word, working in us to transform us into godly people, who are able to endure the sufferings.

The difference between a lost man attempting to live a good life, and a saved man living a godly life is as night and day. Even so, the difference between a saved man attempting to serve God by the efforts of his flesh, and a saint serving God in the Spirit, are also night and day.

Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

I want to take a moment and talk about this. In this country, we want those who are unsaved to live within a Judeo-Christian ethic. You do not have to be saved to do that, but you do need to believe in the God of the Bible, and have respect for the Bible as God's word. Without God, a society becomes secular, and that is a road that leads to ruin.

What you want in every citizen that is unsaved is that the values of the Judeo-Christian ethic are in place; people should tell the truth, we should treat people with kindness, immorality will ruin a society, stealing is wrong, defrauding is wrong, helping those who are less fortunate is a virtue, human life has value that is greater than other life because people are made in the image of God; animals are not.

I have two dogs; Zoey and Chika and I love them a lot. But if I were at the beach, and a man I did not know is drowning, and not far from him, one of my dogs is drowning, and I can only save one, I am saving the man. Even though I love my dog and I don't even know this man, I know that his life is of greater value to God than my dog's. I am commanded to love my neighbor; I am not commanded to love my dog.

The wisdom of the Bible will direct your thinking to that which is right. I realize some people won't like my analogy, because they think that the great thing in life is to live by our feelings. But to live by your feelings is one of the best ways to make yourself miserable. This infatuation with feelings is what makes people think the most important thing they can instill in their children is self-esteem; it is not. The most important value or character trait you can instill in your young children is self-control. This is true for every parent, especially when our children are young.

In the first three years children will get this from their mothers, which is why it is important for mothers to spend the most time they can with their young children. One more thing while I'm talking about it; in those first three years one of the main jobs of the mom is to rear those infants in as stress-free of an environment as possible. We don't have time to talk about that but there is a lot to say about it.

At the age of four and going up to age five or six, the influence of the father becomes very, very important. The things a dad does, chasing his children around the room, tickling, wrestling, and laughing with them, showing them to be adventurous and teaching them self-control by instruction and by example, do far more to set a child up for a great childhood and adult life than you might imagine.

Not to say that dad shouldn't spend time with the kids when they are 1-3, but at 4-6, he is of primary importance to his kids, which means that he needs to spend time with them, as much time as he can. I pause to say, this is not a competition between mom and dad; it is a teamwork effort. Mothers nurture their children in different ways than fathers, and children need both of those.

If you are a dad, stop thinking of quality time, there is no such thing; there is only time with them. These are the years when time with your kids is more important than creature comforts that come from working overtime. Yes, you may do without some things in that 3-year stretch, but what your kids will get from their time with you is worth far more than any "stuff" you can buy.

Okay, all of that was for free but let me bring us back to the triumph that Paul refers to in verse. 14.

One of the main reasons we have this verse about God always causing us to triumph is to show us that there is a godly way to respond to those who attack us, and that godly response will insulate us from the effects of the sufferings.

Now, let me ask you another question: By these hurtful accusations, how is Satan hoping Paul will think of his own ministry?

Paul is not discouraged, and this also is part of the triumph. Paul thinks of a way to open the Corinthians' heart to him because their spiritual benefit is more important to him than avoiding the sufferings. Paul can be victorious when people believe his message just as much as when they reject his message. Paul's triumph is that the sufferings do not adversely affect him or his message. Paul's motivation is not vested in outcomes, but in faithfulness to what God has called him to do.

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The Most Important Decision