

## The Book of 2 Corinthians

### 2 Corinthians 2:14-15

#### Session 23: Life Unto Life

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.

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 him.

Now, let's talk about how it is that we can "always triumph."

Notice that the first part of the verse does not stop at the word "triumph." Our triumph is "in Christ." We are guaranteed always to triumph when our response to the things happening to us are in-line with who we are in Christ, and are a product of Christ in us. When we suffer, we want our response to be Christ's response 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.

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.

The power to endure these attacks without being overcome by them is not in Paul, it is in God, which is why Paul can say what he does in chapter 12.

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore **I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake**: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

In Christ, there is nothing that can tear you down, nothing that can make you quit, nothing that can separate you from the love of God, nothing that doesn't work

together for your good, nothing that can change who you are, nothing can negate your spiritual blessings, nothing can take away your eternal life, nothing can come between you and God, nothing can take His Spirit from you, nothing can keep His grace from you...in Christ, you are unstoppable. If you need the refresher, go back to Romans 8:31-39.

Paul knows what triumph looks like, and now we do too. Paul knows that his triumph in Christ is not tied to the outcome of his situation, but to his faithfulness to live the doctrine which was given to him which allows him to patiently endure.

Now, let's finish up the verse.

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.**

Notice that the subject of the sentence is God. He is the One causing us to triumph in Christ, and He is the One who is making manifest.

God is

**making manifest** (making evident/put on display)

**the savor** (the pleasant aroma) **of** (which indicates that what Paul is doing is acceptable and pleasing to God)

**his knowledge** (the knowledge of Christ),

**by us** (who triumph in Christ)

in **every place** (wherever we go).

In other words, when we triumph in Christ, God is spreading the pleasant aroma of Christ's work in us, everywhere we go.

The life that is amazing is not the one with few problems and smooth sailing, but the life that no matter what is happening, it possesses the peace of God, it completely trusts in what God is doing, it is able to rest in the sufficiency of His grace, it is able to patiently endure the hardships, while, at the same time, it is filled with joy unspeakable. That is the sonship life.

As we triumph in Christ, God is using us to make known “the sweet smell of the knowledge of Christ.” We are making that knowledge known to everyone who sees us. This is the first part that is in Paul’s mind that provides for him to endure the sufferings of Christ.

So, let’s set the stage for Paul’s consolation in the midst of the attacks against him.

Firstly, Paul knows there is doctrine which will deliver him from the effects of the sufferings. Will these accusations hurt Paul? Yes, even with the doctrine. But, he will not be destroyed by them. Let me give a sneak-peek at this issue in chapter 4.

2 Corinthians 4:8 *We are* troubled on every side, yet **not distressed**; *we are* perplexed, but **not in despair**; <sup>9</sup> Persecuted, but **not forsaken**; cast down, but **not destroyed**; <sup>10</sup> Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**

We will talk about this passage in detail when we get to chapter 4, but for now, just notice that Paul admits that he is troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down, as he bears in his body, “the dying of the Lord Jesus,” or the sufferings of Christ.

My point is this: the doctrine does not make you oblivious to the sufferings. So, what good is it, then? If it doesn’t stop us from the pains and hardship of suffering, what does the doctrine do? It equips us to endure our troubles without being distressed, so that we do not despair. It makes it so that we know we are not forsaken, and when we are “cast down,” we will not be destroyed by it. And all of this has a purpose behind it, indicated by the word “that” in verse 10; that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body! What a privilege!

And this is the next thing that enables Paul to endure the sufferings; he knows that by these, the life of Christ is being made manifest in him.

So, what do we have so far?

1) God will enable Paul to triumph.

He is comforted by knowing that the doctrine will keep him from being overwhelmed, or pressured into quitting. That is the first thing; God will always cause him to triumph in Christ.

2) Through this triumph, Christ will live His life in Paul.

Christ in Paul is why Paul does not lose sight of what God wants for the Corinthians. Paul will not abandon them, because he has learned that to serve the Lord Jesus in this present evil world and in the face of the Adversary, there is a price to pay. Paul is willing to suffer for two reasons: 1) for the Corinthians' sakes, and 2) for Christ's sake.

But we need to enlarge on these so that we have a clear idea of what is comforting Paul. When I say that Paul is willing to suffer for the sake of the Corinthians, I am saying that the love Paul has for them and his desire for them to be what God has designed them to be is greater than his desire to avoid suffering. Paul wants them to benefit spiritually. Paul values and esteems them to the extent that he is willing to suffer in order to bring about the work God wants to do in them.

And what makes Paul love them this much? Firstly, because he understands that God loves them this much. Paul knows how much God values them as members of the body of Christ. He knows what God Himself has already done through His Son, to bring them to this point. He knows what God wants to do with them and through them, and the accomplishment of God's will is deemed by Paul as worth the suffering. Actually, the love Paul has for the Corinthians is Christ's love for the Corinthians.

When I say that Paul is willing to suffer for Christ's sake, this is what I am talking about. Paul is willing to suffer to accomplish God's purposes.

But this is not for nothing on Paul's part. Paul knows that his enduring of the sufferings, the display of God's grace working in him, will not only build his inner man, and provide for his joint-heir inheritance in eternity, but it will bring glory to

God for such a sacrifice to be made. For Paul to have Christ live His life in him is the zenith for Paul, it is the highest life he can possibly have.

And Paul allowing Christ to live in him is also the highest accolade that Paul can give to Christ. He has given Christ his life; what more is there?

Years ago when I was in Bible college, one of my professors gave me a book. He told me this book had influenced his life more than any other book outside of the Bible. The book was titled, "Life on the Highest Plane." Do you know what "life on the highest plane" is? It is when the Lord Jesus is living His life in and through us. It doesn't get any better than that.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by **the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

There is more than one meaning of the word, "faith." In the OED, there are 14 meanings listed for "faith," and only three of them are now obsolete. But, when we read the phrase, "faith of," there is only one definition:

Oxford English Dictionary: faith of

Reliance on the fulfillment of a promise; faithfulness, fidelity, loyalty of another

The "faith of Christ" is describing the fidelity, or the faithful work of Christ on our behalf. In this phrase, the word "faith" is being used in the sense of someone possessing the quality of fidelity, faithfulness or loyalty. Let me show you an example of this in Romans 3.

Romans 3:3 For what if some did not believe? **shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?** <sup>4</sup> God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

The preposition makes a difference; it isn't "in," it's "of." Often, this is treated as a mistake or a mistranslation. And until you get used to the Bible terminology, it may even sound a bit strange, but this is not a mistranslation of the Greek text;

this is exactly how the Greek reads. Unfortunately, preachers and scholars brush this off as though it is just a clumsy way of saying “faith in the Son of God.”

Most translations of the Bible, because they are translating out of a Greek text other than the TR (Textus Receptus/Received Text/MT=Majority Text) change the preposition to “in” and wind up a reading like the New International Version (NIV):

Galatians 2:20 New International Version (NIV)

NIV: I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me.

I know this is not representative of every translation, but I looked this verse up in 64 of the most popular translations and the overwhelming majority of them changed the phrase to “faith in the Son of God.” Of the handful that kept the word “of,” they still skewed the meaning of the phrase so that it no longer says what it is supposed to say. For example, look at Complete Jewish Bible (CJB):

CJB: When the Messiah was executed on the stake as a criminal, I was too; so that my proud ego no longer lives. But the Messiah lives in me, and the life I now live in my body I live **by the same trusting faithfulness that the Son of God had**, who loved me and gave himself up for me.

While observing that it is the faith of “the Son of God”, they are still defining “faith” as the same thing as “faith” which is “in Christ.” In other words, they are defining faith as “trust,” and “dependence” but that is not what Paul is saying.

The Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition (DRA):

DRA: And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me. And that I live now in the flesh: **I live in the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and delivered himself for me.

Here, they changed the prior preposition “by” to “in” which changes the meaning of “the faith of the Son of God.” This makes it look like Christ has faith (trust) in something, and we trust in the same thing He trusts in. Wrong definition of “faith.”

The Easy English Bible (EASY):

EASY: Christ died on the cross on my behalf. It is like I died there with him. So I do not live my own life any more. Instead, Christ lives in me. **The life that I live now in my body, I live because I trust what he has done for me.** He has loved me so much that **he died on my behalf.**

There is a sense in which this true, but, this is not actually the point being made in this verse, and I don't think it goes quite far enough. It is true that the life we now live is possible because we trusted in what Christ did for us in the past, (which is "faith in" not "faith of.") What Paul is really emphasizing by the phrase "faith of," is what Christ is doing for him in the present, producing a righteousness in Paul that is acceptable to God. The EASY translation is focusing on our part, our faith in what Christ has done, but it is not focused on His ongoing faithfulness to produce practical righteousness in us.

What Paul is saying is that the life he now lives in the flesh, is only possible because of the ongoing, faithful performance of Jesus Christ, in Paul.

The Expanded Bible (EXB):

EXB: I was put to death on the cross [<sup>L</sup> have been crucified] with Christ, and I do not live anymore—it is Christ who lives in me. I still live in my body [flesh], but **I live by faith in [or because of the faithfulness of] the Son of God who loved me and gave himself to save me [<sup>L</sup> for me; on my behalf].**

Including both "in" and "of" confuses the issue by making them synonymous, which they are not.

The "faith" of Christ" is not Christ's faith or "trust" in anyone; it is God's faithfulness to do all that He said He would do. The "faith" of God is His faithfulness to perform all that He said He would perform. This would include the faithfulness of God to have Christ live His life in Paul (Christ liveth in me), and for the life that Paul lives in the flesh, to be the life of Christ in him.

So, how do we know that the “faith **of** the Son of God” is the right way to understand it? Because both prepositions show up in the same passage, so obviously, there is meant to be a difference. For example, Galatians 2:15-16.

Galatians 2:15 We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,  
<sup>16</sup> Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by **the faith of Jesus Christ**, even we have believed **in Jesus Christ**, that we might be justified by **the faith of Christ**, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Do you see how believing “in Jesus Christ” is something different from “the faith of Christ?” We are justified by the faithful work of Christ to forgive our sins, make us righteous, and change our status before God from being an enemy, to being “at one” with Him. And how do we obtain all that Christ faithfully provided for us: by believing in Jesus. But our faith or belief or trust in Jesus is not what justifies us; we are justified because Christ did something for us, therefore it is the “faith of Christ” or the “faithful performance of Christ on our behalf” that justifies us.

But let’s go back to Galatians 2:20 to get back on our point.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God**, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Did you get that? Now, I want to tie this back in to 2 Corinthians 2:14, which leads me to this statement as we consider the “sweet aroma” of Christ living His life in us. The thing that we do that most exalts the Lord Jesus and glorifies our heavenly Father more than any other act of praise or worship, more than any song we can sing, more than any words we can say, is to allow the doctrine to transform us so that the life of Jesus is made manifest in us.

Let me say it another way: as Christ lives His life in us, then we are leaving the pleasant aroma of Christ everywhere we go. This is something the flesh could never do; no matter how much we try to “emulate” Christ. Only Christ can produce the “sweet savor of Christ.”

Also, from verse 14, Paul knows that by his ministry, he is making known (putting on display) this “knowledge of Christ” everywhere he goes.

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.**

This is Paul’s purpose. It is what drives him to overcome the obstacles.

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are unto God **a sweet savour of Christ**, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

What is a “savor?” In the Bible, savor is spoken of as either “taste” which has to do with flavor, or “smell,” which has to do with an aroma. In this case, the emphasis is on the smell, or the aroma.

Paul is saying, in verse 15, that with everything that is happening to him, by his faithfulness to live the doctrine, his life was a sweet aroma of Christ, rising up to God.

As we endure the sufferings of Christ, we are, unto God, a “sweet savour of Christ.” What does that mean? It means that the primary One that we are pleasing by our life and ministry is God; not ourselves and not even those we minister to. This is exactly what Paul is talking about in Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath **given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.**

When Christ gave Himself on the cross, it was for us in the sense that we are the ones that needed what His death would produce, but when He did it, He offered His life as an offering and a sacrifice to whom? To God. And when He did, God considered it a “sweet-smelling savor.” This is what Paul is saying about the sacrifice of his life to God; it is a sweet savor of Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:15 **For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ**, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

Paul gave himself, through his sufferings, as an offering to God, as a living sacrifice to God, and that was, to God, a sweet-smelling aroma, because it was the aroma of Christ, Himself.

Look again at Ephesians 5:2.

Ephesians 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

In Ephesians 5, Paul instructs us to walk worthy of our position as members of the body of Christ. If we do not walk according to our position in Christ, then we are not going to be producing the sweet-smelling savor of Christ.

To walk “in Christ” means for Christ to live His life in us. He is the sweet-smelling savor, not us. We are in Him positionally, but if we don’t walk in accordance with our position in Christ, then we are not practically the savor of Christ to God; in other words, we stink.

If Christ is the savor, then the only way for us to have that aroma is for Christ to live in us.

Just as Christ gave Himself as an offering and a sacrifice, as we endure the sufferings of Christ, there is a sacrifice being made on our part to God, and that is part of the sweet savor that Paul refers to in verse 15. In another sense, as we endure the sufferings for Christ’s sake and allow His life to be lived in and through us, our lives are the offering that Christ, in us, is making to the Father.

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