

## Triumph in the Face of Trouble

**Introduction:** If you are facing trials, persecution, unfairness, uncertainty, distress or trouble in any form and you seem to think there is little or no hope (can anyone relate to that?) – then I have good news for you – there is hope! God’s word shows us clearly how you can walk in triumph in the midst of your trouble. My prayer is that this will be a turning point where you will turn your trouble into triumph!

If you say, “I don’t have any troubles. This message is not for me” – then let me remind you of what God’s word says:

2 Tim 3:12 ... *“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”.*

John 16:33 ... *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world”.*

1 Pet 5:8 ... *“Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

We will take a look at the life of Paul and see an example of one who faced extreme trouble and yet walked in unwavering optimism rejoicing in the life and hope he had in Christ.

### Did Paul have troubles?

He’s been preaching and healed the lame man and the crowds are hailing him as their hero and the Jews (Pharisees and religious Judaiser doods) are not happy:

Acts 14:19 ... *“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.”*

Paul and Silas and co are in Philippi and Paul has cast the demon out of the girl and her owners have lost their source of income and are very unhappy and have stirred the crowd up against Paul and co:

Acts 16:22-23 ... *“The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely.”*

1 Thess 2:9 ... *“For you recall, brethren, our labour and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.”*

2 Thess 3:8 ... *“nor did we eat anyone’s bread without paying for it, but with labour and hardship we kept working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you.”*

1 Cor 4:9-13 ... *“For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong;*

*you are distinguished, but we are without honor. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now."*

2 Cor 1:8-9 ... *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead."*

Phil 4:12 ... *"I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need."*

2 Cor 11:23-29 ... *"Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labours, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak?"*

Yes, there's no doubt Paul faced troubles! We too may have troubles but, in comparison, our troubles to pale into insignificance! But let's learn from Paul how to face trouble and yet live in victory.

### **The Three Keys to Paul's Optimism**

Through all his trials and tribulations we see hope in his eyes, an encouraging tone in his speech and buoyancy in his step and actions. Even when the skies are "dark" over him there is always a ray of light and hope in his expression.

We see Paul constantly ... *"rejoicing in hope"*, clad in the ...*"armour of light"* and ...*"walking in the light"* even as Christ is the light of life in Him shining forth.

There are no "ups and downs" with Paul. His demeanour – his manner, his attitude, his expression, his behaviour or conduct – is constant. Where others of the world would be walking with drooped shoulders and faces of despair in contrast Paul would be moving with the posture and attitude of a conqueror – standing tall and strong regardless of the ferocity of the onslaught he faced.

He constantly fought and laboured in the spirit of certain triumph. Read through his epistles and you'll hear the optimism in his words as they resound forth:

... *"I am confident of this very thing"...*

... *"We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" ...*

... *"Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"...*

... *"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ"...*

So what are the secrets of Paul's certain and assertive optimism in the face of the most severe times of trouble? As we read through his epistles and listen to his counsel we will find three things that stand out – three keys to Paul's success in the face of adversity.

### **1. Our Redemption through Christ:**

First and foremost, threaded throughout his life and teachings we see the reality of the redemptive work of Christ. Not only is the message of the cross and salvation in the passages where Paul deals specifically with the doctrine of redemption but also in the parts where he deals with other daily matters. It's there, threaded into all he says. It's as though the redemptive work of His Master is the very atmosphere in which all his thoughts and purposes find their sustaining and enriching breath.

Just look at the Epistle to the Romans for example – in it there are weighty passages concerning the doctrine of redemption, for instance chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 in which we see the familiar and well known verses such as:

Rom 3:23-24 ... *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."*

Rom 4:25 ... *"He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification."*

Rom 5:8-10 ... *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."*

Rom 6:6-11 ... *"knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus."*

But then when talking about the more general topics, like the "eating of meats" discussed in Romans chapter 14, even there we see the redemptive message subtly included:

Rom 14:15 ... *“For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food **him for whom Christ died.**”*

Similarly in writing to the Corinthians, when discussing the sanctity of our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit, the redemptive message is there:

1 Cor 6:19-20 ... *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For **you have been bought with a price**: therefore glorify God in your body.”*

Again, when presenting the ideal relationship of husband and wife, Paul paints it in the light of redemptive glory:

Eph 5:25 ... *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and **gave Himself up for her.**”*

In discussing the grace of liberality and generosity the grace of redemption is included;

2 Cor 8:9 ... *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”*

The reality of redemption is everywhere in Paul’s thinking and speaking, in his salutations, messages, and benedictions. It became the very spirit of his life. His conception of redemption regulated his every thought.

Paul also lets us know that this redemption that vitalises and influences his every thought and action has its source way back in eternity past. It was God’s plan for us right from the beginning. We hear this in words like:

... *“we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world”* ... (Eph1:4)

... *“eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”*... (Titus 1:2)

... *“God who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began”*... (2 Tim1:9)

From eternity past it was God’s plan and purpose that we live by His life – the abundant life Christ came to give us. Paul knew and lived in this eternal plan – living by the life of Christ.

Just spend a few minutes with Paul and you’ll hear in his resounding words the end of the dominion of darkness and the unveiling of the light of the new creation that redemption has brought us:

Eph 1:13 ... *“**now** in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”*.

Rom 5:9 ... *“having **now** been justified by his blood we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”*

Rom 6:22 ... *“now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life”.*

Rom 8:1 ... *“now there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”.*

Is it any wonder that a man like Paul with the understanding of the reality and glory of the redemptive purpose flowing through his every thought would possess a heart and expression of such joy and optimistic hope – regardless of his present adverse circumstances? He knew his foundations were in Christ and he was secure no matter what happened to him in the natural. He knew his life ... *“was hidden with Christ in God”* (Col 3:3). In that fact he rejoiced and brought encouragement to others.

But that’s not all. There’s more that motivated Paul:

## **2. Our Resources in Christ:**

If we take a further look over Paul’s life we will discover more secrets to his abiding optimism. We will see his understanding and his living sense of the reality and greatness of his resources in Christ.

Eph 1:3 ... *“Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ”.*

Eph 1:7-8 ... *“the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us”.*

Eph 3:8 ... *“the unfathomable riches of Christ”.*

Eph 3:16-20 ... *“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”*

Phil 4:19 ...*“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*

Col 1:27 ... *“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

Rom 2:4 ... *“Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?”*

Gal 2:20 ... *“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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”*

Rom 8:17 ... *“and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”*

Col 1:29 ... *"For this purpose also I labour, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."*

Besides Paul there's Peter echoing the same things:

2 Pet 1:2-4 ... *"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."*

For Paul, **Love** was not just a relationship thing – it was an energy that produced abundant labours.

**Faith** was more than an attitude – it was an energy that created mighty endeavours.

**Hope** was not just a posture – it was an energy that generated enduring patience.

In Paul's statements we find his sentiments on the mystic ministries at work:

... *"Grace works" ... "Faith works" ... "Love works" ... Hope works" ... Prayer works"*

He also finds allies in places the flesh shuns ... *"this light affliction works" ... "tribulation works" ... "godly sorrow works"*.

Paul even finds that God has operating agents in the raw materials in the world's discarded waste:

1 Cor 1:27-28 ... *"but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are."*

Concerning the enemy Pauls has no timidity.

Eph 6:13-14 ... *"Having done all to stand firm, stand firm"*

2 Cor 10:4 ... *"for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses."*

Phil 1:28 ... *"in no way alarmed by your opponents"*

Rom 8:37 ... *"in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."*

So whatever the odds are that he is facing Paul shows his knowledge and utilisation of the wealthy resources he has in Christ and remains the bright and positive optimist always "rejoicing in Hope" and yelling out *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"*

And finally, the last of his secrets which fire up his optimism in the face of trouble:

### 3. Our Rest in Christ:

Paul shows us his impressive sense of the reality of future glory. He loved to contemplate the words he wrote in Rom 8:18 ... *“the glory that shall be revealed”*

He would muse on the words he wrote in Col 3:4 ... *“When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory”*.

He pondered on death as “gain” where he yells out Phil 1:21 ... *“for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* because this would transfer him to the place where he would be *“at home with the Lord”* (2 Cor 5:8) to ... *“be with Christ which is far better”* (Phil 1:23).

He constantly looked for ... *“the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (Titus 2:13)

And he contemplated *“that great day”* in which to him would be revealed the crown of righteousness and glory and spoke of this to Timothy.

2 Tim 4:7-8 ... *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing”*.

Also he could with confidence speak out the words of:

Phil 2:16 ... *“holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain”*.

### Conclusion:

Finally, let’s look at how all three of these keys to victorious living in the face of trouble are interwoven in the following passages:

2 Cor 6:1-10 ... *“giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, **in the power of God**; by **the weapons of righteousness** for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.”*

Rom 8:31-39 ... *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who **did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all**, how will He not **also with Him freely give us all things**? Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the*

one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is **He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God**, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

2 Cor 12:9-10 ... "And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the **power of Christ may dwell in me**. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

2 Cor 4:7-18 ... "But **we have this treasure in earthen vessels**, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body **the dying of Jesus**, so that **the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body**. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, **so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh**. So death works in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak, knowing that He who raised the Lord **Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you**. For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God. Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an **eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but **the things which are not seen are eternal**."

These are the springs of optimism that flowed in Paul's veins and should also be our keys to living in victory in the midst of whatever darkness that surrounds you:

A sense of the **glory of the past** in a perfected **redemption** through Christ

A sense of the **glory of the present** in our abundant **resources** in Christ

A sense of the **glory of the future** in the peaceful **rest** of our eternal home with Christ