

Triumph in Christ

II Corinthians 2:14-3:5

1/ 08/ 06

Intro

This second letter to the church at Corinth is actually the third. We do not have the first. This letter follows only about a year after the one we just finished studying. There were some troublemakers in the church who took Paul's letter and turned it around and accused Paul of being harsh with them.

In his love for them, he continues to write to them to teach them in the faith and give them what they need to grow up in maturity in Christ. That is what they need, and that is what we all need as well.

In this chapter, Paul writes about the trials of his ministry and speaks to how he is living a victorious faith before the Lord. "God always leads us in His triumph," says Paul.

These are principles of living a victorious faith.

I. There Can be Triumph in Trials

A. Thanks be to God

- Paul had just been referring to the difficulties they had faced in their church as well as the troubles he had faced in his travels.
- But he says, "Thanks be to God." Why can he say this even in hard times?
- Because there is something greater in him than the trouble.

Illus – When Paul and Silas were in Philippi and cast a demon out of girl who brought much profit to her

owner through demonic divination, they had Paul and Silas arrested...

Acts 16:22-26, "... 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; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;"

Illus – When someone cuts you off on the freeway, how you respond is not just a result of what happened, but also, what is in your heart. Is there something greater happening than being cut off?

Hebrews 11:32-40 The hall of faith; not all lived, but all were victorious.

B. Who leads us in His triumph

- We love to win, and for many it's the pride of their lives, but we need to understand this by God's perspective.

Illus – It's possible to win and yet lose. Jordi and I were grocery shopping together and there was a small boy who had picked up a big box of cookies. He and his mom were having a contest of wills, "Put that back." "No.."

"The boy will win," I said to Jordi. Unfortunately, he will lose in the process of winning.

- The word in Greek is used of a conquering general that is given the victory procession after a great battle.
- Verse 14 says that He always leads us in **His triumph in Christ**. In other words, we are part of the victory procession because He is the victor.
- He has conquered death, Satan, lies, and he will come as conquering King in the last days.

Romans 8:37-39, “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.”

I John 5:4, “... and this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.”

II. How You Smell Matters

A. We are the fragrance of Christ

- Paul says the knowledge of God is a sweet aroma.
- And God manifests that sweet aroma through us.

Illus – There’s an old southern expression that captures the opposite of this. “There’s a skunk in the woodpile.” You can’t see it, but you know it’s in there.

That should not be true of us. There’s something that should smell good about us. I believe it is part of the favor of the Lord.

- The picture in this verse is again of the conquering general’s procession. It was filled with the sweet smell of flowers and incense.
- Paul says it has to do with the sweetness aroma of the knowledge of Him...

II Peter 1:3-4, “... 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,”

John 12:3, “Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

B. We are a fragrance to God

- In the Old Testament, fragrant offerings were given to the Lord in several ways. Burnt offerings were to be a sweet savor to the Lord and incense was offered because of the sweet aroma that was lifted up to the Lord.
- These are given to bless the Lord.
- He is the one who is blessed by our faithfulness. Even if our efforts are not successful, God is blessed by our faithfulness.

Ephesians 5:1-2, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Philippians 4:18-19, “But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

C. Not everyone likes the aroma

- Paul says that to those who are perishing, we are not a sweet aroma at all. To them we are the smell of death. (Some are offended by Christ because they are running from God.)
- In other words, it’s possible that we are offensive to non-believers. But it’s important that the offense be Christ.

Illus – I want to be very careful to not offend people because of who I am. I have no problem if someone is offended by Christ, but I don’t want to offend because of my humanity.

- The Lord gave warnings that some would oppose and be offended at you because of your faith.

Luke 2:34, And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed...”

Matthew 10:24-25, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!”

III. God Makes us Adequate

A. God wants our hearts to be sincere

- The word sincere means, genuine, true...
- It comes from the Latin word, “sin-cere,” meaning “no wax.”

Illus – during the Greek times, there were many traders in marble sculpture. The problem arose if the artist broke a piece from the sculpture, rather than ruin the thing and start over, he would grind some marble and mix it with wax to fill in the missing piece. All would be well until the art work was put in the sun...

- Paul said that there were some who were using the Word of God for personal profit, and there are many who are doing that very thing today.

Acts 8:18-24 Simon wanted to purchase the power of the Holy Spirit.

B. Our adequacy is from God

- We are not adequate for what God calls us to do.
- There is an old saying that, “God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called.” That is a very good saying.

Galatians 6:3, “For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

- The key is to have a greater confidence and faith in what the Lord can and is doing rather than in myself.

John 15:5, “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

Conclusion

Faith is the Victory, are the words of an old hymn. And they are very right. Keep your faith, let there be something victorious in you that is greater than any trial you are facing.