

TRANSCENDING TROUBLES TRIUMPHANTLY
II Corinthians 2:12-17

Intro: What is your idea of a victorious Christian life?

- Is it living a life untouched by the world---or COVID---traveling through life unscathed by sin---and sickness---and the violence that surrounds us?
- Is it like going through the Pirates of the Caribbean in Disney World---with cannons firing---guns going off---and attacks all around you---yet riding through life without a scratch?
- Or perhaps you are a bit more aggressive---and think of victory in more active terms.
- Like a Sherman tank---rumbling over every foe as if he wasn't even there.
- While those are fairly common concepts of a victorious---triumphant life---few of us experience life like that.
- Something goes haywire in our Disney World---and we find ourselves wounded.
- Or our tank breaks down---and we find ourselves running for cover.
- But that really shouldn't surprise us.
- Even the Apostle Paul had problems---he had troubles.
- In fact---at one point he was so troubled that he had to leave town.

- And on this occasion he left---not because he was being chased out of town---but because he was frustrated---he was anxious---he was troubled in spirit.

- Yet---even then---he transcended his troubles triumphantly.
- Let's see how he did it.

I. TROUBLED
II Corinthians 2:12-13

- “Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,
- I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.”
- Does it shock you to discover that the Apostle Paul turned his back on an open door?
- We often think of the apostles as superhuman---doing everything right.
- But here Paul tells of a time when he blew it!
- He says he went to Troas to preach---to share the gospel of Christ---and found the Lord had really opened the door there.
- People were receptive---and were responding to his preaching.
- Everything was going great---or so it would seem.
- But something was wrong.
- Paul was worried.

- He had hoped to find Titus there---with word from Corinth.
- But Titus wasn't there---and Paul was anxious about things in Corinth.
- Apparently he couldn't get it off his mind.
- He didn't know what was going on.
- He may have been worried that all his work there was going down the drain.
- Or that something had happened to Titus.
- He started playing "what ifs" with himself---and got so worried that he couldn't stand it.
- So he walked out on a great opportunity in Troas---and headed to Macedonia---hoping to find Titus.
- Now that doesn't sound very apostolic---does it?
- Where was his faith?
- Why didn't he just trust that God was working things out?
- How could he walk away---when God had opened a door for him?
- Well---believe it or not---Paul wasn't perfect.
- His teaching was infallible---inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- And we can have complete confidence in what he wrote.
- But he had his personal weaknesses---just like us.
- And I'm glad he did.

- I find it reassuring that the greatest missionary who ever lived blew it on occasion.
- That the man who explained so beautifully the nature of faith and grace---lost focus of it himself once in a while.
- He too could get so bothered by personal concerns that he just couldn't do what God wanted him to do.
- So the Apostle Paul had his troubles---his anxieties---his moments of defeat---just as we do.
- But what separates him from most of us is the way he could bounce back so quickly from his troubles---to triumph.
- Let's read on.

II. TRIUMPHANT II Corinthians 2:14-16

- "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.
- For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;
- to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?"
- What a recovery!
- Even though Paul blew it---His Lord led on in triumph.
- And that meant Paul could triumph too.
- He was caught up in the triumph of Christ.

- The picture painted here is one of a Roman Triumph---a triumphal march.
- Of a victorious commander returning to Rome with his soldiers---parading his captives through town.
- And the sweet aroma Paul talked about is a reference to the priests who would join the processional with their censers of incense.
- They would fill the city with what was to the Romans the sweet smell of victory.
- To the captives---however---it was the sickening smell of death.
- Paul said he took part in such a triumph---and Christ led it.
- Everywhere he went---even if he might fail personally---the fragrance of Christ was spread to everyone.
- Believers and non-believers alike.
- For the non-believers---sad to say---it was the smell of death---the smell of defeat and doom.
- But for the believers---it was the aroma of life---of salvation---of victory in Jesus.
- Paul had the privilege of spreading that fragrance---the fragrance of Christ---everywhere he went.
- Because even in his failures and frustrations---he still traveled in the triumph of Christ.
- What a picture of victory---in spite of defeat.
- And we need to keep that picture ever before us.

- We are going to stumble in our Christian walk.
- We are going to overreact to the frustrations and worries of life.
- We are going to fail.
- But let us never forget that in spite of our failures---we can still travel in the triumph of Christ.
- And we---like the Apostle Paul---can transcend our troubles.

III. TRANSCENDENT II Corinthians 2:17

- “For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”
- It almost sounds as if Paul has changed topics here---but he hasn't.
- The key to Paul's ability to transcend his troubles was that even though he was a preacher---he was not merely peddling the word of God.
- What he was doing---everywhere he went---was something he took very seriously---something he truly believed it.
- Now I realize there are some who do think of themselves as salesmen for Jesus.
- Who view evangelism as a form of sales.
- But like Paul---I'm uncomfortable with that picture.

- A salesman may---or may not---believe in what he is selling.
- And a salesman usually sells something in order to profit from it.
- But Paul wasn't a peddler of religious information---or products.
- He wasn't a religious huckster---simply hawking wares to make a buck.
- Religion can be extremely profitable.
- And there were those who profited from it in Paul's day---as do some today.
- And even those who start out in ministry with the best of intentions often lose sight of their original objective.
- The lure of financial gain can blind any of us---even preachers---to what's really important.
- But it hadn't for Paul.
- He was still motivated by a sincere desire to share what he had been given in Christ.
- And he hadn't lost sight of the fact that he had been personally commissioned by God to share it.
- So everything he said and did---he did in the sight of God.
- His faith was for real.
- His call was for real.
- His life was for real.
- And that's what enabled him to transcend the troubles he experienced in the course of his ministry.
- If our ministry---or our faith---isn't for real---or if it's motivated by selfish ambition---we'll not be able to transcend our troubles.
- If we became a Christian because we thought it would guarantee a charmed life---we're going to be sorely disappointed.
- And when we don't get what we thought we'd get---our troubles will devastate us.
- If we view faith as a path to the good life---we'll have nothing to sustain us when disappointments come---and the going gets rough.
- But if our faith is in the right person---for the right reasons---we can transcend our troubles triumphantly.
- Obviously that won't happen if we are nothing more than peddlers of the word of God---repeating things we really don't believe.
- Doing what Jeremiah lamented about the people of his day---“Thou art near to their lips but far from their mind.” (Jeremiah 12:2)
- Contrasting himself with the peddlers---Paul said---“But as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”
- That was his answer to the question he asked in verse 16.
- “And who is adequate for these things?”

- Who can handle the troubles of life victoriously?
- Those who are sincere in their faith---who sense the call of God in their life---and who live their life in the presence of Jesus.
- That's what made Paul adequate for the challenges he faced.
- That's what enabled him to transcend his troubles---and even his failures.
- And that's the only way we can have a truly victorious Christian life.
- We must be for real---and our faith must be for real.
- We must mean it when we say Jesus is Lord.
- Our decision to serve Christ must not be based on what we hope to gain from it.
- We serve Christ because He is the Son of God---and He has every right to be the Lord of our life.
- And we recognize the call of God in our life.
- He has chosen us---and has not only saved us---but has commissioned us with the greatest work of all time.
- He has a job for us to do in life---a purpose for us to fulfill.
- He wants His Son to live His life through us.
- That gives meaning to everything we do.
- When we speak---we do so in Christ.
- When we work---we do so in Christ.
- When we play---we do so in Christ.
- When we cry---we do so in Christ.
- Everything we do is in Christ.
- In His name---and in His sight.
- We are therefore able to be open---and transparent.
- Before God---and man.
- We have nothing to hide---our motives are pure.
- And even when we do blow it---we don't have to hide in the bushes like Adam and Eve.
- We don't even attempt to cover up our frustrations and failures.
- Instead---we openly confess them before God---and man.
- And we do so with the full assurance that we are still marching in the triumph of Christ.
- That's the way to a victorious Christian life.
- Begin with a faith that's sincere.
- Honestly seek to do what God has called you to do in life.
- And recognize that everything is done in the presence---in the sight---of Christ.
- That's the way to transcend troubles triumphantly.
- It worked for the Apostle Paul---and it can work for you.
- You can transcend your troubles triumphantly.
- You can face the future with confidence.
- You can have victory in Jesus.