

A Life of Constant Triumph

“But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ”

2 Cor. 2:14 (NIV)

“Wherever I go, thank God He makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ.”

(Moffatt)

This statement seems very beautiful but quite impossible! Yet it is a word picture of the ideal life of a Christian worker and no ideal set before us in the New Testament is outside the realm of possibility. This was a statement made by a man who was experiencing the truth of this victorious life.

The Greek term ‘triumphal procession’ is derived from the Latin word that was used for the solemn entrance of a victorious Roman General into Rome, hence its significance of victory. So the imagery Paul is using is a picture of life as a constant victory.

Now in Paul’s life the facts appear to challenge the truth of this claim. The only incident that seems to harmonize with this description was when Paul and his entourage were travelling to Damascus with all the pomp and authority given to him by the Sanhedrin! We feel we want to ask Paul:

- Was it victory when you were let down in a basket from the walls of Damascus?
- Was it victory when you lived in isolation in the Arabian Desert?
- Was it a triumph when you were thrown out of Antioch or when you had to flee from Iconium?
- Was it victory when you were lying outside the city of Lystra apparently stoned to death?
- Was it a triumph when you were captive in the stocks or in the dungeon at Philippi?
- What about when you were in the midst of the uproar in Ephesus or when you said, on your way to Jerusalem that bonds and suffering would accompany you?
- What about when you were shipwrecked for the fourth time going to Rome?
- Were you experiencing victory when you said that you often faced death or when you were beaten five times by the Jews and three times with rods?
- Was it a triumph when that ‘thorn in the flesh’ was so painful that you asked the Lord three times to remove it?

I think we would want to say to Paul, “Far from being a life of constant victory, your life seems to us more like a life of defeat, suffering and failure!” But Paul would reply, “No! No! My life is a life of constant victory!”

It is clear that the way we measure victory or defeat is very different from Paul’s way of measuring! He said, ***“No! In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!”*** (Rom. 8:37) Paul would argue that the trials, the sufferings and the hardships that seem like defeat are really the precise channels of God’s grace to us and through us.

Perhaps Paul would tell us that it was those years in the Arabian Desert when he was alone with God that Philippians 3 was born in his heart and mind. He would perhaps explain that the expulsion from Antioch and Iconium was a real victory because it meant that the Gospel and the knowledge of Jesus Christ spread into the whole of south Galatia. The stoning at Lystra and his apparent death outside the city is thought by commentators to be the time when he had the vision recorded in 2 Cor. 12 when Paul was caught up into Paradise!

The shipwreck was a victory because Paul was able to give encouragement and good cheer to all on board the ship. The experience in the Philippian jail was a definite victory since it led to the salvation of the jailer and his family.

And so we could continue through the list of apparent problems and difficulties! Paul would maintain that there was indeed constant victory.

How often has this been our experience in the Muslim World? Time and time again seeming defeat, hardship and set-backs have turned out to be a means to further the Gospel. Even martyrdoms, that look so much like victory for the Evil One, have proved to be real triumphs for the Gospel.

So can we make Paul's language ours? What is the secret that lies behind this enjoyment of constant victory? Four statements of Paul show us the secret of his life of constant victory:

1. Gal. 2:20, ***"I have been crucified with Christ."*** He knew **the crucified life**. Paul had ceased to matter to Paul. George Muller was once asked what was the secret of blessing in his life. He replied as he bent, lower and lower, ***"There was a day when George Muller died."*** When we have had this experience, then we begin to know the life of constant victory.
2. 2 Cor. 5:9, ***"We make it our ambition to please Him."*** This is **the surrendered life**. When the supreme ambition of our lives is to please God then we are on the path of triumph.
3. Rom. 8:14, ***"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."*** This is **the guided life**. This was Paul's experience. When our lives are guided by God, then we are on the victory side.
4. Rom. 8:28, ***"In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose."*** Paul states his conviction that there can be no defeat for the man who knows **the ordered life**; who accepts all the circumstances of life as expressions of God's will.

It is my prayer that this will be a year in which you experience constant victory in Jesus every day.