

## 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

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It's our prayer and expectation that God's Word shall speak to each one of us this morning. Let's open God's Word together to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 for our scripture reading. If you did not bring your own Bible with you this morning, we invite you to use one from the pew rack before you, and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We'll begin reading with verse 7.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may 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, 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, 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 also we 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, 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."

It's good to be back with you people again. I haven't turned this little clock on. I think I will. It's set for 40 minutes. There's a note there, I guess, that the person is supposed to abide by that, although in talking with your pastor, he says that it's only for the benefit of the choir. Because it makes them feel better, cause they see it's running. [Laughter until 02:55] I plan to leave before 40 minutes are over, but a few people want to stay here until the clock is over. I'll let you know how much time is left.

I suspect all of us run into problems. And perhaps some of you are here this morning and you thought you may, you might not even come this morning, because you are under the weather. Perhaps emotionally; maybe physically you weren't feeling too well; perhaps something was pressing and you simply said I just don't want to be with people. And maybe someone in the family or some friends said "no, you ought to come. It'll do you good to be in the Lord's house today." I note it is to be discouraged and have problems and wonder just which end is up. Seems that almost always we get out of one jam, we get into the next; we solve one problem, and another one comes along.

Years ago I heard a story that I know is not true, but it is so typical of so many of our lives. I want to share it with you. The fella had a large St. Bernard. And those of you who have St. Bernard, you know they slobber. We had one for a while and finally, because of the problem the dog had, we had to have it put to sleep, which was a tragedy for our whole family, was like a member of the family left, and standpoint of the food budget was like two members of the family left.

But this large St. Bernard, this friend had, slobbered like most of them do. And Sunday afternoon, he used to take this dog for a ride with him. And he had a station wagon. He put that back seat down. The dog would get up very close, and then kind of hunched down, and rest his head on the driver's shoulder, slobbering down all over him as the case may be. Well, that went on for Sunday after Sunday after Sunday. And the, finally, the fella decided I just can't take it any longer. And he scouted around and found out that there were training schools for dogs. And so he filled out the application forms, got everyone else to fill out references on his dog, so forth, sent him in. And the dog was accepted, and he dropped the dog off at this obedience school. He explained the whole situation, and the trainer scratched his head, said "I don't know, but we assume we can do."

Couple weeks went by, and the fellow was anxious, "I wonder what in the world are doing with my dog. How are they gonna solve this problem?" Curiosity got the better of him, and so he called up. And he said, "Sir, I'm the fellow who owns that St. Bernard that slobbers. What have you done?" He says, "We taught him how to spin." He says, "Great. Be right over and pick him up." He says "not yet. He's having trouble rolling the window down." [Laughter until 05:41]

Some of our graduates, yesterday, from the college or the seminary or Rosemead, felt their problems were behind them. Some of them have school bills, obligations to pay off. And so the exams are over, but now the bill paying begins. Unless the bill paying is on the backs and the shoulders and everything else of the parents, and they're still carrying it.

One student who graduated from Columbia University several years ago, he's had a case history written up about him. Dr. Mathews, the former head of the United States Office of Education, tells about this student. He graduated from University, uh, Columbia University. Right after graduation, he received a bill for the last semester's work, but he didn't want to pay it. And so he sued the university. And he used, as the basis for his case, the catalog statement of Columbia University. It said that they would produce responsible citizens in society. He says, "I'm not gonna pay my bills, so I'm not responsible. So you failed, and I don't have to pay." He didn't win his court case, but at least he made it into print.

But most of us have problems, the times that we can't smile about. And they eat away at us. Sometimes there are problems with people in our own homes, our families, and our own street, the people we work with.

The apostle Paul lived with tremendous problems, and yet he is the one who said "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." In fact, Paul tells us that, and I'm not going to speak directly on that particular passage. But in Philippians the 4th chapter, he paraphrases verse 13 with the most unusual verse 12, "I know how to be abased, I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Paul learned to suffer need, to be hungry, to be without money as it were, perhaps at times to be without friends, certainly to have physical problems of all sorts. But that was still the same Paul, who said "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me."

Apparently, Paul was not talking about "I can become a millionaire; I can become the most popular person at Corinth, whoever it may be; I become a celebrity at Rome, and so instead of being in prison; they will put me on a pedestal and people will bow down before me." Paul could not do all those things, even through Christ. Paul uses a lot of illustrations from the Corinthian games and from the other games, the athletic contests that the Greeks held. But Paul probably could not high jump eight feet. No one has yet. He could not pole the, pole vault 20 feet, although there is no evidence that they use pole vaulting as one of their activities there. He couldn't run the marathon, perhaps, better than anybody else. Paul, could you really do all things?

Paul is talking about what God ask him to do. Paul is talking about the peace that could be in his heart, because that's the theme of Philippians, the 4th chapter that the God of peace will be with you. And then Paul goes on and talks about all the circumstances that normally befall a person who wants to live for Christ. And in the midst of all those circumstances, Paul says, "In all of that, I can be victorious in Jesus Christ. I can live for Him. I can do it all to His honor and glory."

So Paul is not talking about a theme of positive thinking that allow us to be better than anybody else. He's not talking about the capability that we can run our business in such a way, that all the other businesses that are competitors will have to look to us, because we're better than they are. Paul has an awful lot about goal setting in the Christian life. And that is translated over to your business life or your personal life. There can be astounding things that will com-, you can accomplish. Progress can be made.

But Paul here is talking about living under oppressive problems, living under adverse circumstances. Like not having a job and knowing where the next meal is coming from; like having friends you thought you had, but now they turn your back on you, and you find that all the people are over at somebody else's house and you weren't invited. Paul was talking about having people in which you invest your life, and then have them say we wish we had never heard of you. Paul knew physical hurt and emotional hurt. But he says "in the midst of that, I can do everything God wants me to do." Paul, perhaps, would even take his passage that he wrote to the church in Galatians, said, "I can still have love. I can still have joy. I can still have peace. The fruit of the Spirit is still mine in the midst of these circumstances."

The text that we'll be looking at is the one that was read for us by Ken. Turn it, if you will, to 2 Corinthians the 4th chapter. We're going to focus on two short verses. Verse 8, then verse 9. Paul says, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

There are four contrasts in these two verses, and these four contrasts are like four verses of just one hymn. It's the same theme. The words are almost the same, but just subtle differences that give us a little different insight into what Paul is trying to communicate. And I refer to this as down, but not out, because Paul was certainly down in the sense that many times we are down, under problems, under pressures. And yet Paul, down there, could still live in such a way that his life could enrich others rather than to be a drag upon them.

The first contrast that is given to us here, I would call it, you can do the job. But that sounds like positive thinking. But keep in mind that the job that God wants us to do is not the one that we dream up ourselves that's gonna make us better than the person next to us. And if you want a key word, I think I'd use the word, determination. Because no matter where Paul was, no matter what the circumstance Paul was in, he still got God's job done. Even if it was demonstrating love to others when they didn't love him; even if it was existing with joy in peace in his life, which through it all what, even though the circumstances would call for despair.

Paul uses a word in the first part of verse 9 in the Greek language, the Greek word "thlibo," translated "troubled on every side" in the translation I have. And you may have "affliction" or some other word. It's translated "affliction" quite often in the first part of 2 Corinthians, because Paul uses this little Greek word "thlibo" to talk about a lot of the physical problems he had. In fact, he said at one time "I was in such terrible straits," probably the physical punishment that had been heaped upon him. He said, "I despaired for my life. I thought I wasn't gonna get out of that city, that jail, that town, wherever it was, alive. They almost had me, completely. My life was almost gone." Wasn't a matter of where's the next meal coming from. It was the matter of whether or not there's gonna be the next breath. Paul uses that word "thlibo."

"Thlibo," basically, was a term, though that was used by sailors. When you took your sailing vessel, driven by wind and, or maybe on rare circumstances, by 75 men or more on either side, paddling away. And somebody stood at the back, and beat a gong to tell you how fast to go. But, probably, the nautical term used for ships that were powered by the wind. And you got between the mainland and an island, or any place where there was a narrow strait, and there wasn't much

room to navigate. And the winds were not favorable. You were trapped. Now, you could tack back and forth. Sometimes, you could tack, and then you'd almost come back, and lose a little ground to gain a little more the next time. But it was so narrow that it was almost impossible to make much progress. But you could still get through. They'd use this term "thlibo," in a narrow strait, highly restricted, hardly any movement, but you can get through.

Paul uses that for affliction in his physical body, crushed, beaten, broken, pushed, hemmed in, even the word pinch sometimes is a good translation. "That's where I've been," Paul said, "but I've got a little wiggle room. And I can wiggle my life through, and be a testimony for Christ, instead of talking in the towel and swearing, instead of saying God doesn't care, nobody cares." Paul always found a little bit of wiggle room to make it through, because he uses in contrast to that word "thlibo" another one. He says "yet not distressed."

Now, turn over to 2 Corinthians, the 6th chapter verse 12. That other word, which is "stenochóreó," which you will forget, and which I looked on my card, because I would forget. But at any rate, it's used here twice in verse twelve. "On our part, there is no constraint, but there is constraint in your affections." Paul is saying that they were hindered or constrained in their love towards him, and were not demonstrated in love towards Paul. The people at Corinth, even though Paul still love them. As you go through 2 Corinthians, you see time and time again where Paul is pouring out his heart to them. He's tried to minister to them, but many of them have turned their back to him. And they do not love him. They do not appreciate him. They do not want to listen to him. They have closed their heart, their mind to anything he has to say.

Paul says they're bound up. There's no wiggle room even to appreciate him. But Paul says "in my life, I still demonstrate love towards you." There was wiggle room for Paul, despite how they were tea-, treat, treating him. At one sense, you see the contrast now. Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians, excuse me, 2 Corinthians, the 4th chapter and verse 8, were troubled on every side. "I look around me. I don't think I can get through here. But, yes, there's a little bit of wiggle room. I can make it." And he moves on, because he says "even though I am restricted, I am not so constrained, or hindered, that no movement is possible." He could still make it.

Now Paul demonstrates that in his life. In the second to the last verse of Philippians and the 4th chapter, Paul sends greetings to the church at Philippi, from the household of Caesar. Back in the first part of Philippians and the first chapter and versus 12 and 13, he indicates why there might be quite a few people in Caesar's household that would like to send greetings. He writes there in Philippians 1:12 and 13, "But I would you should understand, brother, and that the things which happen under me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and all other places."

Paul was in prison, in Rome, in Caesar's Palace. I was in Rome just once, about ten years ago. And they took us to Caesar's Palace that was then being excavated. A huge mound of dirt was over this, well, it was really a, a large hill, or a small mountain, a tremendous area. They began to excavate back through there where Caesar's Palace was. And as we walked into that quarter, which look like you're going into a, a shaft, where they might be, might to put, say, subways in one of our large cities. It was a, a large area. And you walk back, I'm guessing now, maybe 100 yards or so. Perhaps I'm exaggerating as the years have gone by, but it was very large and

impressive. Then you'd come to a room. Some of the rooms were extremely large, almost as large as this auditorium, and then other rooms all of that. And they said that they had just begun to excavate Caesar's Palace. Hundreds of people live and work there. Food was prepared. Clothing was manufactured. Articles of, of use in a home, furniture was prepared and made there. There were all kinds of activities that were going on. It was a city in a sense, within the larger city Rome. He had his own guard, his own army, if he will, his own prison.

Caesar was in that household. The slaves that served there, as well as the freemen, were proud to be part of such a noble household. And some of them when they passed away, their inscriptions that indicate, at their death, that they were proud to be identified, even as a slave in Caesar's household.

Now Paul didn't have much wiggle room in prison, chained to a guard, worse than a slave. Nothing to be proud of, as someone who was despicable, perhaps, in the eyes of others. But there was enough wiggle room to use his testimony for Jesus Christ. Enough wiggle room, so that instead of throwing in the towel and said, "If God has called me to be an apostle, what am I doing here?" Paul probably looked around him and said, "Aha, I've got a captive audience," those that were there with him in prison. Paul probably thought, look at all the contacts in the most influential home, in this entire city, probably in the known world at that time. Paul had a little wiggle room, and he was not constrained or hindered, so that his testimony would be ineffective. I'm suggesting that there are very few circumstances in life, perhaps none that most of us have been faced with, where we couldn't find at least a little wiggle room to use it for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

And the odd thing is, when one begins to use it, a triumphant note creeps into your life. And before long, even we may be saying, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me," rather than "what's everybody doing to me? Why don't they get off my back?"

Paul's testimony could ring out in Caesar's household. Over the years at Biola, we have had some blind students, who from one sense have had very little wiggle room, compared to those of us who have our sight. I can think of a couple years ago who are poor examples of individuals, because they felt they had no wiggle room. And they were a drain on everybody who met them. But in the last decade or two, there have been several that have come through Biola, who have been tremendous testimonies, even though they've had their battles and their discouragement.

Back in the late 50s, early 60s, as I recall, Terry Rose came back from the Korean War, blinded by an explosion in Pork Chop Hill. He got his degree at Biola, went on and got his master's degree and came back as a counselor at Biola, and help those who had sight to see even better. Terry bought a home, sight unseen, couple doors from us. Then after he bought that home, he brought his wife and family down to live in it. His wife had never seen it. Before his wife got their parre-, Terry want to do a little sprucing up. One night, I walked down to where, to the house, and Terry was in there, with all the lights on. And he was painting. I said, "Terry, what you've got the lights on for?" He said that bothers people to see somebody painting in the dark. When his wife moved in, they did have a professional painter come back and touch up. But Terry was in there working.

Terry had an interesting yard. He, he would mow and weed and so forth, but he just got tired of all that. And so he was, I think, the first home in our block that took out the grass and put in gravel. Then he get down on his hands and knees and go along. And anything that felt like was alive, he pulled out, and he had a neat front yard. Terry Rose had very little wiggle room in one sense. My, how he used it to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

A year ago, we graduate a student by the name of Dave. Dave used to, almost run around our campus. He knew it quite well. Made out extremely well on it. Never use the white cane or a stick. Didn't have a, a dog that would help him. But he thought he knew most the campus, and he dis, did quite well. In fact, he's still around. He works across the street at city hall now, for the city of La Mirada. But Dave also used to like to get exercise and being a musician. He knew about a metronome, that little thing that goes tick, tick, tick, tick. And you can lose that little weight up and down to make it go faster or slower, if you're learning a musical instrument or trying to keep exact time. But he made a lot of that ticks, so he could put it out in the center of the soccer field. And then by hearing that tick, he would know, he knew that, as long as he heard it, he was still on the soccer field and he could run a circle around it. Now, of course students would sneak up and take that metronome and slowly move it, until sometimes Dave was not running on the track. And sometimes he ran into all kinds of things.

But there was a follow with tremendous insight into how to use his life. Not simply under the circumstances, but under those circumstances for Jesus Christ. Thlibo, limited, restricted, not much room, but a little wiggle room. And isn't it amazing how much some people can squeeze out of that wiggle room for Jesus Christ?

Every once in a while, perhaps it's exaggerated I know, but I hear people say, "You know, when I get up in the morning, I'm no good until I get my first cup of coffee. I can't be gracious, until I tank up on coffee." Now others can't be gracious, unless they do this or that. And I guess I've got a few peculiarities, where it's hard for me to be gracious, until something happens. Some of us feel we have no wiggle room without a little coffee, or if we miss a meal, or something unusual happens.

I heard one student complain, he says "that professor gave me a B." And I didn't know whether he was excited, because he had all season Ds, but it turned out that was the only B he got in college. And he was quite upset. Then I talked with a mother, who is very proud, who, through the midst of tremendous adversity, slowly struggled, found his son that over a number of years with part time work, was finally able to graduate.

Our wiggle room difference, doesn't it? I wonder how many of us feel constrained today in our testimony is not worth much, the measure of joy and peace we have is dependent upon the fact of, that we have tremendous amount of latitude. And anybody crowds us just a little bit, like missing a cup of coffee or a little crowded on the freeway, the testimony is gone. The joy is gone. The peace is gone. We can do nothing through Christ, because He doesn't strengthen us.

The next contrast, I want to share with you. By the way, if you want to give headings to these, I would call that, "when you can do the job," the first contrast, "you can do the job." And the keyword might be determination, determination. The second, "there is a way." "There is a way."

And the keyword there would be imagination. Notice, if you will, now the second contrast in verse 8, "we are perplexed, but not in despair." Perplexed, but not in despair. There's a special play on words.

Share this. Years ago, this one boat with Clyde Cook, who is Director of Missions of Biola, and he used the time to talk about some of the unusual ways they've gotten out of binds as they traveled overseas. But the first part of verse 8, that first part of the contrast, there is a word "poros," which means a way, or a path, or a passageway. But you could turn that into a verb "poreó," the means that there's a, a road that you're traveling on. There's a passage way that you're using. But you know if you come to the end of that passage way, come to a cliff, and there's no way across the canyon that you see there, come to a river and there's no bridge. You're on the Santa Ana Freeway, going into town at 7:30 in the morning, and the traffic is backed up. There's no way. The Greeks had a word for that. You take that word "poreó," the highway that you travel on, or traveling on a highway. And you put an A in front of, or an Alpha of, it and that makes the word a negative. That means there is no way. No way to travel, no way to move, "aporeó." And that's the concept that is here. Paul is saying in our second contrast here in verse 8, we are perplexed, that is we're at the end of the road. We're at the end of the trail. We look ahead, there's nothing, there's no place to go. That's it, all through.

But Paul has a contrast yet to be made. "Perplexed, but not in despair." All Paul is done between the word perplexed and despair is taken a word that already has a prefix on it, the alpha or "aporeó" for no way, and adds another prefix on top of that one. So it's x-aporeó, which means absolutely no way. Paul is saying many times in my life, I've come to the end of my road. Many

times I've come to the end of a path. Many times I've said, Lord, this is too much. One beating too many, one jail too many, too many meals missed, too many uncertainties, too many friends who have turned out not to be friends. Paul says I've been there, but Paul says I've never come to the place where I could say there is absolutely no way. I can live for Jesus Christ. I've never come to that spot, because Christ was in him.

Some of us that have problems, I'm sure, difficulties that we've run into, circumstances that we faced that we felt we could not resolve that there was no way around. Ford Motor Company had an ad a year or two ago. That said that Ford had a better idea. In most areas in life, individuals who are working hard to make a profit in whether the area of competition. Not only manufactures in this country, but automobile manufacturers around the world that are bringing their automobiles in this country, takes a lot of imagination and ingenuity to keep the price, I guess, halfway decent, and still sell and return a profit to the investors. Takes a lot of imagination.

Isn't it strange that some of us in our Christian lives do not use the imagination to overcome problems or circumstances? It's as if somebody came in with the challenge, and so we say "OK, you win." It's as if the devil corners us and we say "OK. No way out. All right, that's it." Some of us have been greatly disturbed as we see some of the trends in our society, whether it happens to be problems, that afflict individuals emotionally. Well, there must be taxation and Proposition 13 and 8 and the conflict there, whether or not that's going to lead to more jobs or fewer jobs or any jobs in some areas.

All of these are problems. They're all perplexing. And some people are saying "that's it. I've had it. I'm through." And their testimony is "I can do something through Christ, if everything works out the way I want. But you throw me a curve, body in Christ can handle it." And that's it. And some of us, literally, communicate that.

Now, I know the pressures at times can be so great. There seems to be no alternative. But I'm sharing Paul's testimony. He says, friends, I think I've been as far as any of you. I've been beaten to where I thought my breath was the last, that was gonna be the last one. And I've had so many disappointments and discouragement, that I've been hauled in and out of prison so many times. And I have become despicable in the eyes of so many people. He says, I've wondered is there no way out. But he says, frankly as I analyze it, I can never say there is absolutely no way, because I can't limit Christ. And Paul began to look and to use his imagination. I could see him in that household of Caesar's in Rome, with the wheels turning. How can God use this situation for His honor and glory?

Some people can get into binds, and you can see the wheels turning. Many of the churches of southern California like this, when are bursting at the seams, because there are too many people with wheels turning. But how to use their talents, their ability, and their testimony for Christ? But there are scores of churches that are dying on the vine for a variety of reasons. And many times, a principal reason is out of imagination, that holy imagination to communicate Christ effectively in the midst of adverse circumstances, isn't there?

John 14:6 tells us that Christ is the way. The word for way there is "hodos." Again, it refers to a road, a highway if you will in our terminology, or a path that you can move along. Undoubtedly, Paul many times in his life, when he came to the end of his road, and tied the note, the knot and hung on, he was thinking "aporeó." No way out. I'm hanging on, and that's all I can do. But because Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the light. Paul said thank God, never X aporeó. Absolutely no way.

The third contrast is found in verse 9, the first part of it. And this tells us here that we can be troubled on every side, but not distressed. Excuse me, persecuted, but not forsaken. Verse 9, the first part. Persecuted, but not forsaken.

The word persecution can run the gamut from having people almost on you to having people all over you. Listen as I read from Exodus the 15th chapter verse 9, the claim of the Egyptians as they pursued God's children, as they left Egypt for the promised land. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them." But the little word that is used here that Paul has in verse 9, "diókó," has far more to do with the process of pursuing than it does with the overtaking and the destruction.

Now, at times people have overtaken you, me. They certainly overtook Paul at times, and led him to it. But there is something haunting about somebody always being right behind you. Just it's rather haunting as you move down the freeway at, will say, 55, although that may not always be the case. And you look in the rearview mirror, and there is a Kenworth, about 75 feet high. It

appears in your rearview mirror. And you can barely see the bottom of the tire, let alone the top. And he's right on your tail. There's something haunting about that. But some of us move through life just that way. People right behind us. Paul says I've lived that way. They're after me. They don't like the word I tell concerning Christ. They don't like the life I live. Even some people who I share the belief in Christ and they are Christians, they don't like the way I do it. Because I don't dress right, I don't speak right. And so as soon as I leave, they undercut me. They're always trying to destroy my ministry. They're right there.

This contrast, I would call, "you do have a friend." You do have a friend. And perhaps the key word would be support. Because even though somebody is always right there, Paul goes on to say in the second part of verse 9, this first part, "but not forsaken." And the word there is simply that we won't be left in the dust. We will not be left, because Christ is with us and He will never forsake us. Lord, I am with you always. Then Paul says in Philippians the 4th chapter that the God of peace will be with us. Paul had a sense of God's presence with him. So no matter who was just over his shoulder, or no matter who had just left him, Christ was always there.

Years ago I was in a business venture, where somebody else was forging my signature, and got the company and myself into a great deal of difficulty. Took a lot of attorney's fees and a lot of court cases to get that settled. But I got a lot of phone calls. And I remember being served with special little missiles that were not nice. Be called into court, one of them came as I was leaving to preach at Easter Sunrise service, and the followers out there waiting by the car, and as I went out, he handed it to me. Summons to appear in court. There's something haunting about people,

right over your shoulder, always there. But there's something comforting about knowing that Christ is ever there. And I'll never leave you or forsake you.

Years ago when I learned to ride a bike, my dad ran beside me. And we lived out in the country. And it was a country road, not too wide, but certainly two lanes wide at least, and asphalt, a little rough but passable. He ran beside me, held on and then gave me a shove, and said you're on your own. If you can remember back when you first learned to ride, that was a harrowing experience. Back then we didn't have training wheels. We're lucky. Even have a bike that had tires that you could pump up and make out. I do remember riding on rims without tires at times out in the country there. But you would pedal and you would pedal as hard as you could, because until you learn to keep your balance, you knew that speed was the only thing that kept you up. And I can remember pa-, pedaling as hard as I could down at old country road, until finally I ran out of road and often to potato patch.

Isn't it wonderful that God never gives us a shove and says, you're on your own? Despite the fact that there are people haunting us, despite the fact that we're in a narrow strait, despite all the problems about us, Christ never leaves us. That's one reason I think why Paul could say, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." Paul is not saying I can exist without problems. That's what I can do. Paul is not saying I can be more popular, more successful than other people. What Paul is saying in the midst of the normal problems of life and here's we are oftentimes abnormal, he said I can exist with a triumphant note, because Christ is there.

Our last contrast, in the latter portion of verse 9, "Cast down, but not destroyed." And I would entitle this "you will survive." You will survive. The key word would be hope. The Greek word that is used here for casting down has the idea of rejecting something, doing away with it. You can ward up a life as you do a piece of paper and toss it in the wastebasket. And Paul says that's what's happened to my life. In fact, in 2 Timothy the first chapter and verse 15, he says all Asia has turned away from me. They're not interested in me anymore. They've crumbled up my life and tossed it aside. That may be that friends, neighbors, loved one, maybe somebody in your family, in essence has watered up your life and said I don't need it anymore. And they've tossed it aside. Paul says that can happen, and it's happen to me. But he goes on to say that not only has that happened and these other things, but I want you to know one thing I have never been destroyed.

And there is a stronger word, which means in a sense that you grind it under heel until the life is crushed out, utterly destroyed, killed. Paul says nobody can take the life that Christ gave me away. They can ward my life up and throw it in a wastebasket, but I'll reach the others in the basket. They can cast me aside, but I'll find somebody there and reach them for Christ. They can do away with my life on this earth, but I go home to be with the Lord and I'll praise His name here. Nobody can grind me under heels so long that I can't live my life victoriously for Him.

Paul, when he was at that first trial in Rome, said nobody stood with me. They all fled away. That's in 2 Timothy 4th chapter, about verse 16 and 17. Only Christ, he said, stood with him. But through it all, Paul was still able to say in 2 Timothy, that 4th chapter, in verse 7. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." He couldn't say I made more

money than somebody else. I was more popular than another individual. I ran a faster 100 yard dash than anybody else. He couldn't say I gave the best socials. I was the best cook. He couldn't say I was most popular in my class. He never claimed he could do all those through Christ.

But he did claim that he would know what joy was in his life. He did claim that he would know what peace was in his life. He did claim that he could demonstrate love in the midst of all kinds of circumstances. He did claim that he could do all those things, everything, all everything that God wanted him to do through Christ. And he did it.

And I say today that there ought to be some positive thinking in this biblical sense in our lives. For we too can do all things through Christ, as He strengthens us. Our Father, we're thankful for this time together, sealed to our hearts these contracts. May we know not simply the agony of pressure, but the joy of your presence. We pray in Christ name, Amen.