

Unstoppable Victory

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Introduction:



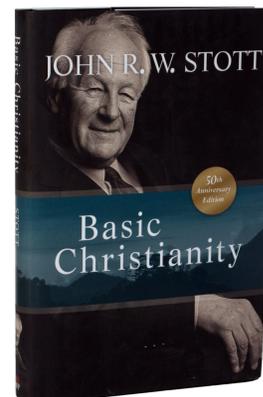
Joni Eareckson Tada has demonstrated the unstoppable victory of Christ through four decades of paralysis. Her story is epic. In her book, *A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the mysteries of Suffering, Pain and God's Sovereignty*, Joni describes her fresh battle with chronic, jaw-splitting pain. She writes, "Those long-ago and faraway days of pleading with God to raise me up on my feet and out of my wheelchair are behind me. Oh, I'm still in my wheelchair. But I'm happy. And on that level, I have been healed. Big

time. Right now the big question for me is all about pain..." Her book is a report from the front lines, a first hand account of how she is dealing with unrelenting pain. Her insights are amazing. Her Epilogue to the book written on June 24, 2010 is revealing. "Last week I was diagnosed with breast cancer. Surgery is scheduled for this coming Monday. Has it spread beyond my breast? Will my quadriplegic body be able to endure one more assault? I have so many questions, but this I know for certain: *"My hope comes from God. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken."* (Ps. 62:5-6)

Like Joni, we have so many questions. "Where is God in the midst of pain and suffering?" "If God is good, why is there suffering and evil?" And the question we address in this message, "Can we have victory in the midst of pain, suffering and loss?"

"The fact of suffering undoubtedly constitutes the single greatest challenge to the Christian faith, and has been in every generation"

- John. R. W. Stott



Scripture text:

“But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Corinthians 2:14-16 ESV)

Body:

In this passage Paul borrows an image from the Roman custom of “triumphal procession” to picture our unstoppable victory in Christ. The word Paul uses is θριαμβεύω (*thriambeúō*) a Greek word meaning, “to *display triumph openly; publicly exalting the victor who leads a victory-procession – and putting the conquered on display as totally defeated*”.

Eugene Peterson in the Message correctly translates the word-phrase, “*In Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade*”



When a Roman army won a decisive battle, a herald or runner was dispatched to Rome announcing the victory. Special incense was reserved for those occasions to be burned by the priests in the temples to their gods. If you lived in Rome and smelled that fragrance you knew that an important battle had been won and that soon there would be a victory parade in the city. The Roman Senate did this to honor the victorious Roman general and to thank their gods for the war that was won.

This victory parade could last several days and brought great joy to the citizens of Rome as they exclaimed the glories of Rome over other nations. People lined the streets in eager

anticipation. Priests led the parade swinging censers filled with incense and the fragrance of victory. The conquering general stood in a gold plated chariot drawn by white horses, dressed with a purple tunic, holding a scepter, with the crown of Jupiter held over his head. People cheered, threw garlands and confetti in the air.

But the crowds really went wild when they saw the main spectacle of the parade.

Chained to the triumphant general's chariot were the officers of the defeated army. These chained captives displayed their total defeat and absolute surrender to the Roman General. They were marched all the way to the Roman coliseum, to the jeers and cheers of the Romans, where they would meet their end.

The text does not say that we march together hand-in-hand with our Lord Jesus, but states that we march as captives, chained to his chariot being driven by Jesus our conquering general! Paul uses this loaded image of a triumphal procession to remind us that it is our absolute surrender to the Lordship of Christ that his victorious fragrance is spread throughout the world.

There are three important things about this unstoppable victory

1. **This unstoppable victory is God's triumph through His Son**

- The responsibility for victory is not mine it is God's
- Jesus Christ won the victory 2000 years ago when he died on the cross.

Paul pictures Christ's decisive and victorious death on the cross with the same Greek word used in 2 Cor. 2:14. It is only used these two times in the New Testament.

*"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by **triumphing over them** in him."* (Colossians 2:15)

- Every temptation you face tomorrow has already been overcome 2000 years ago
- Rather than surrender by faith to Christ's already won victory, we tend to grit our teeth, tense our muscles, and say, "I will win today if it kills me". It usually does.
- The David Principle for defeating giants - "The battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:47)

2. **This unstoppable victory becomes ours through surrender**

- My #1 responsibility is to make sure that every moment of every day I am living under his Lordship, chained to his chariot, surrendered unconditionally.
- The only thing that will bring blessing to others is the life of Christ in me manifesting to others



Jacob's famous wrestling match with God (Genesis 32:24-32) The fight is fixed. Jacob had been running. A man wrestles him till daybreak. The Angel asks, "what's your name"? Since he knew, why did he ask? He wasn't asking for information he was asking for a confession. Jacob. Con man, cheat, fraud, deceitful. Surrender to God by acknowledging who you are. Be honest, open with God. Say it out loud. "I am Jacob". After this act of surrender God then changed his name to Israel, prince with God.

3. **This unstoppable victory remains ours in any situation**

- There is no conceivable situation in life in which God can not give us victory

Two things about every situation.

1. He led me into it.
2. He has already overcome it.

Conclusion:

Following in the wake of his triumph. You walk on conquered ground.

"This is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith" 1 John 5:4

Nearly a decade ago, my friend Bob and his wife Charlene were driving home on Valentine's Day. A truck came into their lane and hit them head-on. They were airlifted to a hospital where doctors fought for their lives. Both of Bob's legs had to be amputated. After 3 months in adjoining hospital rooms, Charlene died. Against the better judgment of doctors, Bob briefly left the hospital to attend his wife's funeral in a wheelchair. Today, years later, my friend moves around on prosthetic legs. The ache in his heart for Charlene seldom leaves. He is sought out by people going through pain and suffering. His counsel to fellow strugglers is rich with scriptural and practical insight. He teaches a Bible class on Sunday

mornings that is life giving. After all the pain, suffering and loss, Bob still believes. His faith has held him steady in the storm. That is victory.