

How Love Is the Key to Persevering in Life and Ministry

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Introduction

Looking at Paul's Life and Ministry

His External Afflictions

His Internal Pressure and Anxiety for the Churches

The reason Paul was able to **boast** about his weakness and **be content** as he endured and persevered through severe hardships was that he experienced **the power of Christ**.

Paul knew if he boasted about his strength and endurance, he would fail in his **weakness** and quit in his **weariness**.

Living in a Broken World

- Following God's will may include suffering.
- Serving in the church includes daily pressures and anxieties.
- Satan is involved in our struggles, seeking to harass and thwart God's people from participating in his mission.
- God gives power to the faint and increases their strength.

God's Purposes in Suffering

1. God allows Satan and his schemes so we will **not be conceited** (2 Cor. 2:11; Job 1:12; Luke 22:31–32—Jesus allows Satan to sift Peter like wheat)
2. God uses suffering to make us **not rely on ourselves** (2 Cor. 1:9)
3. God uses suffering to **perfect** us in our weakness.
 - What does this look like?
 - Suffering produces: Endurance → character → hope → doesn't put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts (Rom. 5:3–5)
 - Trials test our faith → steadfastness → perfect, complete, lacking in nothing (James 1:3–4)
 - Trials test our faith → results in praise, glory, honor at the revelation of Christ + love and inexpressible joy → salvation (1 Peter 1:6–9)
4. God uses suffering as **a backdrop to experience** his love, comfort, peace, joy, and hope.

5. God also **disciplines us** as we sin in our sufferings, but he does so out of love and that we might share in his holiness (Heb. 12:10).

How Should We Respond in Our Suffering?

- God calls us to **boast in our weaknesses** so that the power of God will rest on us.
- God calls us to **be content** in our weaknesses and hardships.
- Count it all **joy** (James 1:2).
- **Rejoice** always, **pray** without ceasing, and **give thanks** in all circumstances (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Paul Was Compelled by the Love of Christ

The **power of Christ** gave Paul the **ability** to endure and persevere in both body and soul, and the **love of Christ motivated** him to live for Christ.

Let's look at five main ways that Paul experienced the love of Christ.

1. Paul was rooted and grounded in the love of Christ (Eph. 1:14–21).
2. Paul knew that suffering produced fruit through God's love (Rom. 5:1–5).
3. Paul knew nothing could separate him from the love of Christ (Rom. 8:35, 37–39).
4. Paul experienced God's love as better than life (Ps. 63:3).
5. Paul was controlled and compelled by the love of Christ to no longer live for himself. (2 Cor. 5:14–15)

Which of these aspects of the love of Christ do you find hardest to believe?

Which aspects do you long to know and experience more?

Abiding in the Love of God Is Key

Abiding is God's primary way to **commune** with him and **counteract** the impact of the fall.

Abiding in Christ was **how Paul experienced the power and love of Christ**.

Abiding in Christ means living by faith in his presence, promises, and power, resulting in the fruit of loving God and others.

We abide by meditating on, praying, and living God's Word.

Meditating on God's Word (Ps. 119:25–32)

Take a moment to write down the reality you want to hold before God.

As we read portions of Psalm 119:25–32, imagine Paul engaging his God in his suffering through this passage—then imagine yourself doing the same.

From this passage, what does God do when we meditate on his word?

What stirred in your heart as you meditated on this passage?

Praying God's Word (Ps. 119:89–96)

Imagine Paul praying these words amid his hardships—then imagine yourself doing the same.

How did God minister to you as you prayed the psalm?

What did you experience in your heart and soul as you prayed, given your reality?

Living God's Word (Ps. 119:105–112)

Again, imagine Paul, then you, meditating and praying these words as you cling to Jesus and seek to follow him by faith amid the storms of life.

How is God inviting you to *live differently* in your reality?

How is Jesus inviting you to follow him?

As you reflect on how the Lord shepherded you and stirred your heart, how did you experience the love of Christ?

In Closing

Abiding in God's presence, promises, and power:

- Frees you to boast about your weakness as you experience the power of Christ, which will sustain you in ministry.
- Leads you to abide in the love of Christ, which compels you to endure and persevere through the many hardships.

Like Paul, the power of Christ gives you the ability to endure and persevere in both body and soul, and the love of Christ motivates you to live for Christ.