

Hold on because He has hold of you!

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Today I would like to focus on Paul's tenacity and resilience in the face of constant trial and struggle, and how we can learn from his example.

Paul's sufferings

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches (2 Corinthians 11: 23b – 28).

TENACITY - *the quality or fact of being able to grip something firmly.*

The Apostle Paul possessed tenacity in spades. No amount of hardship caused him to lose his grip on his faith or the work to which he was called. But he wasn't alone in it all. He had a secret weapon, so to speak.

*At my first defence, no one stood with me, but everyone deserted me. May it not be charged against them. **But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me**, so that through me the message would be fully proclaimed, and all the Gentiles would hear it. So, I was delivered from the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will rescue me from every evil action and bring me safely into His heavenly kingdom. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen (2 Timothy 4:16-18).*

1. Paul was confident that the Lord was with Him, would strengthen him, would rescue him, and take him into heaven at the right time (v 17, 18).

His relationship with the Lord is what sustained Him. *The LORD is the **stronghold** of my life— of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps 27:1).*

For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you (Isaiah 41:43).

Hold on because He has hold of you.

2. He believed God would accomplish His work in and through His life (v 17).

Whatever happened to Paul, he kept bouncing back (Resilience. I.e., Greg's Impatiens; Bounce back clown toys). He could not be stopped. Even from prison (confinement) he ministered, writing the letters we now read. And he told everyone the gospel (I.e., the Pretorian guard, and fellow inmates).

And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns (Phil 1:6 NLT).

3. He trusted in the power of God's Word (Isaiah 55:11).

He was chained, but he understood that the Word of God was not chained (2 Tim 2:9).

It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it (Isaiah 55:11).

And you won't find Paul believing and speaking contrary to God's Word.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) (Hebrews 10:23 KJV)

4. He knew the grace of God was sufficient.

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me (2 Cor 12:9 NIV).

5 things not to lose a grip on. (Hold on to them. Don't let them go).

1. Your relationship with Christ – our fellowship with him - prayer - the Word).
2. Your call. Whatever our circumstance or confinement, God will fulfil it.
3. The Word. Stand on the Promises of God – don't let them go – trust in them.
4. Trust that God's grace **is** enough.
5. Your passion. Paul was passionate about Christ and the work of the ministry.