

God revoked the sentence

2 Corinthians 1:3-4; 8-10 - ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

⁸ For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, ¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,

A bit of context: Paul concludes the first letter to the Corinthians with a note of victory: God had opened a great and effective door to the Gospel in Ephesus. As Acts 19 describes, in two years only, the whole of Asia Minor heard the Gospel. God was doing unusual miracles and countless people abandoned the worship of idols and started to follow Jesus. During these two years, the 7 churches of Revelation were planted, as well as other churches.

Paul was very old by now, but these were the most fruitful days of his ministry. He was standing on his dream and the calling of God for his life.

However, now, at the peak of his ministry, in the midst of immeasurable success, he was suddenly faced with pressure above his strength, persecution, the desertion of key leaders and imprisonment. Suddenly it was as if all his dreams, all his work, and his own life received a **death sentence**.

Verse 9 - Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves

- Have you ever been faced with more pressure than you can handle? – something above your strength and ability
- Have you ever felt as if some part of your life has been put on death row – maybe your marriage, your ministry, your finances, your career...?

Paul said in **verse 8**: “we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia”

That is a good indicator that God wants us to learn something about this. We don't need to be ignorant of the devil's devices, about trials and tribulations, about pressures that come to all of us – about ‘death sentences’ pronounced upon your dreams. Here's one very powerful truth we can learn:

The verdict of circumstances is never final!

1. Not when Jesus is your Advocate (1 John 2:1)

Isaiah 51:22a - Thus says your Lord, The Lord and your God, who pleads the cause of His people...

Jeremiah 50:34a - *Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is His name. He will thoroughly plead their case ...*

Romans 8:34 - *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

2. Not when you have an appeal

In a court of law, it takes proceedings, hearings, witnesses, deliberations, it takes a lot before a sentence is finally pronounced. This is so in the assumption that such a sentence is thorough and then final and irreversible... unless of course there is a higher instance, a higher court of appeal.

We have the highest of instances in our God! – in Him we can always present our appeal. He is the Alpha and the Omega, He has the first and the Last word. He is our highest instance!

- His mercy triumphs over any verdict
Verse 3 – *the father of mercies*

When the verdict of circumstances says ‘sentence of death’ it is great to know that our God is the Father of mercies. His mercy triumphs over judgement.

- His jurisdiction is unlimited
Verse 9: *Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in **God who raises the dead***

If God raises the dead is there anything that He cannot do? He can reverse any curse and revoke any sentence. He has all the power to bring anything from death row to life.

3. Not when a ‘precedent’ has been established

The verdict of circumstances is not final when you have an advocate like Jesus, a judge like God and when there is already a precedent of blessing, set beforehand.

Normally a court decision is set or determined by the existence of a precedent decision in a similar case.

Verse 10: [God] *who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.*

He *delivered us* – he has already set a precedent! – every future situation will have to follow what He has done in the past.

Look at **2:14:** ¹⁴ *Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.*

2 Timothy 4:16-18 - ¹⁶ *At my first defence no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.* ¹⁷ *But the Lord stood with me [He is our Advocate] and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through*

me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also, I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion [another death sentence revoked]. ¹⁸ And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!

Paul knew that God would deliver him in the future because that is what He did in the past.

Here's what David said:

1 Samuel 17:37 - *Moreover David said, "The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."* ...

Conclusion:

Paul left us with an inspiring lesson on how we can win even when we are "*burdened beyond measure, above strength*", even when it feels like a death sentence has been pronounced against us.

Remember:

The verdict of circumstances is not final:

- **Jesus is your Advocate,**
- **God is your appeal**
- **A precedent of blessing has already been set**

All that is left for you and me to do is simply to

- a) Bless the Lord in the trial

Paul starts his account of his trials by saying in **verse 3**: "*Blessed be the God and Father...*". That specific word in Greek (*eulogeo*) means "*to celebrate with praises with desire for His glory*" (according to Vines' dictionary).

- b) Trust God

Verse 9: *Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not **trust** in ourselves but in God who raises the dead*