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Winter 2024  
Owning a Faith that Matters

**Sermon Title:** Expressing Confidence  
**To be used with Session 5:** Confident Faith  
**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

**Connection with Bible Study:** This sermon will complement the Bible study “Confident Faith” by considering Paul’s testimony that desperate times forced him to turn from trusting himself and fully trusting God.

## **Introduction**

One of Job’s so-called friends made the remark that “humans are born for trouble as surely as sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). Most of us would absolutely agree; troubles are a part of life. Biblical history and secular history chronicle continuously the variety of troubles that people face. To be alive is to face inevitable trouble. Because we are fallen (sinful) people who live in a fallen (sinful) world, trouble will visit us all. The key thing is not that we have trouble in life; it is how we allow those troubles to impact our journey of faith.

The Apostle Paul knew more than his share of troubles. The narrative of his life and missionary journeys in the book of Acts relates a long list of troubles that Paul faced. He spoke of these in his writings on numerous occasions. In his own words in 2 Corinthians 1, Paul spoke of three things facts about trouble.

## **Trouble can lead us to despair (2 Cor. 1:8)**

The verses we are considering in today’s message come out of the larger context of the fact that when we go through trouble, we can be assured of God’s comfort in the midst of it all. We, in turn, can use our experience of God’s comfort to bring that same comfort to others as they face trouble.

As Paul spoke of the afflictions and sufferings he faced in life, he focused attention on one specific instance that happened while he was in Asia or what we know as modern-day Turkey. Evidently those to whom Paul was writing were familiar with the situation because Paul didn’t give details on this. Such an omission has frustrated Bible scholars for centuries and led to much speculation as to what Paul was talking about. Needless to say, the troubles that Paul faced had the result of leading him to great despair. He described his emotions using words like “completely overwhelmed,” “beyond our strength,” “despaired of life,” and “received the death sentence.”

Fact number one about trouble is that it can lead us to utter despair—if we let it. However, good can come out of despair. That’s what Paul found.

## **Trouble can lead to a new perspective (2 Cor. 1:9)**

Because of the despair that Paul felt, he gained a whole new perspective. As Paul contemplated all that he was going through, he learned an important truth. He discovered that he could no longer depend on his own strength and abilities to overcome the troubles he faced. Instead, Paul told us, “as a result, we stopped relying on ourselves and learned to rely only on God” (1 Cor. 1:9, NLT). That is a perspective we all need to internalize. Jesus Himself told us that “apart from Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).”

Unfortunately, this is a hard lesson to learn. Most of us must suffer great difficulty before we learn the truth that I can’t do it on my own. We could avoid a lot of pain and heartache if we would daily surrender control of our lives to Jesus Christ and lean heavily on him.

### **Trouble can lead to dependence on God (2 Cor. 1:9-11)**

When Paul declared his complete dependence on God, he gave an incredible reason why he would do so: God is in the business of raising the dead. In other words, God has demonstrated His incredible power by doing the impossible: raising Jesus from the dead. If God can raise the dead, then there is nothing we are facing that God can’t give us the power to go through. We don’t have the power, but God certainly does.

Paul gave the testimony that God could deliver him in times of trouble time and time again. He was certain that troubles would continue to come in his life. He was also certain that God could and would bear him through whatever he faced. This is the testimony that each of us ought to have on our lips continually. I’m not depending on myself. Instead, I am leaning heavily on God.

### **Conclusion**

When troubles come in life, we all have a choice. We can worry and fret; we can fight and push against the challenges; we can give up in despair and sink into depression. Or we can follow the example of the Apostle Paul on his journey of faith. He recognized that his best approach was to place his undying trust in the God of the resurrection. Our God raises the dead, and He can raise your dying dreams, He can raise your devastated marriage, He can raise your finances from ruin. He is the Almighty God who can do all things. He is the God who loves you and loves to care for you like a Father. Choose today to stop relying on yourself and learn to rely only on God.

*Dr. Sam Crouch is retired after 52 years in ministry. Sam was educated at Baylor University and Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife live in Tucson, Arizona where Sam enjoys writing, reading, yardwork, and cats. His latest book is [Clearing the Fog: Gaining an Understanding and Appreciation of the Old Testament](#).*