

## How Can I Be Positive In Times Like This?

Are you finding it hard to be positive and optimistic these days?

Let me tell you about a remarkably positive man you may have never heard about, as he lived about 400 years ago in another part of the world and is mainly known by those who like Lutheran hymns, since he wrote a bunch of them.

Paul Gerhardt was a Lutheran pastor in the mid 1600s in Germany, and he did not experience the kind of circumstances in his life that anyone would call positive. The Thirty Years War ravaged Germany during his childhood and into his adult life. His family home and church were both destroyed in the war. He lost four children in infancy because of disease. He lost his church when he refused to compromise his beliefs at the demands of the government. He went for a year without a paycheck. A year after that, his wife died, leaving him to raise the one son who had survived the epidemic alone.

Now your life may not be as marked by tragedy and hardship like Paul Gerhardt's, but it is still hard. And not just due to the fallout from the coronavirus. Maybe your marriage isn't great, and there are problems in your family. Maybe your job is mentally, emotionally, or physically draining. Maybe you have serious health problems you are dealing with, or you are just getting old. Maybe you never seem to catch a break, or your dreams routinely turn into disappointment. Maybe you are disappointed in yourself, and you realize God should be the one really disappointed in you and your sins.

Paul Gerhardt realized that his sin was actually his biggest problem, because it meant that he had not right to expect anything from the God he had failed except eternal punishment in hell. So what made him so positive? The fact that God loved him anyway. That in love for him, God had sent his Son to die for his sins and rise again; all so that Paul could know God loves him and had forgiven him and would take him to heaven.

God loves you and sent his Son for you and your salvation too. So even in these hard times, find your reason for hope and optimism in Jesus Christ, so you can say with Paul Gerhardt:

Why should cross and trial grieve me?  
Christ is near with his cheer; never will he leave me.  
Who can rob me of the heaven  
That God's Son for me won When his life was given?

When life's troubles rise to meet me,  
Though their weight may be great They will not defeat me.  
God, my loving Savior, sees them;  
He who knows all my woes Knows how best to end them.

Since I know God never fails me,  
In his voice, I'll rejoice When grim death assails me.  
Trusting in my Savior's merit,  
Safe at last, troubles past, I shall heaven inherit!