

2 Corinthians 2.12-17 “Even Benchwarmers Get a Championship Ring!”



Paul had Very TESTY Relationship with the Church in Corinth

One of PAINFUL SIGNS of Lack of Forgiveness > Dragging Up Past Infractions

RETURN to Paul's Discussion of TRAVEL PLANS > LOVE for Corinthians

TRIED to COOL FIRE with LETTER to church > But Letter like GAS on FIRE!

For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.
2 Corinthians 2.4

Letter sent by TITUS > GENTILE GREEK apparently LIKED by Corinthians

Paul EAGER to Hear their RESPONSE > Longs for RECONCILIATION

When “Great is Artimus of the Ephesians” CHANT got too HOT, Paul left Town
From EPHESUS Paul traveled NORTH to TROAS, Place saw Macedonian Man
Paul was MULTI-TASKING Waiting for Report from Corinth / Church Planting

1. The heart of man plans his way...

a. Door of Service

v. 12 When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ even though a door was opened for me in the Lord...

Paul COULD RECOGNIZE a FRUITFUL FIELD for Ministry...

When he went to EPHESUS he SAW...

a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries
1 Corinthians 16.9

When I have MANY ADVERSARIES – Interpret that as TIME TO LEAVE!

For PAUL – MORE the Adversaries, WIDER the Lord was OPENING Door

NOTHING Worse than PASSIVE REACTION to the GOSPEL “that’s nice!”

HOLY SPIRIT is Using Word > He convicts Sin, Righteousness, Judgment

NO Conflict – No Conviction of Sin – GUILT has NOT Gotten under SKIN

SAUL of Tarsus > ANGRY AGITATION led to Surrender to the SAVIOR

Paul...came to Ephesus...And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Acts 19.8-10

It is GOD, not Man who OPENS Doors, Not for the Preacher, but the PEOPLE

Jesus told Church in PHILADELPHIA

Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut.

Revelation 3.8

“the opening of the door for Paul at Troas is a most manifest demonstration that even the very beginning of faith is a gift of God”

Augustine

DOOR of SERVICE was OPEN IN TROAS... BUT...b. Distress in spirit

v. 13 my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there.

Sometimes Imagine Mighty Paul as Ministry Machine – Theological Automaton

MISSING TITUS was to LOSE a BROTHER > FRIEND in Time of NEED

Last Letter WE HAVE from Paul – FINAL Imprisonment – Awaiting Execution

To Tim: As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy... Do your best to come to me soon...Do your best to come before winter.

2 Timothy 1.3,4, 4.9,21



Paul NEEDS PEOPLE and PEACE of Mind like ALL of us DO

NO Relief in his spirit > No PEACE of Mind > Deeply WORRIED

Paul's PAIN – Children of Faith in Corinth apparently BETRAYED him

FALLEN for FAKE NEWS from the Invading SUPER APOSTLES

MAP shows the LAND and SEA Routes – TROAS to CORINTH

At ONE Point in WINTER – SHIPS Stop for the Season – Seas too ROUGH

Paul Waited for LAST Ship – No Titus – HEADED for Macedonia

v. 13 So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

WHO knows what MIGHT have happened in TROAS > Door was OPEN
But Paul shows NOT Every OPEN Door is One we're Supposed to ENTER
PEACE OF GOD - NOT Guard his Heart/Mind – Distress DIRECTED him ON!

How DIFFERENT Paul was than POWER False Apostles who Invaded Corinth
He's WEAK, NEEDS PEOPLE, CAN'T MUTE Deep Concern for Corinthians

MAYBE TROAS was DISTRESS of SPIRIT Paul described in chapter 1...
the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond
our strength that we despaired of life itself. 2 Corinthians 1.8

The fact that he was so anxious about them that he had no rest anywhere, even
when a large prospect of usefulness presented itself, until he had learned how
things stood with them, argues a singular degree of attachment to the Corinthians
John Calvin

At THIS POINT in 2 Corinthians > Paul CHANGES the SUBJECT

Will NOT Discuss his TRAVEL Plans again until Ch 7 – Jumps back in...

So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.
2 Corinthians 2.13

For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies
had no rest... 2 Corinthians 7.5

Paul's BRILLIANT Mind had a WANDERING TENDENCY!

Thank God it Did – SOME of most WONDERFUL Verses of Bible in his RIFF
HOLY SPIRIT leads Ap. Paul to Great Spiritual Depths of Beauty / Wisdom

Paul lifts UP EYES of Faith from DISTRESS on Ground to DESIGN of GOD

1. The heart of man plans his way...
2. ...but the Lord establishes his steps. (Proverbs 16.9)

Things FALLING APART – No TITUS, No RESPONSE, No PEACE of Mind
 1986 landed in NARITA Airport with Pregnant Wife and Two Little Boys
 Going to SHARE with some YWAM friends in SHIN JU KU
 No Worries I had PO BOX #! In last 4 yrs in Uganda Never Called Anyone!
 Soon discovered PO BOX # Not Easiest way to Contact People in TOKYO
 Remembered professor from Covenant College there > Sent me LETTER
 Had his Phone # - Dr. Young any chance you know YWAMers in ShinJuKu?
 Sure! My Daughter goes to School w/ their Kids...here is there Phone #!!

v. 14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession

a. Conqueror who Saves

Regardless of Paul's TROUBLES in TROAS > God ADVANCES in TRIUMPH

“Behind a frowning providence he hides a smiling face” William Cowper

Paul DESCRIBES his Ministry with PICTURE of Roman Triumphal Procession

In the triumphal procession were two-horse carriages and litters laden with gold and ornaments of various kinds...the throne and scepter of Mithridates Eupator himself, and his image, eight cubits high, made of solid gold, and 75,100,000 drachmas of silver coin; an infinite number of wagons carrying arms and beaks of ships, and a multitude of captives and pirates...

Appian's description of General Pompey's victory parade in 61 B.C.

GOSPEL is ALL About Christ – Alpha & Omega – Author and Finisher of Faith

We do not fight for victory; we fight from victory...sharing in his victory...following in Christ's triumph. Warren Wiersbe

b. Confidence in Suffering

Paul **BOASTS** in the Lord to be **ONE** of Victorious General's Soldiers

BUT he was **FOREVER PAINFULLY** Aware he served by Mercy and Grace

For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.
1 Corinthians 15.9

v. 14 *He has made us his captives* and continues to lead us along in Christ's triumphal procession.
NLT

LIT: "triumph over us" – God **ADVANCES** Thru Us & **DESPITE** Us

Paul is quite capable of putting together mixed metaphors, and here we have one. He is not saying that he is being led around in triumph, but rather that, like the captives in triumphal procession, he is being treated rudely while in the service of God.
Ben Witherington III

NOT Triumphalist View of **MINISTRY** > **VICTORY** thru **SUFFERING**

In **BACK** of Procession are **CAPTIVES** – Soldiers, Slaves, Dragged from Home

Paul uses this **PICTURE** to Describe his **PAINFUL** Relations w/ Corinthians

Paul describes Self to Corinthians > **SLAVE, FOOL, WEAK, DYING MAN**

As the enemy of God's people, God had conquered Paul at his conversion call on the road to Damascus and was now leading him as a "slave of Christ," to death in Christ, in order that Paul might display or reveal the majesty, power, and glory of God, his conqueror.
Scott J. Hafemann

PARADOX of the Gospel –

Power in Weakness, Life through Death, Victory thru Weakness

I protest, brothers, by my pride in you, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day!
1 Corinthians 15.31

I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. 1 Corinthians 4.9.10

1 Corinthians 4.9	2 Corinthians 2.14
God	Thanks be to God
Exhibited last as sentenced to death	who leads us in triumphal procession
us apostles;	us in Christ
we became a spectacle	and through us reveals the fragrance of knowledge of him
to the world, that is, to angels and people	in every place

For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. 2 Corinthians 4.11,12

From justification until glorification the redeemed sinner is on display as a trophy of divine grace. But Paul is speaking more particularly of himself and his apostolic ministry...from Damascus...to his martyrdom at Rome... “in Christ” God triumphs over us and exhibits us to the world as his captives, subdued (unlike the prisoners of Rome) by the power of mercy and grace.

Philip E. Hughes

c. Commission to Speak

v. 14 and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere.

You will KNOW THEM by THEIR SMELL

We all know from those **AWKWARD Moments of GASEOUS ERUPTIONS**,
You **CANNOT HIDE Smells: OBVIOUS, EVERYWHERE, UNMISTAKABLE**

Triumphal Procession > INCENSE Burned to gods, Flower Garlands for Victors
 Sometimes they spread SPICES on Road > CRUSHED by Parade Marchers
 Knowledge of GOD was EVERYWHERE for EVERYONE > SPREADING

v. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God

AROMA is OF Christ > HE is the SWEET SAVOR, AROMA of LIFE

How DIFFERENT was this SIMPLE but PROFOUND Knowledge of God in X
 FAR More REAL than 1st C Esoteric, Mystical, Initiation Religions of SECRETS
 Knowledge of X spreads like SWEET AROMA to ALL People EVERYWHERE

v. 15 among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,

Only TWO Possible RESPONSES to the GOSPEL

NOT everyone will RECEIVE the LIFE-GIVING Aroma of JESUS

Simeon "...child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel..."

Luke 2.34

Guys in Back of Parade > LOST BATTLE & Many will SOON Lose LIVES

Some FIGHT to Death in ARENAS, Some Eaten by LIONS, Some Crucified

TOWN they're being DRAGGED Into with CHAINS Really STINKS!

HORSES sometimes ELEPHANTS, 100's SOLDIERS Not BATHED Long Time

INCENSE Not for their gods – GARLANDS of Flowers declare THEY LOST!

To whom is there the savor of death unto death unless to those who believe not,
 neither are subject to the Word of God. Irenaus

Calvin WRESTLED with the PROBLEM of the REJECTION of the Gospel...

The gospel is preached unto salvation, that is its real purpose...its accidental function must always be imputed to the depravity of men by which life is turned into death...the gospel is never preached in vain, but is effectual, leading either to life or death.

John Calvin

v. 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

GOSPEL comes from Scene of DEATH and becomes a SOURCE of LIFE

If Jesus is taken to be a dead Jew and nothing more the message about him will be rejected, and those who reject it will become as dead as they suppose Jesus to be.

C.K. Barrett

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. John 3.36

“Father, make me a crisis man. Bring those I contact to a decision. Let me not be a milepost on a single road. Make me a fork, that men must turn one way or another on facing Christ in me.”

Jim Elliot

v. 17 For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word,

FALSE Apostles looked for PROFIT and PRAISE of Men

They were FULLY CONFIDENT in Themselves > SUPER Apostles

They POLLUTED the WORD and tried to PROFIT from the Word

PEDDLE Word with TRICKS and DECEPTION

“Peddle” – Use FALSE WEIGHTS on Scales / Pour WATER in the WINE

Paul REFUSES to TAMPER with the UNVARNISHED Word of GOD

The ever-present temptation for ministers is to commend themselves on the basis of 'image'...while the minister needs gifts appropriate to his calling, let him come not in the strength of those gifts but in the power of the word of God.

Paul Barnett

v. 17 but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God

Those who HANDLE Word w/ PURITY Realize how UNWORTHY They Are
Know God's Facial Recognition Cameras ALWAYS On > Nothing to HIDE

Paul held firmly to both salvation by grace through faith and ultimate accountability for deeds. While deeds cannot get one into the kingdom, they can certainly keep one out.

Ben Witherington III

v. 17 in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

One Sunday 1988 asked to Preach NAMIREMBE Cathedral in Kampala, Uganda
INVITED to Step Up to PULPIT > Procession Bishop, Dean, Vicar, Curates
Just when KAZOO BAND was Getting Started > Stopped SIT DOWN!
Caravan Gov't Cars Screeching Up Namirembe Hill President and Family!
Great POMP God President Musevini, Wife, and kids Sitting in Front ROW
Then got word, "OK Blair, go and PREACH NOW!!..."

SPEAK IN CHRIST > Out of our UNION w/Christ > Introduce Others to HIM
AUDIENCE of ONE – He is ONE we STAND BEFORE ALL the TIME

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word
2 Timothy 4.1,2

We PREACH the Word in the PRESENCE of God and of CHRIST JESUS

v. 16 Who is sufficient for these things?

HEAVY Burden of RESPONSIBILITY in Ministry of TRIUMPHAL LORD
 Paul OVERWHELMED by POWER of God – He SAVES and DESTROYS
 PARDON of God – Why should SINNER like Me receive MERCY & GRACE
 PLAN of God – Makes ME Messenger of WORDS of Life > Opportunity!?

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars,
 which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the
 son of man that you care for him? Psalm 8.3,4

David CONSIDERED the MOST Marvelous Work of GOD he could IMAGINE
 CREATION – Heavens, Moon, Stars – SPOKEN by Powerful Word of God

NOW we see WORK of God even MORE MARVELOUS

Task Required Not just DECREE of God --- required the DEATH of God
 GOD the SON – Suffered, Died, Buried – to make us RIGHT with God Forever

Who am I Lord that I should be CROWN of Your CREATION?

Who am I Lord that I should be LOVED so much you'd give your LIFE for Me?

Who am I Lord that your BLOOD should BREAK Chains of my Sin & Death?

IN Christ we're VICTORS – CHAMPIONS – With HIM in TRIUMPH

Who is Sufficient for THESE THINGS?

I Never got into the GAME – All I did was SIT on the BENCH

Why Should a Benchwarmer like me Get wear the Championship RING?

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive
 the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of
 adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears
 witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—
 heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order
 that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8.14-17

2 Corinthians 2.¹²When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, ¹³my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. ¹⁴But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.