

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF CORINTHIANS

Second Corinthians – Chapter 2

Paul Addressing An Existing Issue

“So, until these issues were settled, I decided against paying you another painful visit. For if I brought you pain, you would be unable to bring me joy.” (vv1-2 TPT)

Paul is making it clear that until an existing issue is resolved, he would not be visiting the church in Corinth. We are not so sure what this issue is about, but Paul explained a bit of the pain and sorrow this has caused from verses 4 to 11.

“And this was the very point I made in my letter, for I didn’t want to come and find sadness filling the very ones who should give me cheer. But I’m confident that you will do what’s right so that my joyous delight will be yours.” (v3 TPT)

Verse 3 seems to suggest that Paul had written to addresses this point in a previous letter and had seriously reprimanded them (i.e. the church in Corinth) but now seek to comfort them afterwards.

Q: Do believers today handle reprimand well? How would you handle being reprimanded?

Forgiveness & Restoration

“Therefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (vv8-11)

- The reason Paul wrote the letter is stated here. To see if the church in Corinth will obey even difficult instructions in reprimanding the offender and perhaps, other things to put in place in the church there.
- Paul is stating that he is forgiving this individual to end their sorrow and possible, exclusion.
- Paul is careful to stop satan taking advantage of the situation.

Q: In what way do you think satan takes advantage of offence, reprimand, and exclusion?

Q: How do we stop satan taking advantage of us in these types of situation?

Triumph in Christ

“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. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.” (vv14-17)

Leads us in triumph in Christ

The Apostle Paul pictures Christ at the head of the victory procession, and we are following Him in triumphant celebration as the universal conqueror. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Christ is the universal conqueror marching in triumph down through the corridors of time throughout the conquered world. He is in the lead, and we, His chosen warriors march behind Him enjoying the

benefits of His conquest. Those who march along in the procession of Christ are emitting everywhere about them the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Him.

"Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ . . ." (v. 14a). God "leads us in triumph" (*triambeuo*) means to "lead in a triumphal procession someone" as a captive. Jesus Christ always causes us to triumph in life. God has triumphed over the hostile supernatural powers through Christ Jesus.

We who were God's former enemies (Rom. 5:10) have been conquered by the sovereign saving grace of God (Eph. 2:5), and taken captive by Him and as His bond slaves are led and displayed by Him before a watching world (v. 7).

Because we are "in Christ," we are in vital union with Him, and therefore are releasing everywhere we go the sweet fragrance of Christ. Moffatt translates (v. 14), "Wherever I go, thank God, He makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ." We are trophies of the victorious grace of God.

We triumph only as we abide in Christ.

What is it that I smell?

Authentic Christianity is always emitting a fragrance that is pleasing to God.

The fragrance results from knowing Jesus Christ personally. The triumph was Christ's, and because of our union with Him; wherever we are we share in it with Him. All of Paul's success was traced to Christ and his relationship with Him. "In Christ" or "in Christ Jesus" is the sphere in which we live and move and have our being. Our spiritual life is in direct contact with Him.

God "*makes known through us the fragrance that consists of the knowledge of Him in every place*" (v. 14b NET). He uses you and me to make known the fragrance of the knowledge of Himself. The knowledge of the person and saving work of Jesus Christ is spread abroad like a pervading fragrance through believers wherever they are led in the procession.

The metaphor of fragrance or perfume "suggests the penetrating strength of the revelation and the delight which it brings to those who receive it," writes Alfred Plummer. Everywhere Paul went he shared the Gospel of Christ and the effect was spiritual apprehension and recognition of its saving truth. The fragrance is Christ.

"For we are a sweet aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to the latter an odour from death to death, to former a fragrance from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?" (vv. 15, 16 NET).

The New Testament teaches the priesthood of every believer. Every Christian is a representative of Christ interceding on the behalf of lost mankind. We are His priests. As we abide in Christ, we spread the sweet fragrance of His Gospel. With sincerity, we preach Christ, and to those who are being saved it is the smell of eternal life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ brings a sweet fragrance to those who are being saved. It has the aroma of victory.

God uses us to spread the sweet fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place. Christ filled lives are "*like a lovely perfume*" (Philips).

"We are a sweet aroma" (v. 15a) or fragrance. The gospel of grace bearing its fruit in our lives is sweet fragrance to God.

In verse 14 the fragrance is the knowledge of Christ, whereas in verse 15, we are the fragrance. The thought is essentially the same because it is the gospel that Paul preached, and we preach.

"In spreading the fragrance of it, we become the fragrance of God" When we have been around Christ, we begin to smell like Him. People cannot help but sense the presence of Christ in us. In Colossians, Paul says, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

fragrance comes from Christ because He alone is the source. We are the means of spreading the knowledge of Christ. Lost sinners see the change in us, and they want to know what is that I smell about your life. What makes you different from me? We can only respond; it is Christ in me. We are the perfume Christ has produced. We are filled with Him. Christ Himself is the sweet aroma which exhales in our character and work. The life of the believer proceeds from God and the saving work of Christ. We are the bearers of the fragrance of Christ.

However, for those who reject Jesus Christ, it is a stench of death because judgment is at hand, and eternal separation from the Lord God. "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36 NET).

To the unregenerate, the death of Christ is like a deadly noxious fume that has a killing effect on them. However, to the believer in Christ it is a fragrance that gives eternal life. The preaching of the gospel brings life to some who hear it and death to others (v. 16a).

And who is sufficient for these things?

Who is adequate for such a ministry? None of us are capable in our strength. Our adequacy comes from our abiding in Christ.

When we have been around Christ, we begin to smell like Him.

Who is adequate for such responsibilities? (vv. 16b-17)

Who is sufficient for these responsibilities in preaching the gospel? What kind of minister ought we to be who preach the gospel of salvation by means of atoning sacrifice of Jesus?

No one without the sufficiency of Christ in him is competent to minister the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is only as we draw our sufficiency from God that we can proclaim the full riches of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Paul's sufficiency is found in Christ alone. Yet he balances that understanding with personal responsibility.

Paul uses an unusual word to describe those who are insincere in their ministry of God's Word. They are corrupting the Word of God by watering it down. *"For we are not like so many others, hucksters who peddle the word of God for profit, but we are speaking in Christ before God as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God"* (v. 17 NET). The word for "hucksters" comes from *kapelos* meaning implying to adulterate and is used figuratively to corrupt by mixing water with wine in order to cheat the customer. They get rid of a product for a quick profit. In the context they peddle or merchandise the Word of God for personal profit.

Paul's concern was they were peddling the Word of God for profit. They are using deception and greed to peddle their product for profit.

Paul did not adulterate the word of God by mixing it with Judaism or false philosophy of the Hellenism or the Greek mystery religions. He did not use it for any selfish purpose or to manipulate people. His methods and motives were pure.

The primary force of the word to "adulterate," "corrupt" or "peddle" here is to seek cheap gain by adulteration by whatever means to turn a profit.

"We are speaking in Christ," reminds us of our vital union in Christ. Ministry must always be done in the power that flows from a vital union with Christ as members of His Body. Jesus said, "*The one who remains in Me—and I in him—bears much fruit*" (John 15:56b NET). The only way to minister is to abide in Him.

Conclusion

This chapter can be seen in 3 parts:

1. The issue of reprimand, correction, and subsequent forgiveness and restoration.
2. Our triumph in Christ and being His fragrance everywhere we are.
3. Our responsibility to preach, teach and model the authentic gospel of Christ.