

"The Triumphant Christian" - 2 Corinthians 2:12-17 – August 28th, 2016

- The title I've chosen for today's teaching is, "The Triumphant Christian."
- I chose this title because the Apostle Paul demonstrates specific characteristics of the victorious and triumphant Christian life.
- In so doing we can take away a practical nuts and bolts application if you will, with which to apply to our own walk with the Lord.

1. The triumphant Christian follows the leading by Christ (Verses 12-13)

- v12 Paul says that when he went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ he had found that the Lord had opened a door for him.
- v13 He says because he didn't find Titus there, he had no peace of mind, so he said goodbye to them and went to Macedonia.
- This is interesting for a number of reasons not the least of which is that Paul is led to leave the open door in Troas to find Titus.
- To me, this speaks to one of the most important characteristics of a victorious and Triumphant Christian; discerning God's will.
- It's evidenced by what we we're told in verse 12 where Paul went to Troas to preach the gospel because God opened that door.
- However, while God opened the door for Paul in Troas, he did not have a peace about staying there so he goes to Macedonia.
- Here's where I'm going with this, Paul provides us with what I'll call the three-pronged template of discerning the will of God.
- The first prong is God's will is always compatible with God's Word in the sense that God never leads us contrary to scripture.
- The question becomes one of how Paul knew that the Lord had opened a door for him in Troas. Answer, to preach the gospel.
- The second prong in the template of discerning the will of God is the peace of God in the sense that there's a prevailing peace.
- I find it interesting that Paul did not have this prevailing peace when he realized that his brother Titus was not there in Troas.
- The reason I find this interesting is because often times, God will confirm His will by way of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- One of the things I'm learning in my walk with the Lord is the paramount importance of not moving forward absent this peace.
- By that I mean, I'm learning how to obey that pause or that check that God gives me by disrupting and disturbing that peace.
- I always regret decisions when I didn't possess that peace, and conversely I never regret decisions when I do possess peace.
- This brings us to the third prong in our template, which is that of God's providence along with God's Word and God's peace.
- There are those times when God will orchestrate the circumstances and choreograph the steps to lead us through open doors.
- In my own personal experience, I've had God close one door only to open up another door for both my protection and direction.

2. The triumphant Christian has the pleasing aroma of Christ (Verses 14-15)

- v14 Paul thanks God who always leads us as Christ's captives in triumphal procession as we spread His aroma everywhere.
- v15 He says we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ both among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.
- In order to better understand what Paul is saying, we need to know a little bit about the ancient Roman triumphal procession.

F.B. Meyer of this wrote, "The idea is borrowed from an ancient Roman triumph, which to the eyes of the world of that day was the most glorious spectacle which the imagination could conceive."

One commentator described the procession this way, "When a Roman general went into battle and killed five thousand or more of the enemy as he secured new territory for Rome, upon his return, he rode in a chariot, followed by his soldiers marching in all of their glory. Behind the soldiers were the men who had been taken captive. Alongside the procession, priests would walk, swinging their incense pots to create a sweet smell of victory as the entire procession made its way through the main thoroughfare to the Circus Maximus, where, for the entertainment of the crowd, the captives would do battle against wild beasts."

- With this understanding, Paul's use of this procession now makes sense, such that, Jesus is the victorious conquering general.
- It seems that Paul sees himself as a priest of sorts, who would walk alongside the procession swinging the aromatic incense.
- What's interesting about this is that our sense of smell is one of the most powerful of the senses because it triggers memories.
- Actually Paul mentions this in the next verse as we'll see, concerning the aroma that brings death and the aroma bringing life.
- To the Romans it brought memories of victory, whereas the same scent brought horrifying memories of death to the captives.
- This explains why it is that non-Christians don't want to be around you. You're aroma is a reminder of their sinful lifestyle.

Again, F.B. Meyer said it best, "Thus the apostle wished that his life might be a sweet perfume, floating on the air, reminding me, and above all reminding God, of Christ. ...A sweet savor of Christ! It does not consist so much in what we do, but in our manner of doing it; not so much in our words or deeds, as in an indefinable sweetness, tenderness, courtesy, unselfishness, and desire to please others to their edification. It is the breath and fragrance of a life hidden with Christ in God, and deriving its aroma from fellowship with Him. Wrap the habits of your soul in the sweet lavender of your Lord's character."

3. The triumphant Christian possesses sincerity in Christ (Verses 16-17)

- v16 Paul says we are an aroma bringing death to one and an aroma that brings life to another, but whose equal to such a task.
- v17 He then says unlike so many, we don't peddle the word of God for profit, on the contrary, we speak with sincerity in Christ.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the greatest characteristics of a Christian walking in victory, this would be it.
- Simply put, a triumphant Christian is a genuine and sincere Christian, just as a defeated Christian is a disingenuous Christian.
- Whether it's the pastor in the pulpit or the Christian in the pew, sincerity is the gauge by which to measure the degree of victory.
- I'll close by answering the question Paul rhetorically asks in verse 16; only those sincere in Christ are sufficient for such a task.