

The Defeated Ministry
Allendale Baptist Church | January 1, 2023

Introduction

It might sound funny but moving to Florida was the hardest decision we've ever made.

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Compelled by the mission to reach all of Jacksonville with all of Jesus for all of life.

I'm the College & Career Reach Pastor.

-College & Career

-Sunday School, life groups, hangouts, campus ministry

-Singles

-Evangelism Taskforce

Area Ministry Director of Florida.

The kids are making lots of friends [PHOTO]

We have strong unity among the pastors and want to disciple from children through adulthood.
[PHOTO]

Leading a team at camp [PHOTO]

Baptisms [PHOTO]

Prayer

[EMPTY SLIDE]

Psalm 17:6-7:

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;

Incline your ear to me; hear my words.

Wondrously show your steadfast love,

O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

[PRAY]

Introduction to the Sermon

As we made the decision to move to Florida to serve at First Baptist Church, I was forced to think and assess my ministry according to the word of God.

2 Corinthians has been a focus.

You see so much of the Apostle Paul's heart as a minister and he spends much time describing the heart of ministry and the power behind ministry.

Paul's example and Paul's words applies to all of us and not just pastors.

-Paul was not just a pastor but an Apostle.

These words matter because they are meant to impact all of us.

All of us are ministers (Ephesians 4).

-We are all ministers because we all interact with people.

-Family

-Co-workers

-Neighbors

-Friends

-Classmates

-Teachers

-Teammates

We will make 4 observations about ministry and apply each of those to our lives.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13

When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, 13 my 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.

1) A minister has deep friendships.

Titus had been sent to Corinth and was supposed to meet with Paul **in Troas** so that Paul could receive an update on how things were going with the church.

-Paul would have arrived in Troas, and in that time, the natural thing to do when traveling was to go to the community of people who had the same faith as you. Jews would go to the synagogues and Christians would find Christian communities. That way you had people

you could dine with (because you didn't dine with people from other religions) and potentially a lodging if you didn't have lodging set up already.

-So Paul would have been going to Christian homes and inns asking about Titus, and to his dismay, no one has seen him.

Paul was anxious to see Titus for two reasons: (1) He was eager to hear Titus' report from the Corinthians because of his great care for the Corinthian church, and (2) because he probably feared for Titus' safety.

Even though Paul's ministry in Troas was fruitful, his heart was burdened by worry for Titus.

-Paul was as human as you and I, and worried about his friends.

-This is a very human moment where you see how dear Titus was to Paul.

-If we truly love the church, there should be people who are very dear to us.

Paul moved onto Macedonia to search for Titus.

-Troas is the Port City in Asia (part of Modern Turkey) and from there you would sail to Macedonia (modern Greece) and walk from that port to Corinth.

-Since Titus was not yet at Troas, Paul went over to Macedonia to try to find him or find out what became of him.

Application: Build deep relationships in the church.

We're getting worse at this.

-Social Media

-Video Games

-Netflix and movie streaming

-Online shopping

We've traded relationships for cheap entertainment.

You don't have to be a social butterfly, but you do need friends.

Jesus said "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

-to shun friendships is to shun love. To deny friendships is to deny others of love.

Friendships take time and effort, but all the best things in life do.

-And at this point, Paul's presses pause on his story. We will not return to hear what happens next until chapter 7.

So what does Paul do between Chapter 2 and Chapter 7? He goes on a 5-chapter rabbit trail.

-So Paul puts hold on his story to point something out, and what he wants to point out is very important.

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

14 But 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. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? 17 For 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.

2) A minister is happy to be defeated by Jesus.

[EXPLAIN ROMAN TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION]

- The Emperor would lead a triumphal procession (Jesus is the emperor in this picture).
- A triumphal procession led the conquered who were now slaves of the king.
- It was humiliating for the conquered to march for the emperor. It was a celebration for the victor and humiliating for those defeated.
- [Imagine it, your loved ones are killed and you have to march for your conqueror]
- Government officials usually praised their gods for the victory.
- Here, Paul is the conquered one and he is offering praises!
- In this case it is a celebration for both Christ and those he conquered (including Paul).

This attitude was foolishness in the Roman world.

But the foolishness of man is the wisdom of God.

In the kingdom of God, victory comes through defeat. Life comes through death. Jesus defeated sin and death by dying.

In our lives too, we find life by dying. Our old self has died, and a new has come. When we give up and surrender to Christ, that's when we find victory.

Application: Being defeated by Jesus is good news for failures.

Application: Real power comes from defeat.

- Power over sin
- Power to make a difference

3) A minister smells like Christ.

and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.

Why is incense used in so many religions? Well in the ancient world, it helped set the tone and the mood (just like a restaurant uses music). The incense was representative of the ethereal, yet real presence of God. It was used as a symbol of God's presence.

Triumphal processions included the burning of **incense** to offset the smell of death from the battle and resulting burning of bodies.

And here, believers are the incense of God.

Paul and the believers (including us today) are also the incense of Christ's triumphal procession.

-When people see us, former enemies of Christ now marching with Christ, to some that is the aroma of life, and to others the aroma of death.

-I think that's in part why some people hate Christians. Some people don't like that we are following Christ because that sign bodes ill for them. They don't want to be on Christ's side, so they hate to see the power of Christ at work.

-But to others, Christ's work in our life will spark a desire for Christ to work in their life. Christ loves to make his greatness known through us and draw people to himself.

Application: Smell like Jesus

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

2Cor. 3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you, or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. 3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4) A minister is known by their love for people.

Letters of recommendation were very important in that era. It helped you to secure lodging. It helped you show your value in a trade or skill. And even speakers would use them

The False teachers would come in with letters of commendation showing how intelligent, insightful, and spiritual they were.

-This was one of their tactics to show their “authenticity” and their value.

Paul doesn't find their letters of commendation all that impressive. For his letter of commendation is the Corinthians themselves!

They wouldn't be a church without the ministry of Paul and his disciples.

The work of the Spirit in creating the church in Corinth and the fruit that followed was a testament to the legitimacy and authority of Paul.

His commendation was not one of stone tablets, but of human hearts transformed by the gospel.

He is alluding to the Old Testament where it is promised that they would receive a better and new covenant, not written on tablets of stone but on the human heart.

And Paul is alluding to this superior reality in his recommendation, not one on a tablet, but as seen in their hearts.

Application: This church (and every church) will be measured by its love for people.

For us here today, the greatest evidence of our ministry is not going to be in physical tablets of stone, but in the hearts of people.

-Your greatest legacy will be people (not accomplishments).

-This church's greatest legacy will be people (not its building).

When I was a part of the building committee, one of my tasks was to create a history of the church for the capital campaign.

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The public history largely follows location and building.

But our greatest legacy will be human hearts brought to life by Jesus Christ.

Prayer