

**“The Unimpressive, Rather Simple, Grace Dependent, Apostle Paul”**

**2 Cor. 1:12-2:17, Rev. Josh Desch**

1. Paul's Boast (1:12-14)
2. Paul's Delay (1:15-22)
3. Paul's Reason (1:23-2:5)
4. Paul's Admonition (2:6-11)
5. Paul's Signature Smell (2:12-17)

- *What would it be like to meet the Apostle Paul today? What would we think of him? What would our impression of him be?*
- *Did you watch the Super Bowl halftime show?*

**Paul's Boast (1:12-14)**

- We would not find Paul to be an impressive figure by the standards of the world.
- A boast should be judged by what one is boasting in. “To boast is by no means a bad thing if the object of one's boasting is not oneself, but God” (ESV SB, pg. 2224).
- What do people normally boast in? Ask yourself that. It's not what Paul boasts in.

**Paul's Delay (1:15-22)**

- Here Paul says that he did in fact intend to come and visit the Corinthians on his way to Macedonia. And in explaining why he changed his plans, he defends both his ministry and the promises of God in Christ.
- He says he does not make his plans according to the flesh, talking out of both sides of his mouth. Rather, if Paul changes his plans, it's because he has a good reason. It's not because he forgot, or that his word doesn't matter. Rather, the reason is that Paul decided that there was a more important reason for him to not go to Corinth than to go.
- So Paul says, I had a very good reason to not come and visit you. Let me explain myself.

**Paul's Reason (1:23-2:5)**

- Paul may have been diminutive; he may have lacked eloquence; he may have been unimpressive to look at. If we saw how Paul looked today, we would probably think he was a homeless person. But don't mistake that to mean that Paul wasn't a strong leader.
- The Protestant Reformers said that there are 3 marks for a true church of Jesus Christ. They are these: 1) That the Bible is preached, and believed to be the Word of God. 2) That the sacraments are rightly practiced. 3) And that a church practices church discipline. *How much do you know about church discipline?* Church discipline means that if someone is living in open sin, the elders step in and call that person to repent. In addition to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, the primary text we use as a basis for church discipline is Matthew 18.
- Paul doesn't go to Corinth right away. He wants to give them more time to get their house in order. He didn't want to crush the Corinthians.

**Paul's Admonition (2:6-11)**

- Paul's change of plans worked out. The church did the hard thing, which was the right thing. We don't know exactly what the 'punishment by the majority means', but most think it means excommunication, removal from fellowship and the sacraments.
- It's almost like as a parent when you say to your kids, "I'm not going to get you out of the situation" . . . Paul helped them mature. He helped them grow up.
- In the church of Jesus, judgment never has to be the end of the road. Mercy is always available to the one who will repent. So now Paul needs to make sure that the Corinthians understand the other side of the coin too. Don't destroy a person, or Satan gets the victory in another way.

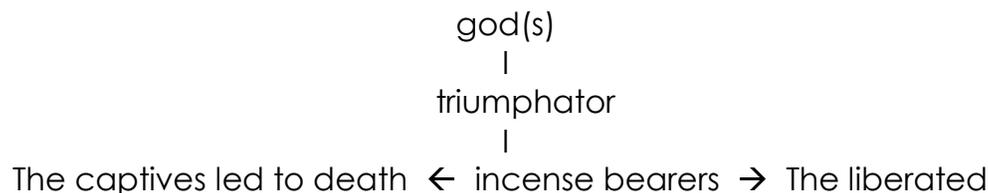
**Paul's Signature Smell (2:12-17)**

- Two possibilities with the Aroma metaphor. 1) The OT sacrifices 2) The aroma that was spread during a military procession. The second option is probably right (see below).
- You are not sufficient, but Jesus is. You are not qualified, but Jesus is!
- Paul's concern was always with the purity of the gospel. He knew he couldn't control the response of people to the gospel. His life was about people hearing that message.
- What does God want of us? To imitate Paul, to conduct our lives with simplicity and godly sincerity. We are to act as "men and women of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ" as Paul says to close our passage.
- And we can take comfort, because we already more than conquerors through him who loved us. Jesus is leading us in triumphal procession. We are on the victory march.

**Roman Triumphal Procession and Authentic Christian Ministry Compared**

Donald Guthrie, 2 Cor. (Baker, 2015, pg. 173)

Triumphal-Procession Metaphor



2 Cor. 2:14-16a Message

