

2 Corinthians: Encouragement in Troubling Times
"Battling Discouragement" Pt. 2, # 7
2 Cor. 2:14b-17
5-29-16 Sun AM

We often get discouraged and disheartened by the trials and hardship of living in these fallen bodies in a fallen world.

You have trials and hardships that trouble you and leave you hard pressed, discouraged, and disheartened. You might be ready to give up- but don't lose heart!

We also live in a world gone mad. Jesus told us that lawlessness would abound and the spirit of the antichrist would increase. When He comes it will be like the days of Noah.

Paul was certainly no stranger to discouragement and disappointment. Note the word "*no rest for my spirit*" [v. 13a]. Paul had no peace because of the turmoil and discontent in his heart.

1. He had not located his friend Titus [v. 12].
2. Hardships and suffering in the ministry (2 Cor. 11:23-27).
3. The cares of the church (2 Cor. 11:28).
4. Problems at the carnal church at Corinth.

It was the church at Corinth that caused Paul the most discouragement and disappointment immaturity, shallowness, sin, indifference, selfishness, rebellion against his apostolic authority, feuds and fusses, pride and misuse of spiritual gifts. Don't forget the false apostles.

This was a dark hour in the Apostles life. He was battling discouragement, possible depression, and death.

Something needed to happen...1500 pastors leave the Pastoral ministry each month. Their own hardships compounded by the cares of the church weight heavy on them.

Remember that Paul got his spiritual balance back between v. 13 and v. 14 when He looked to Christ and realized he was in a triumph led by Christ.

TT- I want to share four privileges we have because we follow Christ in triumph.

I. We are Led by a Sovereign Lord (2:14a).

NKJ says, "Now thanks be to God who always causes [leads] us.

If we are to be victorious over discouragement and trials, we must understand we are following a Sovereign Lord. **God always leads** believers through every circumstance in life.

God is in control!!! We have a choice when faced with trials and hardships. We can understand we are being led by a sovereign God or we can fret and worry.

II. We Are Promised Victory (v. 14b). "to triumph in Christ"

Just like the conquering Roman general leading in victory, Christ leads in triumph over sin, death, and hell. The believer's ultimate triumph is certain.

I. We are Led by a Sovereign Lord (2:14a).

II. We Are Promised Victory (v. 14b).

III. We Have Influence for Christ (2:14c).

Remember the sweet aroma the incense censers carried by the priests in the Roman triumph and the flowers thrown in the streets?

Paul says this, "God in grace manifests through believers [us] the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Christ in every place." We give off the fragrance of the gospel.

The focus is not on us, we are just containers of the gospel. The focus is Christ and the gospel. The issue is not success but privilege so why get discouraged?

- I. We are Led by a Sovereign Lord (2:14a).**
- II. We Are Promised Victory (v. 14b).**
- III. We Have Influence for Christ (2:14c).**
- IV. We Can Please God in Christ (2:15-16).**

Paul likens our ministry to a fragrance of Christ unto God. The sweet aroma of Christ is manifest to people and the gospel ascends to the very throne of God.

To those who are lost it is an aroma of death unto death. To those who are saved it is an aroma of life unto life.

Interestingly, in the Roman triumph both the victors and the conquered smelled the same aroma.

Paul found his way out of discouragement by focusing on his privileges rather than his problems.