

LIVING THE CHRISTLIFE
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Our Sufficiency in Christ
2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

¹² 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.

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.

³ 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 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

—2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6 (ESV)

v 12 – “When I came to Troas...”

Apparently referring to Paul’s Third Journey, following his departure from Ephesus
We do not have further details about this particular visit to Troas

The broader context here is that the apostle is writing about plans that had not gone as originally intended—including plans to have already re-visited Corinth.

Possibly the intention referenced in Acts 19:21-22, with Timothy and Erastus sent on ahead: Now after these events [the great success of the Gospel in Ephesus] Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

After being in Ephesus more than two years, and following the great Christian movement there came great trouble—stirred up by Demetrius and others. (Acts 19:23 ff)

Following the turmoil, Paul made the decision to depart for Macedonia. In order to get to Macedonia (Acts 20:1), Paul would have gone by land to Troas and set sail from there. It was here that he apparently expected to find Titus but did not.

Even though an invitation—an opportunity—in the Lord to stay and minister in Troas was presented, Paul had no rest in his spirit because of concern for his brother, Titus.

We might say he did not “have a peace about it.”

Trouble in Ephesus... now some anxiety in Troas about Titus, who was dear to Paul, this is “where things were.”

v 14 – “But thanks by to God...”!

This is the transition point

Circumstances seemed entirely against Paul, things were not going as he had hoped or as he had planned

But he had learned, he had experienced, *and* he could state by faith

“who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession...”!

More lit. “The One always leading us in triumph in Christ”

Always – not sometimes—God’s victory is absolute and eternal

“leading in triumph” – [one word in the Greek] it is

ongoing and

a victor’s parade – something well known in the Roman world

The victory is not a personal, self-centered victory—although the blessing to ourselves is more than anything else could ever be

It is the victory of Christ and His kingdom—and we get to share in His victory

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”—Rev. 11:15

“and” – continuing the thought

“the fragrance of the knowledge of Him making known through us in every place!”

A part of this victory is the Christ is using the apostles in this way—making known the

“fragrance of the knowledge of Him”!—this, irrespective of whether their lives, at

any given moment, were hard or easy, according to their plans and expectations or not

We have to understand the victory to celebrate the victory and to rejoice in our role in it

“For we are a sweet perfume [*euodia*] of Christ to God to those being saved and to those perishing”

Victory does not mean all are converted—it means that Christ is represented and proclaimed

“to one indeed an odor from death to death, but to one an odor from life to life”

More than a message—it is the person of Christ Himself

Some, who currently are rejecting Christ and perishing, find only judgment and

conviction of sin in that odor, and as they continue to reject Him, go from

“death to death” – from spiritual death now to eternal death following

judgment

Those who believe in Christ, who are going from life in Him here to life

everlasting, find love and joy and hope and in His presence

This—bearing the fragrance of Christ—is the charge to those who are His—and to do so according to His will is victory!

“Who is sufficient for these things?”

One of Paul's most encouraging statements!

The point is—we—in ourselves—are not sufficient, and we do not have to feel or believe that we are!

v 17 – “For we are not, like so many...”

The apostles' work was more challenging because of their integrity

God's word—the message and truth of Christ—is not for sale, and God's messengers are not sent to me men-pleasers

We speak “in the sight of God”!

3:1-3 – “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?”

The apostles could point to the Corinthians themselves as their “letters of recommendation”: to their changed lives in Christ, which God had effected through the preaching and ministry of the apostles

The hand and power of God upon a life and ministry is far more authoritative and validating than humans recommending and commending one another

v 4 – “Such is the confidence...”

This is the nature of our confidence

It is through Christ unto God—not “self-confidence”

That Christ is within us and using us wherever we go

That through our ministry He changes lives—people are given new life in the Spirit

We are also not *self-sufficient*—our sufficiency is entirely from God

Sufficient to do what? – to be ministers of a *new covenant*

The *new covenant*

The new agreement, new contract, new testament

No longer of the letter [*gramma*] – no longer according to a written law [do we understand this?]

But of the Spirit – the new life given to us in Christ through His Spirit