

2 Corinthians 2:12-17

Paul mentions the city of Troas (**2 Cor 2:12**) because he is returning to the topic of his travel itinerary (**2 Cor 1:15-16**). Sadly, there were unscrupulous people in Corinth who were ready to turn to their own advantage Paul's decision to change his travel schedule. They argued that he was unworthy of the churches' trust. This left Paul with no option but to defend himself.

Summary

In 2 Corinthians 2:12-17, Paul returns to the subject of his movements and mentions his stay in Troas, concerned to allay any suspicion that whilst away from Corinth, the church and its well being were not constantly on his mind.

1. Open Door in Troas vv. 12-13

In Troas, there was an open door for Paul to preach the gospel. Even so, he could not settle and focus on his work. He was distracted with other concerns (**2 Cor 2:12-13**). An 'open door' is not enough, by itself, to guarantee that a particular course of action is in accordance with God's will. Whilst God may sometimes guide us through our circumstances, he never does so in a way that contradicts his revealed will in Scripture.

Paul had arrived at Troas expecting to find his associate, Titus, there, only to be disappointed (**2 Cor 2:13**). The apostle was so restless for news that he could not stay put and wait for Titus to return. Instead, he went to intercept him in 'Macedonia'.

In explaining all this, Paul gave the believers in Corinth a glimpse of his state of mind throughout this affair. His opponents tried to win people over to their side by projecting an image of enormous, unfailing competence. Paul, by contrast, was candid and open about his fears. He made no pretense of invincibility.

Which is better; a leader who always exudes an aura of strength, or one who is willing to reveal his weaknesses? Which of the two is more likely to rely on God?

What about other Christians? Are you willing to show your weaknesses, anxieties and fears or do you pretend to be always strong and invincible?

2. God's Victory Parade vv. 14-16

It seems that Paul's rivals portrayed him as a pathetic figure running pathetically from one defeat to the next. The problem of triumphalism is still with us.

Verse 14 shows us how Paul responded to the taunts that he was a failure. Whatever others might think of his achievements, he saw himself as part of a victory parade.

To Paul, the progress of the gospel in the world resembled a Roman triumphal processions. God, not Paul, was the victorious general leading his hosts in triumph. First century parades could not only be seen and heard; bystanders could smell them (2 Cor 2:14-16). What spoke of success and celebration to one group spoke of defeat and death to the other.

In Paul's illustration, the same scent will affect different people in different ways. 'To the one we are a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life (2 Cor 2:16). Some will be attracted, but others will be repulsed.

Paul's question, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' (2 Cor 2:16b) is a reminder that our calling as Christians is beyond us in our own strength.

3. Proper Preaching vs. 17

When Paul preached the gospel, he did not behave like a disreputable trader or a huckster (2 Cor 2:17). In Paul's day, the chief ways of watering down the gospel involved thinning it either with Jewish ceremonies or pagan ideas.

The dilution of the message of the cross is still an issue today.

Paul acted out of 'sincerity,' he spoke 'as commissioned by God' and he also spoke 'in the sight of God we speak in Christ.'

What picture do we see of Paul here?

First, he was completely transparent about himself.

His confession that his stay in Troas was marked by anxiety about Titus and the kind of report that he might bring from Corinth shows an engaging willingness to reveal his innermost fears. This is a quality worth emulating.

Secondly, note Paul's realism about the gospel and his own part in it.

It would do us good if, like Paul, we could see beyond our immediate discouragements and appreciate what is actually going on when we seek to make the gospel known. Even if the short-term results seem unrewarding, we are part of our Savior's victory parade.

At the same time, if Paul did not have grandiose delusions about his role in Christ's triumph, seeing himself at the head of the victory parade, this is a challenge to all Christians not to think more highly of themselves than they ought.

Paul was also realistic with regard to peoples reactions to the Gospel.

We are not surprised when some people are attracted to Jesus but we are sometimes taken aback when people react negatively to the Gospel.

We would do well to learn from Paul's concern to be an honest evangelist, never watering down the Gospel to make it more palatable, nor acting from dubious motives.