

# Attraction or Promotion

2 Corinthians 2:12-17

## How to Be a Good Minister - Paul's Defense of Ministry

1. A **Personal MINISTRY** - Jesus cared about the people around him - his team and his followers
2. **ALWAYS Triumphant** - He leads a host of captives
3. **Attractive IN CHRIST** - Christ is Attractive - the Rose of Sharon

1, Personal

**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.

Personal - that even though a blessing of God was on the evangelistic efforts of Paul - he had a greater concern than preaching to a new group of people - In his mind went this scenario -

- a. preaching is why I was called - woe unto me if I preach not the gospel
- b. but the immediate need was this - since Paul had written 1 Corinthians - and after having preached the gospel in Ephesus and after having a great outpouring of strife there ...he needed to find out how the Corinthians had received the letter and how they were.



He went to Troas - the departure port for Europe - the same Europe where Paul had had great success in

preaching the gospel in Macedonia - **MAP** by finding Titus - who had delivered the letter of Paul to the Corinthians. He believed in Troas he would meet up with Titus.

The rest of the story -

**5** For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. **6** But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, **7** and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. **8** For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. **9** As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us.

The story is that in the defense of Paul's ministry - he had not meant to just be harsh to show he was some kind of control freak. Paul's own defense of his ministry was wrought out of love for the believers. A massive compassion and concern for their welfare.

Paul had a personal stake in them - because he had invested himself in them.

Jesus said, where your treasure is there will your heart be also. Paul had put what he valued most in the whole world into the Corinthians. The truth of the gospel.

You see this expressed this way

**2 Corinthians 11:28** **28** And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. **29** Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant?

Paul who had fought against "the way" was now part of the way.  
What do we mean by that...  
it is the way of Jesus -

Jesus laid His life down for the church - the disciples long before Calvary - oh yes -  
He is the one who went to Samaria - dirty Samaria - just by going there Jesus' reputation among the Jews suffered - by talking to a Samaritan and a sinner woman!!!! Oh He modeled a new way of living.  
The life of love.

It is what motivates the whole of salvation - it is what God meant when He planned the plan of salvation.  
That it would be an expression of His love for the whole world.

**John 13:35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

love is the answer -  
It is the motivating factor behind who Jesus is - behind who he has always been.

The angel flew to Daniel and twice told him - Oh Daniel greatly loved!

This love of Paul was not his as an original - it is not Pauline love - it is the love of God expressed through the willing servant Paul...towards the believers in Corinth who questioned Paul's love.

It was not ethereal love either.  
It was not theoretical.  
It was personal.

Paul loved the gospel - but the gospel preaching which was his calling was put on the back burner so that Paul could not find any rest until he reached Titus - whom he also loved - so that he could get insight on how the Corinthians had received the tough letter - that dealt with so many problems - the letter of 1 Corinthians.

Paul made it his business to know.  
He could not rest in his own calling or ministry unless he had known of their welfare.

Paul had a special ministry - a large plate.  
He was busy with strategizing over where to take the gospel next.  
The gospel was important to him.  
BUT SO WERE THOSE WHO HAD BELIEVED ALREADY!  
THEY WERE IMPORTANT TOO.

We never want to lose sight of that.  
That God values individuals.

To the Galatians he put it this way  
So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

That God loves real people...do good to all - but especially those of the household of faith.  
Why is this hard? Because when we get to know someone we not only uncover their strengths but their weaknesses. And your what - disappointed.

### **Battling the Enemies of Personal Love for Believers**

You also have to battle -- what? Familiarity.  
Familiarity breeds contempt among the fleshly.

God knows our frame that we are dust - so should be about each other.

G. K. Chesterton said when he boiled life down to what he had really learned...what was so important to him...

"when it comes to life the critical things is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude."

Why did Paul open his letter to Corinth - the first letter like this?  
vs. 4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of Gd that was given you in Christ Jesus...

This was a tough letter...yet he opened it with a thanksgiving that they were saved.  
vs. 6 even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you...

Paul looked for things to be thankful for about others.  
How do you look at your brothers and sisters.

It is easy to see the flaws we all have them.

Personal Love for believers is paramount if you want to minister as Jesus ministered.

I am often brought back to the way Jesus pursued His disciples after the resurrection.

Some masters would have thrown them away because they were such a disappointment.  
Not Jesus.

Reach out Thomas - and see.  
He walked through walls to show them His great power..  
But He pursued them and implored them to believe and grow and then to minister to others.

Peter - feed my sheep -  
(why - because that is what a good shepherd does.)

Well - I want to just have a meeting where we all give our opinion....  
I want to just have a talk about Politics.

Did Jesus?

No

Did Paul?

No

Paul loved the believers and he preached the gospel.

He disciplined and evangelized in reverse order.

They, the citizens who had rejected Jesus and crucified Him - they called the 1st Church of Jerusalem - The Way

They knew from the way they acted - that they had been with Jesus.

Paul pursued Titus - into Macedonia - embarked from the port of Troas and went into Macedonia with the purpose of finding out how the believers in Corinth were faring by going to the source - Titus and been there.

We get our information on others through people who know less than the truth.

Gossip infects many churches - because it infects individual people's hearts.

Evil reports must stop.

Go to the source.

Recently some slandered some friends of mine.

They didn't come to me and say - hey - I have some questions do you know what's going on in these people?

No - they didn't ask someone who knew - because they didn't want to know.

Anger is like that.

Someone who used to be a very close friend of mine sat in this very building on Tuesday of last week and said to me - "I don't know you"

I thought - well - you didn't ask!!!

You heard things - second hand things.

You made a false judgment and broke fellowship.

Now he is mad because every 6 months or so I send him a text and say "what's up"

He said - i want peace - I said - what kind of peace - what you really want is quiet.

Jesus said - peace is reconciliation.

Peace is restored fellowship.

Oh that we would stay friends with our brothers and sisters.

Paul said seek peace and pursue it.

## **A PERSONAL MINISTRY...MODELS Christ's love....**

**2. Always Triumphant** - 14 But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession

There's gratitude again...funny how it pops up...

Thanks be to God -

We will all go through things...

Ups and downs...

Good and bad...

Tight and close fellowship and the heartbreak of broken relationships...

in the middle of the storms - in the middle of ecstasy over "Koinonia"

We are IN CHRIST - AND IN CHRIST WE ARE BEING LEAD IN A VICTORY PARADE.

think back to what Paul said at 1:10 He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. 11 You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Our assurance is this - God will always deliver us. Period  
Because in Him we are safe.  
No one can snatch us out of His hand.  
That knowledge is and leads to a Triumphant lifestyle.  
It doesn't mean we always get the victory over health issues...over disease.  
It doesn't even mean that we will survive physically.  
WE may die as a result of being Christians.

Dennis Miller was interviewed by Bill O'Reilly last week and said - "if I was a Christian right now I would ZIP IT!!! Quit talking about it - because the next big target is Christians in America - you better keep quiet if you want to live.

But so what.

Paul knew the secret.  
We always are being lead in triumphal procession.

Paul could on one hand say...I'm troubled - I didn't find rest - so I pursued the Corinthians...  
And at the same time - no matter what I win in Christ.

**Richard Pratt says it this way in the historical context of the day...**

**Paul drew upon the triumphal parades that were known throughout the Roman world. Prisoners of war were marched through the streets as fragrant perfumes filled the air. At the end of each parade, many prisoners were executed. For this reason, the smells of the parade were sweet to the victors, but they were the smell of death to the defeated.**

Who Is Already Defeated?

**Satan -**

COLOSSIANS 2:15 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.

Ephesians 4:8 SAYS GRACE WAS GIVEN TO US...BECAUSE...

When He (Christ) ascended on high He led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.

Paul received his own ministry as a grace gift.

He said of his very life which he owed in total to Christ...

**4 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.**

WE have this treasure in earthen vessels....

All that we have - our life and breath and what God has blessed us with is part of the gifts of Christ that are carried in His train - the train of His victory parade...the result of His death and burial and resurrection - a direct result of the Gospel.

We are to walk in away that reflects HIS TRIUMPH!!!

2 CORINTHIANS 2:14B and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere.

We are a city set on a hill...we have no choice - if we are saved...it leaks out of our pores.

We are a new creation in Christ.

But how can we be fragrant when we are still sinners?

Christ in you the hope of glory.

Ephesians 5:2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for

us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Attraction is what a flower is -  
There is nothing more repulsive - so repugnant as the smell of death.

If we have just our self to rely on - a self that is right now inclusive of the flesh and we continually grieve the H.S.  
and so we are not continually being filled with the Spirit....the fragrance of Christ is missing.

And...further more...Ephesians 5:2 adds something...a fragrant **offering**.  
Romans 12 says to present our bodies as living sacrifices which is spiritual worship.  
Whenever we open our mouth to sing to the Lord it is a sacrifice of praise - an offering unto the Lord.  
It isn't about impressing someone - it is of and for the KING!

That is fragrant to God.  
But it is also fragrant inherently - our very identity has been changed when we re born again.  
We are now children of His.  
We are now a new creation.  
At the middle of our beings we are changed.  
Born of the Spirit.  
Hearts alive unto God.

We still battle the old passions of the flesh...we still must work hard to renew our minds...

But we are in Christ - old things have passed away..  
The gas of death has passed!

**Illustration of death** - TIP CALL where a dead body was in a trailer for about 3-4 days in the heat.  
It wreaked of decayed flesh - death.  
You had to cover your nose.  
Why because we were alive.

To the alive death smells bad.  
Oh....

In ministry - the truth is inherently odious in one respect - because of judgment.  
The very fact of the existence of one saint - is proof that God has granted salvation.  
And if He granted salvation...then that person needed to be saved from something.

Sin is death and that is what the saint was saved from.

So His new creation-ness - is a touchstone - a witness that you need to be saved.  
That is a fragrance of death to the dying.  
It is a warning.

Humble yourself.  
Bend the knee.  
Receive the free gift.

And suddenly - you are a new creation and the gospel is made sweet.

My offering - my living sacrifice is at once like a rose and like a dead body.

That is intense - but that is what we are called to - to be witnesses of the need for salvation - to be saved from sin and the result of Christ's triumph - we are a sweet smelling savor - and the smell of death.

Fragrance in the Greek is Osme - it just means something that causes the brain to say - hey that smells....  
Good or Bad - it is used interchangeably.

But we are still in the Triumphal Procession.  
Some who are looking...who God is drawing...will see the difference.

They are coming to their senses and saying...I feel like death warmed over - and your testimony though odious makes me understand that I need Christ...and once they are born again....they are addicted to the fragrance.

To be "in Christ" is to be genuine.  
You are all born once.  
You are people.  
You are not lizards.  
You are human.

You may act reptilian...you may snap at each other...but you are still human beings.  
The image of God is marred - but it is still present.

So when you are born again - you are now not children of the devil anymore...  
YOU ARE RIGHTLY RELATED TO THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE.  
HE IS ABBA  
HE IS YOUR FATHER.  
YOU ARE FORGIVEN.  
YOU ARE PERFECT IN CHRIST.  
JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST.

Paul had grown up in Christ.  
He was a mature believer - you may be a baby - you may make too many messes. You may not always smell like Christ.  
If not grow up.

But you are not a peddler - a huckster.  
Especially of God's Word.  
You are not trying to get rich on the gospel.  
You are not those whom Peter warned about - who twist the Word of God to suit them.  
Your desire is to find out the meaning of the verse, the chapter....

Such was Paul's declaration - such was His defense.

Men and Women of Sincerity.

That in the end is attractive.  
That is something you can't fake.  
Sincerity = eilikrinea - the quality or state of being free of dissimulation - sincerity and purity of motive.

A good fragrance - an expensive and quality fragrance is costly because of its level of purity.  
If it is cheap it lasts five minutes.

Not so with Christ.

So many today - are into self promotion.

We can stumble around in that area.

But God knows the difference.

People will know too.  
So let's act like who we really are.

#### **Questions and Conclusions:**

What if this is not where I am?

Two options - you are walking in disobedience or you are dead.

If dead - call on the name of the Lord - for what? For salvation.  
Realize you are dead - and you need to be brought back to life.

You have no life. Jesus Christ alone is the way the truth and the life.  
There is no other way to the Father.

Realize you have been a child of a different spirit. You have succumbed to the lies and the tricks of the devil and you need to be set free  
GET SAVED

IF you are walking in disobedience - confess your sins.  
Get into God's Word and see exactly where the trouble is.  
What the sin is.  
Expose the sin with the light of His Word and pray for cleansing.

Begin walking according to - in agreement with the calling you have received when you were saved.  
Ask continually to be filled with the Holy Spirit and shun the spirit of this age that now works in the sons of disobedience.

There is not a servant of the Lord anywhere - they have never existed that didn't have to do that Isaiah thing.

Maybe you have received a fresh impression of grace today - a grace gift as Paul longed to give the Corinthians...

But you feel so guilty.

Go to your Father.  
If you have seen a vision of God - in this letter from Paul.  
and you feel unclean - good - that's proof that you still care.

Weep in godly sorrow - ask for cleansing.

Listen to what happened to Isaiah

**6** In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. **2** Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. **3** And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" **4** And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. **5** And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" **6** Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. **7** And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."

Then be a minister....don't sit around thinking somebody else will do it.

**8** And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." **9** And he said, "Go, and say to this people:

### 3. Attractive

When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Proverbs 16:7

Jesus said love your enemies.

That's what Christ did for us - Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

It is His love that drew us.  
Our love from Christ - shining through us will draw some too!