

2 CORINTHIANS 2

How The Christian Faith is Spread

Student Guides

Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	2 Cor. 2: 1-13
Day 2	2 Cor. 2: 1-14
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Chapter 2 may be the most personal of all the recorded words of the Apostle Paul. He opens with a heavy heart, filled with sorrow for the conflict he had experienced with the Corinthian believers. His strong stance concerning some of the immoral practices they had ignored had created backlash from the church (1 Cor. 5:1-6). Some felt that Paul was overly harsh and even unloving. What Paul experienced has unfortunately been the standard experience of God's prophets through the centuries. Prophets, more times than not, have been misunderstood men. Nevertheless, the chapter may begin with Paul's personal experience but it ends with the utter triumph of Jesus Christ!

1. The Tears Paul Shed (vv. 1-13)

Paul begins the chapter explaining the reason he did not visit the Corinthians (v. 1). His absence was both for their benefit as well as his (vv. 2-3). For Paul, no enjoyment could be experienced by rebuking the Corinthians further. His life's goal was to promote joy, not grief. Paul's joy would be the "joy of you all" (v. 3).

Paul questioned the Corinthian's silence toward a man committing incest! (1 Cor. 5). Should he then be accused as being unloving? It is as if the Apostle Paul is saying to the Corinthians, "I don't mind telling you: I shed tears over the first letter I sent you." One way to gauge whether a person is actually being harsh is to test their attitude about the message they deliver. One thing is for sure: Paul's heart was profusely bleeding because he had to deliver such a stinging blow to the church he dearly loved (v. 4). Paul expresses his humanity in all its weakness. Every servant who works for the Lord must sooner or later realize he or she is but human. All our strength for the Kingdom good comes entirely from the Lord Jesus (vv. 5-7). Now that the sinning man had been disciplined and repented, Paul encouraged the complete restoration for him from the church (v. 10).

In addition, Paul speaks of Satan's devices (v. 11). The Greek term translated "devices" literally means, "well thought out plans." He is the master strategist. We must resist playing games with the devil. In the end, according to Paul, the triumphs of the warrior are sure.

2. The Triumph Jesus Secured (v. 14a)

When the Romans fought and won a battle, they had a victory march. The greatest honor given to the Roman General was during this march. In order for the general to be honored, he had to have had at least 5,000 slain enemies and a substantial amount of territory gained. What an impressive procession this would have been. Christians have their own victory march they may celebrate (v. 14). Jesus is our victorious general. He leads a procession nothing can stop! According to Paul, the cross was where the battle was both waged and won.

First, at the cross, Jesus *spoiled* the enemy. Paul elsewhere explains, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col. 2:15). At the cross, our soul's enemies were stripped of power. Satan can no longer control us. The fear of death vanishes through the cross of Jesus Christ.

Second, at the cross, Jesus *showed* the enemy. Paul speaks of making “manifest.” Sin, death, and hell were exposed and publicly disgraced at the cross of Christ (cp. Matt. 1:19). Satan was exposed as a murderer. Sin was openly revealed as ugly. We now are ushered into the presence of the Almighty through the power of the cross.

Third, at the cross, Jesus *shattered* the enemy. We were not only delivered from the enemy’s hands, we were also rid of our enemy! All else before Calvary was only preliminary to the main event—the cross of Jesus Christ. The victory march of Jesus Christ is on!

3. The Tidings the Church Spread (vv. 14b-17)

The victory march Jesus assures is to be spread into every land on the face of the globe. The church is to saturate the culture with the Gospel. We spread what Christ secures.

First, we fight from a personal victory. Remember, it is God Who, “always causeth us to triumph in Christ.” He leads you and me in triumph. Hence, we claim His victory in our daily walk.

Second, we fight from a perennial victory. He “always” leads us in victory (v. 14a). Indeed our loss remains impossible if we are standing with Jesus Christ.

Third, we fight from a powerful victory. The knowledge of Jesus spreads and spreads. We take the victory of Jesus into every experience we face. All nations of the earth will eventually be touched by the message of Jesus. The world is defeated and doesn’t even know it! Our job is not to win the battle. Our job is to point people to our General, King Jesus. Like a powerful aroma, the Gospel scent permeates everything it touches. Paul speaks of the “savour of death” and the “savour of life.”

As for believers, our lives are to be a precious aroma to the Father. In our own stead, we are but the defiled odor of death. In Christ, our lives remain a “sweet aroma” to God. In addition, our lives are a pleasant scent to the saints. We are, in Paul’s words, a “fragrance of life.” Question: Do others receive an aroma of life from our lives? Do they gain the perfume of the Lord Jesus?

On the other hand, we are a perilous aroma to the lost. We are the smell of death. To conquered enemies in chains, we can only remind them of past defeat and future punishment. Some people are so hardened, the odor of all that is Christian is odious and foul. The things of Christ become a curse rather than a blessing.

Wrap Up

The Apostle Paul remains an example to all believers. He showed humility and courageous defense of the Christian faith. Yet the tears he shed for the people of God were both real and genuine. Paul never failed to spread the triumph Jesus secured. And, he inspired the church to carry on the work all for the Lord Jesus. Every Christian must become the fragrance of life to all around.