

2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6, New Covenant Ministry

¹² Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, ¹³ I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵ For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? ¹⁷ Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

¹ Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? ² You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. ³ You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, 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 confidence we have through Christ before God. ⁵ Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶ He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Questions

1. Outline Paul's train of thought. What is the logic the moves from his travels, to be captives of Christ, to what qualifies him to speak on Christ's behalf?
2. Reflect upon the imagery in vv. 14-16. Is the picture of "captives in Christ's triumphal procession" one of defeat or victory, for whom? How can it go wrong in a Christian's life to see oneself as victorious rather than defeated by the victorious one as Paul describes himself?
3. The imagery of a pleasing aroma to God is a clear allusion to the sacrificial offerings in Lev. 1-7. How is the Christian's life supposed to be a sacrificial offering? Why is it life giving to some and death to others?
4. How does Paul respond to presumed arrogance of his ministry (vv.1-3)? How do we discern the difference between using the Spirit as a guise for arrogance vs. ways that show Spirit enabled humility?
5. Remember, this passage is part of Paul defending his apostolic ministry. What is *unique* and different about Paul's ministry as an apostle vs. what is similar about the ministry of Christians and the church today?
6. What does Christian ministry look like in your own life?