

circumstances and remember that we are on the victory side. Our witness for Christ is like a sweet smell to the Lord and to other believers, but it is the smell of death to unbelievers.

b. We are unworthy of such honour (v.16-17)

- 1) At the end of verse 16 Paul asks, “**And who is sufficient for these things?**” In other words, who is worthy of sharing the sweet aroma of Christ?
- 2) He partially answers this question in verse 17. Unbelievers ought to be able to see that we are not like those who corrupt God’s Word. We are not corrupting God’s word for personal gain.
- 3) The word translated “**corrupt**” actually means to sell or to peddle. Pedlars travelled around selling their goods. Some pedlars were dishonest to get gain. Paul was not travelling around selling the gospel for personal gain, nor did he distort it. He preached it sincerely and freely because of all that Christ had done for him.
- 4) It is an honour to be on God’s victory side and to share the good news with others. Discouragements are temporary, our victory is eternal. We must focus on the future!

Conclusion: If you are feeling discouraged, look carefully at the three facts we uncovered in this passage. **Christians are not immune to discouragement.** It happens to the best of Christians. **We can choose to be thankful during discouragements.** Though difficult, with God’s help, we can make that choice. **We need not be discouraged because God causes us to triumph.** We are on the victory side. The Gospel we are to share smells great to God and to believers, but it smells fearfully bad to those heading for eternal death.

How does the Gospel smell to you? If it does not smell sweet and make you thankful, it is likely because you have never truly received it. Will you receive it today?

Song: Victory in Jesus - 496

Conquering Discouragement

5 May 2024 AM – Text: 2 Corinthians 2:12-17 – Topic: Discouragement

Introduction: Someone wisely noted, “Behind every shadow there’s a light shining.” Author unknown Think about that! Shadows are dark and dreary, but they can only exist because something is blocking the light.

Discouragement is like a shadow. It exists because the Devil has gotten between us and God’s light. To conquer discouragement, we must look past the obstruction to the Light.

Transition: A careful examination of this passage reveals three facts about discouragement that can enable us to conquer it when it attacks. (use the Map of Asia)

The first fact that that can enable us to conquer discouragement is that ...

1. Christians are not immune to discouragement (v.12-13).

a. Titus failed to meet Paul at Troas with news from Corinth.

- 1) Troas was a port city in northeastern Asia. It is the location where God had previously called him to go to Macedonia (Ac 16:8-11). It is also the place where Eutychus fell out of a third story window and died as Paul preached late into the night and raised him back to life (Ac 20:5-10).
- 2) Evidently, Paul had sent Titus to check on the church at Corinth and to meet him in Troas with his findings. We have already noted that Paul was burdened for this troubled church. He had rebuked them in his first letter for many sins, and he longed to hear how they had responded.
- 3) When his plan to find Titus at Troas failed, Paul became discouraged. He had no rest in his spirit. He was deeply troubled. This is a reminder to you and me that even strong, godly Christians can become discouraged. The devil knows that if he can discourage us, he can keep us from effectively serving the Lord.

b. Though he had an open door to preach, Paul moved

on in hopes to find Titus.

- 1) Paul came to Troas to preach Christ's Gospel. The Lord opened this door for him. This may mean that the people were eager to listen, that souls were being saved, or simply that he faced no open persecution there.
- 2) Though things were going well at Troas, Paul's uneasiness did not pass. Thus, he moved on into Macedonia. Perhaps he hoped to find Titus there.
- 3) You and I may find ourselves in similar situations. We may be doing right, serving the Lord, and things are going well, but a dark circumstance continues to trouble our hearts and cause us to be discouraged. **Christians are not immune to discouragement.**

The second fact that that can enable us to conquer discouragement is that ...

2. We can choose to be thankful during discouragement (v.14)

Evidently, as Paul travelled to Macedonia, perhaps through Bible study, meditation and prayer, God enabled him to change his thinking. He looked past the obstruction to God's light.

a. Paul channelled his thoughts to God's goodness.

- 1) Often, discouragement is the result of unhealthy thoughts. Had Paul been worrying about the Corinthian church or about Titus? Who knows! What we do know is that he changed his thought patterns.
- 2) He began channelling his thoughts to God's goodness. Many hymns in our hymnbook challenge us to do the same. For example, "Count Your Blessings" 370, "Great is Thy Faithfulness" 40, "Victory in Jesus" 486, and "It is well with my soul" 256.
- 3) Paul took his eyes off his burdens and placed them on the Lord.

b. He chose to thank God.

- 1) He was able to then say, "Now thanks be unto God."
- 2) In his letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul wrote, (1 Thessalonians 5:18) "**In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.**" He wrote similarly to the church at Ephesus, (Ephesians 5:20)

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;"

- 3) The best thing you and I can do to conquer discouragement is to begin to thank God for all that He has done for us.

The third fact that that can enable us to conquer discouragement is that ...

3. We need not be discouraged as God causes us to triumph in Christ (v.14-17)

a. Christians are in Christ's victory parade (v.14-15).

- 1) In his mind, Paul compared God's goodness to him to the "Roman Triumph" of the first century. Peter Pett describes this event for us. "It was a public display in honour of a triumphant general returning from a wholly victorious campaign which had added greatly to the prestige of the Empire. In that glorious procession, led by the highest authorities in Rome, would be found captive prisoners in chains, trophies of war, the priests with their censers of incense, and the general himself in his chariot, resplendently dressed, followed by his victorious troops, and surrounded by the massed and cheering crowds." Warren Wiersbe adds, "The procession would follow a special route through the city and would end at the Circus Maximus where the helpless captives would entertain the people by fighting with wild beasts."
- 2) Again, Pett notes, "Paul saw himself as a part of the triumphant procession led by the triumphant God, with himself one of those who swung the censers, the dispensers of incense, giving off a savour which spelled a future life of glory to the General's army and miserable deaths to the enemy captives."
- 3) As Christians, we are in God's victorious army. He has conquered death and Satan. We are privileged to follow along in the parade to His honour and give off the sweet aroma of Christ. In his letter to the Roman Church, Paul wrote, (Romans 8:31) "**What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"** (Romans 8:37) "**Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.**"
- 4) When discouraged, we must look beyond our