

THE BIG PICTURE

2 Corinthians 2:12-17

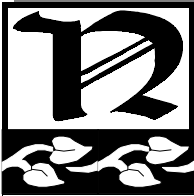
There are “defining moments” in life which cause us to rise above the ordinary routine and see the big picture. For Paul, this was one of those moments. Thankfully, for us, he shares with us those reflections in this passage, as if we had access to his personal journal.

I. Paul's dilemma 2:12-13

II. The triumphant procession 2:14-16

III. A sincere life 2:17

WHAT DOES IT SAY?



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 good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.”

2 Corinthians 7:5-7

“For when we came into Macedonia, this body of ours had no rest, but we were harassed at every turn -- conflicts on the outside, fears within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort you had given him. He told us about your longing for me, your deep sorrow, your ardent concern for me, so that my joy was greater than ever.”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Paul here recounts the events that happened which led him to write 2 Corinthians. Note that these 2 sections fit together - they are separated by Paul's "digression" in 2:14-7:4. Also, check the chronology (Introduction page 2) for clarification.

Explain why Paul had “*no peace of mind.*”

What news did Titus bring? (Hint: continue reading 2 Cor. 7:8-16)

Paul's emotions get the better of him here and he

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. ¹⁵ For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of 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, like men sent from God.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

launches into one of the greatest "rabbit trails" in history!

"Suddenly - Paul breaks off from his account in order to praise God for His unfailing goodness.. and one thought leads on to another in an outpouring of spiritual wealth unsurpassed in any other of his epistles."

Phillip Hughes

He describes with joy the kind of life he lives as a servant of the New Covenant, and he contrasts that life-style with the fear and uncertainty which characterized life under the Old Covenant.

Read Wiliam Barclay's comments below and note the symbolic parallels to our life in Christ.

A key concept here is the "*aroma of Christ*" (verse 14). Describe what that is.

"In his mind is the picture of a Roman Triumph and of Christ as the universal conqueror. The highest honor which could be given to a victorious Roman general was a "Triumph". To attain it he must satisfy certain conditions. He must have been the actual commander-in-chief in the field. The campaign must have been completely finished, the region pacified and the victorious troops brought home. Five thousand of the enemy at least must have fallen in one engagement. A positive extension of territory must have been gained, and not merely a disaster retrieved or an attack repelled. And the victory must have been won over a foreign foe and not in a civil war.

In a Triumph the procession of the victorious general marched through the streets of Rome to the Capitol in the following order. First came the state officials and the senate. Then came the trumpeters. Then were carried the spoils taken from the conquered land. For instance, when Titus conquered Jerusalem, the seven-branched candlestick, the golden table of the shew-bread and the golden trumpets were carried through the streets of Rome. Then came pictures of the conquered land and models of conquered citadels and ships. There followed the white bull for the sacrifice which would be made. Then there walked the captive princes, leaders and generals in chains, shortly to be flung into prison and in all probability almost immediately to be executed. Then came the lictors bearing their rods, followed by the musicians with their lyres; then the priests swinging their censers with the sweet-smelling incense burning in them.

After that came the general himself. He stood in a chariot drawn by four horses. He was clad in a purple tunic embroidered with golden palm leaves, and over it a purple toga marked out with golden stars. In his hand he held an ivory scepter with the Roman eagle at its top, and over his head a slave held the crown of Jupiter. After him rode his family; and finally came the army wearing all their decorations and shouting "Io triumphe!" their cry of triumph. As the procession moved through the streets, all decorated and garlanded, amid the cheering crowds, it made a tremendous day which might happen only once in a lifetime."

William Barclay

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

[Hint: Look up "aroma" in a concordance.]

What is this "aroma" associated with in the Old Testament?
(see Genesis 8:21, Exodus 29:18, Leviticus 1:9)

How does Romans 12:1 fit into all this?

What do "death" and "life" refer to (verse 16)?

What is the expected answer to "Who is equal to such a task?" Why? When have you felt this way?

Have you ever been burned by the type of Christianity described in the first half of verse 17?

What does Paul say has characterized his ministry?

"Peddling" has the idea of hucksters selling their product on a street corner with the main purpose of making money, but not caring to get involved with the customer or giving a guarantee that the product will do what they claim it will do, or any promise that they will on that same street corner tomorrow.

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

In your own words, summarize the main point of this passage.



LIFE RESPONSE

How is God asking you to put this into action in your life this week?



Describe a time in your life when you were ...

a. the “aroma of life” (i.e., your presence or witness led someone to a deeper understanding of God’s love, perhaps to their conversion. They responded positively to you.)

b. the “aroma of death” (i.e., your presence as a believer reminded someone of their anger towards God, fear of Him, or lack of a relationship with Him. They did not respond to you positively)