

September 21, 2025

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of 2 Corinthians – Part 2

The Sweet Smell of a Triumphant, Transforming Faith

Today we continue on our multi-year journey through the New Testament where we are seeking to understand the historical, chronological & missiological of the 1st Century Church so that we in the 21st Century Church can keep the “CHURCH ALIVE & GROWING”. We pick up where we left off with Paul at the end of his 1st Letter to the Church in Corinth. As I mentioned before, Paul had spent 1 ½ years previously in Corinth evangelizing, discipling and planting churches. He then left to go to Ephesus where he stayed 3 years. During this time, Paul received news of the chaos that had erupted in the Corinth Church. That’s when he wrote we know of as 1st Corinthians. It appears that he left Ephesus and may a quick ‘painful visit’ as we will learn in Chapter 2:1,2. Paul then left and promised to return for a longer visit and then he went to Macedonia. It appears he stayed in Macedonia longer than expected by him and by the Corinth church and they began to accuse him of forgetting them and seemed to question his integrity and intentions. This prompted Paul to write the letter we know of as 2 Corinthians about 1 year after he had sent them 1st Corinthians. Approximately 55/56 BC.

Last week The Ministry of Comfort & Reconciliation

1. Receive God’s Comfort—
2. Extend God’s Comfort—
3. Walk in Integrity—

As I mentioned about last week’s passage, today’s passage is another difficult one to wrap my ‘pastoral head’ around and to distill into a coherent and concise message. With the Holy Spirit’s help, I will try to do just that.

I am distilling in down to just two (2) simple but powerful points. These two points fit well into our Church Anniversary Celebration. As we close out 66 years of ministry as a church and begin our 67th year let’s pray and plan to be a church that exhibits a...

**A Triumphant Faith &
A Transforming Faith**

1. A Triumphant Faith

2 Corinthians 2:12-17; 3:6- ...¹² *Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,* ¹³ *I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.* ¹⁴ *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.* ¹⁵ *For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;* ¹⁶ *to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?* ¹⁷ *For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.*

Chapter 3:1-6...*Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? ² You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³ being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, 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 toward God. ⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶ who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

This section opens with some honest, yet troubled emotional honesty. Paul came to the area of Troas; you may remember from your history classes about the Trojan Wars which ended with the Trojan Horse ruse. This is where it happened, it was in the area we know today as Northwestern Turkey (about 140 miles north of where Paul had spent the last 3 years in Ephesus). This event, though centuries old, still had a lasting impact on the people of that area. Thus, it was rather ironic that Paul would talk of a triumphant faith from a place that had experienced tragic defeat. But, for us Christians it can make perfect sense. The world will try and trick and deceive you with its metaphorical Gift Horses. If we are not careful the world/Satan will deceive us and destroy us. Paul at first seemed to struggle with a sense of triumph, but he quickly overcame... listen to verses 13 & 14...

*¹³ I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. ¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who always leads us in **TRIUMPH** in Christ.*

Paul then goes into an analogy of the ‘Fragrance of Triumph’. You have probably heard of the phrase “*the sweet smell of victory*”. Paul had alluded to this in the 1st chapter where he stated our confidence is found in the ‘Promises of Christ’ and the “Power of the Holy Spirit”. Paul expands on this by saying those two blessings should develop within us a ‘sweet fragrance’ or aroma that reflects the power and life we have in Christ. Our ‘aroma’ is a blessing to those who are saved and to those who are perishing but are looking for hope.

I think we should take a long look, or should I say, a long ‘*smell*’ of lives and see if we are a pleasing aroma to life or a displeasing distraction to a lost world.

Let’s let the ‘sweet smell of victory and triumph’ emanate from our lives as we lean on Christ and the Holy Spirit to make us ‘adequate’ in our faith. Paul also uses the illustration of Living Letters. Can some of you remember either giving or receiving a ‘scented letter’, usually a Love Letter? Let’s be ‘*Scented Loved Letters*’ to a world steeped in the Stench of Sin and Lostness!

Paul then ties together the teaching that a Triumphant Faith is also a....

2. A Transforming Faith

2. A Transforming Faith

3:7-18... ⁷ *But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,* ⁸ *how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?* ⁹ *For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory.* ¹⁰ *For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it.* ¹¹ *For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.* ¹² *Therefore having such a hope we use great boldness in our speech,* ¹³ *and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away.* ¹⁴ *But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ.* ¹⁵ *But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;* ¹⁶ *but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.* ¹⁷ *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* ¹⁸ *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **TRANSFORMED** into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

Paul then goes back to the Old Testament and uses an illustration about the insufficiency and non-clarity of the Old Moses Covenant.

The Old Covenant served its purpose, but once Christ came, He renewed the Covenant with us by the Triumph over death and the grave. The New or Renewed Covenant in Christ is superior and not only makes us triumphant it also serves to TRANSFORM us into the Image of the Glory of the Lord (vs. 18).

Call to Action:

This New Covenant gives us Liberty and Freedom from sin and the Law and **TRIUMPHANTLY TRANSFORMS** us into the *Image of the Glory of the Lord*. The Spirit of the Lord is available to lead us to a clarity of God's Will & Direction, and a Liberty to live a Triumphant, Transforming Life in Christ where we are 'Scented Love Letters' which tell of the Sweet, Triumphant and Transforming Good News of Jesus Christ and the freedom and power we have in the Holy Spirit. How will you respond?

If you are a believer its time to get 'smelling good'. If you are not sure of your salvation, it's time to surrender to God in Christ and become a born-again Christian.