

Parades – they are occasions for the public display of success, for the festive celebration of victory.

Consider three New Testament references: **Matthew 21:1 – 11** - Jesus' Triumphal entry to the place of His death.

2 Cor. 2:14 – 17 – Captives in the train of Christ's victory, spreading His fragrance with two results. Who is sufficient for these things?

1 Cor. 4:9 – 13 – In the process, **beware of the folly of premature triumphalism**. We are marching to eternal life and glory, so this is not morbid pessimism, but we are marching to our death also. Men condemned to death, spectacles to the world. Daily dying so that others may live.

So, are we marchers in this parade? Yes, Pilgrims on Parade, bond-slaves chained to Christ's chariot. Since this is so, **you must know your place; keep your place, to the end**. Parades – pageantry or drudgery?

Paul describes his place in the parade. He is the example of the "theology of the cross" that he had learned from Christ – **The characteristics of a faithful Christian minister** (2 Cor. 2:17) – what **we are NOT**. We are not like so many who peddle an adulterated version of the Word of God for selfish ends (as in the church whose model is from the world of business only), but **what we are**.

Men of sincerity, judged in the sunlight, speaking from a genuine sense of love for God and for you who I serve, who hear me, telling the truth faithfully as I have been entrusted with it; not tampering with it. (**A person of Integrity**)

Whose authority comes from God on high, with the stamp of "God's right to command;" I have a commission for which I am responsible; I am a watchman on the wall who has no right to tell anything other than exactly what I have seen, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me, God. I speak knowing that God will ultimately back up what I declare. God is my witness. (**A person of Authority**)

Who speak **Before God** (before whom I stand), I am not self-appointed; I did not dream up this assignment. I am lowly, trembling, with a sense of awe and dread. "Who is sufficient for these things?" (**A person of Humility**)

And **In Christ**, here is my strength, Christ Himself, in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, by real incorporation and union with Christ, "abiding" – I in Him and He in me (Jn 15) so that "My sufficiency is from God." (**A person of Sufficiency**)

I am confident that I am a part of Christ's gospel train, and so we speak as those entrusted by God with the gospel, not as pleasing men but God Who tests our hearts... for if I were still trying to please men I would not be a servant of Christ (1 Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10).

In his day Martin Luther confronted the "theologians of glory" by making the "theology of the cross" as central to the Christian life as the doctrine of justification by faith. "The theology of the cross is not simply an example of how God is gracious; it is also the basic pattern for understanding how He is to work in and through us, His church. The theology of the cross is not a cerebral thing; it profoundly affects our Christian experience and existence, making demands upon our whole lives and turning theology into something which controls not just our thoughts, but the very way in which we experience the world around and taste the blessing and fellowship of God Himself. Suffering and weakness are not just the way in which Christ triumphs and conquers; they are the way in which we are to triumph and conquer too. In other words, if suffering and weakness are the ways God works in Christ, it is to be expected that these are the ways He will work in those who seek to follow Christ. One does not become a theologian by knowing a lot about God; one becomes a theologian by suffering the torments and feeling the weakness which union with Christ must inevitably bring in its wake." (Carl Trueman)

Calvin, in the Institutes, "Paul with good reason, therefore, magnificently proclaims the triumph that Christ obtained for Himself on the cross, as if the cross, which was full of shame, had been changed into a triumphal chariot!"