

This takes place in Acts 20:7

2:14

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, leading us in conquering procession (ESV; NRSV; HCSB).

The image of participation in a divinely led triumphal procession stems from the parading of victorious Roman generals through the streets of Rome with captives trailing behind and incense perfuming the air in thanks to the gods.¹

Even Zedekiah, taken back toward Babylon, experienced the parading of himself behind the Babylonian victory march.

Here, Paul is saying that as he journeyed back to hear Titus' report, it was an anxious walk not seeing Titus. It was an anxious walk wanting to know if the Corinthian believers still loved Paul after his 3rd letter requiring that forgiveness. It was a desperate, life-sucking walk because He was needing refreshment, but—as we learned in chapter 1—he changed his plans so as not to bring a heaviness to the Corinthians again; Paul consequently did without that personal dialogue that he needed so badly. Paul was furthermore passing on an open door to speak. He was passing on a great revival and a great conference and a great crusade. He was doing without an open door, a grand harvest. It was a heavy, defeating, desperate walk. In the middle of that, Paul says “My heavy-hearted travel was a victory parade.”

Were you passed over for a job? Keep walking, desperate in trust to your God: He's leading you on a victory parade that will end on the horizons of Heaven. Were you under-appreciated in your selection for a team? Keep walking; keep plodding; keep stepping on your journey, desperately committing yourself to the One Who is leading you in triumph. Are you feeling dry? Are you feeling depleted? Are you feeling isolated from loved ones through no faults of your own? Keep pulling your plow in that victory march and you'll feel, as I have felt, as others around you have felt, your steps getting a little lighter. Here the Paul, full of faith, say to you “I'm feeling led by a King Immortal, Invisible, and the only Wise God.” Here him say “God has lavished us with riches in Christ which drive us to victory.”

So as you feel like the saints are failing you and your friends are forgetting you and the health is faltering and the demons of Hell are following, you remember that the Rock of ages and His Son are leading you. You remember that goodness and mercy are your rearguard....

and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. ...,and that you smell of God and Christ in this ol' world. The whole place knows you. Take a look at verses 15 & 16.

2:15-16

our sacrifice is pleasing to God on both counts: from the death odor of the lost and the lively odor of the saved.

In all ways, in every place, we are under the scope. Some, under the microscope—checking you out...some under a telescope—persecuting from afar. The world is watching as Christ escorts us through life in victory—victory in heaviness. Some watch the parade and smell the death of the old selves as they have shared in our salvation. They desire our salvation. They smell our victory savor and they watch our victory parade and what do they do? They salivate for our deliverance. They smell the death of the old man.

Others...others fear us and they know not why. They see our tickertape, heavenly displays and they cower in dismay. They don't know how we won, but they don't like that we win. They don't understand us, but it is easier for them to assume that we are doing it through sorcery or mental technique. They smell the impending death of their own souls. The Gospel, however, never ceases in its pleasing aroma to God, says Chrysostom:

¹ Gordon D. Fee and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., eds., *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 662.

“The light, even when it blinds someone, is still light. Honey, though it is bitter to those who are sick, is still sweet. So also the gospel has a sweet savor to all, even those who do not believe it are lost.”²

And who is sufficient The word “adequate” appears in the NASB (95 update) **for these things?**

One only need to glance at verses 17 through 3:5 to see what Paul felt was his main way of shining, or better yet, of smelling....or of giving off his victory stench. How can we know that Paul is being led in a victory procession? He is still preaching. With Paul, he was on his journey, and we find it was his custom to minister as he traveled. Preaching is a matter of ministry for Paul and he felt the weight of turning people “on” or “off” by the very same preaching!

Please notice that it is not one of the things he has to offer: preaching or teaching the Bible. It is, rather, the totality of what he does, and it causes death.

Preaching...

1. Paul keeps saying that was his main mission (1 Corinthians 1:17; 2:2; 15:10);
2. He was arguably not good at it (1 Corinthians 2:3-5). Although he was not good at it from the perspective of the mechanics or technique of preaching, but he had something far more satisfying: a clean testimony (2:17) and the fruit of his listener’s lives (which he eluded to in 1 Corinthians 4:10, but came back to in this epistle, 3:1-4).
3. Paul did other things in the ministry (2 Corinthians 12:15).
4. Paul knew that with preaching at these open doors comes great adversity (1 Corinthians 16:9).

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²Thomas C. Oden, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (NT: Volume VII)* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 210.