

2 Corinthians 2.12-17

Greek Text UBS 3 corrected [1983]

12 Ἐλθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν Τρωάδα
 εἰς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ,
 καὶ θύρας μοι ἀνεωγμένης
 ἐν κυρίῳ,
 13 οὐκ ἔσχηκα ἀνεσιν
 τῷ πνεύματι μου
 τῷ μὴ εὑρεῖν με Τίτον
 τὸν ἀδελφόν μου,
 ἀλλὰ ἀποταξάμενος αὐτοῖς
 ἐξῆλθον εἰς Μακεδονίαν.
 14 Τῷ δὲ Θεῷ χάρις
 τῷ πάντοτε θριαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς
 ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ
 καὶ τὴν ὁσμὴν
 τῆς γνώσεως
 φανεροῦντι
 δι' ἡμῶν
 ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ
 15 ὅτι Χριστοῦ εὐωδία ἐσμὲν
 τῷ θεῷ
 ἐν τοῖς σωζομένοις
 καὶ
 ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις,
 16 οἷς μὲν ὁσμὴ
 ἐκ θανάτου εἰς θάνατον,
 οἷς δὲ ὁσμὴ
 ἐκ ζωῆς εἰς ζωὴν.
 καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα τίς ἰκανός;
 17 οὐ γὰρ ἐσμὲν ὡς οἱ ►πολλοὶ ◀ textual variant 1
 καπηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον
 τοῦ θεοῦ,
 ἀλλ' ὡς ἐξ εἰλικρινείας,

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A stiff, formal, grammatical translation

But on coming to Troas
 for the gospel of Christ
 and a door [missionary opportunity] was opened to me
 in the Lord [as the Lord's agent]
 I had no rest
 to my spirit
 by my not finding Titus
 my brother
 but having said farewell to them
 I departed into Macedonia
 So thanks be to God
 who is leading us in a triumph
 in Christ
 and the fragrance [sweet smell]
 of the knowledge
 [is]manifesting
 through us
 in every place
 That we are the aroma of Christ
 to God
 among [in] those who are being saved [rescued]
 and
 among [in] those who are perishing
 to whom, on the one hand,[to the one] [we are] a fragrance
 from death into death
 to whom, on the other hand, [to the other],
 from life into life.
 and who is sufficient for such things [responsibilities]?
 For we are not as the many, [majority] [the variant reading is "the rest"]
 merchandising [pawning][peddling] the word
 of God
 but as out of a single heart[sincerity]

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ἀλλ' ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ
κατέναντι θεοῦ
ἐν Χριστῷ
λαλοῦμεν.

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*but as [of] [sent] out from God
before [in the presence of] God
in Christ
we are speaking.*

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θριαμβεύονται

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[1] Before leaving Ephesus, Paul had apparently made an appointment to meet Titus, on his return from Corinth, at Troas.
[2] He went to Troas, and despite a great opportunity for preaching the gospel had opened up Paul had “no relief for his spirit”; a way of expressing disturbance in himself which he is registering in sympathy with the Lord.

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[3] The people were ready to be evangelised, but it was beyond him to do it, since he was absorbed by his concerns for the Corinthians. The human spirit, when absorbed by things of God can only deal with so much; so he had to let go an opportunity he would have gladly taken.

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[4] It is as important to secure converts as it is to win them.
[5] The Corinthians would have appreciated this matter, since it was Paul’s concerns about them that were the occasion of this lost opportunity.

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[6] After farewelling the people at Troas, and crossing the Thracian Sea, Paul advanced into Macedonia where he did meet Titus [see 2 Cor. 7.5-7] and his concerns were allayed.
[7] Here, in 2 Cor. 2.12-13 he does not stop to say so, but does go on to speak a jubilant thanksgiving.
[8] It is in this thanksgiving that Paul uses the word θριαμβεύονται and the sense which is that given in the AV 1611 is “God

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which always causeth us to triumph". This treats the verb as transitive, with God as the subject and the action which He is doing is passing over to Paul; so that we would read this to mean that in the dealings with the Corinthians, Paul has acted in Christ's name, his honour being at stake, and the victory has been his, for which he thanks God.

[9] Lightfoot, in his commentary on Colossians [p.190] thinks this is a wrong translation indeed in the AV.

This verb, he makes clear, takes an accusative:

[a] of the person over whom the triumph is celebrated

[b] of the spoils exhibited in the triumph

[c] more rarely, of the substance of the triumph.

In Colossians, Lightfoot points out that the picture is of subjugated persons of men who are led in public, chained to the triumphal car of the victor, in this case Christ.

In Colossians 2.15 it is, of course, the evil powers – the cosmic powers and authorities - that have been disarmed; and at the cross of Christ are led in as captives in his triumphal procession.

He says, "the violence of the metaphor is its justification. The paradox of the crucifixion is thus placed in the strongest light - triumph in helplessness and glory in shame. The convict's gibbet is the victor's car." P.190.

[10] The triumph here is God's, not the apostle's. Paul is the captive who is led in the conqueror's train, and in whom men see a trophy of the conqueror's power.

As God wins a victory over any man, and leads his captive in triumph, the captive has an interest in this; for it is the beginning of all triumphs, in any true sense, for him.

[11] We see this in Paul's history as an enemy of Christ. Damascus Road where he rose from the earth a slave of Jesus Christ; from that hour God led him in triumph in Christ. So that the only triumphs we can ever have, deserving the name, must begin with God's triumph over us. So Paul thanks God that He is always leading them around as those who have been won in victory, in the triumph procession of His Christ. As He does this it sheds the odour of the knowledge of Him.

[12] Leads on to the work of God as making through the apostle, the fragrance of his knowledge in every place. Incense was central to the Roman procession. The expression τὴν ὄσμην τῆς γνώσεως we should see that the γνώσεως is a genitive of apposition the fragrance and the knowledge are the same thing. The knowledge of God was what accompanied the presence of Paul as he was seen to be a trophy of Christ's victory. This is the picture which is behind the statement in 2 Cor 5 "the love of Christ constrains us..."

[13] Christ made known through Paul not only his might, but his charm, not only his greatness but also his grace. To be led in triumph like Paul was a good thing, it was to move in an atmosphere perfumed by the love of Christ, as the air around the Roman triumph was perfumed by incense.