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### PAUL REJOICES IN HIS TRIUMPH IN CHRIST | 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17

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Note: some more liberal translators/interpreters claim that 2 Corinthians 2:14-7:4 were either "inserted here by an editor of Paul's letter" or "were originally a separate letter that was combined with other separate letters to make up 2 Corinthians as we know it today."<sup>1</sup> Either assumption presumes that Paul must write with a modern, formal writing style, following a prescribed outline which meets the criteria of academia. Personally, I see no reason why a letter cannot make abrupt changes of topic and later revert back to earlier topics. Such is the nature of letters (such as 2 Corinthians) as opposed to treatises (such as the book of Acts). Paul had been talking of meeting Titus, and will return to that topic in 2 Corinthians 7:5.

- Verse 14 - In spite of not arriving in Corinth as originally planned, Paul rejoices in two facts:
  - That God **always causeth us to triumph in Christ**. Note that there is no basis upon which to make general application to every believer based on these verses.
  - That God **maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place**.
    - To make **manifest** is to "bring to the point of visibility."
    - Through Paul (and his companions) God made the **savour** of His own knowledge visible (or the knowledge of Christ).
    - God's knowledge itself is not made manifest, but the secondary "smell" of that knowledge is made manifest.
    - In today's terminology, Paul might say, "through us God has helped people get a taste of His knowledge."
- Verses 15-16 -
  - Paul and his companions (i.e.: **we**) are a **sweet savour of Christ**, that is, using a metaphor, "they smell like Christ to God."
    - This fact is the reason that God is manifesting **the savour of his knowledge...in every place** (v. 14), thus the word **for**, which could be translated *because*.
  - This **sweet savour** (εὐωδία - euodia, note the prefix *eu*) is also a **savour** (ὄσμη - osme - same root as *euodia* but without the beneficial prefix, *eu*) to **them that are saved as well as them that perish**.
    - To the saved, it is the **savour of life**
    - To the perishing it is the **savour of death**.
  - Paul contemplates his worth for being such an instrument of God, asking **who is sufficient for these things?** He elaborates on this question in the next verse, and provides an answer in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6.
  - Notice that Paul's **triumph in Christ** (v. 14) was true whether his message resulted in people being saved or people remaining in their lost condition.
    - The victory was not in a certain number of conversions, but in faithfulness (see. v. 17).
    - How important it is that we see our **triumph in Christ** rather than in ourselves, in our achievements, or even in our "holiness."

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<sup>1</sup> Roger L. Omanson and John Ellington, A Handbook on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 48

- Verse 17 -
  - Just like in our day, there were **many, which corrupt the word of God.**
  - The word **corrupt** is *καπηλεύω* [kapeleuo] which is "a huckster" (Strong's).
    - The word means "retailer," but in its context with the **word of God** must necessarily take a negative tone.
    - Darby translates, "make a trade of the word of God." Rather, Paul claims to do his ministry out of **sincerity** as if God was watching directly.

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#### PAUL DEFENDS HIS SINCERITY | 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-3

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- Verse 1 -
  - Paul's previous comment perhaps seemed self-promoting, so he "humbly defends" himself, beginning by asking rhetorical questions, both related to **commendation**, which is from the Greek root "to stand" along with the prefix, "together with."
    - Thus, he asks, **do we begin again to stand together with ourselves?**
    - Further, **need we, as some others, epistles of standing together to you?**
    - Paul is stating (indirectly) that his life and ministry is going to *stand* on its own.
  - Note: in light of Paul's defense as a minister of a new message (vv. 6-18), it is significant that Paul says that he does not need **epistles of commendation** from others.
- Verses 2-3 -
  - The Corinthians themselves were the **epistle** (of commendation). This *epistle of the Corinthians* was **known and read of all men** because the Corinthians had been **manifestly declared** that this church was a *letter from Christ* that was **written not with ink and not in tables of stone** but rather **in fleshy tables of the heart.**
  - These words of compassion for the Corinthian church are most meaningful when you remember that this church had unspeakable sin within its midst (1 Cor. 5:1) and that there was such an issue within the church that if Paul went there *face to face* it would be **in heaviness** (v. 2:1).

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#### PAUL EXPRESSES HIS SUFFICIENCY | 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-5

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- Verses 4-5 -
  - Having defended himself for any self-promotion, Paul returns to his question of chapter 2, verse 16, **And who is sufficient for these things?** The **things** being the assignment to proclaim God's message both to the saved and the perishing (2 Cor. 2:15).
  - Paul says that he and his companions have *confidence* that is **through Christ toward God.** Indeed, *only through Christ* can anyone be confident *toward God.* This confidence is not, says Paul, **that we are sufficient of ourselves** for we cannot **think any thing as of ourselves**, therefore **our sufficiency is of God.**