

A DIFFERENT KIND OF MINISTRY 2 Corinthians 2: 14-17 (10-10-04)

Ministry... what comes to mind when I say ministry? Preacher, pastor, teacher, music, dancing, youth visitation, etc. Does work, drain, exhaustion, sacrifice, or effort come to mind? You need a different kind of ministry. We have heard before of a word for ministry, “diakonia” which has the meaning and flavor of a *waiter at the table*. Well, it still sounds like a lot of effort, but somehow there is a different thing flowing out of Paul, regardless of what happens to Him. We will be looking at this concept of ministry, this waiter at the table thing, in time.

A FUNNEL OF PRAISE THROUGH RELATIONSHIP

2 Cor. 2: 14 Paul here borrows a figure from the triumphal processions of Roman conquerors. Returning home after glorious victories, they would lead their captives along the streets of the capital. Incense bearers would march along both sides, and the **fragrance** of the incense would permeate the scene. So Paul pictures the Lord marching as a conqueror from Troas to Macedonia, and leading the apostle in His train. Wherever the Lord goes, through His servants, there is victory. **The fragrance of the knowledge** of Christ is diffused through the apostle in every place. F. B. Meyer writes:

Wherever they went men knew Jesus better; the loveliness of the Master's character became more apparent. Men became aware of a subtle fragrance, poured upon the air, which attracted them to the Man of Nazareth.⁶ Thus Paul does not feel that he has suffered a defeat in his warfare with Satan, but the Lord has won a victory and Paul shares it. (Believer's Bible Commentary).

Even though Paul had discouragement at times, He cannot be shaken in spirit. Every apparent set back is an opportunity for victory for Paul. It is not we who lead this deal, IT is GOD. He always leads us and it is in Christ this triumph takes place. Sometimes *I get out in front* and the result is not very triumphant, or when it is it fades quickly. This procession is not about our efforts, it is always Him.

A FRAGRANCE FLOWING

V14. I do have a role it seems. Something is happening to me, or rather through me. I don't analyze it, make it happen or control it. There is an aroma, a fragrance coming out of me, but not originating by me or with me. This aroma is spreading. The word used for spreading here is the same word used in John 21:1, 14. The very same thing that is happening in my life, happened with Jesus. He manifested Himself and now He is spreading that manifestation through me. Something is manifesting in my life and God is the originator of this thing. It is spreading everywhere and the original language (**pas**), indicates all things in their totality are affected by this aroma. What is this aroma? V.14 states it is the KNOWLEDGE of God. Now this is not academic knowledge, nor is this religious ritual. This is not about my trying, my efforts my great mind or my cleverness. What is being spread is in the original language “GINOSKO” or actually the relationship, the interaction that is formed by my being tight with the Father. My relationship with Him causes something to flow out of me that those around me cannot ignore. It does not happen by my impressing people with my talents or even my personality. I can do those things at times, but *if there are results, they do not last*. Why? Because it is me flowing in those times and people can take or leave me but they really can't do that with Him. You cannot “take it or leave it” with Jesus, and ironically, if who He is, is flowing in who I am, then and only then you cannot have a take it or leave it reaction to my life either.

THE FATHER'S DEAL

V.15. It is easy to miss the main point here. This aroma or fragrance is not something I make or spread, nor am I trying to pull off this “impact” on people. What we see happening here is that Christ is manifesting in my life and it is not an attempt of mine to influence others, it is a fragrance UNTO GOD!! God initiates the fragrance

to flow through me and it flows back to Him, and the fragrance is CHRIST. See, we become so tight with Christ as He was with the Father, that the essence of Jesus, is actually my essence. Even as Jesus is life to those who are seeking, and death to those who are not, my life to some and death to the others. I cannot separate myself from Him “in me” and still live. In John 15: 1-4, He makes this clear.

¹ I AM THE TRUE VINE, AND MY FATHER IS THE HUSBANDMAN. ² EVERY BRANCH IN ME THAT BEARETH NOT FRUIT HE TAKETH AWAY: AND EVERY *BRANCH* THAT BEARETH FRUIT, HE PURGETH IT, THAT IT MAY BRING FORTH MORE FRUIT. ³ NOW YE ARE CLEAN THROUGH THE WORD WHICH I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU. ⁴ ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU. AS THE BRANCH CANNOT BEAR FRUIT OF ITSELF, EXCEPT IT ABIDE IN THE VINE; NO MORE CAN YE, EXCEPT YE ABIDE IN ME. ⁵ I AM THE VINE, YE *ARE* THE BRANCHES: HE THAT ABIDETH IN ME, AND I IN HIM, THE SAME BRINGETH FORTH MUCH FRUIT: FOR WITHOUT ME YE CAN DO NOTHING.

My life is tied to His life and nowhere does Jesus ever talk of what I am *doing* of effort as bringing that life. Everything I “do” must flow out of that life that already exists. *Flesh births* flesh and the *Spirit births* Spirit. Both things have an odor, one is the fragrance of Jesus.

Reflections and Application:

1. What is your reaction when your plans for the Lord are upset, or changed by circumstances beyond your control?
2. How do you get to the place of having Him lead you in triumph, as opposed to trying to be triumphant?
3. Can you think of a time when you especially enjoyed serving? Why did you feel that enjoyment?
4. How do you know the difference between when *you* are offensive to others, and when it is Christ’s fragrance that is offensive?