



Lesson 22: *Ministers of a New Covenant*
2 Corinthians 2:12–3:6

2 Corinthians 2:12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 13 I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? 17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

3:4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The struggles of ministry

▲ *We traveled through Troas*

2 Corinthians 2:12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me,

▲ *We were troubled about Titus*

2 Corinthians 2:13 I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said good-bye to them and went on to Macedonia.

▲ *We were triumphant travelers*

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ

The smells of ministry

▲ *As gospel ministers, we smell like the Savior*

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. 15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

▲ *As gospel ministers, we stink to the sinners*

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

▲ *As gospel ministers, we spread sweetness among the saved*

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

The seriousness of ministry

▲ *Our meekness is tangible*

2 Corinthians 2:16 And who is equal to such a task?

▲ *Our motives are trustworthy*

2 Corinthians 2:17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.

▲ *Our ministry is testified to*

▼ *by lengthy resumes?*

2 Corinthians 3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

▼ *by letters of recommendation?*

2 Corinthians 3:1 Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

▼ *by living letters – lives redeemed and revolutionized*

2 Corinthians 3:2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

The strength for ministry

▲ *Our confidence is in the Savior*

2 Corinthians 3:4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.

▲ *Our confidence isn't in self*

2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

▲ *Our confidence is in the supply of the Spirit*

2 Corinthians 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Life lessons

1. Ministry includes traveling through seasons of opportunity and opposition and success and struggle – we must travel in triumphal procession.
2. As smelly believers, we will smell sweet to some and we will stink to others – we must focus our fragrance on pleasing the senses of God.
3. Proof of ministry is often in the pudding – but regardless of outcome, we must remain true and trustworthy, maintaining the motives of Christ.
4. Gospel work is daunting, and we are not equal to the task – we must depend on the empowering life of the Spirit, which is more than enough.

Titus Timeline

- (1) **AD49** – Titus is a Greek Gentile, probably converted during Paul’s ministry at Antioch in Syria; Paul refuses to have him circumcised – Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:3.
- 2) **AD49** – Titus accompanies Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to the Council at Jerusalem – Acts 15:2; Galatians 2:3 (Titus’ name, strangely, does not appear in the Book of Acts).
- 3) **AD55** – (?) Titus is at Ephesus with Paul and Timothy and from there carries Paul’s severe letter to Corinth (4) – 2 Corinthians 7:6-8 – and begins the process of promoting an offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem – 2 Corinthians 8:6 and 12:18.
- 5) **AD55** – Titus is expected to come from Corinth to Troas in order to rejoin Paul at Troas, but he does not show up – 2 Corinthians 2:12-13.
- 6) **AD55** – Titus leaves Corinth to return to Paul, who has moved from Ephesus, through Troas (where he did not find Titus), and into Macedonia – 2 Corinthians 7:6-15.
- 7) **AD56** – Paul writes 2 Corinthians and sends it from Macedonia back to Corinth with Titus – 2 Corinthians 8:6-24 – with the instruction to finish receiving the offering for the poor saints at Jerusalem.
- 8) **AD62/63/64** – Titus is on the island of Crete, left there by Paul with the assignment of appointing elders in the churches. Paul has been released from his first Roman imprisonment and plans to send Artemas or Tychicus to Crete, instructing Titus then to join Paul at Nicopolis (9), where Paul plans to winter – Titus 1:5; 3:12.
- (10) **AD65** – Titus is present with Paul in Rome during Paul’s second imprisonment, from which Paul sends him to Dalmatia (11) for some ministry duty – 2 Timothy 4:10.

