



A Worship Study Guide for Individuals, Groups and Families: For the week of March 19, 2017

WEPC small groups meet in homes across Richmond every week to participate in Jesus Christ's mission to Richmond, enjoy fellowship, study God's Word, pray together, and explore the fruit of the Gospel on our lives. Simply put, these groups are small enough to be the church to one another, and they serve as bridges between WEPC and the community where God has planted us. It is a place where the church can go deeper in the worship of God and further in Christ's mission.

Note to Discussion Leaders: Have members read the Bible passage in the group meeting. This is a "worship discussion" guide, and our reflections and applications are grounded in Scripture. Read through this guide before meeting with the group. You do not need to work through the whole guide. Decide which points would be most helpful for the time of meeting together, and use them as a starting point for your time together.

II Corinthians 2:12-17, "Triumphal Procession"

¹²When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, ¹³my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the

fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. ¹⁵For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, ¹⁶to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

- **Read vv12-13.** Paul continues the defense of his changed travel plans. Paul went from Troas into Macedonia, rather than directly to Corinth. Why?
- The Lord opened the door in Troas, but Paul did not enter in. What do you make of this?
- **Read [II Corinthians 7:5-7](#)** where Paul talks about the conclusion of this matter. What two things did God use to comfort Paul's restless spirit?
- **Read vv14-16a.** In Corinthian culture, only military victors led the triumphal procession. What is Paul saying about God?
 - Only prisoners and the spoils of war were led in the triumphal procession. What is Paul saying about us?
 - Both Roman triumphal processions and Jewish worship employed the use of strong-smelling incense. Through us, Christ "spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere" (14).
 - How are believers perceived by God (15)? How can we know this?
 - How are believers perceived among those who are perishing (16)? Why?
 - How are believers perceived among those who are being saved (16)? Why?
- **Read vv16b-17.** What is Paul's point in asking, "Who is sufficient for these things?"
- What contrast does Paul set up in v17? What point is he making to the Corinthians?
- **With today's passage in front of you, pray for each other.** In particular
 - Are you struggling with a restless spirit? Ask God for His guidance and comfort.
 - Are you surprised that you are offensive to those who do not trust Christ?
 - That we would know that God is satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ
 - That His "life to life" fragrance among us is an encouragement to others who are being saved.

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on II Corinthians 2:12-17

- What do we do with failure?
- “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again. Fail better.” (*Samuel Beckett*)
- Paul admits here in this passage not so much to a sin, but to a failure of monumental proportions due to human weakness. This failure is what drives him then to preach the Gospel in this letter all the more strongly for the next several chapters.
- He had traveled north from Ephesus to preach the Gospel in Troas because “a door was opened for me in the Lord” (12).
- His “spirit was not at rest” (13) because he was waiting to see Titus, who would bring him information about the Church in Corinth.
- “For even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within. But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming but also by the comfort with which he was comforted by you, as he told us of your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced still more. For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us...And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For whatever boasts I made to him about you, I was not put to shame. But just as everything we said to you was true, so also our boasting before Titus has proved true. And his affection for you is even greater, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. I rejoice, because I have complete confidence in you.” (*II Corinthians 7:5-9,13-16*)
- Paul was unable to preach the Gospel because of his concern for the Corinthians.
- Nevertheless, he is able here to speak about the triumphal procession of Christ and his place in it.
- Christ’s triumphal procession continues through the world regardless of apparent setbacks like Paul’s trouble in Troas and also those who think the Gospel stinks.
- Let’s be clear what the Gospel is and isn’t.
- “John Berridge says he preached morality till there was not a moral man left in the village; and there is no way of injuring morality like legal preaching. The preaching of good works, and the exhorting men to holiness, as the means of salvation, is very much admired in theory; but when brought into practice, it is found not only ineffectual, but more than that—it becomes even ‘a savour of death unto death.’ So it has been found; and I think even the great Chalmers himself confessed, that for years and years before he knew the Lord, he preached nothing but morality and precepts, but he never found a drunkard reclaimed by shewing him merely the evils of drunkenness; nor did he find a swearer stop his swearing because he told him the heinousness of the sin; it was not until he began to preach the love of Jesus, in his great heart of mercy—it was not until he preached the gospel as it was in Christ, in some of its clearness, fulness, and power, and the doctrine, that ‘by grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God’ that he ever met with success. But when he did preach salvation by faith, by shoals the drunkards came from their cups, and swearers refrained their lips from evil speaking; thieves became honest men, and unrighteous and ungodly persons bowed to the scepter of Jesus. But ye must confess, as I said before, that though the gospel does in the main produce the best effect upon almost all who hear it either by restraining them from sin, or constraining them to Christ, yet it is a great fact, and a solemn one, upon which I hardly know how to speak this morning, that to some men the preaching of Christ’s gospel is “death unto death,” and produces evil instead of good. And the first sense is this. Many men are hardened in their sins by hearing the gospel. Oh! ‘tis terribly and solemnly true, that of all sinners some sanctuary sinners are the worst. Those who can dive deepest into sin, and have the most quiet consciences and hardest hearts, are some who are to be found in God’s own house. I know that a faithful ministry will often prick them, and the stern denunciations of a Boanerges, will frequently make them shake. I am aware that the Word of God will sometimes make their blood curdle within them; but I know (for I have seen the men) that there are many who turn the grace of God into licentiousness, make even God’s truth a stalking-horse for the devil, and abuse God’s grace to palliate their sin.” (*Charles Spurgeon*)
- Only God is sufficient for all of this.
- It is Jesus’s procession.
- The Lord is the determiner of how we “smell”.
- Results are left up to the Lord
- He determines success or failure.