

Triumph and Victory in Christ

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes that God is always leading us in triumph in Christ, and that He is glorified in both the salvation of the repentant and the judgment of those who refuse the Gospel.

Scripture: Matthew 7:13-14, John 3:16, Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:8-9, Philippians 3:18-19, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10, 2 Peter 3:9, Revelation 20:11-15

Topics: "Victory in Christ", "The Aroma of Christ"

Description

William MacDonald emphasizes the triumph and victory found in Christ, drawing parallels between a military victory parade and the Christian journey. He explains that while believers carry the sweet aroma of Christ, it is perceived differently by others; to the faithful, it signifies life, while to the unrepentant, it represents death. MacDonald highlights that God is glorified in both the salvation of the repentant and the judgment of the lost, underscoring the solemnity of these outcomes. He challenges the notion of measuring success solely by conversions, suggesting that rejection of the Gospel also serves to glorify God. The sermon concludes with a poignant reminder of the weight of this responsibility, echoing the Apostle's question, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

Transcript

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” (2 Cor. 2:14 NASB)

It is generally understood that Paul here borrows a figure from the victory parade of a military leader just returned from a foreign conquest. The general is at the head of the parade, savoring the sweet satisfaction of victory. Behind him are his jubilant troops. Then behind them are the prisoners-of-war, slated for punishment, perhaps death. All along the parade route are incense burners, filling the air with aroma. But the aroma means different things to different people, depending on whose side they are on. To those who are loyal to the commander in chief, it is the fragrance of victory. To the captives, however, it is an omen of defeat and retribution.

The pathway of a servant of the Lord parallels this picture in several respects. The Lord always leads him in triumph. Though it might not always seem like victory, the fact is that he is on the winning side and God's cause can never fail.

Everywhere he goes, he carries the aroma of Christ with him. But this aroma means different things to different people. To those who bow to the Lord Jesus, it is the scent of everlasting life. To those who refuse the Gospel, on the other hand, it is the smell of death and destruction.

But in both cases God is glorified. He is glorified in the salvation of the repentant, and he is also vindicated in the refusal of those who are perishing. When the latter stand before Christ, at the Judgment of the Great White Throne, they will not be able to blame God for their plight. They had the opportunity to be saved but refused it.

We generally judge the effectiveness of Christian service by how many people are saved. Perhaps there is a suggestion in this passage that it would be equally valid to judge it by how many people, after receiving a clear presentation of the Gospel, reject it and plunge into hell.

God is glorified in both cases. To Him there is the sweet incense of grace in the first instance and of justice in the second.

Solemn issues! No wonder the Apostle asks, in closing, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

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