

THE NARRATIO SECTION 1:8-2:16 :: Paul writes this letter (and all his epistle letters) using Roman rhetoric and letter writing styles. Following a greeting and some kind words usually came the “narratio” (in which our section is placed). This was the part of the letter in which the author stated the facts of the case that were at issue or the main questions under debate. To be convincing it has to assign some reasons and motives for what the defendant was being accused of doing. It is crucial to mention times, places, persons, and causes that give some explanation for the behavior in question...this is exactly what Paul does in 2 Corinthians 1:8-2:16. (Witherington III, p. 361) Paul has been attacked elsewhere, and in Corinth, as an ineffective leader, one unworthy of being followed.

ANYONE...SUCH A PERSON... HIM :: It's unclear who this person is who has saddened Paul. It's unclear if he is a stranger to Corinth somehow associated with the false prophets referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:13 or if he is a Corinthian Christian who has insulted Paul.

Punishment :: in Greek the word is *epitimia*, which can be translated in various ways, meaning “rebuke” or “reproof” or “punishment.” How it's translated is related in part to who this unnamed person is – a stranger or a member of the community. Paul congratulates them on their ethical behavior, and now “tests” them, encouraging them to be reconcilers and to forgive. Having passed one test, the Corinthian Christians are now being tested again.

F●RGIVE

Pauls' words send us back to the teaching of Jesus on forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-22 (NRSV) :

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven[b] times.

2 Corinthians 2:1-15

New Revised Standard Version | (NRSV)

¹ So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. ² For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? ³ And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you. ⁴ For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

⁵ But if **ANYONE** has caused pain, **HE** has caused it not to me, but to some extent—not to exaggerate it—to all of you.

⁶ This **punishment** by the majority is enough for **SUCH A PERSON**; ⁷ so now instead you should **F●RGIVE** and console **HIM**, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. ⁸ So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. ⁹ I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything. ¹⁰ Anyone whom you **F●RGIVE**, I also **F●RGIVE**. What I have **F●RGIVEN**, if I have **F●RGIVEN** anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ. ¹¹ And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

¹² When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; ¹³ but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia.

¹⁴ But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in *triumphal procession*, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. ¹⁵ For we are the **AROMA** of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

AS YOU READ AND REFLECT ON THIS TEXT:

- ↪ How have you experienced forgiveness in your life? How have you given forgiveness?
- ↪ When did you experience forgiveness as a life-restoring experience? When have you had the experience of trying to give forgiveness as a life-sucking force or impossible task to do?
- ↪ Why was one experience so life-nourishing and one so life-destroying?
- ↪ How do you need the Spirit of God to bless you that you might forgive, or ask to be forgiven?; that you might be more existentially aware that you're (we're) called to be the aroma of Christ, maybe more in our weakness and imperfection, than in our strength and got-it-all-together-ness?
- ↪ Who might the Spirit of God be calling you to talk with in response to the living Word you're hearing?

triumphal procession :: Several ancient Roman, Greek and Jewish writers mention the Roman Triumph. It was a victory procession in which the trophies and spoils of victorious warfare were carried throughout the triumphal city (usually Rome). It was done to honor a conquering general who drove into the city (Rome) the spoils, prisoners and riches won, as well as the army that had served faithfully under him. Some believe that the usual practice was to kill the captive prisoners at the conclusion of the procession. Paul seems to speak of himself metaphorically, as one of those led into the triumphal city as a sign of capitulation. Paul is comparing himself not to the victorious leader of the triumph, but to one who is lead in the triumph: a defeated prisoner of war.

AROMA The odor that rises from such practices could be that of the practice of sprinkling spices in front of such a procession, or it may refer to the smell of the captive himself. The smells seems to be not that of Christ's sacrifice (burnt in an offering), but rather the odor emanated by Paul. He is probably suggesting that his life manifests the wisdom and gospel of God: the crucified Christ himself. Paul is asking who is equal to the task of conveying the very presence of Christ, his characteristic smell, to the world. To do this task is to be truly Christ-like. It is a task no human being is fully capable of, only in God's power, by faith, in humility can such a triumph be walked. On in this way can a leader be a Christian one. It's not a question of speech, power, deeds or personal presence, but rather humble Christ-like-ness. Paul doesn't fit their profile of a Christian leader. He writes to subvert and change their vision of leadership, discipleship and faith-full living.

Paul uses imagery of himself as an enslaved leader, which he has already done in 1 Corinthians 4:9 : "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, as though sentenced to death, because we have become a *spectacle* to the world, to angels and to mortals."

In his book *Suffering and Ministry*, author Haefemann writes that a prisoner led in a triumph knew the procession led to a violent death. Paul then is implying that his vocation of revealing God is not only in his words and actions, but throughout the course of his life in which he manifests the message and meaning of Jesus call in Mark 8:34-35 "'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'"

Paul uses dramatic metaphors to appeal to the sympathies of his audience and establish rapport with them as he explains His ethos. It is Christ whom he imitates. The suffering of Christ is the suffering in which Paul shares. The power of Christ rests upon him in his weakness. *There is more to see than meets the eye.*

These notes come from (*Conflict & Community in Corinth*. Ben Witherington III, p. 361-367.)