

# Captives to Christ

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Good morning everyone. It's a great pleasure for me to be here and thank you for having us. Thanks to Nick and the leadership and the St. Mark's Church family. It does bring some good memories for me.

There's a few people that I know from this church, but especially that goes back more than 20 years ago when I was a student at GWC, many, many years ago.

And I was placed here in this church in my last year. And there are people who are still here that I see from that long ago. And it's good to be here and just to sit here and enjoy the worship and the fellowship of God with you in this church.

Maureen couldn't join me today, but we are so grateful to St. Mark's Church. We are one of those missionaries that are being supported by St. Mark's. And we praise the Lord for you. We thank you for that.

But Maureen couldn't be here. My daughter and my granddaughter are here with me this morning. Maybe just to introduce our passage this morning.

[ 1 : 1 2 ] We'll come to it in a moment and see how Paul was stressed when he was writing this letter. But I want us just to stop for a moment. And I was thinking sitting down there that if each and every one of us here can write something, just a sentence or so, of what things we are going through, whether in the neighborhood or just the nation and all the things that are happening in our nation or beyond our nation and the world, or maybe in our own families, children or parents, that we can come up with a book, a huge one, which can be published, of things that are of great concern to us here.

And that's a picture of Paul here in this letter. Because although Paul was an apostle, but he did some concerns. He did some concerns with the people of Corinth, with the people who were masquerading around as the preachers of the gospel, who were not Christians.

And it's easy for me, I'm sure for you as well, that when we think about all the things that are happening that makes us not happy in the world, that sometimes we're quick to find fault with them there and fail to examine ourselves as the church, as the church of God.

And recently here in South Africa we've been seeing things that are happening in the church, you know, we've heard news of things that are unbelievable. You know, people giving snakes to their congregation, and there are a lot of stuff like that.

And when I go around as a missionary, I do go to different places, and people, they ask me, but you Christians, and people are not believers, they don't understand when you say, no, I am a Christian, but I'm not that kind of a Christian.

[ 3 : 0 8 ] And the only thing, the only place, as our brother Adrian mentioned here, that other religions, they pawned people elsewhere.

But you and me, we have Christ. And what a wonderful thing that we have, telling people that Christ came and died for us.

And here this morning, we are looking at this passage, a wonderful passage, which speaks about this sweet smell, this aroma, that you and me are in Christ.

Let's bow for a moment and ask God to help us as we look at this passage together. Well, Father, what a great joy that here in this place in Plumstead, St. Mark's, and all over our country this morning, the Bible is openly opened.

There's no fear or intimidation of being arrested by publicly living our lives to you as Christians. And I pray, Father, that as we read here, we'll be reminded of that, the privilege that we have to share your gospel freely without any fear.

[ 4 : 24 ] And while we do that, Father, we think of places where they do not have this opportunity. That, Lord, you will strengthen our brothers and sisters in those difficult areas, that they will learn to love you, even if it's difficult and challenging, but that they will go on going on because they know that the only place of refuge is found in you.

Help us now, Father, as we look at this passage in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, when you look at the whole letter, the second letter of Paul, it's easy to see that Paul was a bit stressed.

There were a lot of concerns. But if you look at it, which we don't have time to do this morning, from the beginning of the book right up to, say, about chapter 9, you see his concerns, but you also see that Paul loves and really cares for these brothers in Corinth.

But from chapter 10 to the end of 2 Corinthians, you see that Paul was really agitated because these people will never give up. You know, they looked down at him.

There were these other preachers of the gospel who were perhaps not even Christians, but they were boasting because they were going around with letters saying that, hey, look, I've got all the right to preach.

[ 5 : 50 ] And they looked down at Paul. They said, well, you are easily intimidated. You are not bold when you are with people. Only when you are away and sitting in your boardroom, where there were no boardrooms at that time, but sitting in your boardroom and writing these letters, you seem to be very strong and very confident.

But they also thought that, well, you are not really spiritual. You don't have visions to see what God is telling you to lead his people.

But these are the people who are not in line with Christ, who are not in line with God's word. Well, as we begin to look at this passage, just a couple of questions that I want us to perhaps think about, especially as we look at this aroma of Christ.

We are the aroma of Christ. How should we look at ourselves in Christ? What are the pictures given to us that we can fully appreciate our status in Christ Jesus?

Apostle Paul often gives us beautiful pictures of our condition before we came to Christ and once we belonged to Christ. In this section of 2 Corinthians 2, Paul is going to describe more beautifully the pictures of who we are by describing who he was before Christ and what of him became when he began to follow Christ.

[ 7 : 19 ] One of the reasons this is important is because this helps you and me in our own distress, in our own challenges or whatever difficulties that we face, maybe at work or neighborhood or family, knowing that we are comforted by this knowledge of knowing that we are slaves for Christ.

I know that we don't like to use that word slaves because of the way that that word is used, but Paul saw himself as a slave of Christ.

And for him, it brought him a great joy, confidence, because he knew this Christ. Here's another question for us.

What aroma do we have as Christians? I'm not talking about those nice deodorants that we go to the shops and spray around us, but I'm talking about our lives.

How do we live our lives as Christians? I'm sure that you know of this man, Mr. Bean. I didn't enjoy him very much, but my kids were very young and they would like us to watch Mr. Bean all the time.

[ 8 : 38 ] And there was one time when he was going to meet the Queen and he was making sure that everything is right, even his smell. You know, though he was exaggerating things a little bit, but he wanted to make sure that nothing smells in a way that will repel this visit of his, you know, the Queen from him.

And you know all the stuff that Mr. Bean will do in order to make sure that he smells nice. This is not about that smell here, but it's the smell of being in Christ and knowing Christ.

Well, there are three things quickly that we look at here as we break this passage together. The first two verses, 12 and 13, they show us Paul's concern. Concern for the church in Corinth, but also right at the end of this chapter, verse 17, there's another concern there.

Well, the first concern in verse 12 and 13, when I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, my spirit was not addressed because I did not find my brother Titus there.

So I took leave of them and went to Macedonia. Why Paul was so stressed about not seeing Titus there? Well, when we read further in this chapter, in this book, but also interpreters, they tell us that he was sent, Titus was sent with a letter.

[ 10 : 12 ] And it was quite a strong letter. You know, Paul as an apostle, writing to his beloved church, and trying to correct their ways and straightening up. It was an angry letter, but it was not done in an angry spirit.

He cared. He loved these believers because he wants these believers to be like him in this procession that we'll see in a moment, to live that life of being in Christ.

Then, although the door was open, was wide open, and it seems that the Lord was blessing the ministry there in Troas, Paul was disturbed in his spirit.

And he left there to go and find Titus. That was the first concern. He was concerned about Titus, he was concerned about the Corinthians, he was concerned about his relationship with the Christians, the believers in Corinth.

But another concern that we see here, which is really just a very small window to see how Paul was stressed when he was writing this letter.

[ 11 : 30 ] The one is just at the end of this chapter when he says, for we are not like so many peddlers of God's word. We'll come back to this at the end, but maybe just sit here and without being judgmental of our Christians out there, brothers and sisters, but we are living in times when I grew up as a young boy in the village and I lived some of that life in the townships, we never heard what we have today in the townships and in the royal villages where these different kinds of ministries just spring up and within a few months they've got more than a thousand following.

But the sad thing, brothers and sisters, is that it's not about Christ. People are not showing Christ as the only way, the truth, and the life.

even your beautiful young pastor here was trained and has got good theology at GWC. I'm sure he doesn't stand here every Sunday and talk about himself, but it's pointing people to God and to Christ.

And that was another burden that Paul heard to say there are these people. If you look carefully towards the end of the chapter, those three chapters, 10, 11, 12, 13, you can see what was going on there in Corinth.

But the second thing that Paul does here, I like Peter, so please if I say Peter, forget it, it's not Peter, it's Paul. But the second thing that Paul is doing here, and he's painting this nice thing in a picture, two pictures for us, but the first picture that I want us to just look at the moment, it's mentioned there in verse 14, a triumphal procession.

[ 13 : 33 ] Well, I haven't seen a lot of these kind of processions, but the commentaries and other writers, they think that Paul took this from a Roman victory, that when the Roman army has gone out to fight and defeated those other countries, they will come back marching in Rome, and the leader of the army will be right in front, and all other soldiers, there will be a big celebration.

People will be marching through the streets of Rome, but in this procession, in this march, there will be people who are rejoicing, who are beating drums, because they've won, but they were also captives, people were defeated, they will be captured.

There were also animals that would have taken the spoils from where they have defeated their enemies. And these writers, they say, well, this aroma, in this triumphal procession, those people that have been captured, most of them will end up being killed.

and all the smell of animals. So Paul is saying, well, we are in this triumphal procession. And using this picture, Paul says that he too is in that procession, is in that parade.

Why? Because he sees himself as that captured slave for Christ when he conquered for him the victory over his sin.

[ 15 : 18 ] but Paul rejoices because he is also a soldier, one of the people that have been taken and recruited in this army. And this is a different one from the Roman, because this is the army for the Lord.

Although in this procession that Paul talks about here, we don't really have exact animals being slaughtered anymore today, and especially as Christians, we look at the moment what Paul, why Paul is using this picture of an aroma for Christ.

But if we stop there for a moment and think about ourselves, and think how a few weeks ago we've been celebrating the Easter weekend, we've been celebrating the Passover, we've been celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, and you and me seated here, if we have come to that place in our lives where we surrender to him as our Lord and Savior, if we have truly come to that, we know that that death of Christ on the cross was my death, was your death.

But we know that the story doesn't end there with our Lord. He was raised again. So let's listen again to this verse, verse 14, how Paul begins, but thanks be to God.

So although Paul had this burden, although maybe Paul was stressed about what was happening around him, but Paul learns to look at what God is doing, to look at what God has done for him.

[ 17 : 09 ] Paul turns his heart to thanksgiving in his distress. He changes his focus from difficulties to God and giving God thanks.

Paul says that he gives thanks to God because in Christ we are led in a triumphal procession. Well, what did Paul mean? Look again at this verse.

I think it's a beautiful verse. It says, but thanks be to God who always lead us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession.

And the verse doesn't end there. And uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. So this captured Paul, unlike those in Rome, the love of God, the grace of God, it brings you and me.

We have been praying for missionaries and you are that church here that supports and prays for missionaries. And you yourselves, you have ministry that the Lord has given to you at St.

[ 18 : 25 ] Mark's Church. the outreaches, I think I heard about your outreaches, your own outreaches here. Going out to the neighborhood, telling people about this Lord Jesus and not just waiting upon the pastor and those who are few to say, well, it's their job, we pay them to do this.

No, it's not about the pastor, it's not about the denomination, it's not about the leaders in the church, it's about what Christ did for you. And you and me, we are in this wonderful parade with the Lord.

You might not see it because this is in spiritual ways, but you and me who are found in Christ, are in Christ, do we then live our lives intentionally?

but the second thing that Paul comes to, the second picture, which is twofold, is this picture of the aroma of Christ. And again, if you look at that verse carefully, verse 14, thanks be to God who in Christ always lead us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

Look at verse 15, we are the aroma of Christ to God. So this sweet aroma, this picture that he brings now, the first one is this wonderful procession, the second one is this sweet smell, this odor, this fragrance.

[ 19 : 54 ] He is using that language, this picture, that you and me are that nice smell. There are two things that he mentions here towards the end of these three verses, that this sweet aroma brings life.

death. But at the same time, it brings death. How this sweet aroma brings death, let's begin by that one.

This sweet aroma brings death because when you go out and tell people about Jesus Christ who died for them, and how that same Lord Jesus Christ helps us to live our lives as Christians, you know, people look at this and say, there's no way that I want this Christ.

I was a young man many years ago working in the hospital back at home in Gwazulu Natal, and we work with many other people from different religions, and there was a Hindu young man who was very angry with us Christians, and every time when we try to just live our lives as Christians will come and challenge us.

He will say, he will come and point his finger like this in our face, and say, you Christians, you are cowards! You go and sin there, and you want that poor man to pay for your sins, because he didn't understand, and unfortunately, if his time comes that he dies without making his life right with the Lord, he is lost forever.

[ 21 : 40 ] So that's you and me living our lives intentionally, and people rejecting you. They are not rejecting you. They are rejecting Christ. And this is really a very serious thing.

This is a burden, because it's not our intention that people end up in eternal death. We want everyone to hear the gospel. We want everyone to add an opportunity, beauty.

But that same aroma brings death to those who reject him till their death. But what about the other side of this picture of sweet aroma?

Those people that notice you at work. Those people, when they make those silly jokes, those dirty jokes at work, wherever you are working, and you do not partake in those jokes, because you live your life intentionally as a Christian.

Those people that whom you have an opportunity to tell them about Christ, to die for their sins, and they are willing to see it and listen. Those people who at the end are attracted by this life of Jesus, and they see the truth, the truth of God's word, and they want to surrender, they want to follow this Christ.

[ 23 : 07 ] It's those people that this wonderful sweet smell brings life to them. And you see, brothers and sisters, it does show, it does say to us, we cannot just keep our faith to ourselves.

It does say to us, every one of us, has an opportunity. I remember one day I was very new in the office, director, and I was traveling in Jobek, and the guys in the personal department, they gave me this name to go and interview in Jobek, and this man came, and he was 78 years old.

Wow! At 78 years old, he still wanted to go to Thailand. He still wanted to become a missionary. So it doesn't matter whether you are young, at school, at university, this sweet smell spreads over.

But I just want to warn us here, dear friends, I know another friend of mine, a colleague who was from those days when I was a pastor in Kailisha. I worked with a lot of other pastors and missions, and this one, I'm not going to mention the church, the name of the church, but he would say to me, secret, only use words when it's necessary.

So in other words, hey, the works, what you do is more important only when it's necessary use your words.

[ 24 : 47 ] I don't think that is right. We need to tell people about this hope that we have in Christ. We need to let people see this Lord Jesus, and we explain.

One love story quickly. In Bangladesh, when I got there, they were talking about discipling people before they started evangelizing them, and coming from South Africa, I didn't understand what they mean by that.

In fact, I was a little bit uncomfortable with that, that you can disciple people before they're Christians. But later on, I realized that they lived their lives so intentionally, that the banglors, who are not Christians, will ask them, but why?

Even if we provoke you, why do you keep quiet? Why do you keep a smile? And at that stage, the government will not throw them in jail when their respond will say, it's because of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ, it's because of what he has done for me. And then people will go on and see the light of Jesus Christ. Sadly, another side of us as God's children, as followers, is when we live lives that repel people from Christ.

[ 26 : 12 ] Christ, when we live our lives carelessly, when we do things that the world see as worldly, so that is dangerous for us Christians.

It doesn't show Christ in us. Well, there are a couple of verses here which Paul confirms. We don't have time to look at all of them this morning, but that shows what it means to be an aroma, to be this sweet smell of Christ.

Well, the last thing that I want us to look at here is towards the end of chapter 16 into verse 16, that last bit. He ends verse 16 with a question, and the question is verse 16, who is sufficient for these things?

The answer is implied there in verse 17, but further when we read further, we continue to read further, Paul is very clear that it's not in ourselves.

The sufficiency is not, it's not even a good theology that we get from theological colleges including GWC. Our sufficiency is not in our ways trying very hard to live holy lives.

[ 27 : 37 ] I'm not saying that we mustn't strive to be more and more like Christ. That's a journey that we take of being more Christ-like every day of our lives to grow in that.

But it's the grace of God that he has given us. It's the truth of his word that lives in us. It's the love of Christ that lives in us.

So in ourselves, there's nothing to boast. Paul says that. But we boast on the work of the cross. And later on towards the end of this book, I think it's in chapter 12, when he speaks about the thorn in the flesh, the Lord comes and says, in your weakness, my, please help me, amen, amen, my grace is sufficient.

that shifts it away from us. It helps us to point to Christ. But a couple of things that are very important for us here.

In verse 17, for we are not like so many peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sights of God, we speak in Christ.

[ 29 : 03 ] He mentioned three things. The sincerity, being in Christ, but also commissioned by God and in the sight of God, to live our lives in the sight of God.

We speak in Christ. Before he comes to this, he says, we are not peddlers. I look at this word in the dictionary, you know, English is not my first language, and I just wanted to make sure what Paul is saying here, when he says we are not peddlers.

And there was a wonderful, beautiful picture in the dictionary of a man selling small things. Sometimes, you know, there's some dishonesty about his deal in that picture that I saw.

people. And Paul is saying, no, we are not that. We are not in ministry for money. We're sitting here.

I mentioned before, earlier, that there are churches, there are brothers and sisters. I don't know whether they are true believers or not, but for them to be a pastor in a church is business.

[ 30 : 21 ] you know, one joke with me and Maureen, when we were in Jerusalem, he said to me, bring that all from Jerusalem. You'll make a lot of money. You will not need to go around and raise support.

I think he was joking. But brothers, that is true. We are sitting here Sunday after Sunday in the midweek, being pointed to Christ, and there are thousands out there that don't have this wonderful opportunity.

There are people who see an opportunity. of trading with the word for their own benefits, whether it's money or popularity or other things.

But Paul closes this chapter in these three words. Sincerity commissioned by God in the sight of God.

God. And he says we speak in Christ. I like this. Paul likes to use this word in Christ, through Christ, in Christ, all the time. Even we missionaries sit here.

[ 31 : 26 ] I see the other SIM are sitting there at the back as well. Even we in our ministry or mission work. Is Christ our banner?

because it's not as I am. I might be wearing this shirt to say as I am, but I will not sell this shirt for you to become a Christian.

But it's when we surrender our lives and come to know him as our Lord and Savior. Well, just as we end here, just a couple of thoughts that I want to leave with us here.

what are your concerns? Are there any troubles in your own life? If you are truly a child of God, do you allow God to lead you in the midst of all of that?

Do you allow God to continue to shine in your life? I've heard of testimonies of people who have suffered, suffered and die, but they die beautifully because they die shining for Christ.

[ 32 : 46 ] They are that sweet aroma. But secondly, sometimes we are not perfect people. We falter.

But I want us to stop from it and think about that moment, what happens when the world see you. They will condemn you.

They will say this is their Christ. But there's a more beautiful thing. There's a more beautiful thing for me. I'm standing in front of you here. I'm not perfect. But the beautiful thing is to live our lives openly.

and if I've made a mistake, if I've made anything wrong, and to correct that thing with that person, if I do that, the Holy Spirit is living in me, is convicting me.

I don't just leave it like that. I make man's, I correct things. So my brothers and sisters, it's just a wonderful privilege that we are Christ followers.

[ 33 : 51 ] we live for him wherever we go. Can we live our lives, not like Mr. Bean, to make sure that I brush my teeth in the morning, I make sure that I done it well, but to ask for the Lord and for his help, to be that sweet aroma that will draw people, the non-believers, those people are not in the church because they do not belong to him, to see Christ.

May the Lord bless us as we continue to ponder about this wonderful picture of being sweet aroma. Thank you, brother.