

How Well is Your Smell? (2 Cor 2:15)

The Chicago newspaper carried an article about a busboy in a Chinese restaurant who went to a bank to get change for \$500.

The restaurant needed \$250 in coins and \$250 in one-dollar bills. However, instead of grabbing one dollar bills, the teller accidentally grabbed a stack of \$100 bills and gave the young man \$250 in coins and \$25,000 dollars.

The young man noticed the error immediately, but instead of saying something about it he decided to keep the money.

He then went to another bank, got \$250 in one-dollar bills and returned to the restaurant, thinking that nobody would find out what happened.

When the bank teller discovered her mistake she couldn't remember what the young man looked like who received the 100 dollar bills. But she did remember one thing. She remembered how he smelled.

She knew from his scent that he worked in a Chinese restaurant and not only did she remember the aroma, but she was also able to pin point the exact restaurant where the busboy worked.

With the help of the police, she located the restaurant, identified the busboy and recovered the money.

The question I want us to think about today is “How well is your smell? I think that most of us would agree that how we smell is very important. Sometimes on special occasions I pick up the cologne Kari bought me 10 years ago and give myself a good spray in order to improve my scent. In the same way the N.T. comes to us and says that Christians are to spray the sweet aroma of Christ.

In 2 Cor 2:15, Paul said, ““For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing”

In other words, there should be something about us that radiates our love for Jesus. When I read this passage one of the things I wondered about was “What is it that made Paul think about smells?” In verse 14, Paul expresses how thankful he is to God because of the good news he received from Titus concerning the church at Corinth.

He was supposed to meet with Titus in Ephesus, but Titus didn't make it. When they finally meet, Paul feels so overjoyed about what the gospel has done through him that he describes it as a victory parade.

To fully understand what that parade was like, we've got to travel back to the days of the Roman empire. After a great Roman victory, the soldiers were welcomed home with

great celebration.

The city would have a victory parade and while those soldiers were riding on their horses they were draped with countless flowers.

In addition to the flowers, was the fragrance of burning incense. If you and I were cheering in that crowd there would be a sweet smell in the air. However, towards the end of that parade we would also see captured prisoners of war, who were stumbling along with their wrists tied behind their backs, ankles chained and heads bowed low.

That smell in the air was sweet to the victors, but for those prisoners of war it was the smell of death. The fragrance of flowers and incense was the smell of defeat. For those captives those smells signaled only one thing. "We're headed towards the gallows."

The same aroma that made many glad, made others gag. From this image Paul brings out 2 spiritual truths. He has two similarities between those who are captives of Christ and those who are not. For those of us who are Christians,

I. We are part of God's victory parade:

Look at verse 14, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place."

The gospel of Christ and knowledge about Jesus was being spread to every place. It was a lot like those Roman victory parades. Knowledge about the Lord's victory over death was being spread all over the city. The early church became to God the sweet aroma of Christ. When Jesus brought salvation to the world it was the greatest victory the world has ever known.

For Paul and all of those who were in his company, it was the fragrance of life. (vs. 16) What a privilege it is to deliver the wonderful message about Jesus. That's why Paul says in verse 16, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Who can do it without trembling?

Sharing the gospel of Christ is the greatest/humbling work on earth and all of us can do it. All of us have the ability to attract others to heaven and it's all because of our aroma. So again, I want to ask the question, how do you smell?

I'm not talking about whether or not you showered today. I'm not talking about whether or not you remembered to put on deodorant. As the church of Christ, we want people to join us in the victory parade to heaven. However, in order for that happen we have put on the aroma of Christ.

I want to give you some ways we can improve our smell.

#1. Speaking encouraging words to someone who is down.

Have you ever had one of those days where you were so depressed that it made you sick to your stomach? Then one of your brothers or sisters in Christ says something that lifts up your spirit. Think about Paul, in the beginning of his faith. None of the other Christians wanted to be near him, but then Barnabas comes along and does what only a Barnabas can do.

With encouraging words, Paul became accepted into the church and dedicated his life to preaching the gospel to the world. Our words have an aroma.

Eph 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."

How thankful I am, for the Christians here, who have words that edify and brings grace to my ears.

#2. Our prayers give a sweet aroma.

In Rev 8, the prayers of God's people are described as "The smoke of incense."

Every time we pray for the sick, pray for the lost, pray for the grieving, lonely, that prayer goes up to heaven as a sweet smelling aroma to God.

#3. Writing someone a card is a sweet aroma of Christ:

We may not think that's a big deal, but you would be amazed at how many times I'll go over to visit with someone and they will have all those cards sitting on their dressers and tables. Those cards have more than just words. They say to that person who is sick and hurting, "The church is thinking about me."

#4. We spray the aroma of Christ every time we proclaim the gospel:

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that success is not based on numbers. When we look at the early church, their success was based upon preaching and teaching people about Christ.

If we can give everyone in our community the opportunity to learn and hear God's plan for salvation that's a victory. Jesus simply says "preach the word and the sow the seed."

I'm sure if we got our heads together, all of us could come up with an impressive list. Doing good deeds that glorifies God (Mat 5:16). Having a Christ like attitude (Phil 2:5-8) Let it be our goal to have an Aroma that glories God and shows to the world how much we love Jesus. I now want to look at Paul's second point.

II. There are some people who will never enjoy the way we smell:

There are some smells that make you go Oh and there are other smells that make you go OO? I don't know how many of you have allergies. I know for me, I enjoy the smell of flowers, but I'm allergic to pollen and grass. For me to smell a bunch of flowers is death to my nose.

Look at 2 Cor 2:15 and 16. "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life."

For those of us who are in Christ, it's a wonderful smell. Jesus died and rose from the dead so that we can eternal life. I would like to think that's the kind fragrance everybody wants. Unfortunately, that's not the case. "To one we are the aroma of death leading to death." What's the worse smell you can think of? A few days ago my girls bought a jelly bean game.

In that candy you might get really good flavors like Coconut, orange and strawberry. Or you might the taste of moldy cheese, stinky socks, rotten eggs, dog food. My wife never did get a good flavor.

That's the way some people view Jesus.

They look at the gospel as an unpleasant, offensive smell of death. Why? I think I know the answer. If you would rather serve self then serve others, being a Christian isn't going to be appealing. To one person, the gospel gives freedom and clean conscience. To another person the gospel is a message of enslavement because they want to live like the world lives.

The same gospel that melts the butter hardens the clay. It will either soften your heart or harden it. My Mom loves perfume. I don't know what kind she wears, but my dad loves it. However, for me and Kari it's hard to take in. It's too much. For some the fragrance of Christ is the fragrance of life, but for others it's the fragrance of death.

The same gospel that saves one person condemns the other. Can we see how this goes back to Paul's image of a victory parade? It's like those captured prisoners of war. Good smell was bad smell.

Every time we preach and teach the gospel God is glorified.

Some believe that God is glorified only when folks are baptized. But this is not what Paul says here. Paul says God is glorified (and pleased) by the preaching of the gospel, period, whether men believe it or reject it.

That sweet smell of the gospel (to God) is the smell of death unto death for those who are perishing in their sins, while it is the smell of life unto life for those who are being saved.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is offensive to unbelievers. Using Paul's analogy here, the

gospel “stinks” to them, smelling like death, which is the exact outcome for those who reject Him. But to those who are being saved, the gospel is like perfume, attracting them to Jesus and leading them to eternal life.

When talking about the different attitudes people have concerning the cross of Jesus.

Paul said “It’s a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but for us it is the power and wisdom of God.” 1 Cor 1:22)

Peter said, for those who believe in Jesus He is precious but for others He is a stumbling block and a rock of offence.” (1 Peter 2:7-8).

Not everybody is going to enjoy the sweet aroma of Christ because of our values. That means we’re aren’t going to listen to speech with bad language. We’re not going to engage in sinful activities.

For us, Christ brings life, while for others, Christ brings death. They don’t see Jesus as being Precious, but for us Christ dying in our place is the fragrance of life. Just like Roses don’t need to apologize for their smell even if some people are allergic to it. ***We Are The Aroma Of Christ*** with no apologies. Will some react as though they are allergic to us? Maybe! But keep on spraying that sweet aroma.

Close: As we get ready to face a new week, let us think about our smell.

Let’s live in a such a way that God can scoop us up with His heavenly ladle, take a whiff and say, Ahhh!, “The church here in Camp Hill smells right to me.”

Let’s diligently study the word of God so we can increasingly become the aroma of life to the body of Christ and a warning of death to those who reject Him.

After church service one Sunday morning, a woman who had been HELPED BY THE MESSAGE wanted the preacher to know about it, but she messed up her words. She said, Preacher, your sermon today was exactly what I needed! It was like water to a drowning man.” I would hope no-one would say that about my sermon.

When we think about the gospel it has 2 effects. For one, it’s life giving water to a person dying of thirst. But for the other it’s like giving water to a drowning man.”

The gospel is good news to those who accept it but bad news to those who reject it. Today if you are not a Christian you have the opportunity to join God’s victory parade.