

**TITLE: A RELIGIOUS ODOR (HOW DO YOU SMELL TO OTHERS?)**

**TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17**

**INTRO:** In **ch. 1** Paul talked about comfort & consistency in Christianity, then applied these to the situation with the penitent member (**2:1-11**). Having spoken of his travel plans in **ch. 1**, he returns to this in **2:12-13**, telling how he left Ephesus for Troas, then on to Macedonia when he didn't find Titus there. In our text this morning, we see two main points: **1)** we triumph in Christ, and **2)** we make manifest the savor of his knowledge (most of our time will be spent on this one).

**I. GOD OFFERS VICTORY TO US (v. 14a):**

*Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ....*

- A. In spite of persecutions (such as what he's mentioned in **1:8**), God not only always comforts His people (**1:3-5**), He always causes us to triumph ("leads us in triumph"—ASV, NKJV) *in Christ*. This triumph is **only** in Christ (which is where we therefore must remain in order to experience this triumph).
- B. **Rom 8:37-39**—"We are more than conquerors through him that loved us...Neither death nor life nor angels...shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We conquer through God's love, and we triumph through God. But again, both of these passages make it clear that this victory is **ONLY** *in Christ!*
- C. This promise was the motivation for Paul to keep going, even when persecuted. And it should also be the motivation for us to keep going! (This motivation is about to be applied to evangelism in **v. 14b-17**.)

**II. GOD OFFERS VICTORY THROUGH US (v. 14b-17):**

A. (**v. 14b**) *God...maketh manifest the savor (smell, odor) of his knowledge by us in every place.*

- 1. First, this makes it clear that God *does* make His knowledge known to the world. He didn't create us, then forget us! He inspired men like Paul (gave His words to them – **2 Pet 1:20-21**), and they wrote them down for us.
- 2. "In every place, God makes the *smell* of His knowledge known *by us!*" This verse is a vivid statement about the great commission & our role as evangelists.
  - a. **By us** – initially Paul is talking about himself & his traveling companions. But as we take what Paul & the other NT writers gave us, & apply it our own lives & teaching, this statement then can & should be applied to us as well.
  - b. So how do *you* smell? With all our perfumes, colognes, & deodorants, it's pretty clear that the **last** thing in the world that we as humans want to smell like is humans! We can be so paranoid about the physical odors that might be emanating from our bodies, yet completely uninterested in the *spiritual* odor we emit.
  - c. In a figurative sense, when people are around us they should be able to *smell* God (His knowledge, the things *He* knows & wants *us* to know, the things He wants us to do, etc.). People should know these things because of us – because of our godly actions (& reactions), and because of our willingness to teach others the truth (e.g., when you start a new job, how long before people "smell" you?! This is *our* responsibility; but what about *their's*?)
- B. (**v. 15**) *For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:*
  - 1. **To God** we're a sweet fragrance of Christ – this is *God's* doing; it's one of His purposes for His people. Jesus lived on Earth as the image of God (**Col 1:15; Heb 1:3**); He spoke only the things God told Him to (**John 12:49-50**). When we say & do **only** those things that Christ (& His apostles) gave us (e.g., **Col 3:17**), then as Christ is the image of God, we're the image of Christ – to God and the world!
  - 2. *In them that are saved, and in them that perish.* We're the sweet smell of Christ to *everyone* – literally "to the ones being saved & the ones being destroyed (dying)." These are in present tense, indicating something in the process of happening (discussed further in **v. 16**).
- C. (**v. 16a**) *To the one we're the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life.*
  - 1. *Death unto death* (to them we smell like death) – not *life* unto death (as in physical life to physical death – something we *all* experience). The ones who "are perishing" (v. 15) are spiritually dead in sin *now* (**Col 2:13a; Rom 3:23**), and although they have the opportunity to be saved, refuse to do so, and therefore will experience the 2<sup>nd</sup> death at the judgment (**Rev 20:14**). By our Christian lives (actions *and* teaching), we are the smell of spiritual death to these people. This sounds horrible. But the point is that, as Christians, our actions condemn them to ultimate spiritual death. Of course, we long for them to change & "smell" the life!
  - 2. *Life unto life* – These are those who believe & obey. Although we too were once spiritually dead in sin, through our belief & obedience, we've been made alive through Christ (**Eph 2:4-6; Col 2:10-13; Rom 6:16-17**). We've been given spiritual life *here & now*, with the promise of *eternal* life in Heaven (life unto life).
  - 3. We're the savor/fragrance/smell of Christ (and the knowledge of God) to both categories – the saved *and* the lost. There is a huge encouragement in this passage: we are God's messengers (Christ's "fragrance") to everyone, even the lost. God knows most will reject Him (and us). So when it happens, don't let it get you down. Your fragrance hasn't changed!!
- D. (**v. 16b**) *And who is sufficient for these things?* Who is sufficient (competent, adequate-NAS)? This is very humbling, isn't it?! It's nice to know that even the apostle Paul felt inadequate for this task. But it doesn't mean he didn't accept it! He recognized the seriousness of this calling. This is **NOT** a part-time job! If you fall down on the job (i.e., are unconcerned with your influence & teaching), you can cause a lot of damage to others (v. 17).
- E. (**v. 17**) *For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.* Here Paul picks up the topic he introduced briefly in **1:17**, namely his defense of himself against false accusations from the "part" of the church that didn't acknowledge him (**1:14; 3:1; ch. 10-13**).

**CONCLUSION:** **1)** We're all probably concerned enough about our *physical* appearance & smell that we roll or spray on our deodorants, perfumes, etc. each morning before leaving the house. How concerned are we about our *spiritual* appearance & smell? Do you prepare as well for how the world will smell you spiritually? We're supposed to be the smell of God to the world around us. Are we? **2)** If so, remember you'll smell like life or death, depending on the "smeller's" attitude. All we can do is keep living faithfully!