

“FOR WE ARE A FRAGRANCE OF CHRIST TO GOD...”

(2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16)

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BIBLE STUDY

So, I open with a confession...what God had for us to learn through this study is much different than what I had in mind when I first approached this Scripture. It was a good reminder that we need to approach God ready to hear what He has to say and not what we assume He’s saying...I pray that as we proceed we will open ourselves to the truths He has for us to explore and apply to our lives.

Let’s dig in, start with reading 2 Corinthians 2:14-16:

“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. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death and to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?” (NASB)

TRIUMPH IN CHRIST

A bit of a history lesson is required, because it will help us to resonate with what Paul’s readers would have instantly understood when they read the phrase “who always leads us in His triumph in Christ.” The language evokes the picture of a Roman general parading through the streets of Rome in triumph. This event was a spectacle reserved for a military leader who had achieved significant victory. The procession was actually led by the members of the Roman senate then trumpeters, followed by the captives from the conquered land – this included kings, and general-these were most certainly on the way to their death. Following the captives was the conquering general in a chariot drawn by four horses, followed by the troops he had led to victory. Because this processional ended by offering sacrifices to Jupiter the smells of incense were on the wind.

Paul clearly reminds his readers that God is victor. Christ’s death and resurrection has restored relationship between God and man and has achieved ultimate and absolute victory over sin and death. That sounds great, but it’s 2011– what do a Roman general and triumphal marches, and victory over sin and death have to do with looming bills and troubled kids and declining economies and addiction and violence? **What does this truth mean for your life today? How does this truth affect the way you walk through your everyday life?**

I would challenge you that it does and should matter. Whatever life throws at you, God is bigger. Whatever battle you are facing God has won – and in Christ that victory is yours!

THE SWEET AROMA

The incense of those triumphal marches would have wafted on the breeze, in and among the crowds of onlookers, in and through the captives and the victors alike.

The language Paul uses is strongly connected to the language of sacrificial offerings.

Read together the following Scripture, what does each say about aroma? What is the connection to sacrifice?

- **1 Samuel 15:22** _____

- **Ezekiel 20:41** _____

- **Philippians 4:18** _____

- **Ephesians 5: 1-2** _____

In our key scripture Paul says, ***“and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God...”*** Our sweet aroma to God is a direct result of Christ’s once-for-all, redeeming sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection. We are the treasure that has been brought back from the clutches of sin and death.

Read Romans 12:1-2. What are we to do? Why? _____

We used to have a rosemary bush in our yard. All we had to do was brush up against it and the fragrance would be on our clothes and skin. It was even more powerful when the needles were broken or crushed.

In presenting ourselves as sacrifices to God, we are presenting ourselves to be consumed by Him and for Him. That will mean allowing ourselves to be broken by Him so that His aroma can be released “through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

And then in presenting ourselves as living sacrifices, we can present ourselves for service to a world that needs to know Jesus.

THE STINK OF DEATH, THE AROMA OF LIFE

The scent of incense in those triumphal processions was the same to all those participating, but the implications were different. For those who were captives it invoked an awareness of their impending death, the next they could look forward to was slavery. For those who were conquerors it represented the sweet smell of victory. **Read 2 Corinthians 2:15-16 again in light of what we've learned.** Jesus used two analogies to describe His church in the world, the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Both change agents.

What's your fragrance in the world around you? Do you live in a such a way that you draw others to the life that they can have in Christ? Or not? _____

General Albert Orsborn penned the following words:

"My life must be Christ's broken bread.

My love His outpoured wine,

A cup o'erfilled, a table spread

Beneath His name and sign,

That other souls, refreshed and fed,

May share His life through mine.

My all is in the Master's hands

For him to bless and break;

Beyond the brook His winepress stands

And thence my way I take.

Resolved the whole of love's demands

To give, for his dear sake.

**Lord, let me share that grace of thine
Wherewith thou didst sustain
The burden of the fruitful vine.
The gift of buried grain.
Who dies with thee, O Word divine,
Shall rise and live again.”**

I read the following, “Christ undertook a battle not rightly His; we share in a triumph not rightly ours.” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary) **If this is so, and I believe it is, what’s our response?** A life surrendered in sacrifice to God, for the salvation of the world...if the world is too much to consider how about a life surrendered in sacrifice to God, for the salvation of your neighbors...your family.