

The Fragrance of Christ

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians 2, verse 14.

2 Corinthians 1, verse 15.

We've got an ability to recognise odours, to recognise smells. And our brain is linking that sensation to memory and to emotion.

There's an aroma that triggers memories often about past people and events. Places give off a certain smell. And I went around with the Glen 20 this morning to make sure it was a nice smell for you when you came into the church.

But sometimes when you go to a foreign country, it's a big culture shock. And part of that culture shock is all the smells and fragrances that are around you, the new odours, as well as the lack of familiar ones.

[1 : 35] And as a younger man, I remember going back to my homeland, England, that I'd left for some years. And we stepped back into this old church, this old congregational church.

And the smell of the building brought back memories to me. And it wasn't so much the church service, I don't think. It was that I had Cub Scouts in the same building. And this is the smell of the building brought back those memories of my childhood.

And maybe for you, when you have a smell, when you sense a smell, maybe it's the smell of coffee. And it just evokes that feeling, that emotion. Or potpourri. I know my wife's got lots of smelly things in our house.

Things that are nice smells. And maybe it's the smell of bread baking. You know, that smell just pervades the atmosphere, doesn't it? And when I walk through the front door of my home, an odour molecule lands on the nerve receptors in my nose.

And my brain identifies the odour of my wife. Oh no, my wife's cooking. And the smell of my dog. You know, some smells are nice, some smells are not so nice.

[2 : 44] And our brain remembers something when we have a smell. When we smell that fragrance, that scent in the air. There's a reaction. Especially maybe when it's the fragrance of our favourite food.

When we walk through the door and, oh, Julie spent hours and hours slaving over a hot stove. And making that beautiful meal. And smells were part of the Old Testament act of worship too. Smells. God smelled the smoke of an animal. Now, without being irreverent, you know, the smell of meat cooking. Maybe it smelled like a barbecue. You know, it was just a beautiful smell of that lamb as it was cooking away in effect.

That beautiful smell, a beautiful fragrance. God smelled the fragrance of the people's worship as they gave the sacrifice of their firstborn lamb. And the smell, it was an odour of a sweet smell that God smelled.

And one of the first things that Noah did when he stepped off the ark, he sacrificed animals. And the smoke, the aroma of those burning sacrifices was smelled by God, it says.

[3 : 49] As a smelling, as a soothing kind of aroma, a fragrance. And likewise too, when the people worshipped in the temple and the tabernacle, there was a burning of incense.

There was a burning of incense. There was a fragrance of their collective worship. As Aaron had a smell too, as he placed the incense on the altar at morning and evening in Exodus 30 verse 7. And he went home with the scent of his time of God on his clothes. That smell of the worship that he had entered into God's presence. And there's also a certain kind of smell of our faith, of our worship.

The godly aroma and fragrance of the Lord Jesus in you and about you. And back to our text here, in 2 Corinthians 2, it talks about how there's a fragrance.

And it's like a triumphant march. There's a triumph in Christ. There's a savour, a smell that is occurring. And the Corinthians would relate this kind of picture here of how in those days the

Roman general and his troops would march into the city of Rome, they would return to their homeland, walking through the streets.

[5 : 00] And the crowds were there, lining the streets. And as part of this event, they used to burn fragrant incense along the roads that they walked.

And the soldiers had incense burning. And it was a very pungent, a very, all the senses were involved in this celebration, in this victory march.

As the Romans came back in triumph. As the crowds would line this parade route. And the Romans would parade their defeated captives too. As they would be pulled along behind the victorious chariots.

And it was a way of rubbing the noses in it, in the defeat, in celebrating the victory over their enemies. Literally rubbing their noses in it. The streets would be filled with these burners, these clouds of incense.

The fragrance of victory was spread throughout the cheering crowds. And to those captives, these clouds of incense were the horrible smell of death, of defeat, of their misery.

[6 : 03] But to the victorious Romans, this smell was a wonderful smell of victory. And friends, people, for us today, this morning, church, Christ is the conquering general. He is the all-conquering one.

The conquering prince. And the Lord Jesus leads us in triumphal procession. That's the picture of this text here. Of the triumph of our Lord Jesus in our lives.

And to all people who put their trust in him, have accepted his liberating work. The freedom that Christ brings through Calvary. The freedom from sin and death. We've been freed.

It's a great victorious time. And likewise, too, as memory is reminded by smell, we're reminded by this occasion today as we come around the Lord's table.

There's the sweet smell of the holiness, the victory, the power over evil. The Lord Jesus Christ is that fragrant aroma of life, of victory, as our all-conquering captain of our salvation.

[7 : 00] And Paul says in 2 Corinthians here that Christ always leads us in this triumph, in this victory. And Christians, as we follow him, we can have victory as we follow in his train.

And Ephesians 5.2 has a like verse. It says, walk in love as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.

We look back at the Old Testament altars, at those lambs slain, and we look today and reflect back on Calvary of the Lamb of God slain, don't we? Of the Lamb of God and that savour, that sacrifice that was to God a sweet-smelling savour.

And it makes us think, as we go to various places, do we take that fragrance of Christ with us? Do we take Christ and his presence that we've been in worship, that we've been with the Lord?

When we leave a room as the air fresh, with God's love, that we've had an impact, there's been an influence, there's been an atmosphere about our life in God, our communion with him.

[8 : 03] The savour of Christ, the fragrance of Christ on our lives. But we know that yet, as we preach and witness to some, for some, it'll be a savour, an aroma of death, because they won't want it.

It will be, as Paul writes here, that for some, it's just a smell of death, because they don't want the life that Christ can bring. They refuse that. What do you smell like this morning?

And we could ask that in a polite kind of way. How is your spiritual scent? Have you got the fragrance of Christ about you? So that you're drawing others with that sweetness, with that pleasantness, with that purity, with that Christ-likeness that we should have as his people.

If not, now's a good time to get it right, isn't it? Think of the corruption. I know my rotten dog, when he goes outside, and not meaning to be flippant here at this time, but a dog goes and rolls in something, you think, oh, what's he been doing?

He just stinks. He's this, this, this, and, you know, sometimes the dogs go and roll in dead things, you know, don't they? I know dead bugs and things. And there's death here, but there's life.

[9 : 09] For us that believe there's life, it's the fragrance of life. For an unbeliever, this means nothing. It's something they would not understand. But for us it's a fragrance of his worship, of his act of sacrifice of himself.

And we think of the corruption that is in the world, the smell of death that's in this world. We need to combat that and counteract that by spreading Christ's fragrance, as it were, and overcoming that.

It's like, for one person, a bouquet of flowers can remind someone of a pleasant spring garden. For others it reminds them of a funeral home. You know, for us, communion reminds us of his death, but it reminds us of his life in us and through us.

And we can spread that to others. And it says of the apostles that they had been with Jesus. There was something about them in Acts 4.13, they had been with Jesus.

Won't that be good for people when you leave this place, when you take something of Christ with you through your week ahead, that people will notice when you've had personal prayer time, when you've spent time in the Word through the days ahead, that people will sense that you've been with Jesus.

[10 : 22] There'll be that fragrance of life. There'll be that fragrance of life.