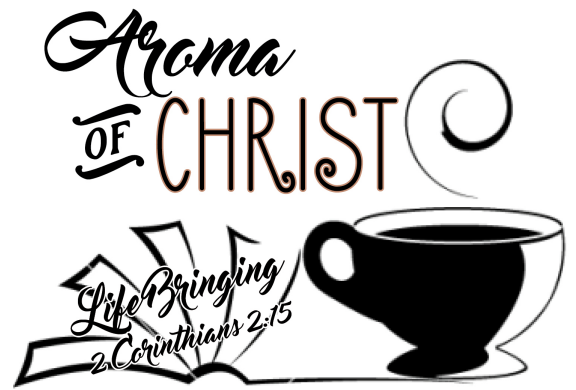


Our senses have a way of stirring up many memories. This is especially true when it comes to our sense of smell. And it seems that our nose does not have a way of filtering out the bad memories from the good. Many different emotions can occur from these memories. Seventy-five percent of our emotions are triggered by smell.¹

So depending on the scent, it may stir up some beautiful and wonderful thoughts – memories that you could sit and ponder on all day.

Or it may bring to mind terrible and ugly memories – sometimes ones that you have stuffed deep down that you had tried to forget even existed. The emotions that we carry with these memories can be very powerful!



Can you remember the last time a scent brought back a memory? Was the scent favorable or displeasing? Was this memory one that you'd like to sit and ponder on all day or rather immediately forget?

Can you think of instances in the Bible that mention a certain fragrance or aroma?

Is there often a correlation between a sweet-smelling scent and a sweet and memorable event? Is the opposite true as well – horrible smell with a difficult time? Could a bad smell just as easily make you recall a good memory? Or a good smell a bad memory? Or maybe some mixed emotions? Example?

In this study, we will hear about a certain aroma. We learn from the apostle Paul what we are to God.

Background

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-22

1. What is the boasting that Paul talks about here?

2. What does he emphasize in verse 12? Why?

Verses 12-14 seem to indicate that there is some tension between Paul and the Corinthians because he is defending his actions and in the words “I hope that...you will come to understand fully.” But in verse 15 he tells them he is confident that on the last day they will be able to boast about each other in the Lord as well.

3. Why did he not take the Corinthians feelings lightly?

4. Paul wraps up this section pointing to God and his work in his people. What three reasons does Paul describe that make them (and us) stand firm in Christ?

For Reflection

How does verse 22 give you comfort?

Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-13

5. We see again how Paul changes his plans. What weighed on his heart to make him change his plans?

For Reflection

Has there ever been a time that God opened a door to you and life’s circumstances did not allow you to walk through and complete the task at hand? How did that make you feel?

We can then relate with Paul and understand how this must have affected him.

The Sweet Smell of the Gospel

Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

“But” connects verse 14 to the previous verses. Paul was so concerned about finding Titus that he could not focus on the task at hand.

6. What is Paul’s comfort?

7. What was a triumphal procession? How does this picture relate to us?

8. What is also our comfort when ministry opportunities don’t go as planned or we feel like somehow we missed an opportunity in sharing God’s Word altogether?

For Reflection

What were some recent missed opportunities in your own life? Witnessing opportunities? Ministry opportunities? Opportunities within your own home? You’re your family? How did you work through that? How did God still work through you or work out the situation?

The Aroma of Christ

Paul now goes on to explain this fragrance of the gospel a bit more.

9. What kind of fragrances might have been in the air during a triumphal procession?

10. What does Paul mean when he says “spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him”?

11. What does Paul say we are to God? Among whom?

12. Why do you think Paul is specific to mention two groups of people? How is the aroma different to each group of people?

13. What does the “smell of death” and the “fragrance of life” mean?

14. Does this affect what we are to God? Why or why not?

15. We were once a bad smell to God. Why? How did God change us to a sweet-smelling aroma? Why?

For Reflection

What could you smell that make you think of life?

How do the words “the smell of death” affect your senses? What comes to mind?

Of our 5 senses, our sense of smell is the most sensitive. People can remember smells with 65% accuracy after one year.² When we smell something beautiful, it makes us feel wonderful. Our eyes glow, we take a deep breath, our faces light up – we want to smell it more! When we smell something terrible, we scrunch up our faces, turn away, and even feel ill. So this is some powerful imagery that Paul uses - death for unbelievers and life for believers – and all the smells, sights, tastes, sounds and feelings to go with it!

Paul's Confidence; Our Confidence

Let us not glance over the end of verse 16 of 2 Corinthians chapter 2 – “And who is equal to such a task?” We will answer that in this next section of Scripture.

16. Are there times you feel like you are not “equal to such a task” of living and sharing the gospel?

- At home
- With your spouse
- With your children
- At church
- At work
- In the community

Read 2 Corinthians 2:17 – 3:6.

17. What evidence does Paul give to prove he and God's people were “the aroma of Christ”?

For Reflection

Name 5 things from this section that, like Paul, comfort you and give you confidence to share the message of the sweet-smelling gospel of Christ.

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Closing Prayer

Sources:

The Holy Bible – NIV 1984

The People's Bible – 2 Corinthians. David J. Valleskey

¹ and ² – 20 Fascinating Facts About Our Sense of Smell. Alun Palmer.

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