

2 Cor.2:12-16

I would like to speak this morning on the subject of: The Two Effects of the Gospel. When the gospel of Christ is preached there are two effects, it either produces salvation or it produces condemnation. When the gospel is preached it will either harden the hearts of sinners or it will humble the hearts of sinners. There is no middle ground when the gospel is preached or if you wish there is no neutrality when the gospel is preached, there are effects. The results of the gospel are that it produces salvation or further condemnation upon its hearers. The more a person hears the gospel and does not bow down to it, begets severe judgment from God. This is perhaps the application of Paul in Romans 2 where he says, *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”* Paul here in our text plainly shows that there are two effectual results of the gospel, that is, the gospel either shall give life or shall execute judgment in death, the aroma or savour is life unto life or death unto death. 2 Cor. 2:15 & 16, *“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life...”* There are four things I would like to share with you:

- I. Paul’s Experience in Preaching the Gospel.**
- II. Paul’s Example in Preaching the Gospel.**
- III. Paul’s Effect in Preaching the Gospel.**
- IV. Paul’s Effort in Preaching the Gospel.**

First, let’s look at: **I. Paul’s Experience in Preaching the Gospel.** In verses 12, 13 and first part of verse 14 we see that Paul uses his own experience when he preached the gospel. He is encouraging us that regardless of the circumstances that revolve around preaching the gospel, whether it is acceptance or persecution, believing or not believing, submitting to the gospel or rejecting the gospel, regardless of the outcome, we triumph in CHRIST! (Read verse 12 – 14a) Notice the results of when he was in Troas, Macedonia and Phillipi. See Acts 16:5-15, 22-31. In other words, we triumph in the gospel regardless of the response, outcome and or circumstances. There is also a sense that when Paul used the term triumph, he could also be referring to the military triumphal procession of a conquering nation. The Greek word for triumph is, *“thriambeuo,”* (thrē-äm-byü'-ō). This word means to triumph, to cause to triumph and or to celebrate a triumph. According to the BLB this word is, *“from the root word meaning a hymn sung in festal processions in honor of the god Bacchus.”* Now, it could be that Paul uses this term in regards to the triumphal procession by the Greeks and Romans after conquering a city or province. When the

conquering army would come home with the news of victory over the enemy, they would have a triumphal procession, which in our day we would call a victory parade:

- They would first get the people to throw out into the streets sweet smelling spices, which would be something like potpourri. They would do this in order to have a sweet smelling aroma or fragrance of victory, so that, everyone by the smell would know, we won!
- Then in this triumphal procession they would parade the spoils from the conquered city or province. They would display the gold, the silver, the precious gems and anything that was of any value.
- The next thing in the procession would be the defeated king, prince or general, perhaps strip or naked and then the other captives would follow.
- Then you would have the trumpeters with special personnel behind them throwing out from their baskets more sweet smelling spices and the burning of incense which carried the fragrance and aroma of victory far and wide.
- Finally, at some point the victorious general riding upon the white horse. A magnificent display of victory over his enemies.

Now, not that all this is in the correct order or it is exactly what they did in their victory parade, but there was a victorious procession with sweet smelling spices and incense to let every one far or near know that there was a victory. More importantly, perhaps what Paul had in mind in trying to convey to his readers is the great victory we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, the rider upon the glorious White Horse in the book of Revelation! Our conquering Messiah, Rev. 19:11-14, 6:2, applied in Col.2:15. Again, this is Paul's experience of preaching the gospel.

Secondly, **II. Paul's Example in Preaching the Gospel.** In verse 14 we have Paul giving thanks to God because of the triumphing preaching of the gospel. This is a contrast to Paul's anxious feeling of verse 13. Verse 14 removes any gloom or feelings of failure, by thanking God in causing us to triumph in Christ. Which always causeth us to triumph, that is, always and everywhere, regardless of the outcome, we triumph in Christ. Paul uses the gospel as an example as being symbolic to sweet smelling spices. Christ causes us to triumph over; He leads us in the triumph of the preaching of the gospel. Paul gives thanks to God who leads us in triumph not as captives, but as sharers of His victory, because of our union to Him. Paul also gives thanks to God for making manifest the aroma or fragrance of the gospel, everywhere and in everyplace. The Amplified version reads, "*But thanks be to God, Who in Christ always leads us in triumph [as trophies of Christ's victory] and through us spreads and makes evident the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere.*" The NIV reads, "*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*" We are triumphant in Christ as we preach the gospel, whether it's by means of behind the pulpit like now, at work, going door to door, downtown, or witnessing to friends or relatives or by means of the printed page in tracts and literature, regardless of the means the gospel is preached, Paul says, we TRIUMPH! Paul gives thanks unto

to God for making manifest the savour, that is, the smell, the aroma, the fragrance of his knowledge by us in every place. The phrase maketh manifest means to spread about the fragrance, that is, the fragrance of the gospel everywhere. To spread the fragrance of His knowledge, just like in the triumphal procession or march of the victorious conqueror. The preaching of the gospel is a sweet smelling savour acceptable to God. Reminds of Noah after the flood in Gen.8:20 & 21, “*And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour...*” Eph.5:2, “*And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*” Christ’s sacrifice was a sweet smelling savour unto God and as we preach the gospel in any form, it is a sweet smelling savour, a sweet smelling fragrance, a sweet smelling aroma.

As we preach the gospel we are making known the knowledge of Christ in God in every place. Notice that Paul says in every place or every where, that is, where ever or when ever we preach the gospel it is a sweet smelling fragrance, again, not just in church, but in the work place, when we go door to door, at the grocery store, with friends or relatives, we spread a sweet smelling savour acceptable to God. What kind of fragrance or aroma do you spread at your workplace or with friends, is it a sweet smelling savour unto God? No I’m not talking about your perfume or cologne, but the fragrance of the gospel. This was the heartbeat of the Apostle Paul, that is, that Christ should be made known was the great end of Paul’s mission and of all things the most acceptable to God. We must preach about the kingdom of God/Heaven, compelling men to enter into His kingdom by the preaching of the gospel. This is acceptable to God, that His Son is preached in truth, God is not interested in our success, i.e. numbers and statistics, but in the faithful preaching of the pure unadulterated gospel. We are to follow the example of Christ in the preaching of His holy gospel. Look at Christ at the beginning of His ministry, Mark 1:14 & 15, Matt.4:17, 23, 5:1 & 2, 9:35, 10:7 and 11:1. Notice the consistency of Christ’s preaching; He does not change up the message to appease His hearers; there is no pragmatism, no philosophical message, no social gospel, no feel good gospel, just the pure unadulterated holy gospel. We must go forth preaching and teaching the gospel of the kingdom, compelling sinners to repent and believe the gospel. Christ was not interested in numbers or success, but in preaching about the kingdom of God/Heaven. Like Christ let us spread the aroma of His gospel, that is, the pure and holy gospel. So as we preach the unadulterated gospel we spread a sweet smelling fragrance that is well pleasing unto God. Paul again says in 2 Cor.2:15, “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. 15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ...*” This is true whether they believe or not. Was everyone who heard Christ preached saved and born again? Was everyone who heard Paul preach the gospel saved and born again? This is Paul’s encouragement to us, that we triumph as long as we spread the aroma, we don’t triumph in the results, no, that alone belongs to God, our triumph is in the preaching of the gospel! This leads us to our third point.

III. Paul's Effect in Preaching the Gospel. In verses 15 & 16 we see the two effects of the gospel, *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life..."* Here we have the impact or effect in the preaching of the gospel. There is no neutrality in the preaching of the gospel, it either saves or condemns to death its hearers. To those who hear and repent and believe, it is a sweet smelling aroma to the salvation of their souls. To those who hear and never repent and believe and die in that state it is a foul smelling, nauseating aroma to their souls. There is no middle ground or neutrality when the gospel is preach and heard or when the gospel is read in literature, there is always an effect. Remember Isaiah 55:11, *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* The gospel will either save or condemn the soul. To one it is a savour of life unto life and to the other it is a savour of death unto death, that is, in them that are saved and in them that perish. How about you this morning what kind of aroma do you smell when the gospel is preached? Is it a sweet smelling aroma, or is it an awful smell? As the gospel is preached do you go ah how glorious is that fragrance, or do you pinch your nose and go "oh no P U," that is an awful smell? When my wife and my daughters would paint their fingernails and used the fingernail polish remover; the smell would be and still is disgusting and nauseating to my stomach. They could do their nails in the morning and if I came home in the afternoon, I could still smell it. On the other side of the coin, when I would mix the apple cider vinegar with water and honey for my healthy drink, they would always complain on how bad the smell was. When you drive close to the garbage dump, it smells, or when a skunk is run over on the expressway, the awful smell continues for miles. Have you been in line when the person in front of you smells like they haven't showered in days? Awful eh? We know when something smells awful or when there is a foul smell and we also know when there is sweet smelling fragrance, like flowers, perfume, cologne or potpourri or some sort of good smelling oils, candles or plug in burners. In other words we all know things that smell good and things that smell bad. Paul uses the gospel as being symbolic to a sweet smelling fragrance or aroma. The word savour is the Greek word, **"osme,"** which means an odor or smell, an aroma. The gospel is an aroma that dispenses a fragrance that bestows life or bestows death. I think that is a powerful gospel that is able to give out a fragrance of life and death. Oh to God, that this morning its fragrance is sweet to your nostrils, yea to your soul. May its aroma captivate you so much that you cannot but have this fragrance! The gospel never returns void to God when it is preach, it has an effect. Again notice what Paul says in 2 Cor.2:15 & 16, *"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life..."* There is no in between, because there are two effects of the gospel. Let's us look as some these effects. First, let us look at the effects when the gospel is a sweet smelling savour or aroma:

- In John 4, the woman at the well, the gospel to her was a sweet smelling fragrance; it was sweet to her soul.

- John 5, the impotent man, the gospel to him was a health healing, saving glorious sweet smelling fragrance.
- John 9, the man born blind from his youth, yes, the gospel was a sweet smelling aroma to his soul.
- Acts 16, as we saw earlier, Lydia heart the gospel and man was it sweet to her soul. How about you it is sweet to your soul?
- The Philippian jailor, almost died but got a smell, and it was a sweet smelling fragrance to his soul. He almost smelled the smell death, but a different aroma affected him, what aroma, what grace, what salvation!
- The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter 8; was never the same when got a whiff of the aroma of the gospel, it was a sweet smelling to his soul.
- In Mark chapter 5, the Gadarene man, my was it sweet to his soul, after being surrounded by awful foul smelling things, got a holy whiff of the gospel and was sitting cloth and in his right mind and yea, was the first one to church!
- What about the man sick of the palsy, yes, the gospel was a sweet smelling aroma to his soul.
- What about the lame man in the temple gate in Acts 3, it was sweet to his smell as he was walking, leaping and praising God, because he couldn't get over the aroma of the gospel.
- The Apostle Paul himself, on the way to Damascus to kill Christians and to put some in jail, one day got a whiff a scent of the gospel and man that was a sweet smelling fragrance to his soul. He also never got over the aroma, so much so, that he had to write about it.
- What about blind Bartimaeus in Mark chapter 10? One day as he sat in his worn out smelly clothes and begging for money on the road side, smelled an aroma, a fragrance that was out of this world, even though he could not see, he smelled that glorious aroma, as the Son of God stood still and Bartimaeus smelled that holy fragrance from heaven and it was sweet to his soul.
- Lastly but not the least, the thief on the cross, I can imagine the scent he was smelling; blood, sweat, perhaps even the smell of death, then all of sudden, he got a scent, an aroma, a fragrance like never before and it was sweet to his soul.
- There are hundreds of examples in the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament as well as the New that shows how sweet and engaging the fragrance of the gospel is to those who believe.
- But my question is; it is sweet to your soul? I confess it was sweet to my soul, but is the fragrance of the gospel sweet to your soul?

Now, the Bible also gives us examples of some to whom the gospel was a foul, stinking, unpleasant, disgusting and offensive deadly smell. The gospel is usually an awful and offensive smell to the religious person.

- The Jews of chapter 5 where the impotent man was healed, though it was a sweet aroma to him, it was an awful smelly and unpleasant to those Jews. The

Jews hated the smell so bad they wanted to kill Jesus, the one who gives the aroma to the gospel. John 5:14-16, 18 and 38.

- To those in John 6, it was an awful deadly smell. John 6:27-29, 35, 41-43, 60-64.
- Consider those in John 7:30, those in 8:24, 44-47, 59. It was a foul smell to them.
- What about Demas in 2 Tim.4:10, he went for awhile until he could not take the smell anymore, it became deadly to him.
- What about Felix in Acts 24:23-25, the gospel was not sweet, but an unpleasant and offensive deadly smell.
- What can we say about King Agrippa in Acts 26? In verses 26 – 29 we see that the aroma of the gospel was fatal to him.
- Look at all those to whom Paul preached to in various places, to some it was a savour of life unto life and to others it was an awful aroma, a savour of death unto death.
- What about the other thief on the cross? He perished in his sins because Jesus Christ to him was an awful smelling aroma.
- Last, but the not least also is a very infamous person. We all know his name, the saved as well as the lost. No one wants to be called by his name, that is, Judas. It was such a deadly smell to Judas, while to others around him, the rest of the disciples, it was a sweet smelling aroma, but to Judas, the gospel was a foul fatal fragrance.

What about you this morning, is the gospel to you a sweet smelling fragrance and aroma or is it a foul offensive smell? If you die without Christ, throughout all eternity that awful smell will torture you. It is not a small thing or light thing to turn away from the gospel, it has its consequences. Who with a sound mind can reject the gospel, the only means that will save your soul? If you had a sickness unto death and the doctor would prescribe the only medicine that could heal you, would you reject it? 2 Cor.2:15 & 16, *“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life...”*

Remember at the beginning of my message, the example that Paul used in regards to victorious conquerors and their triumphal procession. Remember the spices and incense thrown on the streets that created the sweet smelling aroma and fragrance for the victors, that same sweet fragrance and aroma of the sweet spices at the same time was a deadly aroma and a fatal smell to the captives that were killed, it was to them the smell of death! Oh to God, do not allow this same sweet smelling fragrance and aroma of the gospel that has saved millions be the means of a deadly and foul aroma to your soul.

Let's Pray: