

SM 2 14 2016 WOODLANDS BIBLE CHURCH

Title of Series: "In Defense of the Truth"  
 \ II Corinthians

Theme: "The Aroma of a Christian" #4

Passage: II Corinthians 2:12-17

- Last Week: "Plans change love doesn't" #3
  - His desire was mutual joy 2:1-3
  - His hope was the realization of his love 2:4
  - His intention was to determine their obedience 2:5-9
  - His concern was the design of Satan 2:10,11

### Introduction:

The duty of every Christian is clear—we are to make disciples everywhere we go (**Matthew 28:19**). But it is equally clear that many of those to whom we are to witness (**Acts 1:8**) have no interest in the Good News and in some cases are openly hostile to our efforts. Open doors do not always mean open hearts! Nor, does it mean that one being a witness for the Gospel is not troubled in spirit!

In his continuing explanation to the Corinthians for the reasons for his change in plans to visit them, Paul expresses his frustration resulting from his concern about Titus, whose report regarding the situation in Corinth the apostle anxiously awaited. The Lord had opened a door

in Troas, a key port city connecting Asia Minor to Europe, but Paul's anxiety necessitated his departure to Macedonia, since it seemed Titus was unable to come by ship and would have travel overland instead.

It is notable that Paul describes his psychological state while waiting for Titus at Troas as without *peace of mind*, Literally, "had no relief in my spirit". **v13**. He was most troubled as he word from Titus concerning the church at Corinth.

In spite of this frustrating experience, Paul expressed his thanks to God **v14**, in light of the nature of the Christian witness in *any* circumstance. It is God who opens the door for our witness (**v12**) and it is God who opens men's hearts so that they believe. Ref. **Acts 14:27** with **Acts 16:14**. Open doors do not come without opposition, as Paul declared in **1 Corinthians 16:9**, "For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries."

How is it possible that our witness is effective in any and all circumstances, in spite of how it is received? Verses **14-17** explain.

### I. THE NATURE OF A CHRISTIAN'S AROMA V14

A. The word behind the phrase "leads . . . in triumph" is *thriambeuô* means "to lead in a triumphal procession," as prisoners were marched in a victory procession. *ESV Study Bible*, "Most interpreters see this as a reference to

the lavish victory parades celebrated in Rome after great battles. God is depicted as the sovereign victor, with Christ as the general, leading the victory procession, and *Paul* as 'captured' by Christ but now joyfully following him."

**Thought:** At this point it is important to place emphasis on God's ability to triumph over the frailties and fallibilities we may possess! It has been said, "*God's power is able to overcome any and all human weakness*".

1. Note how Paul refers to this in **1 Corinthians 4:9**, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men."

2. Christians are Christ's slaves, those who take up our cross daily (**Luke 9:23**), "who die daily" (**1 Corinthians 15:31**) in his service.

B. Our submission to Christ as his "captives" "always puts us on display in Christ and through us spreads the aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place," **v14**.

C. This "knowledge" is seen in the effect the Gospel has had on our lives, as we "walk" in submission to the Lord. David Garland, "The gospel's piquant aroma permeates everything so that persons are forced to take notice."

D. It is also seen in our *verbal* witness that explains our surrender to Christ. "*Wherever we go he uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Good News like a sweet perfume.*"

**Thought:** Through His saints, God produces a sweet aroma, the Aroma of Christ! Paul says, "Godly living and preaching of the gospel are perfume to God's nostrils"

Ref. <sup>ESV</sup> Philippians 4:18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

## II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A CHRISTIAN'S AROMA V15, 16b

A. As the captives of Christ, we are the fragrance of Christ to God among everyone with whom we come into contact.

1. "Fragrance" is from *euôdia*, "a sweet scent." Ref. **v14, 16** where both "fragrance" and "aroma" are from *osmç*, denoting simply a smell, weather good, bad, or neutral."

2. To God, our witness is a pleasing aroma. Ref. **Genesis 8:21**, "And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, 'I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the

imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.”

3. To men, as David Garland notes, “What some find to be a sweet aroma, others regard as a stench.”

B. To those who are being saved [Present Participle] we are “the aroma” (smell) of life “leading to life,” HCSB. Abundant life now, eternal life to come!

C. To those who are perishing [Present Participle], we are the stench of death, “leading to death,” HCSB. Spiritual death now, eternal death to come!

**Thought:** “Because of the cross, “too roads diverged in a wood” – to reapply Robert Frost’s familiar words – and all of humanity past, present and future travels one road or the other.” Ref. **Matthew 7: 13-14.**

D. As John Calvin declared, “[The Gospel] is never preached in vain, but is effectual, leading to life or to death.” **Our witness is never in vain!** It *a/ways* has an effect!

**Thought:** And who *is* sufficient for these things? **v16c** – We are not adequate for “these things”. For what are we inadequate? We are not adequate to manifest Christ to a dying world. We cannot live like Christ, in and of ourselves. And we are not adequate to present the gospel in a way which convinces and converts sinners to Christ. Only God saves through His Son Jesus Christ!

When Paul asks who is adequate for these things, he wants us to understand that no one is – **in their own strength.**

### III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A CHRISTIAN’S AROMA v16c, 17

A. Who indeed is sufficient for this great responsibility! Unlike many, “who market (peddle) God’s message for profit,” we must live and proclaim the Gospel aware that God is watching. “In the sight of,” - “in the presence of” God.

B. We must speak *sincerely*. Speak truth of the gospel plainly, and with purity of motive! How we live and what we speak must pass close and critical inspection by those with whom we come into contact.

**Illus:** “Jim Elliot once prayed, “Father, make me a crisis man. Bring those I contact to decision. Let me not be a milepost on a single road. Make me a fork, that men must turn one way or another on facing Christ in Me.”

C. “As persons sent from God,” We are his ambassadors!

D. As spoken “in Christ.” We speak as Christ would speak!

## Conclusion:

There is an aroma here today! Our very presence as worshipers is a sweet aroma to God! And it can be the very aroma of life to those who come to faith in Christ—or the stench of death to those who refuse to trust him! What a responsibility! What a privilege! What an encouragement! There was a church established in Troas, in spite of Paul's departure to Macedonia, according to **Acts 20:6-12**. In fact, Troas is where the young man Eutychus fell from the loft during Paul's extended evening message! Paul's aroma must have lingered there after he left. May our sweet aroma continue in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!