



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Corinthians 2: 12-17

Winter 2025

"A Sweet Aroma"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth. Well our text this morning is 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 12 through 17. Really, we have a transition with verse 12 and move into a whole new section of this book, which I will comment on in our lesson; but we begin reading with verse 12,

<sup>12</sup> Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup> I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

<sup>14</sup> But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. <sup>15</sup> For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; <sup>16</sup> to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? <sup>17</sup> For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

2 Corinthians 2: 12-17

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is to be with Your people, as it is every Sunday, (and it seems those Sundays come very quickly). And they do come quickly, for time passes quickly...and soon we will, "fly away", as the psalmist put it. (Psa 90:10).

Well, life is brief and so it is good that we are here, with Your people, with Your book, and opening it up to study Your revelation: To study the truth that You've given us and which is so vital for us to know in order that we grow in 'grace and knowledge', and maturity—in order that we have the wisdom to deal with the world in which we live.

And so I pray, LORD, that this morning You will minister to us through the Holy Spirit—that He will enlighten our minds, and He will strengthen us and build us up in the faith and equip us for the rest of the day, the rest of the week, until we gather here again next Sunday.

LORD, may we be what You have intended us to be, a 'sweet aroma'. It's not us; it's Christ in us. —He's the *aroma* and the *truth* of the Gospel. But may it be seen in us; may we be adequate representatives of You and Your grace.

Well, we can only be that by being built up in the faith, sanctified through the reading and the teaching of the Scriptures; and so bless us in this hour as we do that.

And bless us materially, LORD. We all have physical needs. We need each breath of life that we take—and the reality is, every breath we take is a gift from You, and we thank You for it. We take it for granted, but it's a gift; every moment of life is a gift—and we need that from You. And that is particularly so with those who are afflicted with various illnesses; and we pray for them as they go through difficult procedures or as they recover from difficult experiences. They are in You; You are in them—heal them and encourage them.

Bless us now, LORD, as we continue our service and prepare our hearts for a time of study together. May the Spirit of God open our hearts to receive the truth of this text; and may we be made more like Your Son to Your glory. We pray that in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) In 1965, my family went to New York City to the New York World's Fair. We toured New York for a day or two, and then we spent the day visiting the fair and going to the pavilions of the various countries.

But companies also had pavilions. The only one I remember, (really, about the only thing about the fair that I remember), is the pavilion of the soft drink company, 7up. It was known for its clock tower and its food court. But what I remember was seven rooms, each filled with a fragrance. Seven rooms, seven fragrances...7up. The experience was pleasant, and that's why it stuck with me; it left an impression. A nice aroma is a wonderful experience. That's why perfume is popular and expensive.

Paul knew that, and he described the Gospel and its influence on this world in that way. He called it, 'the sweet aroma of the knowledge of the Lord', (vs14). And it's what we are to be; and that is our lesson in our text, 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 12 through 17.

Paul had an opportunity to be 'a sweet aroma' in the town of Troas. He mentions that in verse 12—but he mentioned that as a continuation of his defense of his absence from Corinth. You remember, some in the church said his absence was proof that he was unreliable. He had promised to return and he didn't: 'He doesn't keep his word'; 'He can't be trusted.' Well, what kind of an apostle could that be? ...Not a genuine apostle.

So to disprove the allegation, he explained his itinerary, and how he had left Ephesus, traveled north to Troas, hoping to meet Titus there and receive news about the situation in their church. Paul had sent Titus to Corinth to deal with the problems there, and hoped to meet him in Troas and learn of his success with them. It was a logical place for them to rendezvous, for Troas was the main port of northwest Asia minor and easy to reach from Corinth.

It's an important city, built at the site of ancient Troy, and a crossroad of the world. So, it was not only a good place to meet Titus, but a strategic location for evangelism—and Paul got to work there, making that ancient battlefield of Achilles and Hector a field for the Gospel. And he had great success: He wrote in verse 12, "...a door was opened for me in the Lord." 'The open door' is a metaphor that Paul often used to

describe the opportunity to preach; but it also describes the effect that preaching has on those who hear. It pictures the evangelist being able to enter a place with the Gospel; God, 'opens a door' there; and then how the message is able to enter the hearts of the hearers.

You'll remember earlier, in Acts chapter 16, where Paul comes to Macedonia. He came from Troas to Philippi, and he's preaching the Gospel there, where God 'opened a door' for him by the riverside. A small group of women were there, and Lydia was one of them. Luke wrote that, "the Lord opened her heart", (Acts 16:14), to receive the things that Paul was saying. That's the work of God... 'opens doors, opens hearts.' (And it's always God who does that, not man.)

We can't open doors. We can't open hearts. We're not sufficient for that. God opens the door—and He also shuts it. (We need to be sensitive to that—that's part of walking by the Spirit.) The ministry is a supernatural work; that's the reason Paul asked the people in Colossians chapter 4, verse 3, to pray for '*an open door*' for his preaching of the Word. In fact, God providentially used the trouble in Corinth to prevent Paul from going back there and leading him instead to the door that he had opened in Troas.

But, and this is Paul's point here, in spite of the success he enjoyed there in Troas, 'he had no rest for his spirit.' (vs13). He was distracted by his concern for the Corinthians while waiting for Titus.

But Titus never arrived, so Paul left Troas and went west across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia, hoping to meet Titus there and receive news about the church. So while the Corinthians were whispering about Paul, believing the rumors that he was 'unfaithful', he was 'undependable', he was 'worldly minded', Paul was in Troas evangelizing and worrying about the Corinthians' welfare. He always had the Corinthians on his heart, even when they were shutting him out of theirs—and that's love; that's *agape*. And a model for us: 'Love puts others ahead of ourselves'.

And as they read about the milestones of his journey and how Paul was forced to leave Ephesus because of a riot, went to Troas where he worried about them...they must

have felt ashamed. Paul was not unfaithful to them; they were being unfair to him; he served them and sacrificed for them. This was his defense for his absence from Corinth.

But at this point, beginning with verse 14, Paul digresses. He breaks off his defense in order to praise God for His goodness, which is constant through all circumstances. Digressions are not untypical of Paul's writings. He would, at times, become so overwhelmed with the things that he was recording and recounting for them, revealing to them, so amazed at the grace of God, and of God's mercy and majesty, that he would go off on a doxology praising God. It's not planned; extemporaneous I assume, and writing it down—or as amanuenses, (his secretary), would write it down.

You see this in various places. You see it, for example in Romans 11, (verse 33). As he explains God's plan of salvation; he broke off with, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God." ...and that went on for three more verses.

But here, Paul goes on for much longer. He doesn't return to his defense and his travels until chapter 7, in verse 5, where he tells of meeting Titus in Macedonia and hearing the encouraging news about the Corinthians and how they had accepted his instruction, and they carried out the discipline...and 'all was well'. So this is an extended digression.

But it was clearly one that was inspired because, as Philip Hughes wrote in his commentary, "It is an outpouring of spiritual wealth, unsurpassed in any other of his epistles." C. K. Barrett wrote something similar. He wrote that "The whole portion here of 2 Corinthians is the centerpiece of the entire letter." So we're beginning a very important part of 2 Corinthians.

Paul wrote it to show them that, 'his detour to Troas had kept him from Corinth'... that that was of God. It was not a mistake, it was of the LORD. It was of His providence—that God had opened a door of opportunity for him there and he had entered that door—and with great success.

So his experience in Troas was one of triumph. —And he states that in a spontaneous outburst of thanksgiving, which is expressed in an image that is very vivid, and would have certainly been vivid to the Corinthians. Verse 14, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place."

As the Corinthians read that verse they would have seen, 'in their mind's eye' the pageantry of a Roman Triumph, a parade that was given to publicly honor a conquering general. It began on the fields of Mars, outside the walls of Rome, and traveled through the Porta Triumphalis, (the Triumphant Gate), into the city, moved along the streets to the Forum, and ended at the Temple of Jupiter. In it, the spoils of victory were displayed: Captives of war, then wagons of gold and silver, followed by musicians, Roman soldiers—and finally the triumphant general riding in a gilded chariot. All along the way the streets were strewn with flowers; bulls were sacrificed, and altars burned with incense.

It was a spectacular scene. We do something similar, not quite as elaborate, but something similar in the 'Ticker-tape Parades' down Broadway in New York. It's called "The Canyon of Heroes". Men love to celebrate their triumphs, whether they're athletes or astronauts.

And Paul here was celebrating, but he was no hero, he's not presenting himself in that way. He wasn't celebrating himself, he's praising Christ who had conquered him by His sovereign grace and was displaying him to the world as His own possession.

And that's true of all of us. We were "enemies", that's how Paul describes us in Romans chapter 5, verse 10. But he then says, 'We have been reconciled to God through Christ's death.' So now, 'We are Christ's, in Christ's Triumphal Procession'.

But unlike Rome's prisoners, (who were marched to the Temple of Jupiter and slaughtered), we are blessed. We've been made God's sons, God's children, with a glorious inheritance. We are on display as trophies of His grace and soldiers in His service.

For Paul, this 'Triumphal Procession' began outside Damascus where Christ converted him. It continued through all of his labors and journeys—and would continue until his martyrdom in Rome. But in all these things, all along the way, 'God', he said, 'was leading him in triumph', (vs14a), and every stage of his life an advance in victory, because his life was in Christ. —And that's true of all of us. All of us who are in Christ, God is leading us. At the moment of faith, the believer is incorporated into Him—joined to Christ in what is called, 'the mystical union'. It is spiritual; it's not physical. It's mysterious, but it's real. We are connected to Jesus Christ. We're connected to His life, to His power, to His wisdom, to His care....We are in Him and triumphing!

Paul didn't seem to 'Triumph!', as you consider all of this. He was criticized in Corinth, driven out of Ephesus, had affliction in Asia, and such anxiety in Troas that he left for Macedonia. But Paul said, "God always leads us in triumph". (vs14a). Not occasionally...always. That's presently what is happening to you who are in Christ. He leads us into situations that we would never choose for ourself—hard situations where 'doors open up' for us to be His witness.

Paul's life was filled with such experiences. Who would have thought that being beaten and thrown into prison would be a triumph? ...But it became an opportunity for Paul in Philippi; that's where God 'opened a door' for him when He shook the prison and literally opened up the jail cell doors, and compelled the jailer, in terror, to fall on his knees and ask, "...what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). And Paul and Silas were able to give him the Gospel and lead him and his whole family to Christ. —That was a triumph!

It was a triumph in Troas as well. While waiting for Titus, and worrying about the Corinthians and their spiritual condition and their relationship with him, God gave Paul opportunity to preach...and he did so with marvelous results. For us it may be a witness from a sick bed in the hospital. Or a difficult marriage.

Peter wrote of that in 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 1 through 6. It was common in the early church that there were wives with unbelieving husbands, wives saved out of paganism, and the husbands not. Peter called them "holy women." (ibid.) Providence placed them in a hard situation in which only the grace of God could enable them to prevail. And it, (*providence*), does enable us to prevail, but often, (and I would say *always*, in principle), with the help of the saints... 'bearing one another's burdens.' And with the support of one another we're able to do many things.

We need the support of the saints...and we do because the world is watching. And the angels are watching; we know that from Ephesians chapter 3, verse 10. You may wonder, 'Does anybody see what's happening?' Well, if no human eyes are on you, that's one thing, but the angelic eyes are always on you.

And so we need God's support—and we need God's support through one another's support, to 'bear one another's burdens' and help each other; and in that way we do succeed. And those women that Peter wrote to, and wrote of...they would also be successful in hard situations through the support of the saints.

Paul was saying, 'Your life is a theater; your life is a spectacle.' From spiritual birth to physical death, the Christian life is a '*Triumphal Procession!*'—more spectacular than anything Rome put on...but just as public. So while the Lord may lead us into some difficult places, as He did Paul in Troas, still we triumph as we live in obedience to Him and our lives are lived to His glory.

As we do that, our lives give off what Paul called, "the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." (vs14b). Again, Paul is using the imagery of the Roman Triumph, when along the processional way, incense was burned and the air was filled with the scent of it. Our words and deeds as a witness for Christ are like that—like incense that gives off 'a sweet aroma' that fills a room. This is how Paul imagines the knowledge of God—it's like 'a refreshing fragrance'. For him, there was nothing better, nothing more valuable than the knowledge of Christ.



If Paul had a life verse, I think it would be Philippians chapter 3, verse 10, "...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." That was Paul's ambition in life which begins with, and has as its priority, the knowledge of Christ: Knowing about Him, knowing the doctrines of the Bible that define Him...and knowing Him personally. The knowledge *about* Christ leads to the knowledge *of* Christ, which leads to a personal relationship with Him. And that's the ultimate goal: We want to know about Him so that we might know Him more deeply and fully. And that's what Paul had as his great ambition. Knowing Him was like 'a sweet fragrance' to Paul...and what we are to be in this world.

I remember vividly stepping off a plane with my wife one evening at Ben Gurion airport, just outside of Tel Aviv, and there was a sweet fragrance in the air. I later learned that it was the Jaffa orange blossoms in the orchards nearby, and it was literally like someone had perfumed the air. It was pleasant, it was refreshing, and it was very memorable. I still have it vividly in my mind. And Paul says that's what the knowledge of Christ is: 'It is a delight. It is like perfume.'

Yet, what was magical for me and Jeannette that night in Tel Aviv was, I'm sure, lost on others: Some who had no sense of smell or some who worked there at the airport and had probably been sniffing jet fuel all day, and is just, what... 'a hazard of the work they had'. Others, probably, just didn't like oranges, (and that's hard for me to understand), but that's the case.

And I mention that because of what Paul says next about the Gospel, the message of God's grace—the message of life, (as Christian yelled as he ran off from the 'City of Destruction' toward that Wicket-gate where the cross was), "Life! Life! Eternal life!"

It's that message—and yet, there are people who don't find anything good in it at all; and Paul mentions that in verses 15 and 16. Even when presented warmly, cogently, clearly, it always produces two responses: Approval, and disapproval. To some the

Gospel of the crucified Messiah and forgiveness of sins through Him, through faith in Him, is, 'the smell of life'...and to others, 'the smell of death.'

Now he says, 'We are a fragrance of Christ'..."to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life." (vs16). But the emphasis is not on us, it's on Christ. It's not that *we* are a sweet aroma, but that Christ is *through* us. So it is the *content* of the vessel here that is important—not the vessel itself. And the content is the Savior—the Gospel of Christ.

And when we give it, it's like a fragrance. It never changes; it's what it is...but men respond to it differently. Some receive it, others refuse it. To some it is like the spring air; it's like the freshness of a flower. To others, Christ is like a corpse that gives off the smell of death.

Why is that? It's an amazing thing; how can this message of eternal life, this free gift of eternal life be something that smells like death to people? Well, for the same reason that people like or dislike perfume. The fragrance is the same—the noses are different...and with the Gospel, hearts are different. Some like it, some don't. Some have a living heart—they, "are being saved", as Paul puts it. (vs15b). Others have a heart of stone—they're "perishing", Paul says.(ibid.) And as God's Triumphal procession passes by, and the Gospel is heard, and the fragrance of Christ given off, men are defined by that...their true nature is revealed in their response.

'The Gospel is never preached in vain. It is always triumphant, because it always has a true effect on people.' Isaiah said that. You're familiar with Isaiah 55, verse 11, about the effectiveness of God's Word. "It never returns (*to Him*) empty." It never fails, it never falls flat. It either leads people to life, or it condemns them to death. But it's main purpose is to lead to life. It's a glorious message. All of God's Word is a glorious message. It reveals reality. If you want to know what reality is, read the Bible.

But the main point in the Gospel, (what we would narrowly call 'the Gospel'), is to lead sinners to forgiveness and life. Calvin, in fact, distinguished between, 'the proper

function of the Gospel', which leads to salvation—and its, 'accidental function', which exposes unbelief and results in condemnation. The fault is not the Gospel for it is 'the fragrance of life'. The fault is in the unbeliever, who is perishing, whose heart is all wrong. The Gospel proves that—it exposes the heart, and it divides men.

John gives an example of that, of this very thing, in John chapter 12, (*verse 3*), where Mary in an act of sacrificial worship poured out, "very costly perfume" on Jesus. Commentators have speculated on how much she must have spent. Probably all of her savings ... 'Emptied all of her IRA out' to buy this magnificent gesture, this perfume, to worship the Lord and honoring Him—because she knew He was going to die and so she was anointing Him.

Mark, (*Newman*), was talking this morning about the disciples when Jesus explains why He's going to Jerusalem to die, and then to rise again on the third day, and they didn't get it, (*See Luke 18: 31-34*), and he, (*Mark*), was marveling over their ignorance. And haven't we all as we read something like that? That was also the case with these disciples in that room in the home of Lazarus...but Mary understood it. She knew what was happening and where He was going; and she anointed Him with this expensive perfume so that, John wrote, "...and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume." (*Jn 12:3*). And I can imagine that as he wrote that, many years later and reflected on it, it was still very vivid in his memory—this house filled with this magnificent fragrance.

It was a wonderful experience for everyone there...except Judas. It angered him. He dismissed it as a foolish act, a waste of money; 'Why the money that could have been gained by selling that perfume could have been given to the poor!' Sounds like a very righteous sentiment—but it wasn't anything of the kind.

That wasn't his problem. It wasn't that he was frugal or kind; "he was a thief." (*Jn 12:6*). That's what John says later on, that he was stealing from the purse. He was the treasurer of the group, and he was taking money from the purse—that's what he

wanted. But more than that, Mary's worship angered him because he did not value Jesus; for he didn't really know Him.

The problem is not the perfume, the problem is not the Gospel. —It's the reprobate, the unbelieving person, who rejects the Gospel because he sees nothing of the true Christ...nothing of value. For him, the Gospel is an odor that is “from death to death.” Jesus is just a ‘dead Jew’ —He emits nothing but decay. So, rejecting Him as dead, such people go on to death. “From death to death.” (vs16). And yet, don't be surprised by that.

Because God promised this Gospel to be effective, we can rest in that—but don't be surprised when people reject it—reject your witness and consider you to be foolish. Be surprised if they receive it, actually. Only sovereign grace can overcome an unbelieving heart—and yet, as I said, God has promised that there will be those that receive it.

So, don't be surprised on the one hand, but yet you can't help but be surprised when they do receive it...but when they do, remember, God has promised that; He's promised that this will be received, and this will be effective. There are two kinds of people, and God will prevail in this. God will conquer.

He conquered Paul. He subdued a willful persecutor of the church to make him a great preacher in the church. He took a man devoted to Judaism and the traditions of the rabbis, so much so that he was killing Christians in his zeal for that—and yet He made him an apostle...not to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, to the pagans. And if He could make Paul His, ‘prisoner of war’, ‘His trophy of grace’, His ‘Valiant-for-Truth’ warrior, He can make us that. He can make an unbelieving husband or wife, or unbelieving friend or colleague, His trophy and His servant...His saint. Paul had that great confidence: That God not only could bless his preaching, but that He would bless it...and He did bless it. He always led Paul “in triumph.” (vs15).

And all the glory goes to God; that's Paul's point at the end of verse 16. This ministry that we have as Christians, to be “a fragrance of Christ” is a serious

responsibility, one that results in life and death, salvation or condemnation. And so Paul, who was very much aware of the awful responsibility, the great and glorious responsibility, was compelled to ask, "And who is adequate for these things?" (vs16b). I suppose that as he's writing this and thinking about this, that question comes out: 'This is great and this is glorious that we can be this fragrant aroma, and we can have this great ministry,...but who is adequate for these things!?'

That's the question—the question that every serious-minded Christian asks. How can anyone, who is as frail and fallible as we mortals are, do this ministry effectively—whether it's from a pulpit, or whether it's at the office, or whether it's in the neighborhood or the home? Who can do this effectively?

And the answer is given next week in chapter 3, verse 5. The adequacy doesn't come from us. "...our adequacy", Paul wrote, "is from God." And He makes the person who trusts in Him, and teaches His truth...sufficient.

He did for Paul, which separated him from a multitude of ministers—that's what he says in verse 17; "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we preach in Christ in the sight of God." Paul has much to say about these men in the final chapters of the book. He calls them "false apostles". (2Cor 11:13). Here he describes them as "peddlers", (vs17), (like merchants, like traders).

Paul didn't object to a man receiving an income from the ministry, (he speaks of a man's right to that in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 14), but for these men that he's speaking of here, these "peddlers" as he says, money was their motivation for ministry. They were like merchants—who in the ancient world were not always respectable people, (and I suppose you can say that about some businessmen today as well), but they were often considered as 'cheats'; they corrupted their product in order to make a gain. And so, just like a wine merchant would water down the pure vintage to stretch it out and make more of a profit, or a perfumer would pollute the pure perfume to have more of it, so also these men were doing that. They were doing this to receive a profit; they were making money.

They were corrupting the Word of God for personal gain—and receiving payment for that. That's why they were there; that's why they were doing what they were doing... (and it weakened the message). And there were “many”, Paul said, many of these false ministers: "For we are not like many..." he says, (vs17)...“many”, compared to the small group of genuine apostles.

It's always been that way. You go back into the days of the prophets and they were always in the minority—and they were always contending with the false prophets. You see that especially in Jeremiah, contending with those that were not genuine prophets. There were always more of them—*many* of them. And Paul here speaks of “many”.

He'd not been gone from Corinth all that long when it was invaded by these ‘peddlers’, who were giving an impure message. They were not giving the knowledge of Christ. They departed from the doctrines of the apostles. (We learn that later, that they were mixing Law and grace, and preaching, as he puts it, “another Jesus.” (2Cor 11:4).)

Nothing has changed. There are many such men today, men who claim to be ‘apostles’. There are no apostles today. The apostles were part of the foundation of the church, and Christ is the cornerstone. We're not building more and more foundations; they, (*the apostles*), have done their work.

But there are people today that make that kind of claim, and there are people today, (the world is full of these ministers), ‘peddling’ the Word of God—giving well-packaged, glib, watered-down messages. We are responsible to beware of that, and recognize it when we see it. Paul has given a warning here to God's people.

But the only way we will be discerning and able to recognize error from truth is to *know* the truth...and we *know* the truth by knowing God's Word. We're responsible to do that: To be men and women who read, and study, and think deeply on the Word of God.

That's what Paul preached...and preached it with right motives. That's what he said, (in contrast to these ‘peddlers’), Paul could say, "...but as from sincerity, but as from

God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." (vs17b). He speaks as, 'one from God', as, 'one of God's ambassadors'.

An ambassador is a representative of his government, and he gives the government's message—not his message. Paul did that; he proclaimed the Word of God, not his own ideas. And he proclaimed all of it: The deity of Christ, the cross of Christ, the resurrection, and the return of Christ. 'The whole counsel of God', all of that which a theologian would label as 'Christology' ...and all of the other aspects of the Word of God.

Paul preached it all. He told the Ephesian elders, when he last met with them, recorded in the Book of Acts, (Acts 20:27), and said to them, 'I did not withhold from you anything. I did not faint from preaching the whole counsel of God.'—and that is what we must know.

He did it there in Corinth as well. And he did it, as he says, "...in the sight of God", (vs17).—Humbly before God, knowing that he was accountable to God for all that he did and all that he said.

He didn't preach to please men; he didn't preach for personal gain. He ministered with sincerity for God's glory—and God always blesses that; He causes such a ministry to triumph. It may be in ways we can't see, but He causes us to triumph when it's our goal to glorify Him...and we preach, and teach, and live, and speak His truth—the Word of God.

And you, as a believer in Jesus Christ are presently being led in triumph. You're being displayed as a trophy of God's grace. Even when you are in difficult places, God has numbered every step you take. He's planned it all. He's guiding you; He's blessing you. Don't despair...consider yourself in this triumphal parade that Paul speaks of—and be believing, and be thankful and obedient.

There are only two kinds of people in the world: Those who are being saved, and those who are perishing. —Which are you? If you are unbelieving, you are perishing.

Why will you perish? We have a Savior in Christ. He died for sinners; He paid for their sins. And He's no longer dead; He's been raised from the dead—we have a living Savior. And all who trust in Him are saved forever.

There's no better news than that. It is a fragrance. And if it's a fragrance for you, if it's *a sweet aroma* to you...then believe and be saved. Come out of death into life.

May God help all of us to live with that life before the world.

*(Closing prayer)* Father, Paul asked and we ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" —to be in this world of darkness, and be light—to be in this world of spiritual death and be an aroma of life? 'Who's sufficient for that?'

Well none of us is, but You are—and Christ in me, He enables us to do that. Praise You, Father—You and Your goodness, and Your grace. Praise the Triune God that we have that within us—that power, that greatness to be what's pleasing to You. It's not in us, it's in You, and You're sufficient for all things.

May we go out this morning to be a fragrant aroma in the world. Give us that desire to do so, to be a witness for You, a witness to the saving grace that's in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for Him, and we thank You for that salvation.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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