



30 May 2025

## Fragrant Flowers

My thoughts today are in tandem with this week's sermon, *The Person Who Makes A Difference*, which wraps up our series in the book of Acts. The sermon's text covers part of the apostle Paul's journey to Rome, displaying some of what it takes to make a difference for God.

Paul wrote about making a difference for God in 2 Corinthians chapter 2.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing: 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? For we are not like the many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God” (14-17).



One wonderful feature of spring and summer is the beauty and fragrance of flowers. When people think of the most fragrant flowers, some top their list with the gardenia, while others prefer lilac, jasmine or roses. Experts tell us the crown goes to the tuberose with its sweet and spicy scent. Despite the name, it is not a rose, and is native to Mexico.

The sense of smell is important, and can be very sensitive. I knew a man who permanently lost his sense of smell and taste. As a result, he had no pleasure or enjoyment in eating. He ate mechanically to satisfy hunger and be healthy. The rest of us can react both positively and negatively. Think of the contrasting words: fragrance versus odor; sweet versus foul; pleasant versus repulsive. Some people have serious negative reactions, and so it is common to find some places designated as scent-free or fragrance-free zones.

Paul tells us God reveals the fragrance of Christ through His people to others. Some respond positively, others do not.

Paul instructs us that God “reveals the fragrance of the knowledge of Him in every place.” The knowledge of God spreads out to all people through His servants just as the fragrance of perfume spreads out to all who are close to it. It is clear that the source of the aroma is not Paul himself. The aroma comes from God and wafts through His people. It is God who reveals it to people. It is not the messenger’s personality, cleverness or accomplishments which lead people to saving faith in Christ, but the knowledge of God. A corollary of this is found in the familiar words in Romans chapter 1 where Paul declares,

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (16).

Similar language is found in the Old Testament, first in Genesis chapter 8 where Noah’s sacrifices after the flood were a “smoothing aroma” to God (21). The ultimate, full meaning is found in Christ’s death on the cross which Paul writes of in Ephesians chapter 5, “Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (2).

There are those whom God has called who respond positively, others reject it. As Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthian church, “the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1:18).

A critical question is “How do we, when do we radiate the pleasant, fragrant, sweet aroma of Christ to others?”

Paul helps us answer that with the contrast between himself and some others “peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.” Any focus or motive of ourselves, acceptance, personal gain stifles the aroma of Christ, while sincere, God-focused speaking the truth in love spreads it.

What kind of fragrance are we giving today to people around us? Are we fragrant flowers allowing God to spread the aroma of Christ that He uses to draw them to Himself, to build them up in Him?

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