–Save This Page as a PDF–

A Sweet-Smelling Aroma
2: 14-17

A sweet-smelling aroma DIG: What seems to be the historical significance for the imagery used in verse 14? What does it mean that believers are the aroma of Messiah? What effect does this have on people? How can the same Good News be either the smell of death or the fragrance of life? Who enables us to be this sweet-smelling aroma? Where do we get it?

REFLECT: Paul was able to praise God in the midst of challenging circumstances. Do you praise God when things are tough? How can you become more able to genuinely praise God in all circumstances? What kind of aroma are you leaving in your life? Pleasing or offensive? How can you spread that aroma of Messiah in your home, neighborhood, or workplace?

For to God we are the aroma of the Messiah.

But thanks be to God, who in the Messiah constantly leads us in a triumphal procession (2:14a). The imagery **Paul** uses in this verse is taken from the Roman triumph. Polybius, the Greek historian of the Hellenistic period, says that the Senate could add glory to the successes of Roman generals by bringing their achievements before the eyes of the citizens through a "triumph." This was the highest honor that could be conferred on a Roman. The best known triumph is the one commemorated by the Arch of Titus, which depicts the Roman victory over the Jews in 70 AD. In a Roman triumph, the victorious general entered the city on his chariot and rode through the streets among throngs of cheering Romans to Capitoline Hill, where he would make a solemn offering to Jupiter. As he drove through the streets filled with the aroma of burning incense, a man held a laurel wreath over his head and whispered in his ear, "Remember, you are only a man."

Paul draws from this rich background here. **God** is the victorious **General** who leads us, **His** followers, in **His** triumph in **Messiah**. As believers, we share in **His** victory, resulting in the sweet-smelling aroma of **His Person everywhere** we go.[87] Then **Paul** chooses another metaphor in referring to the effects of **His** being

paraded before others. **And through us spreads everywhere the aroma of what it means to know Him (2:14b)! The aroma** of the knowledge of **God spreads everywhere**. Just as perfume **spreads everywhere** into the atmosphere, so **the Divine** revelation **spreads everywhere**. But, as in **Yeshua's** parable of the soils (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Et – The Parable of the Soils**), **the sower** scattered **the seed** widely, but **the soils** where **it** landed are not equally productive. In some **soils the seed** is destroyed before **it** can even begin to take root; in others **it** is eventually destroyed. In **Paul's** metaphor, the gospel's piquant **aroma** permeates everything so that people are forced to take notice. But what some find to be a sweet-smelling **aroma**, others regard as a stench.[88]

For to God we are the aroma of the Messiah. The Good News is like a flower's fragrance. If a sweet-smelling flower smells bad to someone, the fault is not with the flower. Rather, there must be something wrong with his nose. In the case of the gospel, the problem is called sin. So, if **to God we** who believe and proclaim **the Good News are the sweet aroma of the Messiah,** who lives in us, then **among those being saved, we are the** same **sweet smell of life leading to more life.** But **among those** in the process of **being lost, we are the** stinking **smell of death, leading only to more death (2:15-16a).** Those bent on sin, those in the process of eternally lost, cannot stand to hear **the Good News** and do not respond to it, except with redoubled antagonism or indifference, as seen in **Revelation 16:9, 11** and **21; Romans 1:19-32; Acts 13:45, 14:4-5, 14:19, 16:20-24, 17:5-9, 32a,** and **18:9a.**

Who is equal to such a task of being a suitable channel for **God** to **spread everywhere the fragrance of what it means to know Him (2:14)?** In other words, what can make people **competent to be workers proclaiming a New Covenant (3:6a)** even more glorious than the one **Moshe** brought **(3:6b-11)**? The

answer is that such **competence** is not produced by financial incentives **(2:17),** self-**recommendation** or **letters to or from** others **(3:1),** but **is from God (3:5),** through **His Spirit (3:3, 6b, 8, 17-18)**. It is **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh**, **the Spirit of God**, who gives **workers the confidence (3:4)** to be sincere and **open (3:12-13)**, who has the power to remove spiritual blindness **(3:14-16)**, and who, in doing so, turns people into a living **letter** of recommendation **from Messiah Himself**, thus removing the need for the usual kind **(2:16b-18)?**[89]

For we are not like a lot of folks who go about huckstering (Greek: *kapeleuo*, which is derived from the noun *kapelos*, meaning *a con artist or street hawker who cleverly deceives unwary buyers into purchasing a cheap imitation of the real thing*) **God's message for a fee. Paul** specifically had in mind **the false apostles** in **Corinth**, who peddled a corrupt mixture of divine truth and Jewish legalism to **the Corinthians**.[90] **On the contrary (2:17a),** unlike those spiritual con men, **Paul** made **the Good News** available to **the Corinthians** free of charge **(10:7, 11:7-12, 12:13; First Corinthians (First Corinthians 9:12b-19; Acts 18:2-3),** even though **he** was entitled to material support **(9:4-12a; Galatians 6:6). The Mishna expresses the same attitude toward teaching Torah, "Do not make of it a crown with which to advance yourself or a spade with which to dig" (Avot 4:5,** cited more clearly in **First Corinthians 9:4).**[91]

ADONAI has given you **a Life Message** to share. When you became a believer, you also became **God's messenger**. **ADONAI** wants to speak to the world through you. **Paul** said: **We speak out of a sincere heart, as messengers of God, standing in God's presence, living in union with the Messiah (2:17b).** You might feel like you don't have anything to share, but that's **the Adversary** trying to keep you silent. You have a storehouse of experiences that **the Lord** wants to use to bring others into **His** family. The Bible says: **Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony of God in them (First John 5:10a). Your Life Message has four parts:**

Your Life Message includes your testimony: Your testimony is the story of how **Yeshua** has made a difference in your life. **Peter** tells us that we were chosen by **God to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He has made for you (First Peter 2:9).** This is the essence of **witnessing**, simply sharing your personal experiences regarding **the Lord**. In a courtroom, **a witness** isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict; that is the job of the attorneys. **Witnesses** simply report what happened

to them or what they saw. **Yeshua** said: **You will be My witnesses (Acts 1:8). He** wants you to share your story with others because it is unique. There is no other story like yours. You may not be a Bible scholar, but you are an authority on your life, and it's hard to argue with personal experience. Actually, your personal testimony is more effective than a sermon, because unbelievers see pastors as professional salesmen, but they see you as a "satisfied customer," so they give you more credibility.

*Dear Wonderful Heavenly **Father**, Praise **Your** great love and care for each of **Your** children! Your love is so deep and satisfying that even in the midst of severe trials when life seems out of control – **Your** steadfast love is totally satisfying! Thank **You** for **David's** example when jealous King Sha'ul was chasing **David** to kill **him**, **David** fled to the Judean wilderness. **He** had to say: "Good-bye" family, "Good-bye" friends and "Hello" those in distress, "Hello" those in debt, and "Hello" to those who were discontented **(First Samuel 22:2)**. **David** could have focused on **his** being alone and on all the negative people and things around **him**, but instead as **a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), he** was satisfied for **he** chose to keep the eyes of **his heart** focused on **Your** great and steadfast **love**. **Since Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips will praise You (Psalms 63:3).** Please help me to follow **David's** example of praising **You** and of meditating on **You** thru **the night** – which will help me to remember **You** during the day. **When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You through the night watches. For You have been my help, and in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy. (Psalms 63:6-7).** In your holy **Son's Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

Your Life Message includes your life lessons: ADONAI has taught you from experiences with **Him**. David prayed: **God, teach me lessons for living so I can stay the course (Psalm 119:33 The Message).** Sadly, many people don't learn anything from their life experiences, they keep making the same mistakes over and over again. You have probably met people like that. It is also important to learn life lessons from others **(Proverbs 25:12)**. Mature people develop the habit of extracting lessons from everyday experiences. I urge you to make your own list and write them down. You haven't really thought about them unless you have written them down. Here are a few questions to jog your memory and get you started. What has **God** taught me from failure? What has **God** taught me from a lack of money? What has **God** taught me from pain and sorrow or depression? What has **God** taught me through waiting? What has **God** taught me through illness? What has **God** taught me from disappointment? What have I learned from my family, church,

relationships, and critics?

Your Life Message includes your godly passions: **ADONAI** is a **passionate God**. **He passionately** loves some things and **passionately** hates other things. As you grow closer to **Him**, **He** will give you a **passion** for something **He** cares about deeply so you can be a representative for **Him** in the world. Whatever it is, you feel compelled to speak up about it and do what you can to make a difference. **God** gives us **passions** so that everything **He** wants done in the world will get done. You cannot keep yourself from talking about what you care about most. **Yeshua** said: **A person's heart determines their speech (Matthew 12:34). David** said: **My passion for God and His work burns hot within me (Psalm 69:9).** And **Jeremiah** said: **Your message burns in my heart and bones, and I cannot keep silent (Jeremiah 20:9).** But you should not expect everyone else to be **passionate** about your **passion**. Indeed, we must listen to and value each other's life message. Never belittle someone else's godly **passion** because **it's fine to be passionate, provided the purpose is good (Gal 4:18).**

Your Life Message includes the Good News: What is **the Good News**? **The Good news shows how God makes people right with Himself – that it begins and ends with faith (Romans 1:17 NCV). For God was in Messiah, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. This is the wonderful message He has given to us to tell others (Second Corinthians 5:19 NLT). The Good News** is that when we trust **God's** grace to save us through what **Yeshua** did, our sins are forgiven, we get a purpose for living, and we are promised a future home in heaven. What are you willing to do so that people you know will go to heaven? Don't miss the opportunities **God** is giving you. Is anyone going to be in heaven because of you? Will anyone in heaven be able to say to you, "I want to thank you. I'm here because you cared enough to share **the Good News** with me?" Imagine the joy of greeting people in heaven whom you helped get there. The eternal salvation of a single soul is more important than anything else you will ever achieve in this life. Only people are going to last forever.[92]