

triumphant. Christ said His church cannot be overpowered by Satan; His kingdom cannot be derailed or destroyed.

God leads us in triumph in Christ Jesus. The final victory is Christ's. Some battles may be lost due to the failure of the soldiers involved, but still God is leading a triumphant procession of the church in Christ (e.g. Church in China today, in Africa; 10,000 a day accepting Christ-in 15 years it will be the most Christian continent).

3. We Are The Fragrance To God

"For we are to God the aroma of Christ." The joy of this fragrance to God is very much a part of this analogy. We are the aroma of Christ to God: in some way, we remind God of Christ. Your life and my life can mean something to God as He sees us being transformed into the image of Christ. Isn't that incredible to realize that we remind Him of Christ?

As we are growing into the image of Christ, God sees what His Son has accomplished in our lives and His heart is gladdened. As we meet Christ in the Word, God sees us being transformed from one degree of glory to another degree of glory by the Spirit (II Cor 3:18). As the image of Christ becomes more a part of our life, and the fragrance of Christ is being diffused by us into this smoggy filthy world; then, God's purpose of making disciples of all nations is getting accomplished. This fragrance is wafting upwards as well as outwards. God rejoices--the angels rejoice as more people are reached and discipled.

4. We As The Fragrance

Then the figure Paul uses changes as he says, "We are the fragrance"--we ourselves! This brings the analogy closer home to each one of us; the responsibility is great. Can we say with Paul, "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ"? (I Cor 11:1) When we come out of the presence of Christ, have we perfumed our mind with Him? How about our words--are they His words? Our will--is it His will? Our actions--are they His actions? **OUR GREATEST INFLUENCE IS UNCONSCIOUS.** Therefore, the greater our intimacy with Christ, the greater our fragrance of Him will be.

5. Process of Making Perfume

There is yet another aspect of this analogy. How do they make the fragrant perfumes we enjoy so much? By crushing flower petals (e.g., like lavender or rosemary), or by heating them and then extracting the perfume.

In our walk with the Lord, it is the crushing experiences which can produce a greater fragrance than anything else can produce. Those who have suffered and have taken those experiences as opportunities to mature--allowing Christ to produce His fragrance, those are the ones whose life is the most fragrant. Crushing events can produce the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ; is that the effect suffering or discipline of the Holy Spirit has on you? Or does it release bitterness? It all depends on the way we respond to crushing experiences.

6. Result of Fragrance

The solemn aspect of this analogy of Paul's is the result of this fragrance: "To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life." In other words, the same gospel that brings life to some, brings death to others. Again this fits the imagery of the triumphant procession in Rome. The stream of people divided in the city: one stream went to the coliseum for death--the slaves captured in battle. The other stream went before the emperor for rewards and freedom. That's why Paul spent his whole life "knowing what it is to fear the Lord therefore we try to persuade men." It was the love of Christ which motivated Paul, and it is this same love which should motivate us to that great privilege and responsibility.

V. KEEPING OUR HEARTS FULLY DEVOTED TO CHRIST

The constant tendency of fire is to go out. If we do not obey Christ, then our devotion to Christ will die down. That's why Paul urged Timothy to "Fan into flame the gift of God which is in you." (II Tim 1:6) The Greek tense of the verb "fan" emphasizes the continuous rekindling of the flame so that our love for Christ should never lapse. His presence and power in and upon us will never diminish; this will produce the "fragrance of Christ"--an unforgettable UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE which others are unable to ignore. We should long for, pray for and be willing to pay the price for the continuing experience of Christ's fragrance and power on our lives and ministry "so that Christ's power may rest on us" (II Cor 12:9).

CONCLUSION

This is an important aspect of our life: the UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE of Christ which is backed by the Holy Spirit's power. We should be characterized by a passion: a longing

that others will come to share what we enjoy in Christ. We sin against His love if we do not live close enough to His yearning heart.

Dr. A.T. Pierson reiterates how to receive this fiery passion for souls: "There is a secret fellowship with God where we get this heavenly fire kindled within, and it makes personal work for souls easy and natural. To linger in God's presence until we see souls, as through his eyes, makes us long over them with a tireless longing. This passion for souls is probably the highest product of spiritual communion with God." When the Holy Spirit fills your heart and my heart with hunger for souls, He will guide us in ways to express that love in seeking the lost. "Thanks be to God, who leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him." (II Cor 2:14)

Jesus taught us that love seeks. Seeking love drives the shepherd out to find the one lost sheep, even though the other 99 are safe. When he finds the one lost sheep he joyfully takes the sheep home and calls all his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him (Lk 15:3-7). Think of the intense joy we experience when we welcome new brothers and sisters into the family of God. That joy gives a vision to all the members of the body so they can each one experience the thrill of leading people to Christ. No joy compares to that of seeing someone you have been praying for and sharing with come to Christ. And then, the joy of discipling that one; watching them grow and mature until they reach others. What else is there in this world besides people?--people to reach and people to disciple.

My constant prayer for us here at Xenos is that we never lose our radical commitment. That our hearts flame higher, brighter, and more intensely with the love of Christ--His fragrance, His seeking love which expresses itself in a passion for souls.