

## The Fragrant Influence of Christ

### ***Read II Corinthians 2:14-16***

This passage says that “God always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ”. The expression “triumphal procession” is translated from the Greek work “thriambeuo” which means “parade of triumph” and is only used twice in the New Testament. The word alludes to the way kings celebrated their victories in that culture. “In the world of ancient Greece and Rome, royal processions were common and reserved for the emperor or king...Roman generals were greeted as ‘saviors’ as they led triumphal processions of soldiers, captives, and wealth through the streets of Rome. Surrounded by incense...a general would carry an eagle-crowned scepter...” (Word Power, by Gary M. Burge, Christianity Today, 10/22/01). There are several views on how this passage in Corinthians should be interpreted. One common view is that it is describing us as part of Christ’s royal entourage, His attendants and soldiers, and the captives led in His train are sin and death which He has forever defeated. In ancient Rome, the attendants of the king would burn censers of fragrant incense as the processional moved through the city. Incense is very strong and pervasive...much more powerful than the scent of a perfume. The dictionary lists two meanings for the word “fragrant”: 1. a pleasant aroma; 2. an unpleasant aroma (*colloquial use*). Two completely opposite meanings for the same word! As verses 15 and 16 of this passage say, “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life”. We are that fragrant incense, like that which was spread during those triumphal processions long ago. As such, we represent three things:

1. We are the Proclamation of Christ the King. We are heralds of His second coming, the scent of which brings either fear to the unbeliever or hope to the righteous. In the ancient processions, the strong fragrance of the burning incense would have pervaded the air and preceded the actual arrival of the king, bringing the great joy of anticipation to those who awaited his arrival.
2. We are the Power of Christ the King. The fragrance of the incense was strongest when the king was present in the midst of the crowd...there could be no doubt that he was there. In the same way, those around us should have no doubt that the power and presence of the King is within us, influencing all we say and do.
3. We are the Proof of Christ the King. Not only did the scent of the incense precede the procession, but it lingered in the air long after the royalty had passed. In the same way, the fragrance of our lives should linger long after we have moved on; evidence that that King has passed this way.

Verse 16 asks the heartfelt question, "Who is equal to such a task?" Not until II Corinthians 3: 4-5 do we find the answer. Paul says, "Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God". Thanks be to God!

***Questions to Ponder:***

1. Which definition for "fragrant" describes your life most of the time?
2. Can you think of a recent example in which the fragrance of the power of the King was present in a situation in your life, and how it influenced the response to the situation?
3. Why does Paul say that believers are the "smell of death" the perishing? Do all unbelievers respond to us in that way?