**How Does It Smell to You?**

I used to travel in Asia for work and ate a lot of foods that would be hard to find in Murray Kentucky. At one business dinner, one of the locals let me take a whiff from a tiny container and, I must say, the smell that escaped from the mouth of that tiny jar was the worst I have ever encountered. I was told that the little jar contained fermented shrimp paste.

I recently came across an article by Mari Uyerhara about the use of shrimp paste in Asian cooking and the title of the article was *It Smelled Like Summer Garbage. I Was in Love.* Obviously, there are others in the world who do not share my disdain for the stuff, and that’s OK.

In 2 Corinthians 2:14-16, Paul uses our sense of smell to illustrate that the same gospel of Jesus Christ will elicit different responses depending on the predispositions of the hearers. He wrote, “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. 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.”

Everyone who encounters the pure gospel will detect a spiritual aroma. The nature of the aroma will depend on how each of us chooses to respond to the message. The basic premise of the gospel is disturbing by anyone’s standards. Violating God’s will (sin) alienates a person from Him (Isaiah 59:1-2) and all of us have done it (Romans 3:23). Furthermore, the debt created by sin is so great, none are capable of paying the ransom price and God’s sense of justice won’t allow Him to simply forgive without redemption or He would cease to be just. The end result of this dilemma would be that all of us would be eternally separated from the God who loves us.

The word gospel simply means “good news” and for good reason. You see, God loved us enough to provide His own sacrifice for sin; His own Son. Jesus was the fullness of the Divine Nature in bodily form and shed His blood on a Roman cross. That sacrifice satisfied the Father’s sense of justice so that He is free to forgive us and still remain just (Romans 3:24-26). Now we can be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11).

On the surface, you would think that everyone would experience the “sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him” but, sadly, that’s not the case. Folks reject the gospel for a lot of reasons; pride, worldliness, earthly wisdom, ambition. But the simple fact is that the truth of the gospel carries the stench of death to the person who has been confronted with the consequences of the lifestyle in which they are determined to persist.

If you are humble enough to recognize that you need God’s help, His message of hope and mercy will amount to the sweetest fragrance you have ever found. If you would like to study God’s word, give me a call at 270-293-1697. We can enjoy the wonderful fragrance of truth together!

**John McKee**

**West Murray church of Christ**