

# An Obvious Aroma

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I was meeting with someone who hated both me and God. I had to meet with her – I knew that – but it took all I had just to show up. I hated the encounters as much as she did. And I was frightened by her. My heart pounded when I saw her; relief flooded me when she left. Relief ... and discouragement. Our time together seemed a total waste. I saw nothing to even suggest victory in this spiritual battle for her soul. Then God gifted me with words which challenged my fears and brought me courage and hope:

*2 Corinthians 2:14 But 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. <sup>15</sup> For we are a fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.*

What bold promises! ***Always. In every place, Triumph.*** All this because He is in me and His presence carries a sweet fragrance. His is an obvious aroma.

*Really?* When I meet with someone, with anyone, can I actually count on God manifesting His fragrance? Yes. I can. Not just sometimes but always. Not just in some places but in every place. Everywhere I go, whomever I'm with, Jesus is also present and *perceivable*. At the least, He makes people aware He is there: they will be as aware of His fragrance as they would be of mine if I'd splashed on an excess of perfume. And at the best? At the best, they will be drawn to know Him themselves. His is an obvious aroma.

I relaxed. She still hated me, but now I knew, really *knew*, that our time wasn't a waste. Nor was it dangerous. I couldn't see His obvious aroma, but isn't that what faith is for – making us sure of what we can't see? Though hidden from my eyes, God's work was taking place. I rested in that. I counted it as fact. My tension eased. I no longer felt so useless and inept.

Our meetings ended – at her option, not mine. I don't know to this day what impact Christ's fragrance had on her heart. But I do know that she smelled it; of that I am certain. His is an obvious aroma. Did she continue to recoil from Him and fill her emptiness with Christ-substitutes? Perhaps. Was she drawn towards Him? Maybe. I may never know, but I can pray, and I have.

## A Few Questions (and a bit of advice)

- **Your Beliefs:** Do you believe that Jesus is perceivable through you?  
If you've welcomed Jesus' presence into your life, you can absolutely count on His fragrance wafting from you. He sends forth from each believer an obvious aroma, the fragrance of knowing Him. It's a given. Count on it.
- **Your Effort:** It's tempting to make an effort to "look Christ-like."  
Do you find yourself trying to "be godly"? Do you wonder if you're doing it well enough? Your efforts are unnecessary. You don't have to produce anything. His fragrance is already there. You don't have to work to create it, and you don't have to work to get someone else to perceive it. It's an obvious aroma.
- **Their Response:** Most of us use another person's response to us to check if we're being effective.  
How about you? Do you let another person's responses dictate your behavior? Do others' actions make God's fragrant presence seem less real? Don't be misled. God never wastes our interactions but uses each encounter to woo our companion to draw near to Jesus. Now it's important for us not be obnoxious, and it's important to be wise and kind, but also recognize that someone's responses may not be to you but to Christ in you.

- **Timing:** Romans 2:4 says that "the kindness of God leads to repentance."  
I used to think that kindness was useless – I thought that if I were *kind* the recipient of my kindness would never understand that I meant what I said. Then I realized the effect kindness has on my heart. Kindness softens me. It makes me receptive. We need to pray that, through our kindness, the Lord will soften the hearts of each person we meet. We also need to be aware that their softening, should it occur, may come years after our kindness takes place.
- **Willingness:** Have you ever wanted to avoid meeting with someone?  
How did you handle it? Think a bit about God's promise to lead us in triumph. How might faith in the continued presence of His obvious aroma impact your willingness to go into difficult situations?

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