
WELCOME TO THE VICTORY PARADE

January 15, 2012

THREE EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIANS

Here are three examples of Christians based on a scent examples.

1. Febreze – This is the “breath of fresh air” Christian. The type of Christian that we all hope rubs off on everybody. When you’re with this Christian you feel energized... your faith is strengthened
2. Spoiled Meat – This is the stinky Christian. The “used to smell good” Christian...but now they’ve gotten bitter and old. They’re stagnant, crusty, rigid, rotting... when you’re with this Christian you feel depressed, sapped, tired...and sick.
3. Human Scent Eliminator (really not a smell, more like a reaction some Christians have to other Christians) – This is the elite branch of Christian Special Forces, designed to cover up any Febrezers out there. Those driven to keep things the way they’ve always been. The “comfort zone” Christians--Actual Mission effort to eliminate the practice of raising of hands

If these three get into a fight let’s pray that the Febrezers win!

DON’T YOU LOVE GOOD SMELLS?

When we lived in Ft. Worth, every time we drove past the Mrs. Baird’s factory we rolled down our windows and enjoyed the smell.

Smells communicate... certain smells lead to certain actions...cooking. Some smells bring back certain memories (basements remind me of my Grammas’ house in Indianapolis). Some smells let you know that something’s coming. A lot like a certain look you used to get from your parents...you knew what was coming. I still remember my dad's look from the platform at church. The “aroma” of my dad’s glare was quite pungent...there was no mistaking what was coming...that look meant a major beating when we got home...man I loved Sundays.

CONCEPT OF AROMAS

The concept of Aromas is alive and well in the Bible, let’s look at one example...

II CORINTHIANS 2:14-16 NIV ¹⁴*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.* ¹⁵*For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.* ¹⁶*To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.*

II Corinthians 2:14-16 in The Message “In the Messiah, in Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, he brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent, rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way of salvation—an aroma redolent with life. But those on the way to destruction treat us more like the stench from a rotting corpse.

One fragrance is described in these verses and how does God respond to the aroma? “The sweet scent rises to God”. You can almost get a sense that God rolls down his window to catch a whiff of this smell. Still two other reactions on the part of two groups of people in this parade. One type of person finds the smell exquisite scent another finds it repulsive.

Triumphal Procession...

II CORINTHIANS 2:14 ¹⁴*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

The purpose was to celebrate the victory of the homecoming victorious army. A triumphal procession was considered as the most esteemed reward for a Roman general. The procession consisted of the senate, citizens, victorious army, spoils and emblems of conquered cities and provinces, the captive princes and generals.

The actual order of the procession was...

1. OFFICIALS
2. MUSICIANS
3. SPOILS OF WAR
4. SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL
5. CAPTIVES
6. MORE MUSICIANS
7. PRIESTS WITH INCENSE
8. THE GENERAL AND HIS FAMILY
9. THE VICTORIOUS ARMY

Where are you in that list? The answer to that question depends entirely on what you are doing with #8 in that list. The way you get to be #9 isn't by good fighting, but by surrendering. Those that found their way into #5 got there by fighting against God.

The truth behind the smell of the incense in #7... There are three symbols in incense:

1. Fire = passion of the worshipper
2. Aroma = the influence of the worshipper
3. Smoke = the prayers of the worshipper

II Cor 2:14-16 says that we as believers in Christ produce two different reactions in people. To those who are saved (our fellow victorious soldiers), we are the smell of life. To those who aren't saved, (those who haven't yet surrendered their lives to God) we are the smell of death. I think there's a sub group within the ones that are repulsed by our smell... Legalistic Christians...more on that later.

Back to the procession. The victorious army and the general loved the smell of incense in the parade. It meant victory, celebration, knowing all their work was worth it. But think about how the captives felt about the smell. The captives were being paraded through the town in order to exhibit their defeat. They would be thrown into prison right after the parade and then the captives would be executed. It's much the same way I felt about my dad's glare...I knew what was coming, and so did they.

So many of you today know what's coming, and you don't seem to care or you've gotten numb to a reality that you know in your gut is very real. Sure Hollywood wants to glamorize atheism, "just believe in yourself, be your own god" but that starts fading fast when you need God. When you're in danger! When you need prayers! When you know in your heart that the story of you and your soul can't just end in a grave.

See, we're all in a Triumphal Procession today. Believers in Jesus are the victorious army, the last on that list, but not because we fought the fight so well... but because of how well Jesus Christ fought the fight. Because God is so good, and so ready to spread the love, we as his followers get to share in the victory. We are the winners...and we didn't even fight! Sometimes Christians need to be reminded that they are in that parade, and that they didn't get there by their own efforts. That's exactly what I'm trying to do for you today, give you the perspective of how solid your security should be by using this analogy that Paul used of this procession.

Now your "smell" that he refers to is your Christian lifestyle; at home, at work, at play, during good times, during bad. Every Christian produces a certain "aroma" that causes others to make a conclusion about Christianity and so much of this has to do with what you are known for as a believer. Truthfully, many of you aren't known for being believers at all. Are you satisfied with that? (Are you just a Christian player?) But some of you are known for either one of two things as a believer. 1) rules and religion or 2) freedom and love. The easier of these two is rules. It's the easier, more robotic side of religion but freedom is a whole other side of faith! Freedom gives you the connection to God that religion never could, and you get it through Jesus.

People know me as the "pastor who drinks" (I don't live in fear any more about what people think about me, especially Christians). Some people have a problem with that... (HERE'S THAT SUB GROUP I WAS

TALKING ABOUT). It's my "aroma"...and it's all about freedom and love but you know what's cool about my aroma? I reach a lot of people for Christ with my lifestyle...with my smell...my influence and I believe that the freedom I live in, in Christ, pleases God. Most of my Christian friends love how I live...to them, I am the fragrance of Life. But to some people that don't get God, and have been jacked up by churches, they don't get me or my lifestyle, and to them I stink. This is that horrible group of Christians and churches who bring everyone down. This is the rotten meat group... as soon as you have a celebration they come in to criticize how you held the party. They're the ones that stand against dancing, and close up the opportunity for a Dad to dance with his own daughter at her wedding because such activity shouldn't be allowed among Christians.

VICTORY PARADE

We are on a Victory Parade...and it is time we live like it. People who don't get that (Christian or Non), truly have no idea what it means to live in the Freedom that Christ provides.

Galatians 5:1, 14-15 ¹*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

¹⁴*The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁵*If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

It's not surprising that Paul told us to quit "biting and devouring each other" while he is talking about freedom. I am free in Christ...his words bring me confidence and strength. But if Christians in my life come at me with bites of judgment and try to devour me with condemnation, then this whole thing doesn't work. And that is exactly where many of you have come from.

And many people really don't get what Jesus meant in *Matthew 11*

MATTHEW 11:28-30 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

This isn't a religious, churchy thing. It's a brother and sister in arms, back to back, military conquest kind of thing and I believe one of the main reasons it's a freedom thing is because of this triumphal procession. THIS IS A VICTORY PARADE, the battle has been fought, it is very obvious who the winner is, and now it's time to party! See you can't do that unless you're free!

This Victory Parade is supposed to be your entire life posture. It's how you should wake up in the morning...I am victorious! (more on that next week). It's how you should face your addictions, your fears, your anxieties. It's why you should embrace the good times and blessings in your life. You are at the end of this Victory Parade, baby!!

At The Waters we like to say that we are here for hurting people, broken, busted, lonely, all that... but let's not forget that what we really have here is a church filled up with soldiers that have, through the strength of Jesus, devastated our enemy with shock and awe like the world has never seen. There was no greater military campaign or strategy than that of Jesus Christ going to war against evil and winning.

So, in that spirit and attitude of victory, I come to you this morning with the same motivation of Isaiah, the great prophet of the Old Testament

Isaiah 61:1-3, 7 ¹The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

⁷Instead of their shame my people will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace they will rejoice in their inheritance; and so they will inherit a double portion in their land, and everlasting joy will be theirs.

Look at that list

1. freedom
2. release from captivity
3. favor
4. comfort
5. crown of beauty
6. oil of gladness
7. garment of praise
8. double portion
9. everlasting joy

You live your life with that attitude, with that victory, you will find that joy you've been looking for, and you will get the attention of the world. How will they respond? We know in *1 Corinthians 1:18* that when we preach the cross and empty tomb of Jesus, some people will call us fools. Some non Christians will call you weak for having faith in God. Some Christians will criticize you for living freedom in the champion, Jesus.

You know what I really care about? I care about what my General thinks of me, my Leader, my Commander. Keeping it real, you know what I'm really living for? The day when my triumphal procession is over, the day I trade in this body for a heavenly one, the day that I see my Captain face to face, and hope to hear those words...

"Well done, my good and faithful servant. Well done." *Matthew 25*