

Series: 2 Cor

Title: What God's Witnesses Are and Why

Text: 2 Cor 2: 14-17

Date: April 13, 2017

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

In order to get us focused on our text, one of my favorite ways to introduce a message is by giving you our outline as we read the text. Our text begins in verse 14,

2 Corinthians 2: 14: Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge...by us...in every place.

By us—by his preacher and his witnesses—God makes the savor of his gospel go forth in every place. The *savor of his knowledge* is the savor of the gospel, the savor of Christ, the Wisdom and Power of God.

First, what are God's witnesses to God?—**2 Corinthians 2: 15: For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ,...**All God's witnesses are a sweet savor of Christ unto God.

Secondly, in whom are we a sweet savor of Christ?—**2 Corinthians 2: 15...in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?** Some believe, some believe not. But in both—in them that are saved and in them that perish, God's witnesses are unto God a sweet savor of Christ.

Lastly, why are we unto God the savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish?—**2 Corinthians 2: 17: For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.**

Title: What God's Witnesses Are and Why

Proposition: God's witnesses are unto God a sweet savor of Christ because we preach Christ in spirit and in truth.

WHAT ARE GOD'S WITNESSES UNTO GOD?

2 Corinthians 2: 15: For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ,...

Who is included when he says "*we are?*" We includes God's preachers and God's people. Not all preachers and all people but God's chosen, redeemed, regenerated, called, believing people. A witness of God is one who bears witnesses of God's ability and power to do all the saving of our souls from beginning to end. Christ's ambassadors are sent by Christ and as we speak God's word we speak for God, *as though God did beseech you by us.*

This verse tells us this is what we are "*unto God.*" Imagine that! We are talking about what we are unto the all-knowing God who knows the heart of every man. This is what we are unto the holy and righteous God who requires perfect holiness and perfect righteousness. This is what we are unto God who is the holy and righteous Judge before whom we all must stand in the day of judgment.

So what are God's witnesses unto God?—"a sweet savour of Christ." Unto God, *we* smell like his Son and *our gospel* is to God a sweet savor of his Son, Christ Jesus.

In ourselves, outside of Christ, no sinner smells like his Son. In ourselves, outside of Christ, all men are proud, self-righteous, God-hating rebels—an abomination [a stench] unto God.

Proverbs 16: 5: Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD: *though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

Deuteronomy 25: 16...all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Proverbs 15:8: The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Proverbs 15: 9: The way of the wicked *is* an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

Proverbs 15: 26: The thoughts of the wicked *are* an abomination to the LORD: but *the words* of the pure *are* pleasant words.

Luke 16: 15: And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

Revelation 21: 27: And there shall in no wise enter into [heaven] any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

But all who are in Christ, are a sweet savor of Christ unto God. How do we become this sweet savor? Is it by our doing or by God's doing? By God's doing! God said,

Ezekiel 20: 41: I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

Salvation is God accepting the sinner. The sweet savor in which God receives us is Christ himself. Christ who creates us anew in his righteousness and his holiness.

Ephesians 5: 2: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself...for us...an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

Christ gave himself. Christ gave himself for us—God's elect. Our gospel is the good news of substitution. Christ died in the place of his people under the justice of God. Christ gave himself an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

The burnt offering could never be accepted without the meat offering. The work of Christ must never be separated from his person—*Christ gave himself an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savor*—We must turn from our person and work to rest in Christ's person and work. God only accepts sinners who rest in Christ who come in the sweet smell of his Son.

When we have been created anew by Christ then God manifests the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. He does so by making us wear the garment of Christ's righteousness and the indwelling holiness of Christ within us. He does so by making us an entirely new creation, created and adorned by Christ alone! He

does so by making us preach and bear witness of Christ alone! *God maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place and we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ,...*

IN WHOM ARE WE A SWEET SAVOR OF CHRIST UNTO GOD

2 Corinthians 2: 15...in them that are saved, and in them that perish: 16: To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

This is the two-fold effect the gospel has upon all who hear. Some smell a savor of death, reject Christ and perish by their own willful rebellion. Death is the wages of sin earned by the sinner. But by the irresistible grace of God, others smell a savor of life and believe on Christ and are freely given eternal life in Christ. Salvation is the gift of God freely given in Christ.

Each of us here, right now, fits into one of these two categories. The question we all ought to ask is, "Which one am I?" If you do not believe on Christ, God tells me to tell you,

Ezekiel 33:11: Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die...?

But be sure to get this. In either, "*in those who are saved and in them that perish,*" God's witnesses are "*unto God a sweet savor of Christ.*" How so?

"To the one we are the savour of death unto death." We are a savor unto God of Christ because we preach salvation by the death of Christ. We preach the death of Christ as the substitute of his people. The gospel is concerning the death of Christ by which God's holy law is honored and satisfied toward his people and God is declared just! The message God makes his witnesses declare is the death of Christ by which the body of the sins of God's elect is crucified forever and God is declared our Justifier. The good news God makes his witnesses hear and believe and declare is the death of Christ by which his people are made to count ourselves dead indeed unto sin. (Rom 6) This message of the death of Christ is a sweet savor unto God.

The gospel is a sweet savor of Christ unto God because it declares death to all man's wisdom, righteousness, and holiness and declares Christ alone Wisdom, Righteousness, Holiness and Redemption to all who believe on Christ.

But to some, all this preaching of the death of Christ is only a savor of death and results in them being hardened unto death.

Still, the gospel we preach is a sweet savor of Christ unto God, even in those who despise and reject Christ and perish forever because even in the death of one who rejects Christ, God's holiness and justice is glorified. Believer's had our judgment meet on Christ and settled on the cross. The rebel shall have the judgment of God meet on them for eternity. So even in the death of the rebel, God's righteousness is glorified!

"And to the other the savour of life unto life." God's faithful witnesses are a sweet savor of Christ unto God because we preach salvation by the life of Christ. When Christ arose all his elect arose in him. We were quickened together with Christ when Christ arose. Right now we sit together with Christ at God's right hand complete in Christ.

God's faithful witnesses are a sweet savor of Christ unto God because this Gospel is the means by which God quickens his people to "spiritual life", by which he grows us and the means by which he keeps us in Christ our Life, "unto life" eternal.

So you see why Paul says, "*And who is sufficient for these things?*" It humbles God's preacher to know that God is working these two effects always by the gospel we preach. We confess that we have no sufficiency for this work.

2 Corinthians 3: 5: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is* of God;

WHY WE ARE UNTO GOD THE SAVOR OF CHRIST IN THE PERISHING AND THE SAVED?

2 Corinthians 2: 17: For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

Some call us unreasonable when we declare that so *many* are preaching a false gospel. But God's word says—"we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God." Since Satan, the father of lies, entered the garden preaching lies, his ministers have been "*many*" in every generation. There were *many* false teachers in the days of Paul and there are *many* in our day.

1 John 2: 18: Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

Philippians 3: 18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Jeremiah 23: 31: Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. 32: Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

But according to God's purpose, God sends his faithful remnant of witnesses in every generation—"For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God." By God's grace, we do not add our word to or leave out scripture. We do not make merchandise of men's souls. We do not mix the law and the Gospel, grace and works. We do not preach one thing to one group and something else to another. We do not preach to prove ourselves right. How do we preach?

"But as of sincerity." What is the chief characteristic of godly sincerity? "*The many*" would say it is the desire to see sinners saved. No! When that is the chief motive then men will alter the message to achieve that goal. That is what happens when churches start counting numbers. The chief characteristic of godly sincerity is the desire to see God receive all the glory in the salvation of his people. This is why we preach God's word in truth giving God all the glory in Christ in the salvation of his people. All God's preachers and people do so because it is written in the Psalms and Christ must fulfill it:

Psalm 64: 10: The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory. [in the LORD]

We are a sweet savor of Christ unto God, because we do not depend upon ourselves, but we preach "*as of God*" Remember, who it is we thank for all these blessings in Christ! Who produces all this work of grace?

“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.”

God’s messenger speaks *“as in the sight of God.”* God beholds all men: false and true. But God delights in his witnesses in the sweet savor of Christ. Before God, our heart is to serve God our Father, not men; to please God our Father, not men; to glorify God our Father, not sinners. By God’s grace, by God making us faithful, we shall give account to God as his faithful ambassadors and God shall be pleased with his witnesses in Christ.

We are a sweet savor of Christ unto God because *“speak we in [and of] Christ.”* God effectually makes his messengers preach “Christ and him crucified” only and plainly. We preach Christ in whom God chose a people unto salvation. Our message is Christ who fully redeemed his people being made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. We preach Christ to whom the Spirit of God regenerates and calls his people to rest in. The good news of the gospel is Christ who is all our need, all our salvation, apart from any work done by us before or after he calls us. When we preach concerning the believers daily walk, we preach Christ whom God teaches us to honor in our daily walk. When we preach that which is to come, we declare Christ who shall come again and present us without fault to God. In preaching about heaven, we preach Christ in whom the fullness of the Godhead is manifest who we shall praise for all eternity.

Let me wrap this up by saying to you, my message to you is the one and only way of salvation, who shall save his people from our sins, apart from the will and works of men, which is Christ Jesus alone.

Acts 4: 12: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

1 Corinthians 3: 11: For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 John 5: 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
12: He that hath the Son hath life; *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

For you who do not believe on Christ. There is one of two ways to live this life. Set goals and do the work it takes to try to achieve those goals. Do this and you will achieve a fair amount of goals in life. Or you can run after pleasure. Do this and you will not achieve anything but will be a welfare bum.

To a certain extent, this applies to the gospel. You are hearing the gospel preached in truth. What we do with this light God has put in our midst will have an effect on us for eternity. You can walk in the light God has given by giving yourselves to learn and believe what God’s word says. Christ called it *“taking heed how you hear.”* He said the one who hears and desires to hear more, to him more shall be given.

Or you can refuse to walk in the light God has given you and go after *“the pleasures of sin for a season.”* God calls it, *“lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.”* God says the one who will not hear, from him shall be taken even that which he had and he shall lose his own soul.

Is this gospel a savor of life to you or a savor of death? Make it your aim to answer that question by heeding God’s word. He says,

Isaiah 55: 6: Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

To you who believe, bear witness of Christ by declaring the word of God in spirit and in truth. By doing so we are a sweet savor of Christ unto God in those who believe and in those who perish. The one thing that makes our ministry a success is not how many believer or how many perish. It is that we preach Christ and him crucified according to God's word in spirit and in truth.

Amen!