

## NOT IN VAIN.

"Now thanks be to that God who always leads us forth to triumph with the Anointed One, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place; because we are a sweet odor of Christ to God, among those who are perishing: To these indeed an odor of death to death, and to those an odor of life to life. And for these things who is qualified? For we are not like the many trafficking the Word of God, but really from sincerity, and as from God, in the presence of God, we speak concerning Christ." – 2 Cor. 2:14,17. – *Diaglott*.

One advantage which the Christian toiler has over every other worker, is the full assurance that his labor shall not be in vain. And in proportion as he has faith in the promise of God, his service will be a joyful one, notwithstanding many things otherwise calculated to discourage. How truly may the consecrated child of God enter into the spirit of the Apostle's thanksgiving. Thanks be to God who always leads us forth to triumph, and who diffuses by us the fragrance of the knowledge of him in every place.

Like Paul it is our privilege to go with Christ outside the camp bearing his reproach. In the harvest field the Lord has appointed to every one of the anointed body a place, and showed that not even the humblest is excluded, and that the one, or two, or many talents may all be employed. Other saints have labored faithfully in the past, sowing the precious seed which we are now privileged to help in harvesting, and ere long the faithful sower and the faithful reaper shall rejoice together. – John 4:36.

But some may question, In what sense are we always led forth to triumph? We answer, In the same sense that Paul was so led. His message was not always received and appreciated, but whether received or rejected of men, he triumphed in the fact that his labor and sacrifices were a sweet savor to God in any case, whether they resulted

favorably or unfavorably to those who heard. Paul's service was rendered heartily, as unto the Lord; and while his love for others made him intensely anxious that they should receive the full benefit of his service, he was not disheartened or tempted to give up the work, when the desired results failed to follow. It was his privilege to rejoice even then in his Master's approval, for he worked with an eye single to his glory.

The results of the preaching of Paul and the other apostles were not always favorable to the individuals who heard. Some rejected the whole message and would not hear it. Others would hear or receive only a part of it; and it seems that some even, after having received the truth and for a time walked accordingly, afterward became apostates and "enemies of the cross of Christ," not only turning their talents and energies away from the truth, but against the truth, and endeavoring to subvert the faith of others.

But notwithstanding these exceptions, which charity bids us hope were few, there were two general classes reached by Paul and every other true ambassador mentioned in this text. To the one class the message is "glad tidings," a sweet odor, a message of life giving hope of life. To the other class it was a reproof, a warning, unpleasant in that it condemned them, declared their lives to be out of harmony with the will of God, and showed that those which do such things, and take pleasure in them, are *unworthy of life*, worthy of death.

To these then the message had an unsavory odor; it was a death message and held out no hopes of life to such, but warned them that death was the legitimate consequence of their present course.

Thus our Lord foretold that it should be (John 16:8); that when the spirit of truth would come [upon the church] it [operating through the church by precept and example] would reprove the world, convincing them of sin and righteousness and of a coming judgment – of sin [by showing their present life to be contrary to the will of God]; of righteousness [by showing them by word and example what right is, –

what the will of God is]; and of judgment to come [by informing them that though punishment does not always follow sin now, yet there will be a day, and age, in which every deed whether good or bad will have a just reward].

The fact that our message is not acceptable to them as a sweet odor, does not prove that it will never be so. They are now more or less blinded by a failure to rightly appreciate either good or evil, [R877 : page 8] else they could see as we do, that they are perishing through entailed Adamic sin, and that the message we bring is good tidings of a way through Christ by which all may enter into life everlasting. Their rejection of our message does not cause them to perish; they already perished through Adam, and they merely in blindness reject, for the time, the only means of recovery.

The Apostle mentions the same class in a following chapter continuing his discourse. (2 Cor. 4:3,4.) He there says that these who reject and do not receive the offer of life, are surely blinded by Satan; they do not see things in their true light. It is because they are blind and not that the message is not clear and favorable that the advantages of the message are not seen, but *hidden to them* – the lost, the unsaved. All were lost, but believers having heard and accepted, are reckoned as saved or recovered to life. These who reject are still in their former condition, still lost – unbenefited by the favor as yet.

But thank God for the assurance that these whom our message does not now reach, and cannot now benefit or recover from their lost or perishing condition, will be brought under favorable conditions shortly, when the glorious Millennial reign is fully inaugurated. The "god" or "prince of this world" shall be bound and his chains of blinding error and misrepresentation shall be removed from the groaning creation, and he himself shall be bound with the great strong chain of truth, and he shall deceive the people no more during the glorious reign of Messiah. – Rev. 20:1-3.

Then the blind eyes shall be opened (Isa. 29:18); then the glory of the Lord and the righteousness of all his arrangements may be clearly seen, and all flesh "shall see it" together. Then the same message, now an odor of death, and offensive to them because of their blindness, will be rightly seen. The knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth, and all shall know him.

The conditions of the message as it relates to sin, and God's abhorrence of it, and the fact that he will not grant life to willful sinners, etc., will still be the same; they cannot change; but the conditions of the sinner will change; his blindness will be removed, and he must then decide the question (obedience and life, or sin and death), which we are able to decide now.

But it is asked, What advantage then do believers of the Gospel age have over those now blind, who will see in the Millennial? We answer, much every way. Think of the joy and peace which we have from believing, which the world can neither give nor take away; think of the fellowship with the Father, and with our Lord Jesus, and the realization that under his favor and care all things, good and bad, are working together for our ultimate good. And then, besides all this, remember that those only who believed during the acceptable time (See June TOWER, page 5), receive the high calling or invitation to become joint-sacrifices with Christ Jesus, and thus joint-heirs of his coming glory and kingdom, which is to bless and uplift those whom he redeemed.

But though we enjoy the service most when it results in finding those to whom the message is good tidings, and sweet odor, yet our service to the other and much larger class is profitable also. Sometimes a seed of truth is a long time in germinating; sometimes those to whom at first your message is not agreeable, an odor of condemnation and death only, recover from their blindness and become faithful servants and messengers of the truth long after your message. Others it restrains from more violent and outward evil, and your labor is thereby a

blessing in some degree to the world. And even the individual, though he die blinded to the beauties of the message you sought to carry to him, will in the future doubtless be helped and benefited by the remembrance of your words and example.

But nevertheless, whether we see much or little fruit to our labors, let us remember Paul's lesson above, that our labor cannot be in vain if it be acceptable to God as a sweet odor, as it surely is where done with an eye single to his service and glory.

