

Sweet Fragrance.– Sunday 26th July, 2015

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷ casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”1.Peter 5:6-7

Beloved in The Lord,

God cares for us. He is a loving Father who cares for His children. That is why, all through the Scripture, we are encouraged to entrust our lives to Him fully. When we humble ourselves and entrust our lives to God fully, then we are in the best possible place we can be in. When we have surrendered our lives to Him in faith, then we are free. When we are free then we are most effective in our witness for Him.

We must always bear in mind, that if we are God’s children, then we are ambassadors for Him in this world of ours. Jesus said that we are salt and light. We have considered the truth before, that we may be the only Bible someone may read.

People are watching us. If you are a Christian, then your life is being observed. Your testimony, your witness is extremely important. Our testimony, our witness is not just what we say with our mouth, but what we say by our deeds and actions and reactions.

We leave a mark everywhere we go. We leave footprints. Every encounter, every conversation, every action leaves a mark. The mark we leave is either good or bad.

As ambassadors for Christ, we need to be ensuring that our testimony is good. We must be living a life that leaves good footprints. Our life, our presence should be as a sweet fragrance. Paul writes:

“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. ¹⁵ For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.” (2.Cor.2:14-17)

What Paul is saying is that our lives should so reflect our Lord Jesus Christ, that we evoke a reaction from people. When a Christian meets a fellow believer the meeting is sweet. Your spirit is drawn to their spirit, because God’s Holy Spirit is abiding in both. On the other hand, however, when a Christian meets a non-Christian, then very often there will be a reaction from the non-believer. Sometimes it will be a very negative one as your sweet aroma pricks their conscience if they are living in sin.

The problem today with many professing Christians is that they are seemingly neutral. There are so few truly Spirit – filled; Spirit - led Christians. So few of whom we can say the salt is really salty and the light is shining brightly. The fragrance is truly sweet.

It is of uttermost importance that we regularly examine ourselves in the light of God's Word. We must regularly use the spiritual mirror to check and see how we are going. We need to be assessing what our testimony is like. We must ask ourselves, when people meet us do they receive a positive witness for God? When people converse with us and spend time with us, do they receive Jesus love?

One very powerful and effective spiritual mirror is to check whether you worry and fret about things. When people who meet you, constantly hear you whingeing and complaining, worrying and fretting; living in fear and uncertainty what sort of witness does that give? What does it say about God? When our language is negative, then our witness is bad. The aroma is not sweet. That is why our text today says:

***"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you."* 1 Peter 5:6-7**

God wants us to live stress free; worry free; because stress and worry and anxiety ruin our testimony. We are to roll all of our anxieties upon Him. He can handle it. Jesus tells us:

***²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."* (Mt.11:28-30)**

Jesus tells us very clearly that He wants to take our load; ease our burden. He loves us. It is neither His will nor desire that we should live weighed down with stress and worry. He wants us to cast it all on Him, and to let it go. He wants us to entrust all to Him and to trust Him.

In order for us to do this we must believe that this is His will for us and that He can handle it, and that we need Him and that we cannot do it on our own. If and when we do, then he sets us free and He eases the burden. It is of course also very important to understand that once we have handed over our worries to Him, we have no right to reclaim them. We must be very ruthless with ourselves in this regard. We must be disciplined. I saw a great plaque years ago that read; " When God forgives our sins, He tosses them into a lake and puts up a no fishing sign." This applies not only to the sin we confess, but also to the burdens, cares and worries we give to Him. We must not fish them out and reclaim them. We must surrender them in faith and then move on.

Paul and other writers of the Bible compare the Christian life to running in a race. An athlete who is competing in a race, wears minimal clothing, in order to maximise his or her performance. If you are in a race, you will not wear heavy jumpers or coats; you will not place a heavy backpack on your back.

It is so in our Christian life. In order to run effectively we must throw off all that is unnecessary. We need to run free and trust that our God will provide what we need. He has promised to do so if we trust Him.

We read in Hebrews: ***"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and***

let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Hebrews 12:1-3)

So we see that we must do two things: We must lay aside every encumbrance and sin and we must keep our sights firmly focused upon The Lord Jesus Christ.

So how do we lay aside every encumbrance? We take it to the Lord in prayer. If the weight that weighs us down is sin, we need to confess it and repent and then having received forgiveness, we must go on believing and knowing that it is gone. We read in 1 John: ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1.John 1:9)***

When we confess our sins, and repent., then they are thrown into that lake where the no fishing sign is. The blood of Christ has washed us clean and that sin has no more power over us. We do not have to carry it any longer.

If the weight that weighs us down is worry, then whatever the concern is, we should take it to The Lord in prayer. We should say: “Father, I am worried about this, I don’t know what to do. I hand it to You and I ask that You would help me and provide a solution.” Will God help? Of course He will. He loves you. Believe this truth and don’t allow negative thoughts to weigh you down. As you surrender all to Him, thank Him. Praise Him. In so doing your burden eases and your feet become light.

An attitude of gratitude helps you to keep your focus on Jesus. Jesus was able to do all The Father had in store for Him, because He was always grateful to The Father, and He surrendered Himself to the will of His Father. Jesus never tried to live in His own power. He relied upon His Father for all things, in all things. The Father gave Him The Holy Spirit who strengthened, lead and blessed Him.

Likewise, when we surrender all to Him, our Father helps us and guides us. If we are Christians, then God The Holy Spirit is dwelling within us. We need to get to know Him better and we need to trust Him and let Him lead us. When we do our witness is true. The footprints we leave are God’s footprints. The fruit from our life is the fruit of The Holy Spirit: ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Gal.5:22-23)***

When we have this fruit in our life, then our life is truly a sweet fragrance that bears good witness to Jesus our Lord. God is honoured and we are blessed.

Amen

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.