

The Aroma – Ephesians 5:1-2

Introduction – There are two aromas, both associated with death and both extremely fragrant. One is the aroma of a decaying, rotting carcass; the other of fresh meat on a grill. In this short passage, which is really a wrap-up of 4:31-32 with a “therefore” in 5:1, we learn that being imitators of God and those who walk in love as Christ commits us to a kind of death, but a death that is a sweet smelling aroma to God. This short passage draws from many other biblical images and passages as Paul instructs us in some of the most challenging exhortations in Ephesians yet.

Be Imitators of God – We are called to mimic God. Obviously we cannot imitate God in His omnipresence, His omnipotence, His omniscience, so what are we talking about? The passage is very specific – we are to imitate God (our Father) as dear children. We are to imitate our Father in the same way that children who are beloved imitate their loving fathers. And what do those two words, “*dear*” and “*children*” tell us about what it is we are to imitate?

Dear – The word is “beloved.” And key to obeying this command is knowing that we are beloved (1 John 3:1-3). “*We obey because we are loved; we are not loved because we obey*” – Chappell. We are not to perform in order to bribe God to become our Father. Instead, we are to ask God to answer that all important prayer that ended Eph 3, (vv14-21). We must know the immensity of God’s love for us. Only then will we imitate.

Children – God did not simply pity us and provide for us. Instead, He has brought us to Himself, adopting us as His children through the redemption that is ours in Christ (1:5-8). If we are children, then we are heirs, and so we must ask God to answer that all important prayer that ended Eph 1, (vv15-23). We must know the immensity of God’s promises for us. Only then will we imitate.

A Loved Child Imitates His Father’s Nature and Actions – It is as common as can be: little children imitate their parents. And the more they are loved and nurtured by their parents, the more they long to be just like them. So what is it that we are imitating as “dear children?” It is, of course, His gracious glory, His giving spirit, His merciful care.

Walk in Love – I remember the words of a faithful evangelist and friend regarding his evangelistic strategy: “I have already chosen to love the next person that comes into my life.” Can we do the same, whether in the context of evangelism or simply the next relationship? To “walk” in love is to have an ongoing, habitual way of living. It’s your normal stride.

Love = Offering and Sacrifice - We are to walk “*as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us*” and so this defines the kind of love we are talking about. Not sentimental feelings, but costly, giving and forgiving love that transforms the other. Jesus gave Himself willingly, not begrudgingly (John 10:17-18). He was not passively giving up in front of Pilate; He was actively giving Himself away on our behalf.

Forgiven Much Loves Much – Jesus taught that the one who is forgiven much loves much (Luke 7:36-50). His point was not that some only needed a little forgiveness; it was that some *thought* they only needed a little forgiveness – and this changed the way they viewed grace. God has not doled out just a teaspoon of grace in our lives. He has inundated us with a tsunami of grace. We are a forgiven people and therefore we must be a forgiving people.

Applications and Aromas – When giving and forgiving are hard or unnatural to do, God’s first answer is not to shame us or make us afraid of His eternal judgment. His first response is to charge us with not believing in His gracious glory – His giving and forgiving nature (Deut 7:9-10). When we do not obey in these realms, we are imitating a false god, we are idolaters. But again, the answer is not shame (it may be conviction); it is love and forgiveness, restating the Good News. Jesus Christ died for that sin, that idolatry, that unforgiving spirit. Would you turn to Him and receive forgiveness for your unforgiving, un-giving heart? What do you think He will give you?

A World of Death/An Aroma of Life – We live in a world that was dead. Everything was death. Everyone was going to die. The world was a carcass that was decaying, the smell was putrid; death was everywhere. But Jesus said “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*” (John 11:25). Everyone still dies. But everyone who dies in Christ, believing in Him, shall live and never die. Your death in Christ does not mean that you will not physically die; it does mean that all of your life and even your death, is a sweet smelling aroma, a glorious barbecue, before God. In Christ, you are life to the world. Overtaken by His giving and by His forgiving, you are to become what Your heavenly Father is and what Christ has done and you will be life to the world around you.