

This week Cindy and the boys are in Mendocino with her mother. I decided not to go with them because I try not be absent from church more than once every two months, and I have already missed four weeks in the past three months. Cindy understands what a pastor must go through, and never gave me a hard time when my ministry meant absence from my family, even in June when I had to leave for a week to speak in Missouri. Speaking so far away is not the most pleasant experience. But I was there to tell them about Jesus. I must be ready to go where God takes me. This readiness to follow God can also be seen in missionaries like the Tokudomes, who are heading back to the mission field in a few days. They recognize that God led them there to provide for others spiritually, and they go where God leads. We may not be called to the mission field, but all our lives should still be driven by the gospel. We are called to live a life that screams, "I believe in Jesus!" In this current climate many people are willing to speak out on issues they feel strongly about, such as social justice and equality. But are we as willing to speak out about the gospel this way? This is the kind of attitude the Lord wants us to have.

We remember that the Corinthians were mad at Paul for not visiting them. They thought he wasn't committed to them or the gospel and just did whatever he felt like. But Paul told them he didn't visit so that he could spare them from severe rebuke. And now he continues to explain how he is living a gospel-driven life, which involves sacrifice, dedication, and willingness to go where God leads. In 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 Paul explains that in addition to his concern for the Corinthians and mending his relationship with them, another reason he didn't visit was because God opened a door for him in Troas. Paul understood that he must go where God leads him. Verse 14 says that God leads us like captives in a triumphal procession. In ancient times when a city defeated another city, the victorious general would return to a parade. The procession would start with a display of the spoils of war, the soldiers, then the commander, and at the very end would be the war captives who follow the commander. Paul says that we are not the soldiers who march in front, but rather we are like the captives at the back, who must trail the victor and follow wherever he goes. Sometimes we think that we go wherever we want to and expect God to use us wherever we decide to go. But we are captives who must follow God wherever He wants us to go. For example Cindy ended up at her current job not only because of her own

decisions but because of God's leading. If she hadn't lost her job in 2001 she wouldn't be where she is now. We must acknowledge that Jesus is the hero and we follow Him. We must go where He takes us and ask that He use us wherever He leads us. But Jesus is not a cruel victor. Wherever He leads us, He will also prepare us to witness for Him there. Those who do missions know that it's not comfortable or easy, but God changes your heart so that you will long to be there doing God's work. So to be gospel-driven, we must acknowledge that God dictates where we go, and that where we are is where God wants us to be for Him.

Also notice that in vv. 14-16 Paul mentions a few times the idea of smell. We should smell of Jesus. It's not something we can turn on or off; we just can't help it. Those who have been changed by Jesus emanate the smell of the gospel. This scent is in our demeanor, our mood, our words, and actions. My neighbors are not Christian, and I realize that I must have a relationship with them and smell of the gospel for them, to bring them to Christ. Likewise wherever you are you should smell of the gospel, to bring others to Jesus. Verse 16 says that to those who don't believe the smell is that of death, but for those who believe it is the smell of life. The gospel is inherently offensive because it tells us that by our own effort we are condemned. We are not good enough for heaven. But for those who accept, it is eternal life through Jesus.

Finally, the two words Paul uses for "smell" are *osme* and *euodia*. These are used together in Ephesians 5:1-2, Philippians 4:18, and fifty times in the Septuagint (e.g. Exodus 29:18, Leviticus 1:9, Numbers 15:2-3) to describe a burnt offering. This tells us that our lives should be given to God as a sacrifice. Our lives are not our own. We are redeemed to God, so we are His captives. And we should not be lamenting over this captivity. In v. 14 Paul thanks God for the opportunity to live for Him. We are called to be His captives, to smell like Him, and to live life as a sacrifice for Him.