

Character as a Sweet Fragrance

“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” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

“Character is power. The silent witness of a true, unselfish, godly life carries an almost irresistible influence. By revealing in our own life the character of Christ we cooperate with Him in the work of saving souls.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 340.

Suggested Reading: *Messages to Young People*, pp. 417–424.

1. The Atmosphere of Grace

- a. What attribute of God is the ground for our salvation, and how has it been manifested? Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 5:20, 21.
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“In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 68.

- a. **Ephesians 2:8-9** (8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Romans 5:20-21

(20) Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

(21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. The Atmosphere of Grace

- b. What happens to those who respond to the drawing power of God's grace? John 12:32; Ephesians 2:10.
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“As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 163.

b. John 12:32 (32) And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

Ephesians 2:10 (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2. The Fragrance of God's Knowledge

- a. When those living under the sacrificial laws offered a burnt sacrifice, what made the aroma a “sweet savor,” or “sweet fragrance” unto God? Exodus 29:18; Ephesians 5:2.
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“[Christ’s] offering is complete, and as our Intercessor He executes His self-appointed work, holding before God the censer containing His own spotless merits and the prayers, confessions, and thanksgiving of His people. Perfumed with the fragrance of His righteousness, these ascend to God as a sweet savor. The offering is wholly acceptable, and pardon covers all transgression.”—*The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1900.

a. **Exodus 29:18** (18) And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the LORD: it is a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD.

Ephesians 5:2 (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.

2. The Fragrance of God's Knowledge

- b. What does God use to manifest the knowledge of Himself as a sweet fragrance to those who are in ignorance of Christ? 2 Corinthians 2:14.
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“Every soul is surrounded by an atmosphere of its own—an atmosphere, it may be, charged with the life-giving power of faith, courage, and hope, and sweet with the fragrance of love. Or it may be heavy and chill with the gloom of discontent and selfishness, or poisonous with the deadly taint of cherished sin. By the atmosphere surrounding us, every person with whom we come in contact is consciously or unconsciously affected.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 339.

b. **2 Corinthians 2:14** (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.

2. The Fragrance of God's Knowledge

- c. What is required of us that our life may be accepted as a “sweet savor” unto God? Ezekiel 20:41; Romans 12:1, 2.
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“God despises a dead offering; He requires a living sacrifice, with intellect, sensibilities, and will fully enlisted in His service. Every distinctive faculty should be devoted to this work—our feet swift to move at the call of duty, our hands ready to act when work is to be done, our lips prepared to speak the truth in love, and show forth the praise of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We should continue this consecration, not taking anything from the altar; for this is sacrilege. When His people thus consecrate themselves in sincerity and humility, they are accepted of God; and they become to Him a sweet-smelling savor, diffusing a rich fragrance throughout all the earth.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 5, 1884.

- c. **Ezekiel 20:41** (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.

Romans 12:1-2 (1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

3. A Savor Of Life or Death

- a. Explain how our influence may be a “sweet fragrance” for life unto some while, at the same time, it may be an influence for death unto others. 2 Corinthians 2:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Peter 2:7.
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“[The effect of our influence upon others] is a responsibility from which we cannot free ourselves. Our words, our acts, our dress, our deportment, even the expression of the countenance, has an influence. Upon the impression thus made there hang results for good or evil which no man can measure. Every impulse thus imparted is seed sown which will produce its harvest. It is a link in the long chain of human events, extending we know not whither. If by our example we aid others in the development of good principles, we give them power to do good. In their turn they exert the same influence upon others, and they upon still others. Thus by our unconscious influence thousands may be blessed.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 339, 340.

a. **2 Corinthians 2:15-16** (15) For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, 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?

1 Corinthians 1:18 (18) For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1 Peter 2:7 (7) Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

3. A Savor Of Life or Death

- b. How is it possible for the savor of our influence to become a stink unto death to those around us? Ecclesiastes 10:1.
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“But never should it be forgotten that influence is no less a power for evil. To lose one’s own soul is a terrible thing; but to cause the loss of other souls is still more terrible. That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a fearful thought; yet this is possible.”—*Ibid.*, p. 340.

- b. **Ecclesiastes 10:1** (1) Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for isdom and honour.

3. A Savor Of Life or Death

- c. How careful should we be in choosing our close companions? Why? 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 5:6.
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“There are mysterious links that bind souls together, so that the heart of one answers to the heart of another. One catches the ideas, the sentiments, the spirit, of another. This association may be a blessing or a curse. The youth may help and strengthen one another, improving in deportment, in disposition, in knowledge; or, by permitting themselves to become careless and unfaithful, they may exert an influence that is demoralizing.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 411.

c. 1 Corinthians 6:14-15 (14) And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. (15) Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.

Ephesians 5:11 (11) And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

1 Corinthians 5:6 (6) Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

4. The Salt of The Earth

- a. How did Christ illustrate the value of the saving influence that God's people are to have upon the world? What warning did He give in doing so? Matthew 5:13. (Compare Matthew 8:12.)
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“By these words of Christ [“ye are the salt of the earth”] we gain some idea of what constitutes the value of human influence. It is to work with the influence of Christ, to lift where Christ lifts, to impart correct principles, and stay the progress of the world's corruption. It is to diffuse the grace which Christ alone can impart. It is to uplift, to sweeten, the lives and characters of others by the power of a pure example united with earnest faith and love. God's people are to exercise a reforming, preserving power in the world. They are to counterwork the destroying, corrupting influence of evil.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 239.

a. **Matthew 5:13** (13) Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Matthew 8:12 (12) But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

4. The Salt of The Earth

- b. How only can we manifest a saving influence upon the world?
Ephesians 5:2.
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“The saving salt, the savor of the Christian, is the love of Jesus in the heart, the righteousness of Christ pervading the soul. If the professor of religion would keep the saving efficacy of his faith, he must ever keep the righteousness of Christ before him, and have the glory of God for his rearward. Then the power of Christ will be revealed in life and character.”—*The Bible Echo*, February 15, 1892.

“There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good. If we realize our helplessness and our need of divine power, we shall not trust to ourselves. We know not what results a day, an hour, or a moment may determine, and never should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and if we put ourselves under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand. When unconsciously we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, prompting us to a better course, choosing our words for us, and influencing our actions. Thus our influence may be a silent, unconscious, but mighty power in drawing others to Christ and the heavenly world.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 341, 342.

- b. **Ephesians 5:2 (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.

5. A Power To Move The World

- a. What promised gift of Christ has enabled men and women in all ages to be a faithful witness for Christ? Acts 1:8.
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“From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer’s love and of His saving grace.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.

- a. **Acts 1:8** (8) But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

5. A Power To Move The World

- b. How will our influence be instrumental in finishing this work of preaching the “everlasting gospel” to the world? **Matthew 25:4**; **Revelation 18:1**.
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“Character is power. The silent witness of a true, unselfish, godly life carries an almost irresistible influence. By revealing in our own life the character of Christ we cooperate with Him in the work of saving souls. It is only by revealing in our life His character that we can cooperate with Him. And the wider the sphere of our influence, the more good we may do. When those who profess to serve God follow Christ’s example, practicing the principles of the law in their daily life; when every act bears witness that they love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves, then will the church have power to move the world.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 340.

- b. **Matthew 25:4** (4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
Revelation 18:1 (1) And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. How may I breathe in the spiritual atmosphere that surrounds the earth?**
- 2. Why is the spirit of sacrifice essential to imparting the knowledge of God?**
- 3. Explain the difference between being a savor of life or a savor of death.**
- 4. What is required in my own heart to be a savor of life?**
- 5. What power will enable the church to move the world?**

