

THE SAVOR OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE

Jon Macon

Second Corinthians 2:14-17 says, *“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”* Through the preaching of His word, God has made manifest the savor of His knowledge in every place. How does that word taste? The flavor of God's word and those who preach it are perceived in opposite ways by people, depending upon their own spiritual situation.

Some fundamental and inescapable facts

There are some fundamental facts that pertain to the souls of all people, and to where each one will spend their eternity. First, we did not make ourselves, but were created by God, the One who has made all things (Psa 100:3; Jer 10:12). The very creation supplies the abundant evidence of the existence of God and His eternal power (Psa 19:1; Rom 1:18-21). And having a Creator means that we belong to Him, and must live to do His will (Psa 24:1-2; 100:1-5; Rom 1:18-32). God's will is revealed in His word, in that one book we call the Bible (Matt 4:4; John 12:48; Rom 1:16-17; Heb 4:12). Sin is defined as transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4). And “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Those sins have created separation and alienation between each person and their Creator (Isa 59:2; Rom 5:12; 6:23; Col 1:21). Our Heavenly Father, by His grace and love for all mankind, has provided His Son Jesus Christ as the one and only way to save us all men from our sins, and reconcile us to Him (John 3:16-17; 14:6; Acts 4:10-12; Col 1:19-23; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 2:2). But we cannot be saved if we do not believe in Christ (John 3:16; 8:24; Eph 3:8). And a *living* faith in Christ requires our obedience to his every commandment (Matt 28:18-20; Luke 6:46; John 14:15; 15:14; Rom 10:16; Gal 5:6; Eph 3:10; Heb 5:8-9; Jas 2:14-26; Rev 22:12-14). That obedience includes repentance, changing our mind from living for ourselves to living only for Christ who died for us and rose again (Luke 13:3,5; 2 Cor 5:14-15; 1 Pet 4:1-2). And those who repent, by crucifying the old man of sin with Christ, must be buried with him in baptism to obtain the remission of sins and be added to His church (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-41,47; 22:16; Rom 6:3-7; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26-27; Col 2:11-13; 1 Pet 3:21;). That is the beginning of our spiritual race, when we are born again (John 3:3-5; 1 Pet 1:23). God's purpose for us from that point is to finish the race by growing to spiritual completion in the image of His Son Jesus Christ (Matt 10:25; Luke 6:40; Rom 8:28-29; 12:1-2; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 3:11-13; Php 3:11-14; 2 Tim 4:7-8; Heb 6:1-3; 12:1-2; Jas 1:2-4; 2 Pet 1:3-4; 3:18). Eternal salvation is the reward for submitting to God's will (Matt 7:21-23; Heb 5:9). All of these facts must be *known*, and require belief and

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(continued)

obedience.

The role of preaching

Part of God's eternal purpose in Christ Jesus is to use His church as the means of revealing His manifold wisdom to the world (Eph 3:10-11). The gospel of Christ, the New Testament, is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:16-17). Romans 10:13-15 emphasizes the role of the preaching of the gospel in the salvation of the souls of men: "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*" It is not God's will for only a select few "professional" Christians be responsible for preaching Christ's gospel to this lost world. Rather, God's will is that *all* of His servants be involved in teaching His word to those who do not know Him (Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; 2 Tim 2:24-26; 1 Pet 3:15). But how people respond to that preaching will vary.

What is the savor of God's word to each person?

In 1 Corinthians 1:17-21, God inspired the Apostle Paul to write about the importance of preaching, but also the two major ways that men respond to the preaching of Christ and his cross: "*For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*" In the parable of the sower, Jesus taught that "a sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it" (Luke 8:5). What does this mean? In verses 11-12, the Lord explained, "*Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.*" Those who do not love God's truth will lose their souls because they do not believe the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thes 2:10-12). Sadly, that includes all but a few in this world (Matt 7:13-14; Luke 13:23-24). To them, the preaching of God's word is the savor of death. But to us, may it ever be the savor of life unto life!