

2 Corinthians 2:5-3:6
Feilding Baptist
26.4.26

[Call to Worship](#)

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Last week we went to one of the least liked books of the Old Testament - Leviticus. Well, here's another - Ezekiel. In 2 Corinthians, that we'll look at later, Paul is pretty convinced that this prophecy from God through Ezekiel has come about. It sets the scene for us on this ANZAC weekend.

Ezekiel 36:24-27 (NIV - UK)

24 "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Pray

Father, thank you for this time to be together. Thank you for this weekend when we remember those who fought for justice. Thank you for their obedience, their bravery, their service to us, that we might be free. Please help us this morning to appreciate afresh the freedom we have in You. Thank you for Jesus, who like so many others made the ultimate sacrifice, also to free us. Thank you for the freedom, and the victory that Jesus' death, brought us. Thank you for the triumph that Jesus' death brought You! Thank you for the Holy Spirit, who now works in us, transforming us, and giving us new hearts. May we have new eyes to see too. Amen.

[Message - Fragrance](#)

Take stock of your lives; what fragrance are you exuding, how are people seeing Jesus?

Phil is a lecturer at Carey. He is in his 50's. A few years ago he was been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. One of his friends was also diagnosed with it, and died within a couple of years. The modern treatments worked for Phil, and he is doing well. But it caused him to stop and think, how much longer have I got, and how do I want to live in those remaining days?

In 2022 the life expectancy of a New Zealand Kiwi male was 81. So, considering his condition, Phil calculated the days he had till his ??? (maybe 65th?) birthday, and has been counting down ever since, two thousand and something to go. A bit morbid eh?! Each day he pauses to take stock of his life, asking himself am I living how I want to live, and did yesterday make a difference?

So, considering this; survey of fifty 95 year olds revealed, that if they were to live again, they would - guess - what would they wish they had done more of:

- spend more time reflecting,
- take more risks (a reflection of what they hadn't done),
- and focus more on what would live on, after their deaths, making a lasting impact.

Phil did not want to get to 60 or 80 with the same regrets.

Knowing that his life could deteriorate at any time, he was keen to convey to his children, not just that he loved them, but provide them some advice, expectations, on how they should live. If you were in the same situation, what would you say to a young woman, your daughter, as she embarks on University studies?

Here are Phil's seven tips he gave to his daughter. In his chapter in the book 'It Works' he unpacks each point in a paragraph:

1. Put God first.

God loves you! Obey and follow God; fear God; know that God's rules/laws are always given with your/others' best interests in mind. Use your schedule to become the people we were created to be.

2. Live your one and only (earthly) life really well

Enjoy! Celebrate! Seek progress not perfection. If something is worth doing, it's worth doing badly until you become good at it.

3. Bad and good rubs off

Choose your closest friends very wisely and prayerfully. Think about the effect they have on you. If they lead you toward God, righteous living, serving, and life, that's great -their good has rubbed off. If they lead you away from God and toward the world and rubbish, their bad has rubbed off. The people you hang out with will have an influence on you.

4. Feeling your feelings

Your feelings are important. You need to listen to them. But you must not let them rule your life. Don't follow your feelings if they go against God's laws; don't "follow your heart" if doing so goes against the Bible.

5. Education baby

Get a good education while you can. It will pay off.

6. Money honey

Make money your friend. If possible, earn more than you need. Never spend more than you earn. Always give a percentage away and save a percentage. Don't borrow money on things that depreciate.

7. Body matters

Respect your body. Look after it. Treat it very well. Exercise regularly, eat sensibly, drink lots of water, get enough sleep. Eat for strength, not drunkenness (Eccl 10:17). Your body is God's temple. Enjoy and respect it.

Considering the title of today's message, Fragrance, which one do you think applies the best?

So let's read, a passage that is surprisingly relevant for ANZAC weekend with the battle between the Kingdoms of God and Satan.

2 Corinthians 2:5-3:6 (NIV - UK)

Forgiveness for the offender

5 If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you to some extent - not to put it too severely. 6 The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient. 7 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. 9 Another reason I wrote to you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. 10 Anyone you forgive, I also forgive. And what I have forgiven - if there was anything to forgive - I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, 11 in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.

Ministers of the new covenant

12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me, 13 I still had no peace of mind, because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia.

14 But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. 15 For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ

among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are an aroma that brings death; to the other, an aroma that brings life. And who is equal to such a task? 17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, as those sent from God.

1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? 2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. 3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such confidence we have through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant - not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

May God bless these words to our hearts and minds.

There is something of an ANZAC or war theme in v11 with something like a warning to maintain our discipline, to stay on God's side. No half heartedness, no traitors here please! Actually, no shirking, for we don't want to give Satan an advantage. Think about what sort of things give Satan an advantage?

Think about when is the church in the media? Not often for the good that it is doing. Bad behaviour is sourced in Satan. And in this case the bad behaviour threatens the existence of the church, it could cause the breakup of the church, to the delight of Satan.

Paul has started this church, it's like a child to him, and he is going to do his best to make sure things don't get out of control.

So what does Paul want to see, rather, we're reading the word of God, what does God want to see in the church - according to the first six verses? Forgiveness, comfort, and love. Quite surprising, for there has been evil. Now we're to see evil turn for good.

One person in particular has been causing problems. They have received a yellow card, and have had to have some time out. But now they have done their time, and the off field review has said no further punishment is required, isn't to be upgraded to red. This person now needs to be welcomed back into the game, not kicked for touch.

There hasn't been a sweeping of the bad behaviour under the mat, as the media accuses churches. Nor has it been a slap on the wrist with a wet bus ticket... Hmm, that probably doesn't make sense to anyone under 45 - bus tickets were ridiculously thin pieces of paper, that when wet, wouldn't harm a fly! We don't know what the bad behaviour was, but Paul seems satisfied that the punishment was sufficient, and appropriate. And somehow Paul must have known that the person had repented, they had turned their lives around, showed remorse (Peter like, not Judas like). So as far as Paul was concerned, they could be welcomed back. Punishment must fit the crime. In this case, the time frame was up.

Ah, but there is some responsibility on the people, they were not to give this person the cold shoulder, excluding them, or talking behind their backs. This person was to be forgiven by the church, v7, comforted, and loved, v8. Again, we should be asking- which love is this? Are we off the hook? Is this convenient love, love on our terms? Is it eros, storge, philia, or agape?

Uncomfortably for us, it once again is agape, the unconditional, sacrificial love, the love of God, the love of Jesus. This is poured out towards one who has hurt others. This is how God wants the church to be.

Let's not think doing good is pointless, this is a battle. See v14, Jesus leads us in triumph over darkness. This verse has some historical background. The words here are of a triumphal parade after a victorious military battle. But the victory parade is of the captured warriors, the losers. They would be scoffed at and abused all the way to the stadium where they would be fed to the lions, or executed.

Hang on, how does the verse read, we're lead as captives?! Ah, but in Christ's triumphal procession. This looks like a reflection on Jesus, as Jesus goes humbly and quietly to the cross. It looked like, and evil thought it was victorious. To find that, actually, the captured soldiers, Jesus, were in fact the winners. It's an interesting image. It would be a good one to continue to ponder.

Jesus leads us in triumph over darkness. In fact, in this triumph, we become like a breath of fresh air. Actually, better still, we become like a fine fragrance, the aroma of Jesus, making Jesus known wherever we go. What a verse v14 is!

Through our fragrance, we do have an impact on the world. And yes, it is in the world, see v15, to those who are being saved, that is those in the church, and those who are perishing, those outside the church. No one is written off. This fragrance is to go everywhere, that Jesus might be known, that the triumph of Jesus might be known. That's very missional. It's very marketplace Christianity, it's how we are to be at work, at home, at school, wherever, seven days a week!

Verse 16 makes the interesting point that we won't always be welcome. Eugene Peterson in *The Message Bible* says that to some we will be like the stink from a rotting corpse. The good news of Jesus, forgiveness, comfort, and love, isn't always accepted, isn't desired by all. But in the church, it must be.

The theme of being out there, making Jesus known continues in the first verses of chapter three, where we are like a letter. Our words, not just written words, the things we say, are like a letter! Yes! How careful we should be not only with what we say, but what we text, what we post, what we email. For it reveals our hearts, v3. Oh yes it does! Think about the words you've used in this week's emails and messages.

When God's love, God's forgiveness, God's comfort is in our hearts, we must share it.

Let's be careful not to let the dark things like anger, disrespect, selfishness, fill our hearts, and have them leak from us. Ha, not only would we be a bad letter, we would stink!

Finally, we should certainly take these things to heart as individuals. But this letter was also written to people as a group, to the church. This is how we are to be as a church, known for our comfort, love, forgiveness. And making Jesus known. We are to be a good fragrance, and a good letter too. Which is one of the reasons we're praying for a month at the moment. We're praying that we would be positive to each other, that we wouldn't back bite, there would be no hand to hand combat.

Let's be new covenant people, v6, a people of the Spirit of God, breathing and speaking fragrance and life. We shouldn't just be drifting along when we have the Spirit in us. Let's let the Spirit breath through us.

Let's take a moment to take stock of our lives, to consider; what fragrance are we each exuding, how are people seeing Jesus through us?

[Benediction](#) - From yesterday's ANZAC service

Now go into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, strengthening the faint hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted and honouring everyone.

May God bless us with the power to go in faith, hope and love. And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever.