

AN ENCOURAGING WORD FOR TROUBLING TIMES #129 (by Rev. Dr. Alice Wolfe, 10/9/20)

“Have We Become Desensitized?”

Growing up on a hog farm, we got used to various odors. Sometimes when we spent time in the barns, our noses became desensitized, and we couldn't smell the odors anymore—even when the odors infiltrated our clothes or hair. Therefore, Mom (who had not been in the barn) would do a “sniff test” to see if we needed to clean up and shower before going somewhere.

Life in our world today can be like living on hog farm. We become so used to the odors of evil, violence, hatred, prejudice, discrimination, rancor, and slander surrounding us, we become desensitized, and we don't smell them anymore. And what's worse, because we can no longer smell the putrid odor of those things, we begin to think they are normal and practice them ourselves. Paul warns about this in Romans 12:2,

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

God does not want us to become desensitized and conform to the ways of the world; God wants us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds—because our thoughts lead to attitudes and actions. God wants to transform us so he can work through us to transform the world. However, if we've been immersed in the odorous evils of this world too long, we may struggle to know what God's will is. Therefore, we need God (who doesn't hang out in the evil, violence, and sins of our world), to do a “sniff test” on us. We need God to help us recognize any sinful odors on us and to help us renew our minds by focusing on God and his Word. Then, he will help us to know God's will. But once we know God's will, we must choose whether we will conform to the world or be transformed. The choice we make will make a difference in the world around us. Do you want to spread offense odors that turn people off from God, or do you want to spread the beautiful aroma of the love, grace, and forgiveness of God through Jesus Christ? The choice is yours!

PRAYER:

Heavenly Father, forgive me for the times I've spent too much time in the world and begun to smell, think, and act like the world. I want you to do a “sniff test” on me... [Take a few minutes and let God reveal any sinful, offensive odors, thoughts, or actions in you...] God, I confess them to you... [name them] and ask your forgiveness... Help me, by your grace, focus on you and your Word... Transform my heart and mind... so I may not only know what your will is, but that I will do it. Help me live in such a way that everyone around me smells nothing but your Christ-like aroma of love, grace, and forgiveness. I pray also for everyone in our nation and world. Transform our hearts and minds to be like you, so you may transform hearts and lives... and the world through us! In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.