**A Sweet-Smelling Fragrance**

**Introduction:**

“The traveler to the tropics is introduced to many fruits that are new to his taste – pawpaw, mango, mangosteen, pumelo, passion fruit, and durian. After the first experience, some are eagerly welcomed again, others received sparingly, still others positively rejected. Christians have been born again that they “should be a kind of first fruits of His creation.” (James 1:18) “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” NKJV “Some, like the mangosteen, are universally admired. Here is a sweetness that does not cloy. Some, like pawpaw, are taken on trial. Perhaps one may grow to like that sort of thing. For still others, once is enough; yea, too much. In every contact, we are leaving the bitter odor of ourselves or the fragrance of Christ’s presence within.” *Author Unknown*

**Theme:**

Fragrance as it is seen in the lives of the children of God.

**Body:**

1. **Old Testament**

* Exodus 30:1-9 “You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood. A cubit shall be its length and a cubit its width – it shall be square – and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the molding on both its sides. You shall place them on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning; when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a grain offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it.” NKJV

Recipe for fragrance: Exodus 30:34-38 “And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take sweet spices, stacte and onycha and galbanum, and pure frankincense with these sweet spices; there shall be equal amounts of each. You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure, and holy. And you shall beat some of it very fine, and put some of it before the Testimony in the tabernacle of meeting where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. But as for the incense which you shall make, you shall not make any for yourselves, according to its composition. It shall be to you holy for the Lord. Whoever makes any like it, to smell it, he shall be cut off from his people.’ ” NKJV **Stacte** is powder taken from hardened drops of myrrh and it is rare and valuable. Myrrh is from the balsam tree. **Onycha** is made from mollusk shells. **Galbanum** is made by rubbing resin from the roots of the flowering plant in Persia. **Frankincense** is from the Boswellia tree in southern Arabia.

* When the priest ministered at the golden altar of incense in the holy place, he would naturally and unintentionally pick up some of the fragrance and carry it with him. People would know that he had been in the holy place. Smoke from burning of incense often represented the prayers of God’s people.

Psalm 141:1-2 “Lord, I cry out to You; Make haste to me! Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” Revelation 5:8 “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” Revelation 8:3-4 “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.” NKJV

* Certain offerings were considered a pleasing aroma. Exodus 29:25, 41 “You shall receive them back from their hands and burn them on the altar as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma before the Lord. It is an offering made by fire to the Lord. 41 And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the Lord.” Leviticus 1:9 “but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.” Leviticus 17:6 “And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and burn the fat for a sweet aroma to the Lord.” NKJV

1. **New Testament**

* Life of Christ Mark 14:3-9 “And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’ ”

John 12:3-8 “Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, who would betray Him, said, ’Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ ” NKJV Mary anointing Jesus’ feet was a very costly act of devotion. Fragrant oil was very expensive; it was a great sacrifice. This act serves as a memorial to her selflessness.

* II Corinthians 2:14-16 “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?” NKJV

The Roman triumph parade was given to honor the Roman general who was victorious in battle. He rode in a golden chariot with his soldiers beside him and his captives behind. Roman priests would burn incense in censers. This would mean life to the victorious soldiers but death to the captives.

Jesus won victory over the enemy and His faithful march with Him. So wherever we go, we should diffuse [give off] and spread the fragrance of His victory. We do this first by a godly life, one of service and devotion. Also we must spread the knowledge of Christ at every opportunity.

* Bodies are to be a living sacrifice.

Romans 12:1 “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” NKJV

* Good deeds; sharing with others Hebrews 13:15-16 “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” NKJV
* Gifts were sent. These gifts from Christians in Philippi were viewed as fragrant offering.

Philippians 4:18 “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.” Note also II Corinthians 8:1-5 “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and they to us by the will of God.” NKJV

A godly life is both beautiful and fragrant. But if there is something rotten within us, those who come in close contact with us are going to perceive it, whether they know what it is or not. They will “smell” it, or sense it. They will turn away in disgust. Let us make every effort to not have rotten fruit in the church.

**Invitation:**

While the Bible mentions many sweet-smelling sacrifices, one stands out above all the rest. Ephesians 5:2 “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” NKJV

Bobby Stafford November 1, 2015 [Evening]