

Sweet Aroma - or "Do I Smell"?

Opener

Our sense of smell is one of the joys many people had to go without as Covid spread.

Spend a moment thinking of something you like to smell: it could be anywhere between marmite and freshly baked bread. OK, I accept that some people like marmite, but you get the point!

How do you smell today - That's not meant to be anything too personal as I'm blogging about our spiritual smell, not our personal pong.

Old Testament

Let me start with what might be a strange question.

Can God smell?

It seems that He can. Don't ask me how, but there are several mentions of aromas which pleased God.

God was pleased with the pleasing aromas as the offerings were made in the Old Testament^a times and no doubt the priest and the people also enjoyed the aromas of roast lamb and beef.

Incense was another aromatic offering. It was made to a special recipe^b and was only to be used for worship.

New Testament

There are smells in the New Testament too, for example the frankincense presented to Jesus by the magi and when Mary poured a fragrant perfume made from nard^c over Jesus. Both were very real physical sensations for those nearby and a profound demonstration of worship.

Christians have no need of aromatic sacrifices. Paul describes Jesus' death as the final fragrant sacrifice.

How about today?

Let me get a bit personal and ask how do you smell?

Remember that we are talking about our spiritual aroma, not our personal pong.

To explore what that means, we turn to 2nd Corinthians 2, from verse 14.

[The fragrance of the knowledge of [Christ] spreads through us].¹⁵ For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

If we are the aroma of Christ^d, the better we know Jesus, the smellier we will be. Our spiritual fragrance will permeate the atmosphere and people will notice.

- Do you smell nice?
- Do you want to smell better?

Hopefully, you can answer 'yes', so stick with me for an idea for some spiritual perfume. There was a recipe for the incense in Exodus, so what the recipe today?

Love

Love is the principal ingredient. Jesus is our example - His love was shown by coming to the earth and dying for all.

How does love help make an aroma? Paul calls on the Ephesians, and Jesus calls us:

^a Examples from Genesis to Numbers

^b Exodus 30:34 "Take fragrant spices—gum resin, onycha and galbanum—and pure frankincense.

^c A plant that produced perfumes and ointments that were very costly and precious (Song 1:12, 4:13-14). Jesus was anointed with nard (Mark 14:3; John 12:3-5) - Lexham Bible Dictionary

^d 2:14

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.^e

May our love for Jesus and each other permeate into those around us as we serve Jesus.

Compassion

The second ingredient of our perfume follows on: it's compassion. Jesus showed compassion many times – such as when he responded to the needs of the crowds and gave them lunch.^f

Mercy is another aspect of compassion as Jude brings out

²² Be merciful to those who doubt; ²³ snatch others from the fire and save them.^g

How can **your** compassion extend to those who don't accept Jesus and need snatching from the fire?

Generosity

My final ingredient for our fragrant spiritual perfume is generosity. We probably think of material things, such as money. At a basic level, it's being generous when we see friends in financial need. At a deeper level, it's giving when they don't need it. We can also demonstrate our generosity through our generous offerings to God's church. But, it's not about how much we give – even the poor can be generous with what they have and give with cheerful hearts^h.

Paul brings the Old Testament up to date in Philippians 4:18 when he refers to their fragrant sacrificial offering

¹⁸ ... I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

An offering is more than just money and materials. In Acts 10 an angel told Cornelius "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God."ⁱ

The prayers of God's people are a fragrant spiritual offering.

Your prayers and your gifts reach God – how smelly is your offering?

So What?

Our aroma represents the life of God in us, the freedom of forgiveness, hope for the future and a sense of purpose. Sadly, many people are weighed down with guilt, despair of the future and have no clear idea of why they are alive. These people represent opportunities for us to share our faith. Some will find us to have the fragrance of life.

Let's make sure we smell good today for their benefit, and to honour God.

Prayer

Father, may I have the love of Jesus in my heart to spread the fragrance of compassion and generosity to those around me. Amen

^e Ephesians 5:1-2

^f *Splanchnizomai* Matt. 9:36; 14:14; (Vines)

^g Jude 22-23.

^h 2nd Corinthians 9:7

ⁱ Ac 10:1-4 altd.