
THE PERFUME OF PRAYER

EXODUS 30:1-10

OUR PRAYERS ARE AN **UGLY STENCH** TO US,
BUT A **SWEET SCENT** TO GOD.



“My prayers are so bad. So, what's the point of praying?” Ever thought that? I have. I sometimes think, “My prayers have no value, my prayers have no beauty, and my prayers have no power.” What's the effect of such thinking? It discourages and reduces prayer, doesn't it? If that's what we think of our prayers, we will not pray. But the Bible teaches us to think of prayer very differently...which produces very different results.

After a couple of chapters on the priests, Exodus 30:1-10 takes us back inside the Tabernacle and shows us a second altar, the altar of incense, which was a symbol for prayer ascending to God (Ps 141:2; Rev 5:8; 8:3). In Luke 1:10, we read that when the priest was burning incense, the people were praying, signifying that prayer is the true incense.

LEARNING

PRAYER IS A COSTLY PERFUME

Unlike the altar for sacrifices which was made of strong brass, the altar of incense was covered with pure gold, it had a gold rim, and four golden horns on the four corners (3). The incense was made of rare and precious ingredients (34-38). God was saying through the precious metal and precious ingredients, “Prayer is precious to me. I value it highly.”

OUR PRAYERS FEEL WORTHLESS TO US
BUT THEY'RE PRECIOUS TO GOD.

But there are costly perfumes that smell horrible! That's true but not true of this perfume.

PRAYER IS A SWEET PERFUME

Three times the incense is described as sweet (22, 34). God thought up a recipe which would fill the Holy Place with the most beautiful fragrance, making it a beautiful place to pray, and leaving a beautiful scent on the priests.

God was assuring Israel that their prayers were beautiful to him. They sent a scent to heaven. The place of prayer is a beautiful place. And prayer leaves a heavenly scent upon us.

OUR PRAYERS ARE AN UGLY STENCH TO US,
BUT A SWEET SCENT TO GOD.

If our prayers are sweet to God, what's their effect?

PRAYER IS A POWERFUL PERFUME

Like the other altar, this had golden horns on the four corners (3), reminding Israel that though their prayers felt weak to them, they were powerful with God. The fact that the altar was to burn incense continually and forever (8), encouraged the people that their prayers lasted in God's presence long after they had prayed them. This altar had to be cleansed with blood every year (9-10), another reminder that their prayers were only powerful because they were covered in sacrificial blood.

OUR PRAYERS FEEL SO IMPOTENT,
BUT SACRIFICIAL BLOOD MAKES THEM OMNIPOTENT.

LOVING

Like everything in the Tabernacle, it taught Israel present truths about God, but also predicted a future Savior from God. The altar of incense therefore taught them valuable lessons about prayer but also pointed to a future which would make these truths even bigger and clearer. That's exactly what Jesus did. He is the altar of incense in human form (John 14:13; Rev. 5:8; 8:3). It's through him and his blood, that our prayers become precious, pleasing, and powerful before God. Now that will make us pray!

Here's how Charles Spurgeon put it: **Jesus stands ready to take every prayer of ours, however imperfect in knowledge, however feeble in expression, however marred with sorrow, and he presents the purified and perfected prayer with his own merit, and it is sure to speed...There is such delicious sweetness in Christ to the Father that it effectually destroys the ill savor of anything that comes from us.**

LIVING

Pray through Christ so that your prayers will be precious, pleasing, and powerful before God.
