

Special Meetings 02 Fragrance of Fellowship

by John W. Bramhall

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christian fellowship and the fragrance of Christ in the lives of believers, highlighting the devotion, inner life, and personal holiness of Christ as the goals of Christian fellowship.

Duration: 45:22

Scripture: Exodus 30:22-25, Psalm 133, John 7:37-39, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Unity Of Believers"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of believers devoting themselves to the will of God. He quotes Romans 12:1-2, which urges believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices and to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. The speaker highlights the need for God to sometimes use difficult experiences to break our wills and lead us to wholeheartedly yield to His will. He also mentions the book 'Living His Life,' which has received positive feedback from believers of all ages and is recommended for personal and group study. The sermon concludes with a reading from Psalm 133, emphasizing the beauty and pleasantness of unity among God's people.

Transcript

I'm sure it's a real joy to be together again and gather round the precious word of our Lord Jesus. We give thanks to God for the privilege. I humbly and earnestly pray as we've already suggested in our prayers, it will please God to preserve the testimony of his people until our Saviour returns, that we may gather together freely in this land of ours.

The greatest object on this earth, dearest to the heart of God, is the church. And those who belong to him, they are the eternal object of his affection and the affection of Christ. And my humble desire is that you and I will fulfill the scriptures to ask God's preservation of our testimony for him until our Saviour returns.

Now just a word about the book our brother mentioned. Just two months ago I had the privilege of reading quite an elaborate number of letters, commenting and appreciating the contents of the book in regard to the Christian life. From both old and young, from old brethren that perhaps would be over 80 years old, down to young teenagers, all expressing their appreciation and help for the ministry of this book, Living is Life.

It is a very worthy gift for any young believer. Do avail yourself of getting one out of the bookstore if you can pass it on to others, and even use it for yourself. It's useful for Bible study in classrooms, for individual study, for prayer meetings and Bible studies in the local churches, and God, thanks be to his name, is blessing it in that way.

Today I would like to speak to you and read first of all from one of the psalms we mentioned last night, Psalm 133, and then read a short section in the book of Exodus, chapter 30. First of all in Psalm 133, the words that we read concerning the fellowship of God's beloved people, whether it be the people of God in the nation of Israel in a past day, whether it be the people of God in the nation of Israel in a coming day, or whether it be the people of God in this present day, we have the blessed, appropriate words concerning their fellowship. May I read verse 1, 2, and 3 of Psalm 133.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment, or the anointing oil upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore.

The book of Exodus, if you please. The book of Exodus, reading in chapter 30, from verse 22 through verse 25. Exodus chapter 30, the second book of your Bible, beginning at verse 22.

Moreover the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal or chief spices of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cashier five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil, olive, and hymn, that is one and one-fifth gallon of olive oil, and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, anointment compound after the art of the apothecary. It shall be an holy anointing oil. May God bless the reading and the hearing of his word.

Humbly but gratefully we depend upon the Holy Spirit of God to be the teacher and the revealer of the precious truth that lies buried in the depths of this wonderful book, the Word of God, the Bible. Just a brief word again concerning Psalm 133. There are many applications, a few applications that can be given to the psalm, as we mentioned in our preceding message.

First of all, it undoubtedly, in its primary meaning, has a future application. When in the glory of their kingdom, the remnant of Israel that shall be redeemed, restored, and glorified as a nation around their Messiah, the King, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be dwelling together in unity in that blessed day of glory when our Saviour reigns. May I give a word of emphasis, just briefly, but I think it's necessary, on the blessed hope that lies before Israel.

One of the tragic things that troubles my heart is the realization that we have some of our beloved brethren in the Lord who teach that there is no future hope for Israel, to which I heartily and fully disagree when I read the Word of God. The hope of Israel is genuine, and the very present situation in the land of Israel today, the very circumstances that surround the land as well as possess the land, and the very environment of the nations that lie around them today, is one of the greatest prophetic significant facts that the coming of the Lord Jesus to the earth, to be King of kings and Lord of lords, is very near. One has only but to listen to the political or the news broadcasts of today, to recognize the development of Holy Scripture to the final fulfillment, and I'm very confident that the nation of Israel has returned and is developing in the purposes of God according to His Word, to that program that will eventually and very quickly bring to pass their period of greatest testing and their greatest deliverance when the Lord Jesus

comes.

Psalm 133 as well as Psalm 134 sets before us the glory of that day when they shall be dwelling together, good and pleasant, in unity around their blessed Messiah. Then we have mentioned, and we mentioned it again briefly, the psalm pictures the beautiful unity that the Spirit of God formed at Pentecost. And may I say once again, and I say it with gratitude, that you and I should be grateful that in this land and in this world, the Spirit of God has called out a people from among the nations to be the members of the body of Christ, to be the members of that blessed church of which our Lord Jesus is the head.

And that within the nations there is that testimony that the unity of the Spirit manifests as having been formed, for we all have been baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free, we have been all made to drink into the one Spirit. It is a joy to recognize that unity exists. You and I could never have formed it, God formed it, and the Spirit of God formed it.

And thank God, within the nations of the world there is that blessed unity formed to which you and I as a believer belong. Now the psalm suggests to us the preciousness of that unity when it's carried out in goodly and pleasant manifestation. And one can but make a plea for what I would like to speak to you about this morning, for the fragrance of Christian fellowship.

You note the psalm, as we mentioned briefly last night, suggests that when God sees his people dwelling together, it reminds them of the precious anointing oil that was upon Aaron's head poured at his consecration to the high priest's office. Going down his head, his beard, and down to the skirts of his garments, that fragrant anointing oil, which God himself had ordered to be made, reminds God of the fragrance that he desires to see in the midst and upon his people wherever they are. May I suggest to you, my beloved brother, as well as to you, my beloved sister, and to myself, the fragrance of Christian fellowship as but one expression when it is seen.

That fragrance is Christ. That fragrance can be nothing but Christ. That fragrance should be nothing but Christ.

For what God inhaled whenever the high priest was anointed was a fragrance that he knew typified the glories and the excellencies of his beloved son when that son walked and lived here upon the earth. Go with me, will you please, back to the book of Exodus, and consider carefully in the scripture that we have read the anointing oil with its different constituents, and all that it involved in the making of it for the anointing of Aaron. Now let me repeat, and this will be the emphasis.

Every ingredient of that anointing oil, and there were four special spices together mixed with the olive oil, all spoke to God of the fragrance of Christ. I do know how much you are as a firm believer that in the word of God the glories of Christ can be found revealed from the beginning to the end. Paul wrote the words of 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 18 saying, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are changed, we are transfigured, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What Paul means is this, there is a mirror, there is a reflecting looking glass, and in that looking glass there is a glory of a person revealed. The looking glass is the mirror of the word of God. The glory that is reflected and revealed in that word is the glory of our Lord.

And beholding that glory in the word, you and I can be transformed, you and I may be transfigured, you and I can be changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. And in the portion in the book of Exodus, the anointing oil that was by God alone prescribed, reveals to the heart of God, even long before Christ came, the coming excellences of his Son in his humanity here upon the earth. Now you note particularly, as you read that 30th chapter, and note specially the opening of those words that God says to Moses in verse 23, take thou also unto thee principal or chief spices.

Now when you consider what the principal or chief spices were, we recognize that it is God himself who names them. Moses was not left to make any choice. In fact, Moses was given no choice in relation to the testimony of the tabernacle.

He was given no personal choice to make regarding the furnishings of it, and every detail pertaining to that earthly testimony. From all the way through it, everything was patterned according to divine requirements. Likewise, the anointing oil was by God himself prescribed as to what were the chief spices.

Those chief spices are four in number as you notice. First, there was to be pure myrrh. Second, there was to be sweet cinnamon.

Third, there was to be sweet calamus. And fourth, there was to be cassia. According to the measurements that God gives, these ingredients were to be brought together and compounded, mixed together with one and one-fifth of olive oil to make the liquefiable ointment or perfumed oil that was upon Aaron's head poured and went down his beard even to the skirts of his garments.

This was a divine prescription. You know it's a wonderful thing that God neither leads to you nor to me to make the choice of what ingredient should be found in our lives as we seek to live for him. Whatever ingredient that God would see in you and me can be summed up again as we stated in one word, he desires to see some of the fragrance of Christ.

Now, note these separate ingredients with me. The first ingredient was pure myrrh, 500 shekels. Now, the obtaining of myrrh was an unusual procedure.

The spice itself, for any anointing or for any use, was obtained from the myrrh tree. Generally, the spice was obtained by a deep incision being made in the bark of the tree, and then when the sap thus exuded out of the bark, it distilled in the shape and the form of a tear, from which it derives its name, myrrh, meaning tear. A bitter but an aromatic substance, and usually obtained by an incision made in the tree to bring out the pure myrrh that was within it.

But may I give the suggestion that the Hebrew idiom has in its meaning. You read of myrrh in many other scriptures, but you really hear that it had to be pure myrrh. In fact, the Hebrew idiom suggests the myrrh of freedom, and the meaning of it was this.

The purest myrrh was obtained not by an incision, but by the voluntary pouring out of the tree without a necessary incision, and voluntarily the myrrh exuded without any incision being required. Now this speaks to the heart of God, of his dear son in his earthly life. You know as I do too, that when you read the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, myrrh was associated with that life.

When the wise men came and worshipped the babe Jesus, they brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. That which was symbolic of that blessed one in the sufferings of his life, even from birth, was brought and associated with the person and with the life of the Lord Jesus, even when born in the manger of

Bethlehem, and worshipped by the wise men who later came to see him. Then when you think of the death of the Lord Jesus, you remember they gave him vinegar to drink, mingled with myrrh.

Myrrh again being associated with that life of the Saviour, and the death of the Saviour, as thus he poured out his soul in death to redeem you and me. When you see the women coming to the sepulchre, or rather shall I not say when Joseph of Arimathea, and when Nicodemus buried the Lord Jesus, they buried him with many spices, and among them was myrrh. And myrrh was an associated ingredient of the life of the Lord Jesus from the beginning to the end.

Now that spoke to the heart of God, and it spoke to the heart of God of that voluntary devotion of Christ to do his will, from the beginning to the end of his life, even into death, and even to the tomb. Voluntarily pouring out his own heart and life to do the will of God. There was no necessary incision, there was no compulsion that he would do the will of God, for before he came, you have his words in that divine conversation as you read it in Hebrews 10, as well as in Psalm 40, from which it is quoted, Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O God.

And that first ingredient of the anointing oil suggested the sinless and perfect devotion of Christ to do the will of God, from the heart, from the beginning to the end of his life. Beloved, may I say, there was that about the life and the death of the Son of God which only the Father is able to comprehend. All that you and I can do is to take our shoes from our feet and worship in adoration, making no attempt to define what is indefinable, and to penetrate what is impenetrable to human hearts and creature minds.

The Father alone knows the fragrance of that life, which was the devotion of his Son to do his will, from the beginning to the end. But may I add, as Paul writes, if he did write the book of Hebrews, which I believe he did, Paul said, by the which will we are sanctified. My brother and my sister, if it had not been for the will and the devotion of Christ to do that will of God, in infinite perfection, you and I would never have a Saviour.

But thank God the fragrance of that devotion still remains, and you and I are enjoying the fruit of it. Now may I go back regarding to our subject, the fragrance of Christian fellowship. One of the ingredients of Christian fellowship is myrrh.

I guarantee, and I'm assured, we shall never produce pure myrrh. But may I quote to you the words of Romans 12, 1 and 2, I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable or intelligent service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

One of the ingredients of Christian fellowship, that will be precious to the heart of God, is when every believer will give himself and herself in devotion and yieldingness to the will of God. Now may I state, and I think you will all agree, how often times God has to use the knife, God has to use an incision, God has to bring us through experiences, to break our will, that we will devotedly yield our hearts and lives to do his will. Why? He wants to see that fragrance of Christ in the lives of his own, as they seek in obedience to do his will.

My beloved, in relation to the fellowship of God's people, contribute in the yieldedness of your life to God's will, to Lipsary's glory, contribute the fragrance of myrrh. The second element and ingredient, you note, was sweet cinnamon. Sweet cinnamon.

Now cinnamon was the spice that was obtained from the cinnamon tree, and it had a unique origin, for the spice was obtained from the inner rind of the tree. The bark was stripped from the tree, and the spice was obtained from the inner rind of that bark, and was thus processed to become the spice that is called sweet cinnamon. A most unusual manner to obtain a spice, a precious ingredient of that biblical day, but it speaks to God as Christ, and it speaks to God of another ingredient of Christ's character when he was upon the earth.

Not only did he have a devotion to do the will of God, perfect devotion through his life from beginning to the end, but there was an inward devotion, there was an inward fragrance, a fragrance of inward beauty and glory and holiness that only the Father could comprehend, and that was the inner life of our Lord Jesus in the sight of God. You and I will never know, and only the Father comprehends this, what the fragrance of that inward life of the Son of God meant to the Father's heart above when he walked down here in the midst of this thing, in all the sinlessness and purity of his character. He could challenge his enemies and say, which of you convinces me of sin? Let me quote the words of Peter, as well as Paul, as well as John.

You remember Peter's sin? He did no sin. And that man of action, who was ready to do something, and sometimes it was frequently wrong, but he said of Jesus, he did no sin. Let me quote the words of Paul, who wrote saying, he knew no sin.

And Paul was a man of letters and learning and knowledge, but of that blessed one he could indeed say, he knew no sin. Let me quote the words of dear Apostle John, who leaned upon the bosom of his beloved Saviour and came nearest to his heart, perhaps, than any others of the disciples, and who said, in him was no sin. As though leaning upon his bosom, John detected in that holy one was no sin at all.

The fragrance of that inner life, absent sin, nothing but pure holiness, glorifying the holy God in the midst of a world where sin surrounded. What a fragrance that must have been to the heart of God. Beloved, I am grateful that there was one that lived upon the earth, whose inward heart, so pure and spotless, rose in its character to tell the heart of God above of that inward purity that ever was his.

Thank God. Have you never noticed in the offerings of Leviticus, as you read them, and particularly the burnt offering, the first one in Leviticus 1, the victim was slayed, and the body was slayed open, that the inwards of the body might thus be visible. And beloved, it spoke to the heart of God of that coming one, whose Him inward being was visible to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Now my beloved believer, may I say to you, and to me, to myself most of all, how important to have the ingredient of sweet calumny in your life and my life in our testimony for the Lord. Remember the Lord Jesus said in John 7, and from verse 37 in that last great day of the feast, Jesus stood in Christ, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and live. As the Scripture has said, He that believeth on me, as the Scripture has said, out of his inner being shall flow rivers of living water, and this they feel the spirit that should come.

My beloved believer, may I remind you, as well as my own soul, of the importance of sweet calumny, an ingredient of Christlike character, where within the likeness of Christ is thus to be developed in the holiness, the personal holiness of your life and of mine. Man looketh on the outward appearance, God looketh on the heart. And when God looks upon the fellowship of His dear people, the fragrance He desires and requires to thus be manifested for His glory is not only nerve, the soul devoted to do the will of God whenever the cost, but also the inward life in corroboration, living in personal holiness that the

fragrance of that blessed Christ may still be found within the believer.

No wonder the poet wrote those lovely words, Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. All of his wonderful passion and purity, O thou spirit divine, all my being refine, till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. My beloved believer, may I say, give more attention not to the outward part of your life, but chiefly to the inward.

Out of the inner man shall flow rivers of living water, for Christianity is the life of Christ communicated to a believer, and dwelling in a believer, and to flow out through the believer. Sweet calamus. God help us to put a lot of fragrance of calamus in our testimony of believers together.

Note the third ingredient, sweet cinnamon. As you have it, sweet calamus, the first, second one was sweet cinnamon, and the third sweet calamus. Now calamus was not a tree.

Calamus was a reed. A reed that grows, I understand, in Pennsylvania, but was found in biblical days in the country of Tibet and India. It grew in marshy places.

And when taken out of the marshy places, it had to be dried, but the obtaining of the spice was most unusual. It was obtained by taking the reed when dried, and pounding it, pounding it, pounding it, and it was subjected to frequent and constant pounding, outward blows that brought out the fragrance and the sweetness of the spice that was within. Now when you look at the life of the Lord Jesus upon the earth, and may I say this very carefully, and consider carefully about it with you, there has never been a human being on the earth who was subjected to indignities and outward humiliation by mankind than the Lord Jesus himself.

He was the object of indignity, of shame and contempt, of humiliation and degradation at the hands of men that you and I have never been able and shall never be able to enter into. But my beloved, may I say, it is that life of humiliation that is given to you and to me, the fragrance of a person who delights our hearts. To see the pathway of that man as he walked here upon the earth.

May I just quote the words that Paul wrote in Philippians 2, verse 5 through 8, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, and made himself of no reputation, and was found in the likeness of men. And being found in the likeness of men, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. My beloved, I'm sure that none of us fail to realize to some degree the fragrance of that precious life in all of his humility.

One wrote the little poem saying, Wouldst thou be chief, then lowly third? Wouldst thou go up, go down? But go as low as you will, the highest has been lowest still. Another has given the expression, so try, God's way up, his down. Peter wrote, humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

The fragrance of this sweet calumny was the fragrance of Christ's humility in the days of his flesh. I don't know my brother and sister whether you've ever felt so humble, have you? I met a dear brother to my astonishment, that made the statement as I was trying to minister for his comfort. Brother, he said, please don't think of me.

God long ago took all pride out of my heart. And when I heard that, I said, Lord, I can't help him a bit. He was even proud of his humility.

No, my beloved, we'll never be too low. But the fragrance of humility was the fragrance of Christ. How the apostle Paul exhorts, that we prefer one another, we honour one another, above each other.

And wherever you find a fragrance of Christian fellowship in its true character, you'll find humility. And that is a fragrant quality of Christ in the life of the believer. And then there's one more thing.

The fourth spice is cashew. Now cashew was a very principal spice in biblical days, obtained from cashew trees. I remember reading in my research on this, that there were said to be 60,000 acres of such trees in the country of China.

But the cashew tree gave the spice cashew either from the bark, which was processed, or even from the buds of the tree. And being processed, they obtained this priceless cashew that was a fragrant ointment. Now you have the word cashew in Psalm 45.

It is in relation to the coming glory of our Lord Jesus when he comes as King of Kings. Cashew is one of the fragrant spices adorning his garment in that coming glory. Now cashew, in the meaning of its word, is very helpful.

The word means, literally in the Hebrew, to cleave, to hold to, to hang to, to be faithful to. And when I think of the life of the Lord Jesus upon the earth, will you tell me, has there ever been such an one who could be called a true and faithful witness? Has there ever been such an equal as to one like he is? Faithful! And when he comes in his glory, as Revelation 19 describes it, faithful and true will that blessed one be. And as Isaiah says, faithfulness will be the girdle of his loins.

For he could say and did say in Revelation 3, I am the true and faithful witness. Faithfulness, oh what a fragrance to the heart of God was the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus as he did the Father's will. My beloved, how for you and for me, this ingredient of faithfulness is such a requirement in our testimony for the Lord here upon the earth.

Now look at them together. You've got cumin, and you have sweet cinnamon, then you have sweet calamus, and then you have cashew. And then these spices were to be taken by the apothecary and compounded together, mixed together by the apothecary with the olive oil, one one-fifth gallon.

And I'm sure that you realize throughout this scripture that olive oil is a precious type of the Spirit of God, and it is the Spirit of God who takes the ingredients of these contributions of Christ's character in and through the believer, and he puts the believers together in their testimony, and he mixes us together. Now, I don't know what part I form a part of what particular ingredient. God grant we shall have all these ingredients in some measure.

But the preciousness of realizing when God looks at his people, every one of them has a contribution of Christ's character to make, of Christ's character to develop in their personal testimony, and God brings us together in collective capacity. And the Spirit of God, well thank God we're not all alike. But if we were all alike, if you were like me and we're all like, well I tell you frankly, there wouldn't be too much fragrance.

But when God can get the fragrance of each believer, though it be different from one another, he can put them together, and he mixes them together by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the whole fragrance comes from the collective brew that speaks to the heart of God of the preciousness that was poured out upon the head of Aaron, and the fragrance of it speaks to him of Christ when he was healed upon the earth, his devotion to do the will of God, the inner holiness of the life, and then the humility of the

testimony, and the faithfulness of the believer's life. And as God sees his people putting these constituent parts into the testimony by the Spirit being mixed together, God smells the savour of it, and the sweetness rises that he might enjoy Christ again. May I say this? Now it may sound a little bit blunt, but you know the world is an awful smelling mess today.

You and I have no conception as to the stench that must rise from the pollution, and I don't mean literal pollution, I mean moral and spiritual pollution, that rises from the lives of mankind. My beloved, listen, it is only in his people, and from his people, that God looks and expects to have the fragrance of Christ rising to his soul and to his heart of hearts. Oh my beloved, may you and I take good care of being a sweet smelling savour, that God might again smell the fragrance of Christ as we are here upon the earth, even at the park upon, together today and tomorrow.

Now beloved, look, the psalm tells us that where that fragrance is, there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore. And may I say, I say it without hesitation and with full confidence, wherever the fragrance of Christ is seen, the blessing of God will be. And may it be true for your life individually, and for all of us collectively, to his glory.

Amen. Shall we pray? Blessed Father, we thank thee for the loveliness and the perfect beauty and fragrance of that blessed one when he was here upon the earth, even our Lord Jesus Christ. How we thank thee for directing our thoughts and our hearts to that blessed one, who gave to thee the greatest joy that ever rose from this earth, from any human life.

We thank thee for it. By that blessed one, we thy people have been redeemed. We've acknowledged with thanksgiving he has set us free.

And though we live in a world where we know men are bound, and in the bondage of sin and the tyranny of Satan, he has delivered us. And as his free men and women, we humbly but earnestly ask, may his fragrance be reproduced in our lives and through us. To thy glory, O God, and to the blessing of thy testimony that we maintain for thyself.

Now Lord, again we pray that the fragrance of our Lord Jesus will fill this day as we fellowship together, as we continue in thy will gathering together in later sessions, that the whole weekend may truly bring to us and to thyself the excellent beauties and glories of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the honor of his name. For we ask it in his precious name. Amen.

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