

"12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb 5:12-14)

Over the past several weeks, I have attempted to unpack this text, especially verse 14. God is calling us to grow up in our Christian faith. The writer is exhorting us to essentially the same thing that God tells us in 1Peter 2:1,2:

- 1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,
- 2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

This passage describes two things: the person who feeds on the word, and the word itself.

1. The person who feeds must be without malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, evil speakings.
2. The food is "sincere milk" Sincere = unmixed, unadulterated, pure.

The goal is that we must grow in the word; we must not remain children, but must advance in our understanding and joy. Malice, guile [hidden arts], hypocrisies [pretenses], envies [unhappy in your own skin], evil speakings must be laid aside if we are to grow; "sincere" without reading it through a filter; directly to see the face of Christ in His purity and glory. 1) to long for, desire 2) to pursue with love, to long after 3) to lust, harbour forbidden desire. As a man longs after a woman, with great desire, so we ought to long after, pursue with love the pure milk of the word.

The senses of a healthy body, therefore, are used in scripture to describe the senses of a healthy soul. We will not know good or evil unless we do this, and will fall into evil and bring shame and reproach upon Christ unless we exercise the senses of the soul, so that they become strong and vibrant.

All the senses must be exercised in a healthy soul, and if one is lacking, the knowledge of good and evil will be impaired. As Paul asks: 1Co 12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

All the faculties of a sentient body are used as figures, but especially the five senses: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and feeling.

Over the past three weeks we considered Seeing, usually a figure for understanding and knowledge including trust "Look unto Me...." ; then we considered Hearing, usually a figure for obeying "Hear, and your soul shall live..."; last week we considered Tasting, usually a figure for appetite and experience, "Taste and See that the Lord is good."

Today, we will consider the fourth of the five senses: Smelling. What a great blessing smelling is! How bland would be our lives without this sense. Much of the pleasure of life, our food, our homes, our spring and summer, fall, and winter would be taken from us if we would lose our sense of smell. It not only gives us pleasure, but it serves as a very important warning. Have you ever gotten a left over out of the refrigerator and said, "Better not eat this, it smells bad." Before refrigeration was invented, there was a huge industry in spices from the far East into Europe because meats and other foods had to have unpleasant odors disguised by the application of these spices to hide the taste and the smell. Today, there is a huge industry in perfumes and ointments to make us smell and deodorants to hide our smell.

Ointments to make us smell. And therein lies the tale of the sermon today. I hope that you will never smell anything again and take the sense of smell for granted again. Ointments are very big in the Bible. They were big in the ceremonies of the Old Testament, and they are big in the imagery of the New. Let us look at this rich imagery. To do this, I am going to look a number of passages of Scripture, exposit them, and then make some observations and applications.

I. Basic: A smell represent a reputation or a Name.

Ecc. 7:1: A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth. I think we have here a basic meaning of the figurative sense of smell: it has to do with reputation and a person's name. A good reputation is better than a very valuable perfume, an ointment. Just hold this in your mind, and we will understand the meaning of this figure, I think. It is better to die with a good reputation than it is to be born with one.

A. There are a number of places in the New Testament that use the sense of smell in this way; either a good reputation or a bad one.

2Co 2:14 Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.

2Co 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

2Co 2:16 To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Eph 5:2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.

B. There are places where the worship of God is a sweet smell to God:

39 As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord GOD; Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. [They gave God a bad name]

40 For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things.

41 I will accept you with your sweet savor, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. [They had a good name before God because of their sacrifices. Their exalting of God, led to them being exalted]

C. The worship of God, therefore, is an honoring and praise of God, and is therefore a sweet odor to Him.

Re 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. [So all the sacrifices of the Old Testament are said to be a sweet smell to God.]

Re 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God:

Ex 15:11 Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

Ps 71:19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

[Our worship consists of praises, thanksgiving, honor, and glory to Him—enhancing His reputation in the world.]

II. The sweetness of our exalting the name of God, will result in a sweetness for us. Matthew 26:

6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13 Verily I say unto you, Where-soever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

A. Therefore, if we honor God in private and truly, He will honor us in public and truly.

"1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly. 5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy

closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." (Mt. 6:1-6)

B. The Pharisees stunk up the place, because they sought a reputation without having the reality. They wanted to be thought men of prayer and good works, but this will leave a stink behind it. [Instead of a sweet smell, there shall be a stink," is the way Isaiah put it in Is. 3.]

C. Illustration: A king who had been good to David when he was fleeing from Saul was Nahash of the Ammonites. He died, and David sent messengers to his son Nahash with messages of sorrow for his loss. Nahash treated the messengers very badly, cut off half their beards and cut off their garments immodestly short and sent them back to David. We read then in 2Sam. 10:6 "And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, . . . etc."

III. This brings us to the most important things of all: the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, who is said to be an anointing, or a precious ointment. He is not only the breath of God, but He is a most sweet-smelling ointment.

A. Christ was anointed to maintain the righteous reputation of God—to exalt and glorify Him.

1. He was anointed Prophet, priest, and king: as our catechism says: No. 31.

2. 7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. 8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. –Psalm 45 quoted in Hebrews as applying to Christ.

3. "5 I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon." (Ho 14:5-6)

4. The end of Christ's work is to enhance the glory of God and to magnify the Name of the Lord, the very essence of a good smell in the world, the beauty and sweetness of the Gospel.

B. It is in the beauty of the aroma of Christ that we are to live our lives. Our lives ought to be sweet to those around us; we ought not to stink up the place.

1. HC 32: A32: Because by faith I am a member of Christ [1] and thus a partaker of His anointing,[2] in order that I also may confess His Name,[3] may present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to Him,[4] and with a free conscience may fight against sin and the devil in this life,[5] and hereafter in eternity reign with Him over all creatures.[6]

2. The care that the Philippians had for Paul; "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God." (Php 4:18)

3. If we abide in the Spirit of God, we will have that pleasant odor to the world. Two things:

a. "1 Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;" (Ps 133:1-2)

b. "2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph 4:2-3)

IV. Application and Remarks

A. The sweetness of our lives can only be accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Our flesh has the scent of death about it. We perfume it with culture, education, manners, refinement, and all these things are good, but eventually the stink of our flesh will fill the earth. How much we need Christ.

B. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." (Eph 5:2)

C. He came to put away our sins and hide them, insuring our reputation and good name. For by faith the fathers received a good report, and so can we.

D. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

Pr 22:1 A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Ec 7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

May God bless you.

Amen and Amen.