

Psalm 133

What Impression do you Create?

The believer is a trinity of body, soul and spirit. Unbelievers have a dormant spirit. They are incomplete. They try to fill that void with *happy-triggers*...that have diminishing returns. Some of our deepest emotions in our soul are triggered by our spirit. We were made to enjoy our life and savor our senses.

This psalm is about Christian fellowship. That means simultaneously with God and with people. To connect that deeply with people, we have to be on the same page of music. It is about connecting with people who are making a concerted effort in going deeper to get to know God. There is something special and precious about being around like-minded people in Christ. The book of Acts portrays the peak of the Holy Spirit's influence on the Christian community. They ate meals together, prayed and studied the bible together, pooled funds for common church causes, cared for each other and were selfless. Simultaneously, God gave them incredible gifts and power and joy and boldness in his name.

I have known many believers who I have nothing else in common with. There is still something attractive about that essence of Christ that seems to come from them. The precious and special thoughts and feelings I enjoy from God are things that they are aware of and are also enjoying.

Read Psalm 133:1-3:

The bible tells us that we are to be a special people; unique in this world. Our life should be a platform for the gospel. We should have an internal attractiveness like an *aroma* that draws people. We march to a different beat. We hold a different view of what is important and valuable to us. This psalm communicates the pleasure of Christian fellowship by comparing it to being around someone that has an inviting perfume, or a great smell.

The orchestration of the Holy Spirit is critical to having unity in the body of Christ. I will occasionally ask God to give me his heart. Sometimes I pray for people because they need help. God's Spirit has to urge us to live at this level of love and care. We cannot know how to love people without a little help from God. He knows how to tune us up and take it to another level. This is living a little closer to heaven. Better still, is the collective spiritual synergy when we are all led by the Holy Spirit in the same place. That situation is rare and very special.

We all need a spiritual tune up. Having functional spiritual eyes and earthy eyes can make the same situation look completely different. If we do not connect with God our *opportunity antenna* seems to go down...and we do not even detect opportunities for the gospel.... or to love on people. Why do some people tuned into God find opportunities to talk about Jesus all day long; and I am just going to work again? That notion might not even occur to me.

...for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:5)

The biggest barriers to abundant Christian living are trust and fear. They minimize our actions of faith; because things are just not appealing. Many Christians live in a way so as to not get in trouble with God (break a rule). They try to figure out what is *allowable*, and they take the liberties that suit them. That would be to minimize our faith. That quenches the Holy Spirit. That shrinks and shrivels our inner man (spirit).

We are given two side by side examples in the bible of how to live; and how not to live as believers. Abraham is our walking faith example. His faith had legs. He took action, and his faith moved him. Lot did not exercise his faith. Lot believed, but he blended into the culture. Lot kept his distance from holy things. He felt some discomfort and estrangement of holy things. He wanted to make money and experience the fruits of his labors. Business opportunities directed his steps. He put his family in harm's way to make money. He thought that he was hanging onto enjoyable things. To the contrary, he was miserable. He lived his life in fear and compromise and regret. Once we are saved we are essentially ruined for this world. We can jump into it; we will always regret it.

...and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) (2 Peter 2:7-8)

Abraham was rich; but he was mainly motivated to meet with God. His business followed his faith journey. That is why believers are more likely to be compared to shepherds than farmers. Shepherds can pick up and move their tents. Farmers are essentially *owned* by their commitments. We all have directly benefitted from Abraham's friendship with God; because he was a man on the move. He was chasing the Holy Spirit. . Lot had nothing to show for his life when it was all over. Lot is our cautionary tale of woe not to follow.

Our Life Should Pass a *Sniff Test*

We were made to see, smell, taste and feel. God can fill our senses. Perfume is a perfect example of experiencing *sensory fulfillment*. We, in turn, can impact the senses of others. The same person can smell offensive or they can smell good.

Bathing in the middle east during biblical times was not like our daily showers. People would only wash their hands and feet; but full-body baths were for special occasions. A person might undergo a full body washing and put on sweet smelling incense for a wedding party. People went for days and days in the sweltering desert heat without a shower. We would be offended by the way that most biblical characters smelled. For that reason, a bath and perfume was considered to be a very special thing. The cost of various jars of perfumes and balms could amount to a year's wages.

Today, spices are cheap; so we have little regard for them. This was not so in the ancient biblical times. Spices were traded like gold.

It might seem odd that something as seemingly inconsequential as a spice – a food flavoring or something to burn to add aroma to the air – would need such jealous guarding.

But the world's demand for spices grew, defining economies from India to Europe. This demand gave rise to some of the first truly international trade routes and shaped the structure of the world economy in a way that can still be felt today. Those who controlled the spices could divert the flow of wealth around the world.

Seasonings such as cinnamon, cassia, cardamom, ginger, and turmeric were important items of commerce in the earliest evolution of trade. Cinnamon and cassia found their way to the Middle East at least 4,000 years ago. From time immemorial, southern Arabia (Arabia Felix of antiquity) had been a trading centre for frankincense, myrrh, and other fragrant resins and gums. Arab traders artfully withheld the true sources of the spices they sold. To satisfy the curious, to protect their market, and to discourage competitors, they spread fantastic tales to the effect that cassia grew in shallow lakes guarded by winged animals and that cinnamon grew in deep glens infested with poisonous snakes. Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) ridiculed the stories and boldly declared,

“All these tales...have been evidently invented for the purpose of enhancing the price of these commodities.”

Good smelling soap and perfume is common to us; but is used to be a rare thing to experience. Being around a person who had bathed and applied perfume would be a special experience in biblical times. The priests were told to wash their hands and feet before each shift in the temple or tabernacle. Many ceremonies required a full bath by the priest. The point is that we are to be pleasant to be around; and not offensive.

The formula for the holy incense used in the tabernacle included liquid myrrh, fragrant cinnamon, fragrant cassia and olive oil. This was God’s protected formula for very specific usage. Any person who made this for themselves or put it on themselves had to be killed. It was especially made for the holiest things. One exception was the priests who served. They were commissioned by pouring this special oil on them.

This psalm describes that experience. We are supposed to act special, smell special and be special, with God’s help. Today, we do not worry about incense; but we need to be sweet to be around. It is not so much about our personalities; as it is about *who* we carry inside of us. The bible describes us as cups or bottles holding extremely precious contents. That is why we have to let it flow out.

We can love Jesus; but still be a jerk to others. We can be born again; but be terrible workers or offensive in other ways. Our life is supposed to be *a platform for the gospel*. That is one reason that we are supposed to be servants of all. We are not to strive to be masters over others.

The Impact of the Holy Spirit Inside on the Outside

Oil was a biblical symbol of joy and festivity when we are active in Christ. We derive pleasure when the Holy Spirit does a work in us. It is like living at another level of enjoyment and awareness and agreement. We are a trinity of body, soul and spirit. The spirit awakens when we are born again...but does it get exercised? Would your acquaintances consider you to be *a real stinker* or *a sweet guy*? Do we *splash sweet Jesus* on the people we encounter...or does it take a long time to find out that we are believers?

You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions. All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia, (Psalm 45:7-8)

Aaron and the priests were to be anointed with oil. It was to be poured upon them.

“And Aaron and his sons you shall bring to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and you shall wash them with water. Then you shall take the garments, put the tunic on Aaron, and the robe of the ephod, the ephod, and the breastplate, and gird him with the intricately woven band of the ephod. You shall put the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban. And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him. Then you shall bring his sons and put tunics on them. And you shall gird them with sashes, Aaron and his sons, and put the hats on them. The priesthood shall be theirs for a perpetual statute. So you shall consecrate Aaron and his sons. (Exodus 29:4-9)

Also Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them. He sprinkled some of it on the altar seven times, anointed the altar and all its utensils, and the laver and its base, to ^[b]consecrate them. And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to consecrate him. (Leviticus 8:10-12)

The usages of olive oil in the bible are multiple. Olive oil represents the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All biblical lamps used olive oil to produce light. God helps us to see what we cannot see. As Christians who are equally blessed, we see the same things and resonate to the same things.

Olive oil is the evenly-burning base ingredient for incense. We sense Christ in each other; like a person walking by wearing a certain perfume.

As fellow Christians, we see the same things, and resonate to the same things. We detect things during the 6:00 news that others do not. We see the impact of invisible forces at work around us. Knowing things that are uncommon makes us uncommon. There is just something pleasant about being around like-minded and focused fellow believers. We tend to be drawn to people who see the world like we do. It is like an intoxicating perfume that accentuates the encounter. We have to be looking for God during these dark times. It is a sign that we are tuned into the Holy Spirit. We may look just like our neighbor; but we are hearing and seeing different things than they are.

“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’ But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’ “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:8-9)

As enlightened people, we need to enlighten others about God. This special sweet and precious *internal experience* that we have with God is intended to be shared and multiplied to the benefit of others.

Then I answered and said to him, “What are these two olive trees—at the right of the lampstand and at its left?” And I further answered and said to him, “What are these two olive branches that drip ¹into the receptacles of the two gold pipes from which the golden oil drains?” Then he answered me and said, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” So he said, “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:11-14)

Why Compare the Holy Spirit to the Sense of Smell?

Our senses are not just for enjoyment. They serve other purposes as well. I can clearly recall working in the countryside around some river area trees and meadows filled with wild spearmint. This was a random thing from over 40-50 years ago! The smell just put me in a good mood. I would sometimes stop to chew on some leaves. It was like fresh gum. It just made me feel good.

Experts tell us that the sense of smell is most closely tied to memories. In other words; this psalm is about savoring something special from God together. We pray to receive all of the time. How much time do we pray about what already has happened? Do we spend much time on our thank-you list? Perhaps God intended

there to be more flavor in the aftertaste of our experiences than in the anticipation. If that is true, that means that we really need to start each day with yesterday's thanksgivings...rather than just dismiss them...never to be re-visited.

The High Priest was anointed with special, sweet-smelling oil. It was poured on his head, and it ran down his beard. He was not rushing around. He was just absorbing the moment for all that it had to offer. It was a peak experience that God provided. I can recall some special moments of fellowship when eating an apple seemed like the best tasting apple ever. I can recall some good outdoor prayers that resulted in the most enjoyable sunsets and evening breezes...like a kiss on the cheek.

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." (Mark 14:3-8)

Moreover the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Also take for yourself quality spices—five hundred shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much sweet-smelling cinnamon (two hundred and fifty shekels), two hundred and fifty shekels of sweet-smelling cane, five hundred shekels of cassia, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, and a hin of olive oil. And you shall make from these a holy anointing oil, an ointment compounded according to the art of the perfumer. It shall be a holy anointing oil. With it you shall anoint the tabernacle of meeting and the ark of the Testimony; the table and all its utensils, the lampstand and its utensils, and the altar of incense; the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the laver and its base. You shall consecrate them, that they may be most holy; whatever touches them must be holy. And you shall anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister to Me as priests. (Eodus 30:22-30)

Mountain Top Experiences

We may have a *mountain top experience* in our life. There may be a moment or event that is elevated far above all others. It may be uniquely satisfying and pleasurable. Some people have that glory-days moment or memory that they try to repeat. We are happiest living our life according to God's prescribed plans. God puts a premium on Christian fellowship and communal worship. You cannot quite get there watching church on TV. You cannot hit that high note when you are disconnected from other believers.

The Song of Solomon was written to capture the ecstasy and pleasure that God has intended for husbands and wives. David's psalms of extreme deliverance also resonate with unequalled joy. We all want to get to that sweet spot in our life. It will never happen with money or relationships or accomplishments. Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes to prove that. We also cannot be dropped into a perfect situation and be completely happy either. Eve was disgruntled in the Garden of Eden. Solomon had 100% success and he got sick of it. It was all pointless. God has made us to complete each other in Christ.

But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Corinthians 12:20-26)