

Exodus - Commentaries by W. Noel Tomkins

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Perfume, The (30:34-38)

It seems worthy of note that this perfume consists of three sweet spices with pure frankincense—four component parts—whereas the holy anointing oil, just before alluded to, was made up of four principal spices and of oil olive, or five ingredients. In the case of the perfume, each ingredient was to be of a like weight, though that weight seems purposely not to be stated; but in the anointing oil, the weight of each compound is given and varies.

The perfume brings the excellencies of Christ for God very specially before us. The ingredients, represented by the figure four, set forth completeness on earth, and are generally divided into three (reminding us of the Trinity) and one. The four Gospels may serve as an instance, three leading up to the rejection of our adorable Lord, and one, that of John, commencing with it.

It is said that stacte (nataph) signifies “to distil”; and that it was “distilled myrrh.” Onycha (shechaleth) is understood to be the cover of a shell fish, like the purple, found in the spikenard lakes of India, and giving a sweet odor; for the shell fishes there feed upon spikenard. And galbanum (chelbenah), derived from a root signifying “fat,” was useful as an ingredient to make the perfume retain its fragrance. Taken together then, do not these compounds speak to us of the depths of suffering, divine love made the Lord Jesus to endure? Think of Gethsemane and of the “distilled myrrh”—His being “overwhelmed” as in the inspired heading of Psalm 102, and yet as the One who had made the fragrant, yet perishable, shell fish, for “they shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed” (ver. 26)! And is there no preserving galbanum in this that follows: “But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end” (ver. 27)? Beloved, may we never forget the perfume was to be beaten “very small” (ver. 35)! The marginal reading of the 35th verse of our chapter seems preferable to “tempered together,” and reads “salted.” Pure and holy, it also was. Do we wonder that in verse 36 it is written, “It shall be unto you most holy”?

In verse 25 we read of the oil as “an holy anointing oil,” and in verse 32 it is said of it, “It is holy, and it shall be holy unto you”; and, anointed with it, the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, the table and its vessels, the candlestick and its vessels, the altars of incense and of burnt offering, with the vessels, the laver and its foot—all are sanctified, “that they may be most holy; whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy.” But of the perfume itself it is recorded, “it shall be unto you most holy.”

Is not the reason for this to be found here, “Ye shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for Jehovah”? As one has written, “Here it seems to be not so much what we have by Christ, but the fragrance in Christ Himself, of which God alone is the adequate judge, and which rises up before Him in all its perfection. How blessed for us! It is for us, but it is only in Him before God.”

We can appreciate to the full the five component parts of the holy anointing oil, which was not to be poured on man's flesh, but only on Aaron and his sons. Still, as they were taken from among men, five was the figure used, as is the case when man is in question, and it was excellent for “ordinances of divine service, and the worldly sanctuary” (Hebrews 9:1). And blessed are these seven (mystical perfection) ordinances, given us in verses 26 to 28, and lovely in their place as types. Nevertheless, as we contemplate what is represented by the perfume, one can but feel that here, as elsewhere, there is “the glory that excelleth” (2 Corinthians 3:10).

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Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Altar and the Hebrew Servant, The (21:1-6)

That the awful terrors connected with the giving of the law should be immediately followed by two enactments which beautifully and significantly bring before us the person and work of the Lord Jesus, and God's grace by Him, is like an evening rainbow after the thunder, lightning, and storm of a summer's day.

“An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and bless thee” (Exodus 20:24). That the law could never bring, for “cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” But the altar here prescribed with its offerings gave a means of approach to God in which the comer would be blest. Anything that would savor of man-his tool on stones, or steps by which he might carry himself up-would only work pollution, and discover man's absolute nakedness or want of resource.

In Psalm 84 we have the utterance of a heart that delights in the tabernacles of Jehovah of hosts, that would be, not in spirit only but, in heart and body there, which is what we are to understand from the words, “My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.” And he is jealous of the birds that find a resting place in such courts. But what must be the ground on which I can be there? The answer is, “Thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, my King and my God” (verse 3). Well will it be for Israel in that day when they seek no longer to a law that can only condemn! and their petition shall be, “Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed” (ver. 9). One can understand how a brief day spent “in thy courts is better than a thousand” passed elsewhere. Do we long, beloved, to be in the place where, as He says, “I record my name”? “For where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20), or, are our hearts cold about it? Oh! that we might gather up somewhat of the Psalmist's warmth in this matter! For “we have an altar whereof they have

no right to eat that serve the tabernacle" and a righteous title of entrance within the veil is ours because "Jesus also that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Yes, called as we are to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, we have, on the other hand, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, who so suffered for us. May we be stirred up, therefore, having a great priest over the house of God, to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). "By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, confessing (margin) to his name" (Hebrews 13:15).

In the Hebrew servant of Exodus 21, how blessedly we see Him who is "My servant, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth" (Isaiah 42)! Assuredly, He is the one who distinctly said, "I love my master," for is not this (we say it reverently) the Master's account of Him, "Who took upon him the form of a servant," who "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"? He, by that death, glorified God (and how fitting that God should always have the first place!), and met, too, the need of the wife and the children, for whose sake He would not go out free. It is good to trace this Hebrew servant who did "not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," who never asserted His rights, yet He is the One whom Jehovah has given, not only to be "a covenant of the people," but "for a light to the Gentiles," "to open the blind eyes, to bring the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." He alone can do it, and will do it unaided. And surely the seal is set to that in this that follows: "I am Jehovah; that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another."

View again the servant "in whom I will be glorified" in Isaiah 49. Apparently, as regards Jacob and Israel, He has spent His strength for naught and in vain, but "though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah." Truly He is. For "God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). Thank God for this, and for what Isaiah adds, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (49:6). And so the Perfect Servant's commission, when He had died and risen again, was, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). And how fitting that He, "Jesus Christ the Son of God" (Mark 1:1), this wondrous Servant, should have it recorded of Him in the concluding chapter of this Gospel, "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God!" And our hearts would have it so indeed, for He is worthy.

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