

## Song of Songs of Solomon – Lesson 4

### The Name of Christ Extolled

-Song of Solomon 1.3

(note: This is not a transcript of the recorded lesson.  
It was what I wrote in advance of class and used as notes.)

Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes;  
Your name is like perfume poured out.  
No wonder the maidens love you!

In this verse, the Shulamite expresses her admiration for the one she loves, comparing him to the beauty of perfume poured out.

Smell is one of the more powerful senses. Scientists say it is one of the most primitive senses, and even though we do not believe in the evolutionary theory that calls this sense “primitive,” yet its presence in the simplest of creatures shows its value in creating a motivation for action.

We, ourselves, can testify of the power of the sense of smell to evoke emotions, both good and bad. Our senses have been given to us to alert us to danger so we will avoid it and attract us to what is good for us. It is interesting to note that, with natural smells. Nearly everyone agrees as to whether a smell is pleasant or unpleasant. And it is equally true that the things that smell bad are generally bad for us and that smell good are, for the most part, good for us.

Smell is one of the strongest memory triggers. If we are confronted with a smell from our past, it can immediately take us back to that time in our minds. Those who have experienced trauma that is connected to some smell can be triggered into a PTSD reaction if they encounter that smell again. And all of us have experienced the uplifting feeling that we experience when we smell something associated with the especially good times in our lives.

Homes have a smell peculiar to the people who live in them. When I was about 7 years old, my father would take me along on evening plumbing jobs or to visit the contractors who were paying for the work he was doing. I distinctly recall the home of one of these men, a Jewish man. This was in the early 1960's, so there were many Jews in the area of Washington, DC who had come there just after WW2. They still had the sound of Jewish speech and their homes smelled of the ethnic cooking they did. At the time, I did not like the smell of this one particular house, but it was the smell of the food they ate, and it is likely that any Jewish person who walked in the house would have recognized it as a Jewish home.

We invent smells – perfumes and colognes – designed to be attractive because the presence of a good smell when we meet others makes them have a positive first impression of us.

Bad smells warn us of things to stay away from. There is hardly a smell so revolting as the smell of a decaying carcass. Even a starving man would be so revolted by that smell that it is highly unlikely he would eat anything with that smell emanating from it.

Smell is prominent in the symbolism of Christ in the Old Testament. Note just these two Scriptures.

In ancient times, tribes and families could identify one another by smell. This is likely due to the common diets of these tribes and families resulting in the people having a certain smell to them. And other olfactory traits could distinguish the individuals within any group. There would be smells common to the group and smells that were different in each of the individuals in the group.

When you consider that eyesight is one of the first of our senses to diminish, and in ancient times there were no eyeglasses to remedy poor eyesight, it is easy to see how the sense of smell could become very important for identifying people who may have been away for a significant amount of time or even someone from one's ethnic group that who had not yet been encountered. Several times in the Bible, we read that one person "fell on the neck" of another as a means of greeting. For example, that phrase is found in the story of the Prodigal Son. It has been speculated that this was a means to get close enough to a person to be able to smell him and thus identify him as kinsman or stranger. Note this part of the story of Jacob's deception of his father, Isaac:

So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said,

Ah, the smell of my son  
is like the smell of a field  
that the Lord has blessed.  
May God give you of heaven's dew  
and of earth's richness--  
an abundance of grain and new wine.  
May nations serve you  
and peoples bow down to you.  
Be lord over your brothers,  
and may the sons of your mother bow down to you.  
May those who curse you be cursed  
and those who bless you be blessed.  
-Genesis 27.26-29

Isaac had already noted that the sound was of Jacob, so he called Jacob near him so he could feel his hands, for Esau was a hairy man and Jacob was smooth. Then for confirmation, Isaac called Jacob to come near and kiss him. The result was that Isaac smelled the smell of Esau on Jacob and chose to believe the smell over the sound of the voice.

Here, Jacob is a picture of a sinner seeking the blessing of God and Esau is a picture of Christ. When we go before God for blessing, we do not come into His presence with our own smell. Rather, we put on the clothing and appearance of Christ, and when the Father feels and smells Christ, He blesses us for Christ's sake.

Earlier in Genesis, we see a story in which smell is considered to be an important part of true worship:

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. - Genesis 8.20-21

The smell of the whole burnt offering was a pleasing smell to the Lord; for it pictured and foreshadowed the smell of Christ and Him crucified.

In the case of our text in the song of Solomon, the smell is of perfume – a manufactured smell designed to attract others. Sometimes such perfumes were used to cover up body odor. But Solomon would have had easy access to good bodily hygiene, so that would not have been the case here. In this verse, these manufactured smells represent the characteristics of the Lord Jesus – characteristics that are attractive to those He loves and those who love Him.

We know this, for the Shulamite says that, not only is the fragrance of his perfumes pleasing, his NAME is like perfume poured out. In the Scriptures, a person's name has less to do with what people call him than it has to do with some characteristic(s) of that person. Noah was named Noah precisely because his named signified the rest that his father prophesied would come through him. Esau was called "Edom" for he was hairy and notably red-haired. Jacob was called by that name for it indicated a cheater.

Often, the Lord said things like, "Then they shall know that I am Jehovah," or, "And then they shall know my name." He did not mean that they would come to the realization that Jehovah is His personal name; it means that they would come to realize the meaning of that name and enter into a relationship with Him based upon the meaning of His name.

The Shulamite says, "Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes." Our Lord does not have a single smell or characteristic, but every characteristic, every attribute, of Him is pleasing to the heart and mind of the believer. (We might add that these same smells are odious to the unbeliever.) But believers can be identified by this: there is nothing about the Lord Jesus that is repulsive to them. A believer loves everything about Christ.

One of the surest signs of unbelief is when some professed Christian hears Christ being declared in truth and is made angry by what he hears and maybe he goes so far as to outright deny the

truth of what he has heard for it does not fit his idea of what is right and good. That particular smell is, to him, a bad smell – the smell of death.

But, to the believer, nothing about Christ stinks; He is, in every aspect of His person and work, a lovely and attractive smell. The smell of His presence overwhelms the stench of the world in which we live. It is so powerful and so powerfully good that it overrides the stench of our own nature and conduct and makes us forget our sin in His presence. The stink of our most despicable and judgment-worthy characteristics, thoughts, and deeds is diminished to insignificance when the “fragrance of His perfumes” fills the room.

In this line, perfume is in the plural, so we think of the multiple characteristics of the Lord. Who can deny the wondrous beauty of the fragrance of His love toward His people? “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Never did a man lay down his life for his friends as Christ laid down His life for His friends. He loved His church and gave himself up for her. He has loved His people with an everlasting love. If the fragrance of that characteristic flows into our spiritual nostrils, all guilt, cares, and inward strife cease.

There is the perfume of His righteousness. The smell of the self-righteousness is to the believer like the smell of death. Their righteousness is a condemning righteousness and sinners rightly avoid such people as they would avoid the smell of a rotting carcass. But the righteousness of Christ is of an entirely different aroma for it is a justifying righteousness. His righteousness is the real thing, a righteousness pleasing to God and accepted by Him, unlike the righteousness of religious moralists. Moreover, it is a righteousness which He does not hold to Himself, but as a perfume emanates from the person who wears it, so the righteousness of Christ goes out to those who are justified by it.

The perfume of His Lordship. Many in broader Christianity speak of the Lordship of Christ as though it is something they approve of, but when you speak with them, you come to learn they know little if anything of His Lordship. They speak of Christ someday becoming Lord over everything. They speak of us making Christ to be our Lord. But just as He was about to leave for His Father’s house, the Lord, Himself, said, “All authority in Heaven and on Earth is given to Me...” This is not an authority He is waiting to receive but an authority He already possess as the rightful reward of His victorious suffering unto death. On the day of Pentecost, Peter declared, “This same Jesus, whom you crucified, God has made to be Lord and Christ!” This was a terror to those who heard it, but once they also heard the word of His grace, they came to love His universal and complete Lordship, for it was the foundation of the security of their souls.

Believers do not have to be told to “make Christ their Lord,” for they delight that, God, Himself, has made Christ to be Lord over all, even over those who do not believe Him. His sovereign rule over the entire universe is to them the assurance that none shall be able to pluck them out of His hand. They can be certain that, no matter what is happening, it is the Lord causing it to happen, and it is happening for their good and no harm will come to them by it.

In the first century church, the essential confession of Christ was, "Jesus is Lord." Therein laid their hope, for none but a sovereign Lord can successfully rescue and defend His people. Therein lay their joy, for nothing could give them more joy than the sight of their Lord exercising His Lordship even among His enemies. And the universal acknowledgement of the Lordship of Jesus is the truth to which all of history is moving. God exalted Christ for the express purpose that, in time to come, every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

No more delightful prospect can be set before the eyes of God's people. Christ's universal, sovereign Lordship is a sweet perfume to them, and nothing could give them greater satisfaction than to see Him openly exalted in that office by all flesh.

And what can we say of His grace? "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8.9).

But, in the next line, the Shulamite says, "Your name is like perfume poured out." In this case, it is a single fragrance or perfume attached to a single name. The Shulamite is speaking about Solomon, whose name means peace. The Hebrew greeting, "Shalom," means peace, but this peace extends to more than the absence of conflict with others. It signifies balance in all things – health, relationships, one's emotional state, and so forth. In truth, it represented virtually everything that the state of "salvation" would produce.

Christ is our peace: Peace with God, peace with other people, peace within the church, peace of conscience. Christ is the God of peace, and He is the peace of God. In John 14.27, our Lord said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." Then a couple of chapters later He said to them, "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world," (John 16.33).

But this lovely fragrance of the Lord is not something that He simply wears. His name is like "perfume poured out." This is not perfume that is worn, but is perfume poured out. We are reminded of two occasions when perfume was "poured out" on our Lord Jesus. The "woman who was a sinner," and Mary of Bethany. In both cases, these women performed their act of devotion and worship entirely for Him, motivated by their otherwise unspeakable love for Him. They did not come to make a scene or be noticed. Yet even though neither of the women did it for the benefit of the others in the room, all the others in the room benefited from what they did. All of them except the unbelievers among them. But the perfume poured on our Lord's feet filled the room with a lovely fragrance which everyone could enjoy if they had a mind to.

And so the fragrance of Christ's Person as the Prince of Peace is something beautiful to all who have the ability of smell it. It is the fragrance of peace.

The name of our Lord as the Prince of Peace is "Jesus." This name is truly like perfume poured out. To the believer, it is the fragrance of home, a kinsman, a wonderful memory trigger of grace come before and a guarantee of Grace to come. He is called Jesus for He has saved His people from their sin. (The name "Jesus" is the same name as "Joshua" in the Old Testament and means, "Jehovah is salvation). The fragrance of that name beautiful name has lifted the hearts of millions of believers in the years since the Lord was here on earth. John Newton well-described the beauty of the fragrance of the name of our "Solomon" poured out.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds, In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, And drives away his fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole, And calms the troubled breast;  
'Tis manna to the hungry soul, And to the weary rest.

Dear name! the rock on which I build, My shield and hiding place,  
My never-failing treasury filled, With boundless stores of grace!

By Thee my prayers acceptance gain, Although with sin defiled;  
Satan accuses me in vain, And I am owned a child.

Jesus! my shepherd, husband, friend, O prophet, priest and king,  
My Lord, my life, my way, my end, Accept the praise I bring.

Weak is the effort of my heart, And cold my warmest thought;  
But when I see Thee as Thou art, I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim, With every fleeting breath,  
And may the music of Thy name, Refresh my soul in death!

Let every believer in our Lord Jesus do all within their power to be where this precious name is poured out like the most expensive perfume. And let each of them pour it out into this world, and by doing so, attract those who have a nose for that beautiful smell and make it a better place to live.