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Sermon Notes

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Imitating the Love of God

Ephesians 5:1-2

What is the AROMA of your life?

I was reading an article by a master perfumer... he was talking about the science and art of making the most delightful fragrances in the world

In the world of perfume, there are 8 main families of aromas: green, fruity, citrus, herbal, floral, woody, musky and oriental. Each of them has about 100 different ingredients.

To me, plants and flowers are like words for a writer or colours for a painter... So I always focus on the ingredients that help me to compose the ideal fragrance of the moment.

For all fragrances I create, I ask each of my suppliers to deliver and provide the best raw materials. It is my personal quest for excellence and quality to create luxury perfumes... Roses from Iran, Bulgaria or Morocco, orange flowers from Tunisia, spices and woods from all over the world.

It was a fascinating article, and I was drawn into it... especially since this text leads me to consider the FRAGRANCE, the AROMA my walk with Christ gives off:

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The aroma should be like Christ's offering to God... a beautiful display of the love of God

An Amazing Command!! ***Ephesians 5:1 "Be imitators of God...!!"***

The more you know the infinite, majestic God of the Bible, the more astonishing this command should seem to you

The Bible says that God created the heavens and the earth by the word of his power...

Isaiah presents the loftiest imaginable portrait of Almighty God as the creator and ruler of the universe

Isaiah 40:22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.

Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

Moses records that God descended on Mount Sinai in a dark cloud and spoke words so loud and terrifying that the ground beneath their feet shook with the sound... the sound was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear"

The holiness of God caused the seraphim in Isaiah's vision to cover their faces, not daring to look upon the glory of Almighty God, despite the fact that they've never sinned, they are perfectly pure

The infinite gap between God the creator and all the universe as creature is well captured by A.W. Tozer:

A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*:

"Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. The caterpillar and the archangel, though far removed from each other in the scale of created things, are nevertheless one in that they are alike created. They both belong in the category of that which-is-not-God and are separated from God by infinitude itself."

Westminster Confession of Faith:

"There is but one only living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, without body, parts or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own glory..."

God has all life, glory, goodness, and blessedness in and of himself; he is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he has made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and has most sovereign dominion over them to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleases. In his sight, all things are open and manifest; his knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature..."

To him is due from angels and men and every other creature whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them.”

WE ARE NOT GOD!!! Those things in total cannot be said of us!!

Theologians have tended to separate the attributes of God into two categories... communicable and incommunicable... or in simpler terms, we are able to IMITATE GOD in some ways, and there are some ways in which we can NEVER imitate God

We are not self-existent!! God exists in and of himself... and needs nothing created in order to continue to exist. We totally depend on God to continue our existence:

Acts 17:28 for "In him we live and move and have our being'

We are not immutable... God NEVER CHANGES...

Malachi 3:6 "I the Lord do not change"

We are CONSTANTLY changings... indeed we MUST change, for the text literally says

Ephesians 5:1 "BECOME imitators of God"

We are not immense, omnipresent, filling the universe with our presence:

Jeremiah 23:23-24 "Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? ²⁴ Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.

We are not sovereign, doing whatsoever we please and accountable to no one:

Daniel 4:35 He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

We are accountable to God, totally under his sovereign will

So... there are incommunicable attributes of God... things true of God that will NEVER be true of us

BUT there are COMMUNICABLE attributes... ways we are commanded to be exactly like God

This makes sense... for in creation, it says:

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

And again in salvation,

Ephesians 4:24 put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

So... we are to IMITATE GOD!

Amazing, for the apostle Paul in other places commands people to imitate him

1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me.

Philippians 3:17 ¶ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Or he tells us to imitate Christ

1 Corinthians 11:1 ¶ Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

But this is the only place in the Bible in which we are told to IMITATE God

HOW??

Here, it is in WALKING IN SELF-SACRIFICIAL LOVE in the pattern of Christ's sacrifice on the cross...

Here it is in living in tender-hearted forgiveness of others, laying down our rights in service to others as Jesus died for us

Ephesians 4:32 - 5:2 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. ¹ Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Context:

Ephesians 1-3: the amazing work of salvation God has worked for us in Christ

Ephesians 4-6: the implications of that salvation... how we are to live

Ephesians 4:1 ¶ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Ephesians 5:2 live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Morality flowing from the cross, from the grace of God:

Ephesians 4:17-24 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. ²⁰ You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. ²¹ Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Morality in all areas of life:

No Lying: vs. 25

No Sinful Anger: vs. 26

No Stealing: vs. 28

No Corrupt Speech: vs. 29

No Brawling: vs. 31

No Sexual Immorality: 5:3

These moral standards would have been familiar to all schools of Greek philosophy

Indeed many pagan people, atheists, or followers of foreign religion would embrace them even now, and in some cases, live them out better than many Christians do

What's the difference?

Christian morality, Christian virtue flows from God, it flows from the cross of Jesus Christ, and it is empowered by a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit of God who can be grieved

John Piper: "Morality apart from the grace of God is spiritual suicide."

BUT morality build upon the grace of God is eternal life!!

I. Imitating God's Love...

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love

A. Christians are not merely to be abstractly virtuous

1. Our goodness comes in direct relationship to God
2. We are to know God, trust in God, delight in God, and imitate God
3. The passionate God-centeredness is the key to this virtuous, moral life we are to be living

B. God IS Love

1 John 4:16 God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

1. This is the strongest statement about love in the Bible
2. God certainly commands love and exemplifies love and teaches us about love... but God IS love... all love comes from God and is utterly characteristic of God
3. All the love we humans have is a dim reflection of the love of our heavenly Father
4. God's heart is attracted to all that he has made... he delights in it and saw its beauty in a perfect sense apart from the evil that entered into the universe
5. So God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good
6. Even after the fall, God continued to love his creation with an immeasurable passion

Psalm 145:13-17 The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. ¹⁴ The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. ¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. ¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.

7. God's love is on display every time he feeds one of his creatures... it is on display every time the sun warms a budding wildflower or the spring showers fall on a field of barley...
8. God's love is on display in his providential care for the world in the original patterns in which he made it
9. God's love for all humanity is on display in this:

Matthew 5:45 He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

10. God has overwhelmingly loved his enemies... human beings who do not acknowledge him for all his gifts:

Psalm 103:5 satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

C. God HAS LOVED Us... even before we were BORN:

1. The love of God is especially on display in his salvation plan for his elect
2. God loved the elect before the creation of the world

Ephesians 1:4-5 he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ

3. God loved the elect by sending his Son into the world

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

4. God loved the elect by offering His Son as an atonement for our sins

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

5. God loved us DIRECTLY in saving us
 - a. He loved you by putting up with the sins you committed before you were a Christian
 - b. He loved you by sending the gospel to you in the form of messengers who shared Christ with you

- c. He loved you by sending the Holy Spirit to transform your heart... to remove the heart of stone and give you the heart of faith after Christ

D. NOW: God Commands Us to Imitate His Love

- 1. This lavish display of God's love comes with an inherent command
- 2. If God has loved us like this, we also ought to love one another like this

1 John 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

- 3. This is especially poignant in the issue of FORGIVENESS of sins

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

E. Parable of the Ten Thousand Talents

- 1. God demands that we forgive others as he has forgiven us
- 2. Christ made this very plain in the parable:

Matthew 18:23-35 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶ "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷ The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸ "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹ "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' ³⁰ "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³² "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³ Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

The "life of love" should be one of tenderness and compassion to other sinners

We should feel the weight of their misery in sin and yearn to set them free

This is true of all lost people... the love of God in Christ should constrain us to witness to people so that they will know God's mercy and forgiveness

But it is especially true of people who have hurt us... insulted us... sinned against us... stolen from us... treated us rudely... made our lives difficult in some way

Genuine forgiveness based on the grace of God in our lives is a powerful witness to the truth of the gospel

Christian history is full of Christians who lived lives of supernatural forgiveness, even to their enemies:

Stephen, as he was dying:

Acts 7:59-60 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Anabaptist man, fleeing for his life

Dirk Willems, Anabaptist who was fleeing for his life across a frozen pond, suddenly heard the ice crack behind him. Though he had made it safely across, his persecutor who was chasing him to arrest him had fallen through the ice. Willems turned around and pulled his enemy out of the freezing water. Despite this act of bravery and love, Willems was arrested and burned at the stake as a heretic.

Corrie Ten Boom, after suffering immeasurably at the Nazi concentration camp in Ravensbruck and watching her sister die of starvation and disease, in the years that followed was speaking in many places of her experiences as a Christian, and of the amazing forgiveness God gives in Christ, how God throws our sins into the bottom of the sea. To her horror, one man came forward after the testimony and said he had been a prison guard at Ravensbruck, and had since been a Christian.

He said isn't it wonderful how God throws our sins into the bottom of the sea, just as you said! He stuck out his hand, offering it to her, and said, "Will you forgive me?"

Corrie Ten Boom:

"I knew I had to forgive him. The message that God forgives has a prior condition – that we forgive those who have injured us. Jesus says, 'If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.'

“I knew it not only as a commandment of God, but as a daily experience. Since the end of the war, I had had a home in Holland for victims of Nazi brutality. Those who were able to forgive their former enemies were also able to return to the outside world and rebuild their lives, no matter what the physical scars. But those who nursed their bitterness remained invalids. It was as simple and as horrible as that.

“And still, I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not an emotion—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.

“‘Jesus, help me!’ I prayed silently. ‘I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling!’”

“And so, woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes.”

“‘I forgive you, brother... with all my heart!’” I cried to him.

“For a long moment, we grasped each other’s hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. **I have never known God’s love so intensely as I did then!**”

Application: Is there someone you need to forgive, as God has forgiven you? Is there someone who’s hurt you deeply, you may feel irreparably... you think you could never forgive that person, ever!

God wants you to LIVE A LIFE OF LOVE, as he loves you!!

II. As Beloved Children

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love

- A. Paul Gives another AMAZING INDUCEMENT: We should imitate God because he has ADOPTED US
1. We are the adopted sons and daughters of the eternal God!
 2. This is the most astonishing part of the salvation plan of God!!

3. We should be imitators of God because we are now BELOVED CHILDREN of God

B. The Stunning Truth of Adoption

Ephesians 1:4-5 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

1 John 3:1 Behold what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are.

1. This is the most amazing part of our salvation... we have been adopted through faith in Christ into the very family of God
2. Now this almighty God is our Father, and he loves us as he loves his only begotten son, Jesus Christ

John 16:26-27 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. ²⁷ No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.

Amazing!! Jesus is saying, "You won't need me to ask the Father for anything... the Father will be every bit as inclined to listen to you as he is to me! For the Father loves you as he loves ME!!!"

3. We can never stop meditating on this as a strong motive for all moral action...
 - a. We should love others because we are dearly loved children
 - b. We should forgive others because God has loved us and forgiven us
 - c. We should meet others' needs because God has met all our needs in Christ
 - d. We should welcome others because God has welcomed us into his family
 - e. We should love other Christians because God loves them like he loves us

Everything flows from this amazing fact of our adoption into the family of God

C. Our Desire to Imitate the Father is Natural for Us as His Children

1. Children always seek to imitate their parents
2. Sons look up to their fathers, imitate their gestures, their mannerisms, their worldview

3. They want to be just like their fathers when they are fully grown

Picture the little boy watching his father do yardwork, or shave, or drive, or do carpentry... when the father is away, the boy likes to sit in his father's chair, imitate his father's mannerisms

Obviously, when the boy gets older and becomes a teen, the sin nature takes over and he begins to assert his independence.... But little children love to imitate their father's

So also for us... we are told to imitate our heavenly Father in living a life of love

This is the very reason Jesus commands us to love our enemies:

Matthew 5:44-48 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

D. We Bear His Name... and His Reputation in the World

1. The honor of the family is in our hands
2. Outsiders watching our behavior will assess our Father by how we act

John 13:35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another

- a. In effect, Jesus is giving permission to the world to judge us based on our love for each other
- b. This is the lasting mark of Christ's family... the love we have for one another
- c. If we are sinful in this world, sexually immoral (as he will address in the next sentence), it will cause the outsiders of the world to blaspheme

Romans 2:23-24 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

- d. If we are holy, we will commend the glory of the Father to the watching world

3. So also our works of loving service commend the glory of the Father to the watching world

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

In other words, for good or ill, God's name, His reputation, in the world is tied to his children.

E. Our Future Inheritance

1. Along with this, we are HEIRS with Christ of the New Heaven and New Earth

Romans 8:17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-- heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ

2. Our citizenship is in heaven... we are just aliens and strangers here, passing through!
3. A life of love on earth is preparing us for an eternity of love in heaven
4. Jonathan Edwards: "Heaven is a world of love... " the best way to prepare for heaven is to love now

III. Imitating Christ's Love...

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children ² and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

A. Christ the Ultimate Example of a "Life of Love"

1. Jesus "walked in love" every moment of his life
2. Remember the two great commandments:
 - a. Love God with all your heart, mind, soul, strength
 - b. Love your neighbor as yourself
3. Jesus is the only human being who's ever lived who perfectly obeyed these commandments... the perfect life of love
4. Jesus LOVED US...
 - a. He entered the world as an act of his will to save his people from hell
 - b. He was moved by love!!

c. Once he began his public ministry, all he did was love people every moment of his life

i) His healings were all displays of his amazing love

Matthew 4:24-25 News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

Mark 1:40-42 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." ⁴¹ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

ii) His teaching ministry was motivated by compassion

Mark 6:34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

iii) His feeding of the crowd also a display of his love

Mark 8:1-3 During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ² "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³ If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

5. Everything Jesus did was motivated by love for God and for others... he WALKED IN LOVE every moment

B. The Cross ESPECIALLY Displayed Sacrificial Love

1. Paul especially zeroes in on Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the greatest display of his love
2. He focuses on the love he had for us as the MOTIVE for dying for us

Ephesians 5:2 live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3. Notice how similar this is to Galatians 2:20

Galatians 2:20 The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Ephesians 5:2 Christ loved us and gave himself up for us

- a. Both are true
 - b. Christ has an amazing and particular love for each individual Christian
 - c. AND he loved us ALL in the exact same way... by giving himself up for us
4. "Gave himself up"
- a. Literally handed himself over...
 - b. He willfully gave himself up to his captors, to torture, and to death
 - c. This was a direct display of LOVE for us

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 10:15 I lay down my life for the sheep.

John 10:17-18 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.

IV. As a Fragrant Sacrifice

A. This is the Centerpiece of Our Salvation!! The Atonement!!

Ephesians 5:2 live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

- 1. This was the culmination of the animal sacrificial system... the fulfillment of all those images and types
- 2. Paul specifically uses atonement language... Jesus was the sacrifice that the Law of God required to atone for our sins
- 3. The lessons of the animal sacrificial system came to the fore here
 - a. All sin deserves the death penalty
 - b. The death penalty can be paid by a substitute
 - c. The substitute cannot be an animal

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

4. The greatest display of love there has ever been in history has been this sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins
 - a. He died under the wrath and curse of God
 - b. He died the wretched death we all deserved to die
 - c. He laid himself down for our good

B. The Image is one of a Life Well-Pleasing to God

AN AROMA WAFING HEAVENWARD...

Think of the fragrance of your life... what scent does it give off??

I think of the variety of aromas God has made... some are nasty and pungent— like a dead skunk, which aroma lasts for a long time in the car long after you drive

Other aromas are so pleasant and sweet, like a magnolia tree on a warm summer day

1. The animal sacrificial system was well-pleasing to God when offered from a pure heart in the obedience of faith

Genesis 8:20-21 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. ²¹ The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man

2. Noah's offering was a fragrant aroma to God... not because God really craves MEAT
3. It was Noah's pure heart of faith and obedience to God that was pleasing to him
4. Even more so with Christ... it was the purest act of love and devotion there has ever been... it was a delightful pleasing aroma to God, a sacrifice so pleasing that it was sufficient to atone for all of our sins

Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

5. The fragrance our life gives off is essential to our winsome witness in the world

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

C. How Then Shall We Live?

1. Paul wants us to be continually mindful of Christ's sacrifice on the cross... it is the single greatest motivator to a life of love that we could ever have
2. The cross HUMBLES us so that we are more willing to forgive others

John Stott: "Every time I look at the cross, Christ seems to be saying to us, 'I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.' Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size."

3. This HUMILITY is essential to living a life of self-denying sacrificial love for others
 - a. Without this humility, we will live for ourselves
 - b. Without this humility, we will never forgive others their sins
 - c. Without this humbling, we will be arrogant, selfish people who use our time, energy, and money our ourselves
 - d. BUT having looked in the mirror of Christ's atoning sacrifice, we learn how to love and how to live, how to die to ourselves and serve others
4. Paul wants everything we do to be like Christ's sacrificial death on the cross
 - a. He wants us to live lives like a LIVING SACRIFICE

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.

- b. He wants us to present our bodies to God moment by moment for service to him
- c. He wants us to forgive those who have sinned against us with hearts of tenderness and compassion
- d. He wants us to die to ourselves and our agendas and do what is pleasing to God
- e. He wants our actions to be a fragrant offering to God at every moment
- f. This definitely includes our prayers... BOWLS of incense

Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

- g. And our worship... without a heart of LOVE and PASSION to God, our songs are empty

Hebrews 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise-- the fruit of lips that confess his name.

- h. Our good works are seen to be sacrifices offered to God

Hebrews 13:16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

- i. This could be something as practical as money given to support a missionary

Philippians 4:18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

- j. Our evangelism is a fragrant offering to God

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.

- 5. Paul is commending Christ's sacrifice as an example for us all

1 John 3:16-18 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

D. Practical Issues

1. Non-Christians: come to Christ!
2. Christians: forgive others who have sinned against you
3. Serve the members of your family
 - a. It starts at home
 - b. Husbands—love your wives and lay down your lives for them just as Christ laid down his life for you; do the same for your children

- i) Don't be selfish... living for the weekends, your hobbies, your passions and pleasures
 - ii) Give of yourself to your wife... pray with her, read her the Bible, serve her body—if she is sick or has pain, care for her
 - iii) Pour into your kids... live a life of love at home... let your words be a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God
- c. Wives—you also should lay down your lives for your husbands
 - d. Children: learn how to serve your parents and your siblings... do your household chores without grumbling
 - e. Families: look for avenues of ministry together!!
4. Serve the church: use your spiritual gifts!!
 5. Minister to the needs of people in the church and outside of the church
 6. Be moved with compassion for the poor in our community and find ways to serve them
 7. Evangelism: be willing to suffer to share the gospel... lay down your life for coworkers and neighbors who are lost

Let's make EVERY MOMENT a FRAGRANT OFFERING AND SACRIFICE to God!