

Oil and Spices

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Date: 06 November 2016

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[0 : 00] Now this section that we read in Exodus 30, it deals with two things which I identify here. The first is the anointing oil, which is to be composed and compiled here with all these particular ingredients, and is to be used for very exclusive purposes.

There is likewise what amounts to, although it's simply called here a confection, it means the incense that is to be prepared to be burned on the altar of incense, which if we'd begun our reading at the beginning of the chapter, we would have read about the altar of incense being prepared there.

So the incense itself is to be a combination of different spices, all ground up small and worked together, so that when it comes to be burned, a sweet savour will arise of it.

Now if we turn to verse 22, we see the Lord instructing Moses here, saying take these principal spices of pure myrrh, 500 shekels, sweet cinnamon, half so much, 250 shekels, and sweet cannabis, 250 of cassia, 500 shekels.

Now, none of these particular spices would be readily found in the desert, but we'll come to that in just a minute. As far as a shekel is concerned, obviously it's one of these old biblical descriptions, which, you know, it sounds wondrous in its mystery, but we don't actually know what it translates into in terms of modern weight.

[1 : 28] Some translations do attempt to translate it into direct modern terms, but there's not complete agreement among scholars as to exactly how much a shekel weighed.

Some commentators suggest that it may have been two-fifths of an ounce, in which case 500 such shekels would be 12 and a half pounds, or perhaps less helpfully say 11 grams, if you think in metric terms, in which case 500 of them would be five and a half kilograms.

So when you're looking at your quantity of myrrh, five and a half kilos, or 12 and a half pounds, what does that translate into? Well, roughly, approximately like the weight of six bags of sugar.

That's quite a heavy load of myrrh that is being compiled here. And cinnamon, sweet cinnamon and calamus, half as much. So that's like six and a quarter pounds, or two and three quarter kilograms, or the equivalent of, say, three bags of sugar.

But then that's twice over, once for the calamus, once for the sweet cinnamon. Then the cassia, 500 again, 500 shekels. We're back to our six bags of sugar in weight.

[2 : 43] So your total weight here is like the equivalent of something like 18 bags of sugar. No, when you think of that, if you're thinking of that on a supermarket shelf, 18 bags of sugar, that's a huge weight of spices going in here.

We don't know exactly, again, how much a hin of oil is. But again, some authorities suggest that a hin is approximately three and a half litres, or just over six pints.

Some suggest it may be as much as ten pints. So again, with these old measurements, we don't know exactly what they translate into. And also, we don't know exactly how this material is being prepared.

We don't know whether it's being ground up small. This massive weight of principal spices is all being ground up small, and then mixed into the oil, in which case that's going to be a very thick, stodgy composition by the end of it.

You know, it's not going to be a nice, easy pouring oil there. It's going to be more like literally an ointment that you would smear on, as opposed to pour on. It might have been done that way, or some authorities think that after it was ground up and put together, like the oil was strained through it, or sieved through it, so that as the oil trickled through whatever was sieving it, it would bring with it some of the traces of all these different spices.

[4 : 13] And so it would be aromatized. It would be smelling of all these spices, but it would still be liquid oil at the end of it. And the thing is, we just don't know. You know, when you've got the, this is clearly the anointing oil used, like, for example, with Aaron, and, you know, Psalm 133, we almost like the precious ointments upon the head that ran down the beard, even Aaron's beard that went down to the skirts of his garments.

Now, that suggests two things. First of all, it would tend to suggest it's more liquidy, and also to suggest that when he's anointed with it, it's not just given a wee dribble. If it's all running down his beard and running down the skirts of his garments, they must have poured quite a bit on it, which would suggest that copious amounts are used.

So it's not just, you know, as some Jewish authorities have suggested, that once it's made up, that's it forever. That's what it means, you know, throughout all your generations. You're never to make any more like this ever again.

I don't think that's what the scripture is teaching. It's teaching you, if you like, the basic recipe, and it would keep on being made as it was needed by the priests or whatever. But here we've got in Psalm 133, you know, this is the anointing oil.

This is the precious ointment on Aaron's beard that runs down, that flows down. That would suggest more liquidy rather than ointment as such.

[5 : 33] But again, this setting apart with this, remember, you know, what it says in the Song of Solomon, you know, because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth.

Therefore do the virgins love thee. So it is this setting apart, this sweet-smelling savour, which none also makes holy. Again, these are not, as we mentioned a moment ago, these are not items that you'd find readily in the Sagai Desert.

So when the Israelites are there and they're taught to do this and the Lord is giving these instructions to Moses, they can't just have a wee hunt around the camp and come up with these things. But the same would go for gold and silver and brass and purple and blue and garments dyed red and rind skin dyed red and all the things that they made the tabernacle from.

They're not just lying around in the desert either. So what do we understand? We understand that the Lord is instructing Moses that this tabernacle and all its furniture and all the composition and all the things in it is to be made for what the Israelites have brought with them from Egypt.

It's not native to the desert where they are. It has to be brought in specially. It has to be specially given, provided, and we must assume that they had brought some of these, an abundance of these precious spices with them from Egypt.

[7 : 03] So they must be there. The Egyptians would have all these plenty of spices. Most of the myrrh and the sweet cinnamon and the calamus, they're thought to be originating with plants that are native to Arabia and particular trees and shrubs and some of them taken from the inside of the bark and the resinous gum that would be there and some others from the outside of the bark and so on.

We haven't really got time to go into all the botanical detail of how these things come about. Suffice to say, they were precious, they were costly, and they would have to be brought from Egypt or obtained in trading.

They are not found naturally lying about. They must be brought in. Now, some commentators, of course, liken all these ingredients, together with the oil, to the gifts that the Spirit gives to the Lord's people.

Oil, of course, as we know, is often used in Scripture as a suitable for God's Holy Spirit. And with all these different principal spices put in, you know, the myrrh, 500 shekels, sweet cinnamon, cassia calamus, and so on, all these things, that these are pointing us to the different gifts of God's Spirit. We think, for example, of what we read in 1 Corinthians 12, where we read at verse 4, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord, and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

[8 : 43] But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another, the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another, faith by the same Spirit, to another, the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another, the working of miracles, to another, prophecy, to another, the discerning of spirits, to another, diverse kinds of tongues, to another, the interpretation of tongues.

But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. So in other words, all these different ingredients, all these fragrances, if you like, these spiritual gifts that the Lord has given, together, mixed and poured in together with the Spirit of Christ, they are one and the selfsame Spirit.

All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will, separately as he will. So likewise, you know, the myrrh, the cassia, the calamus, and whatever it is that goes into this anointing oil, it is still symbolizing this one Spirit, even though all these different gift things, all these different ingredients are likewise in it.

In 2 Corinthians, of course, we read in chapter 2, verse 15, we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish.

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? For this savor, this scent that is given off to the Lord, the spiritual gifts that he has given, they are pleasing, they are acceptable in his sight, it's a pleasing scent to him when his people are laboring in the things that he has given them.

[10:37] But to others, of course, of the world, it's just so much stink, so much stench, you know. And of course, different, we've got to remember different smells. Smells are always evocative for us, they evoke certain things.

I can remember when I was a wee boy going to visit my father in his workplace in the College of Education in Aberdeen, and as you went in the door, you went up the stairs, and it was sort of, you know, concrete stairs, and it sort of echoed as you went up, up to the offices up above where he was working.

But the thing I always remember is when you opened the door and started up the stairs, the smell, it was a smell that I now know to be like photocopy sort of smell and sort of the toner that they would put into the copying and paper and ink and all that kind of secretarial type smell that was in there. And that's what you inhaled when you went up the stairs. And then years later, when I was back at university, I happened to be going to a different department from usual, turned a corner, passed a set of offices and there was the same smell and suddenly I was back.

You know, I'm sure you all have come across different scents and smells like that that take you back to some particular instance where that was what you were inhaling or breathing. And if the memories were good, then it's a good memory.

[11:52] And if they weren't, you think, oh, that just takes me right back to some awful day when such and such happened. Because they're very evocative. And to some people, the same scent will be good and to others, it will be bad.

And to some way, the savour of life unto life and to others, the savour of death unto death. But we don't change the savour just to suit others. We have it to suit and to serve the Lord.

He gives the gifts, he gives the spirit and we are to exercise it for him. Now, another thing that we notice is just as we said, you know, these ingredients, they're not lying about in the desert, they have to be brought, they have to be put in.

So all the gifts that the Lord gives by his spirit, they're not native to us. We're not born with a particular grace of Christ. We're not born with a particular ability to serve him with this or with that or the next thing.

Our nature is fallen. Whatever we receive from God by his spirit is put in. It is brought, especially by the Lord, and it is inserted. Just like these ingredients and all that goes into building the tabernacle, it wasn't fun lying around in the Sinai desert.

[13:03] It had to be brought. It had to be taken from outside and put into that situation. So the Lord takes his own gifts and he gives them to his people and he puts them through, if you like, the medium of his spirit just as all these ingredients go into the oil of anointing for Aaron and for the tabernacle and so on.

Something else we need to recognize is that just as it says that all these things are to be anointed. Thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, the ark of the testimony, the table in all his vessels, the candlestick in his vessels, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, the labour in his foot.

Thou shalt sanctify them that they may be most holy. Whosoever toucheth them shall be holy. Thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.

And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel saying, this shall be a holy anointing unto me throughout all your generations. Upon man's flesh let it not be poured. Now thou shalt he make any other likeness.

And I think, well hang on a minute, it just says you're to anoint Aaron and his sons here. Surely that's it being putting on man's flesh. You know, it's running down his beard, it's coming to the skirts of his garments. Yes, but in that context, Aaron and his sons are not mere men.

[14:28] They are taken as men but they are acting not as men, they are acting as God's priests. Think of it, the tabernacle, it's of God. The altar of burnt offering, it's of God.

The altar of incense, it's of God. The laver and his food, it's of God. It's all things that are to do with accessing the Lord. It's all his sanctuary, his altar, his tabernacle, his ark of the covenant and ark of the testimony and so on.

It's all the things which are relating to him are to be anointed in this way as though set apart. Set apart with his special anointing oil in the sense that they are anointed with his spirit.

Man is not God. Man is encouraged to come to the Lord. Man is taught that he is made in the image of God and he is to approach to God.

He is to seek to the Lord. He is to recognise the sonship that is offered to us in the Lord. But that is not to say that we are God. God is separate from us, distinct from us and even the priests, men though they were, in the sense that they were anointed of the Lord in this way with his holy oil, makes them separate.

[15:48] And all of this, of course, is pointing us on to Christ who yet being one of us is also distinct from us. Hebrews 7, verse 26, such an high priest became us who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens who need have not daily as those high priests to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins then for the people's.

This he did once when he offered up himself for the cross. Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Man is not God.

Despite the privileges that are given to us, despite the fact we are encouraged to come to the Lord, we are not God. And if we seek to be, you know, if anybody seeks to just make this stuff up themselves and just anoint it themselves as though they were special, well, we are as gods now. We are just the same as God. No, you're not. All that you prove by seeking to be like God in that sense is to prove that you're not fit to be one of his people. They shall be even, verse 33, cut off from his people.

All that that will mean is you cannot even be one of the Lord's people for someone who was of the Lord's people would never presume to think themselves God or his equivalent.

[17:15] So it's not when you, you know, if you go to somebody's house and you're staying there and they say, come in, come in, make yourself at home. And if you say to them, is it all right if I go and make a cup of tea?

Of course, if you go and make a cup of tea. Well, if I'm staying right, can I go and get a shower? Yes, yes, and they just play it everything else, towels and so on, and there's your room and everything and everything just as you want it and so on.

It's lovely, it's comfortable, I have to make myself at home and that's what they tell you to do. And then, a couple of days later, they get a visit from a solicitor saying, oh, hello, Mr. So-and-so, Mr. So-and-so, I've just been told that you want to put your house on the market.

Yes, your guest is staying here said that she put the house on the market and that they were going to sign the papers and that all the proceeds would go to them. And you go and say, what are you doing? You put my house on the market? Oh, he said I could make myself at home.

He said I could treat the place as if it was mine, sir. This is what I think, it's a nice house you've already got in. I'll just put it on the market and I'll sell it and that'll be great. So, thanks very much, that's great. Now, you can see why we've crossed the line, can't you?

[18:15] because it's one thing with your host's permission to use with thankfulness and courtesy and appreciation all the good of their home that they want you to have.

Make yourself at home. But it's not your home, is it? You don't have the right to take it, to buy it, to sell it, to make them homeless, to take that which is theirs.

You don't have the right to presume upon what belongs to somebody else. You're a guest, you're welcome, you have the ready access to the entire house and all its facilities and make yourself at home but it's not actually your home, is it?

And God wants his children to have access to all the gifts that he affords. He wants them to know him as he is. He wants them to be anointed with the Spirit.

He wants them to have the blessing of being as he is, to have the grace, the courtesy, the kindness, the love for the poor, the oppressed, the meek. He wants them to be generous one to another.

[19 : 20] He wants them to show the love of God through his children. He wants them to receive the blessings of this world using the world that's not abusing it.

Not thinking that this is the main deal and all that there is. No, this world is passing away but for now we receive his good gifts. The sun and the rain from heaven and the food of the field and the fish in the sea and all that we have.

We have from the Lord. That's great. But we are not God. We are called to be sons and daughters of God. We are called to follow him, to have access to him, to pray to him, to seek to be with him for all eternity but we are not God.

It is not our house in which we dwell. We are guests in what our host provides. And as long as we maintain and remember that relationship which brings with it so much blessing and privilege, we will be blessed and rejoice in the things of the Lord.

But all that is to be thus anointed with this holy oil and all these sacred ingredients, these are things of God. And even Aaron and his sons as the priests are the priests of God.

[20 : 42] And we are not God. And that distinction has to be kept. It has to be made because what happens if we don't? What happens if we don't is that we repeat the same sins and folly of our first parents going round and round.

That is what the serpent counted them with. Ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil. Not enough that you be fulfilling his creation and made in his image and lords and of all that he has done.

Not enough that you have the complete dominion over all that the Lord has made. But rather the one thing that is left to you. You desire that.

The one thing you don't have to be as God. You and I. We are not God. And the children of Israel are not God.

No, they are called to be the children of God. And although they are called out into this wilderness specifically so that they can serve the Lord God of the Hebrews. And God who has said to Pharaoh, Israel is my son.

[21 : 54] Therefore let my son go that he may come and serve me. Even my firstborn. But being the children of God, we are not God.

We are separate from God. We are distinct from God. This anointing is for the Lord and his particular things.

The things that distinguish between him and his people. And whilst that is remembered, all will be well. And whilst that is remembered, it will be to our benefit rather than to our shame or our restriction.

Like all of us, sometimes I need to go to the mainland. When I go to the mainland, then I go on the ferry or I go on the plane. If I go on the ferry, I drive my car into the ferry and then the announcement comes on saying, you know, welcome Caledonia McBrain, welcome to you and so on.

I hope you'll enjoy your trip. And then, oh, well, that's fine. I'll make myself a note. I'll go down into the engine room and I'll tinker about with all the machinery that's going on there. And if nobody stops me, I'll just tinker, I'll see if I can turn this wheel and make this thing go better.

[23 : 05] I'll walk to the captain's bridge and I'll start steering the thing. I'll see if I can sail the boat myself. What will happen if I do that? I'll be arrested. It'll be a disaster because I am not an engineer.

I don't know how all the engines work. I don't know how all the different bits of machinery operate. I don't know about sailing a great massive ferry. I don't know about all the navigational techniques in all the seamanship.

There are people to do that. I am welcome on that boat. I am part of the people that are taking across, backwards and forwards, across the sea. That's great. That's what I'm meant to do.

But if I from that assume I can be anything and do anything, the result, if I were able to do it, would be a disaster. It would be harmful to me. It would be harmful to everybody else.

And it would seriously interfere with those who are simply trying to do what is best for me and every other passenger on board. So likewise with God. As long as I remember there to be the child of God is the greatest privilege to which a human being can be called.

[24 : 13] Then all is well. God is in his heaven and I, whilst I am upon earth, serve him, live for him, love him, and long to be with him.

And he seeks to gather his children unto him. The children of God are the children of God. But they are not God. This anointing is separate and distinct.

But lest we may fall into the trap of thinking, oh well, that means God doesn't want anything to do with this child. He wants to keep them out. He wants to be himself and keep them at arm's length.

That's not so. God wants the distinction preserved for our good as well as for his glory. Because the next section from verse 34 on to the end deals with the creation of the incense here.

The incense which was to be burned on the altar of incense, which, as the tabernacle would be clear, was to be in front of the veil. Now the Ark of the Testament was behind the veil.

[25 : 13] It was in the Holy of Holies. But in front of the veil was the altar of incense. So it was only a few feet away from the actual Holy of Holies, from the Ark of the Covenant.

But it was behind the curtain. And this was partly to enable the Israelites to recognize that the God whom they worship is there. He is real and he is close and he is almost, as it were, within touching distance.

But he remains unseen. And they are to approach him in worship and above all in prayer. And that is what incense is throughout Scripture the symbol of.

And this we have, you know, repeatedly, you know, through the Old Testament and in the New. If we read, for example, in Luke's account of the Gospel, chapter 1, where Zacharias, remember, because he's a priest.

And chapter 1, verse 9, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot, he was drawn by lots to who was to go in and burn the incense, was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

[26 : 16] And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. They were praying outside the holy place while he was burning the incense inside the symbol of prayer.

ascending up before the tabernacle or before the holy of holies there. Revelation, in chapter 5, verse 8, when he had taken a book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them hearts and golden vials full of odors and clouds of incense, which are the prayers of saints.

And chapter 8, and verse 3, again in Revelation, an other angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden sense and there was given unto him much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

This incense, which is also uniquely to be compiled, it's not to be made just any other kind of perfume or whatever, this unique special incense was to symbolize the holy relationship, the ready access of God's people to almost within touching distance of yet the invisible God behind the veil.

Now we know, of course, that the veil has now been torn in two from the top to the bottom of the temple. What does that mean? Oh, that we can see God now? No. No, but that God showed himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

[27 : 50] Jesus said, he that had seen me had seen the Father. Now, of course, he said, yeah, that's me, but we can't see you now, Lord. We can't see you. No, not with the eyes of flesh.

Nor does the Bible have any description of what Jesus was like in terms of his physical appearance because that is not the issue. We can't pretend to recreate an image of Jesus either in carving or in stained glass or in art or in saying this is what he looked like because we don't know what he looked like.

But we know what he was like because the Bible tells us what Jesus is like. Not his appearance, not his face, not his, whether or not he had a beard, not what height he was or weight or colour of eyes or whatever his mouth looked like or any of these things.

These physical attributes about which the world obsesses. We are not told these things. What we are told is what Jesus is like and thereby what God is like.

we are told of his teaching, we are told of his behaviour, we are told of how the Lord reveals himself through Christ. And so likewise these prayers of the saints, there is incense, this is to be a holy thing.

[29 : 04] And just as the incense is unique, there is no other kind of incense to be made, we are to understand not only that there is only one God whose anointing is unique and separate and can't just be reproduced because there are no other thoughts.

But likewise there is only one way to approach the Lord, there is only one means of access to the Lord. And just as that be through the prayers of the Lord's people, we can't just pray any old thing. We have to, if our prayers are to be received and accepted, they must be coming through Jesus Christ. There is none other mediator between God and man. Now, some of you of course might remember and think that in Isaiah it says in chapter 1, bring me no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me.

The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Now, to get that in context we need to see the previous verses.

It says, hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom. Sodom was long gone. So this is a spiritual kind of Sodom he's talking about. Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

[30 : 18] He is likening Israel to those cities which were so debased and so depraved that they were destroyed by the law. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord?

I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts. I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of eagles when you come to appear before me. Who hath required this of your hand to tread my courts?

Bring no more vain of lations. Incense is an abomination to me. Now it's not that incense and burnt offerings and all the rest of it are abominations of the Lord in themselves.

He appointed them. He's the one that set what burnt offerings were to be done when. He's the one that set up the altar of incense and how it was to be made and so on. What he means is that the symbol or the token without the substance without the reality is an abomination to me.

All these protestations of love when you don't feel the love when you're not having the worship yes you're going through the outward motions but you're not really serving me in spirit and truth.

[31 : 23] You're burning beasts and you're burning incense and you're going through the outward form but you don't love me. You're not serving me. Look at the way you live. He's saying look at the way you behave. Look at what's in your heart.

This is mere outward window dressing. It's putting a nice covering or wrapping on that which is rotten and stinking inside. And the Lord doesn't despise these outward things.

He said these outward things are meant to be a symbol a token of what is within. That the symbol is meant to be expressive of the substance the token of the reality. That is why the mere outward going through the motions is an abomination to the Lord.

But when it is taken as what it is meant to represent it is pleasing and acceptable in his sight. There is only one way to compile this incense and that is what is said out here with all these different kinds of spices that are mentioned here.

Sweet spices plant and sweet spices with pure frankincense of each there shall be a like weight. Grind them up small. Some commentators take this to mean the way in which Christ was bruised for our iniquity the pounding of the incense together in the mortar and pestle.

[32 : 43] The way in which it is ground and the way in which it is offered up because at the end of the day just as there is only one way for us to get through to the Lord and that is through the mediation of Christ.

So likewise that sacrifice of Christ is an acceptable savor to the Lord. Ephesians tells us this chapter 5 verse 2, 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. Now how can anyone regard all the blood and guts and suffering of crucifixion as a sweet smelling savor? We look at that and we think how can that be love? And so many people of course have an unconverted mind and those who don't approach the word of God and its truth as they ought to but rather with a worldly or with a merely empty human idea. They say, oh no, that's just a tragedy. The crucifixion, oh it's just a disaster. That's just like cosmic child abuse as someone said. And they say, oh, well this is just brutality and sin. How could God ever delight in that? God does not delight in the suffering but God delights in the sacrifice. He smells the sweet savor of love. The love of his beloved son showing forth perfectly the love of the father for lost sinners. Because there was no other way for sinners to be reconciled to be reconciled to God. But unless a sacrifice could be made that would pay for their sins.

And nothing that men could come up with would ever be sufficient. No amount of bulls or goats or blood on any altar or incense is going to be enough. But these things were themselves the tokens, the expressions of that which would be the final sacrifice, the ultimate payment. But the only person unable to make that payment is God himself. And to do it he cannot remain in heaven, he has to come to earth.

There has to be a distinction made, a separating out almost, if I can use that word advisedly, between the father and the son. Not that they are separated one from another, but insofar as the son becomes human flesh. That is something which God the Holy Ghost and God the Father have never done and will never do. God became flesh. He was born so that he could die. And when he dies and offers up himself upon the cross with all the suffering, with all by his stripes we are healed and they shall look on me whom they have pierced and all the fulfillment of all the scriptures. Yes, the Lord delights in such courage and bravery and love which exhausts and plums the depths of all the love that has ever been expressed in heaven and on earth and all the world. We can't get our eyes on that level of love. We couldn't give it.

[36 : 02] We couldn't do it. We wouldn't allow a child of ours to be brutally executed for somebody we don't even know or don't love us an enemy to us. We would say our first responsibility is to our child. We would want to protect our child. We would want to make sure they were cosseted and kept from harm and danger.

To be able to let them go. To be able to allow them willingly to give themselves up. To pay a price so in others. Wretched sinners, enemies, filth-ridden, unworthy convicts such as we are. To be reconciled. That is a love that's just beyond us. It blows our minds. It doesn't blow God's mind. He recognizes it. He sees it. He identifies it. He delights in it. It is a sweet-smelling savour to him.

It is the very incense that ascends before the tabernacle. There is only one right way of compiling the incense. There is only one right offering to God. And that is his son, Jesus Christ. There is only one way to approach his throne.

And that is in prayer through Christ our Lord. There is only one God. And one separate from sinners.

[37 : 27] Just as Christ our high priest is separate from sinners. And all that is of God is anointed with this holy oil and this holy spirit.

And all the gifts and all the ingredients and all the gifts that go to make it what it is. That he gives freely to man but reserves to himself that which is his own.

We are called to be the children of God. That is our great privilege. It is the expression of God's love. 1 John 3. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.

That we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God. And it hath not yet appeared what we shall be.

But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is. We shall be with him. But we are not him.

[38 : 28] And it is because we are not him that he is distinct, separate, perfected, miles above us and yet has come down to us.

Because we are not God, we are able to be saved by God. Separate from us. Anointed with this holy oil.

Distinct. So that we may recognize who God is. And our place in his scheme of salvation. Because we are not him.

We are saved by him. Thanks be to God. Let us pray.