

Special Forces: Day Twenty

Basic Training: Unit Three

Personal Hygiene

Sweet Aroma

There is a certain hotel in Cupertino, California (Greater San Francisco Bay Area, alias "Silicone Valley") that has an elevator with a very unusual characteristic. When entering this elevator, in the early morning hours, I became surrounded by the distinct and wonderful smell of breakfast! I noticed that the elevator was located quite some distance from the ground floor lobby, dining room and kitchen. As I exited I noticed that this tantalizing aroma was absent from the hallway! I think they must open a can of "Fragrance of Breakfast" intentionally pipe it through the elevator vents so that guests will be enticed to partake of the fare in the hotel dining room at fifteen dollars a head.

To a hungry guest (on a diet, living on the third floor, and using the exercise room every morning) the aroma of eggs, sausage and bacon sure is sweet! It reminded me of a verse from Scripture that talks about what aroma God considers pleasing.

The concept of a sweet aroma to God actually can be traced all the way back to Noah, who built an altar after being saved from the great flood.

"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..." Genesis 8:20-21a (NIV)

We can see the same sacrificial system in the priesthood that was established after the Israelites were delivered from bondage. There are over forty references to sacrificial offerings being a 'sweet aroma' to God in the Old Testament, mostly in Leviticus and Numbers. The Old Testament system of continuous animal sacrifices as a payment to God for sin established God's requirement but gave way to the 'once for all time' sacrifice of his very own Son in the New Testament.

Key Verse:

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

It is amazing the power that an odor can have. When operating in the combat environment we know that the odors of an opposing force can sometimes arrive before a first sighting. In our current society we go to great lengths to remain odor neutral or wear a fragrance that is (hopefully) pleasing to those around us.

As believers, it is important to recognize that we will also have an aroma! It will be offensive to those who are perishing and will be sweet to those who are being saved.

So What!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, as sinful humans we are not now, nor could we ever be a sweet fragrance to God. Christ, who lives within us and expresses himself through us by the work of

His Holy Spirit, is forever our fragrance. We are a sweet smelling aroma because we have been washed clean by the Holy Spirit because of Christ's blood sacrifice on the Cross of Calvary!

"But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." Titus 3:4-7 (NIV)

The question is how do we remain clean and what part do I have in maintaining this personal hygiene? How can I know if I have an aroma or if I just smell? The Apostle John tells us:

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." 1 John 1:7-10 (NIV)

Here is our part of the hygiene process: "Confessing our sins." God's part is cleansing us. How do I know if I am clean (aroma or smell)?

"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. " 1 John 2:1-6 (NIV)