

Let My Prayer Be Set Forth Before You as Incense

by Octavius Winslow

The sermon emphasizes the significance of the heart in prayer, highlighting that true prayer is the incense of a heart broken for sin and humbled for iniquity, and that God views the believer's heart with love and acceptance.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 141:2, Matthew 6:6, Luke 1:10, Romans 8:26-27, 2 Corinthians 2:15, Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 4:16, James 5:16, Revelation 5:8

Topics: "The Power of Prayer", "The Heart of Worship"

Description

Octavius Winslow emphasizes the profound nature of prayer as a sacred act of drawing near to God, likening it to the sweet incense offered at the altar. He explains that true prayer arises from a heart transformed by grace, where the believer's struggles and sincerity are known and cherished by God. Winslow highlights that even the simplest expressions of prayer, such as a sigh or a tear, are fragrant offerings to the Lord, who sees beyond outward appearances to the heart's true condition. The sermon encourages believers to recognize the beauty and value of their prayers, as they are accepted by God with delight. Ultimately, it is a reminder of the intimate relationship between the believer and God, where prayer becomes a means of communion and connection.

Transcript

Let my prayer be set forth before you as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.
Psalm 141:2

THIS passage presents the Christian to our view in his holiest and most solemn posture--drawing near to God, and presenting before the altar of His grace the incense of prayer. The typical reference to this is strikingly beautiful. "You shall make an altar to burn incense upon And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning; when he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." That this incense was typical of prayer would appear from Luke 1:10, "And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense." And David, though dwelling in the more shadowy age of the church, thus correctly and beautifully interprets this type: "Let my prayer be set before you as incense."

But from where arises the incense of prayer ascending to the throne of the Eternal? Oh, it is from the heart. The believer's renewed, sanctified heart is the censer from where the fragrant cloud ascends. True prayer is the incense of a heart broken for sin, humbled for its iniquity, mourning over its plague, and touched, and healed, and comforted with the atoning blood of God's great sacrifice. This is the true censer; this it is at which God looks. "For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Precious censer! molded, fashioned, beautified by God. There exists not upon earth a more vile and unlovely thing, in the self-searching view of the true believer, than his own heart. And yet --oh wondrous grace!--God, by his renewing Spirit, has made of that heart a beautiful, costly, and precious censer, the cloud of whose incense ascends and fills all heaven with its fragrance. With all its indwelling evil and self-loathing, God sees its struggles, watches its conflict, and marks its sincerity. Not a feeling thrills it, not an emotion agitates it, not a sorrow shades it, not a sin wounds it, not a thought passes through it, of which He is not cognizant. Believer! Jesus loves that heart of your. He purchased it with his own heart's blood, agonies, and tears--and He loves it. It is His temple, His home, His censer, and never can it approach Him in prayer, but He is prepared to accept both the censer and incense with a complacency and delight which finds its best expression in the language of His own word, "I will accept you with your sweet savor." And what shall we say of the fragrance of this incense? Oh, how much have we yet to learn of the intrinsic sweetness of real prayer! We can but imperfectly conceive the fragrance there must be to God in the breathing of the Divine Spirit in the heart of a poor sinner. It is perhaps but a groan--a sigh--a tear--a look--but it is the utterance of the heart; and God can hear the voice of our weeping, and interpret the language of our desires, when the lips utter not a word; so fragrant to Him is the incense of prayer. "Lord, all my desire is before You, and my groaning is not hid from You."

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