

WE MUST BEGIN ETERNAL LIFE HERE BELOW, NOT ONLY IN OUR CONSCIENCE, BUT ALSO WITH OUR PRAISE. OUR SOUL OUGHT TO BE LIKE A FLOWER, NOT MERELY RECEIVING THE GENTLE INFLUENCE OF HEAVEN, BUT, IN ITS TURN, AND AS IF IN GRATITUDE, EXHALING ALSO A SWEET AND PLEASANT PERFUME. IT SHOULD BE OUR DESIRE, AS IT ONCE WAS THAT OF A PIOUS MAN, THAT OUR HEARTS SHOULD MELT AND DISSOLVE LIKE INCENSE IN THE FIRE OF LOVE, AND YIELD THE SWEET FRAGRANCE OF PRAISE.

(CHRISTIAN SCRIVER GOTTHOLD)



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AKED CHICKEN. MASHED POTATOES. ROAST BEEF WITH CARROTS, POTATOES, AND ONIONS. BAKED HAM WITH RAISIN SAUCE.

Every Sunday when I was growing up, around 12:15 in the afternoon, after a full morning at church, I would step through the front door of our house to be greeted by the rich aromas emanating from the kitchen. Every Sunday morning, as the family dressed for Sunday School and worship, Mom would put the finishing touches on that day's dinner, placing it in the oven on a low heat so it would be ready after the final "Amen" of the eleven o'clock worship service. And every Sunday our growling stomachs would be met by a house exuding the savory aromas that would fill our nostrils. Made all the more hungry by the smells, we would have to suffer the wait while Mom fixed the accompanying vegetables and salad, and filled a towel-lined basket with her fresh, homemade crescent rolls.

To this day, the smell of chicken fixed the same way, or of pot roast, carrots and potatoes ready for the dinner table, will immediately transport me back to those more simple days. In those aromas I am reminded of our home on Church Street in Marshalltown. I can see the basic, unsophisticated furnishings of the living room where we would bide our time with the Sunday funnies while we waited to be called to the table. I can see the small dining room, and the table set with the best dishes we had. I can remember the taste of each dish, the scent of candles burning in the center of the table, the comfortable conversation of a family enjoying the homely custom of breaking bread together.

More than anything else, however, those smells remind me of the love Mom had for her family. Even though on Sunday morning she was already busier than the rest of us, it was important to her that she feed her family a hearty, wholesome meal—from her own kitchen. Every dish was prepared with care, with practiced skill, and with her devotion and love.

## A Soothing Aroma

But our God is in the heavens;  
He does whatever He pleases.  
Their idols are silver and gold,  
The work of man's hands.  
They have mouths, but they cannot speak;  
They have eyes, but they cannot see;  
They have ears, but they cannot hear;  
They have noses, but they cannot smell;  
They have hands, but they cannot feel;  
They have feet, but they cannot walk;  
They cannot make a sound with their throat.  
Those who make them will become like them,  
Everyone who trusts in them.

(Psalm 115:3-8)

From the very beginning God made it clear that He was singularly unlike any of the man-made deities that some favored—those that had been imagined and fabricated by their own worshippers. His role, indeed, was a reversal of the process: Instead of being a god fashioned by man, He was the God who had fashioned man. More than that, He was the God who fashioned man *in His own image*. Remarkable. And thus was established the pathway for authentic worship and communion.

He had a mouth, and *could* speak.  
He *could* see.

He *could* hear.  
He *could* smell.  
He *could* feel.  
He *could* walk.

Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, "I will never again curse the

ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done."

(Genesis 8:20-21)

From the outset, God demonstrated that He shared our senses. He showed that He would interact with us in much the same way we interact with each other. When we spoke, He would listen. When we were in need of it, He would touch. Our lives would be open to Him, because He could see. And our devotion and praise would not be for naught, because He could smell their aroma.

## The Fragrance of Our Lives

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

(Ephesians 5:1-2)

Like it or not, each of our lives has an aroma about it. We smell. Our actions, our thoughts, our words—all deliver upward a fragrance that is either pleasant or unpleasant to the Lord. It is easy to marvel at God's mental acuity, how He is able to sort out and respond to simultaneous entreaties from believers all over the world. But think, too, of His *olfactory* acuity—His ability to sort through the confusing mélange that drifts heavenward from more than six billion souls. Were we to sense the same, we would surely pass out from the stench! But God not only does not swoon, He is able to isolate, identify, and evaluate each individual aroma that wafts into His nostrils.

When we worship Him in Spirit and truth, our adoration rises in a cloud of offering, a fragrance that is sweet in the Lord's nostrils. Our songs rise in a vaporous ribbon, a sacrifice of praise that He inhales as a sustaining nectar. Indeed, our very lives—everything between our morning alarm and our evening slumber—can be a pleasing aroma to Him.

The fragrance of our lives tells God how much, how deeply, how *authentically* we love Him. Just as the hearty aromas that embraced my senses every Sunday noon bore witness to the love Mom had for her family, the aromas wafting heavenward from our lives bear witness to our level of devotion to an attentive, gracious God. ■

*Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love;  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee,  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice and let me sing  
Always, only, for my King;  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee,  
Filled with messages from Thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold—  
Not a mite would I withhold;  
Take my intellect and use  
Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose,  
Ev'ry pow'r as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will and make it Thine—  
It shall be no longer mine;  
Take my heart—it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love—my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store;  
Take myself—and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee,  
Ever, only, all for Thee.  
(Frances Ridley Havergal)*