

The Altar of Prayer and the Price of a Soul

Exodus Chapter 30

As we continue our journey through the Tabernacle, we see that God is a God of order, but more importantly, He is a God who desires intimacy with His people. Every piece of furniture we've looked at tells us something about how we approach a holy God. In Exodus chapter 30, we encounter the Altar of Incense, the Atonement Money, and the Laver.

The Sweet Fragrance of Prayer

In the first ten verses, we see the instruction for the Altar of Incense. It was a small altar, made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It stood in the Holy Place, right before the veil. Now, what was the purpose of this little golden altar? It wasn't for bloody animal sacrifices; it was for the burning of sweet incense.

The Bible tells us in the Psalms and in the book of Revelation that incense is a beautiful picture of the prayers of the saints. Just as Aaron was to burn incense every morning and evening, our lives are to be marked by a "perpetual incense"—a constant, prayerful communion with the Lord. It's a reminder that as we walk with Him, our fellowship should be a sweet-smelling aroma to His heart.

But notice the warning in verse nine: *"You shall not offer strange incense on it."* We don't come to God on our own terms or through "strange" worldly philosophies. We come through the way He has provided—Jesus Christ.

The Equal Value of a Soul

Moving into verses eleven through sixteen, we see the "Atonement Money." When a census was taken, every man twenty years old and above—regardless of his status—had to give a half-shekel.

I love the heart of God here. The Word says, *"The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less."* You see, when it comes to the soul, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. A wealthy man's soul is worth no more than a poor man's soul, and a poor man's soul is worth no less. We all have the same need for a covering, for a ransom. In those days, it was a silver coin; today, we know that we were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

The Necessity of Cleansing

Then we see the Laver of Bronze in verses seventeen through twenty-one. This was essentially a large basin for washing. Before the priests could enter the Tabernacle or minister at the altar, they had to wash their hands and their feet.

Why? Because even though they were God's servants, they lived in a dusty, dirty world. As we walk through this world, we pick up the "dust" of the earth—the little compromises, the worldly attitudes,

the sins that so easily beset us. This washing represents the "washing of water by the word." If we want to minister effectively, we must stay in the Word, letting it cleanse our walk and our work.

Practical Application: A Life of Fragrance and Purity

How does this apply to your Tuesday morning or your Thursday night?

1. **Keep the Incense Burning:** Don't let your prayer life become a "sometime" thing. Make it a "perpetual" thing. Talk to the Lord while you're driving, while you're working, and before you sleep.
2. **Watch Your Walk:** Are you stopping at the "Laver" of God's Word daily? We cannot serve a holy God with dirty hands. Let the Scriptures wash your mind and redirect your steps.

A Challenge for the Believer

Are you offering "strange incense" in your life? Sometimes we try to mix the things of the world with our worship. We try to find satisfaction in our careers, our hobbies, or our possessions and then offer God the "leftovers." I challenge you today to sanctify the altar of your heart. Let your devotion be pure, set apart entirely for Him, just as the holy anointing oil was never to be used for common purposes.

An Invitation to New Life

Perhaps you are reading this and you feel the weight of your own life. You realize that you have no "covering" for your soul. The Bible is clear that we have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But there is Good News.

Jesus Christ came to this earth, God in human flesh. He went to the cross and shed His precious blood to pay the ransom for your soul—a debt you could never pay yourself. When He rose from the dead three days later, He proved once and for all that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

He is not looking for your money or your "good works." He is looking for your heart. If you will turn from your sin and put your trust in Jesus today, He will wash you whiter than snow and give you a peace that passes all understanding.