

“Prayers like incense” (Psalm 141)

Verses to Remember: “May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering. Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:2-3).

Incense or insensitive? What comes out of our mouths?**1. May our prayers be as incense (v.2)**

- The imagery puts us in the Temple. Incense would be burned around the time of the morning and evening sacrifices (Ex 30:7-8).
- In Revelation, prayers are also linked with incense (Rev 5:8; 8:4).
- What is the picture of prayers like incense meant to communicate? They go up to God. They fill the air; there is a very real palpable presence; our prayers matter. They linger; burning incense in the morning and evening in the Temple meant that the scent was perpetually in the air. This is a good picture of praying without ceasing. They are sweet smelling. God loves for us to come to him. It is incense, it is sweet smelling when we run to him with our prayers and long to hear his voice. It is incense when we ask God to help us keep our lips from evil. It is incense when we ask God lead us in righteousness and help us refrain from wickedness. It is incense when we invite good reproof. It is incense when we put justice in God's hands and seek refuge in him.

2. Let us lift up our hands as an offering (v.2)

- In the Temple, incense in the morning and evening coincided with the morning and evening offerings (Ex 29:41-42). Prayer is connected with the time of offering (Ezra 9:5-6 cf. Ps 66:13-20; Dan 9:20-21). It was at the place of offering where God would meet with them. It is through the offering of Jesus that we are able to meet with God and speak to him in prayer.
- The lifting up of our hands pictures reaching out to him, and it shows our dependence on him, our need for him (cf. Ps 28:2; 63:1-4).

3. May God guard our mouths (v.3)

- If our hands are raised like an offering, we are not to then take those hands we raise to God and use them for wrath or dissension. If we pray sweet words of incense, we are not to then turn to our brother and speak words of insensitivity (1 Tim 2:8; James 3:8-10).
- This week, when we speak, ask ourselves, **“Was that incense or insensitive?”**
- Let us also pray words of incense to God in the morning and evening and let them linger throughout the day.