

Hebrews

True Christian Sacrifices

Hebrews 13:15-16

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Hebrews 13:15-16 (NASB95)

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INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Hebrews 13:15-16 (NASB95)

¹⁵ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. ¹⁶ And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Prayer

Throughout the history of man, people have asked the question...

"What is the purpose of Life?"

The scriptures consistently stress that we must live to glorify God. There is a fine line between glorifying God out of obligation to try to earn God's approval. But it must be noted that the most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—is that we must enjoy what we are praising. I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses our relationship with God, but completes the enjoyment.

All true enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise. The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their praising their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, and fans praising their favorite game.

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise does not merely express our joy but completes the enjoyment.

ILLUSTRATION:

We have all experienced this feeling at some point in our lives. Maybe we have just watched a movie or attended a ballgame that was very entertaining. Although we were surrounded by people we did not know, we wanted to share the joy of the experience with them by saying, **"That was very good!"** The praise completes the enjoyment.

So if we want to fulfill the chief purpose for which God created us, we must live to glorify God by enjoying Him forever, so that our joy in God spills over into continual praise of God. The Bible links the first great commandment, to love God with our total being, with the second great commandment, to love our neighbor as ourselves. God desires that we offer our lives as continual sacrifices of praise to Him as well as sharing our enjoyment with others by doing good.

The author may have been responding here as he seems to be doing back in verse 10 to an objection raised by the Jews towards these Jewish believers in Christ that **they** have an altar in Jerusalem, but you Christians have no altar.

The author counters by saying, “True, we no longer offer animal sacrifices, because Jesus is our complete and final sacrifice for our sins. Therefore we need no other sacrifice for atonement. But we **do** offer sacrifices to God, not to gain forgiveness of sins, but because we possess forgiveness in Christ. Our sacrifices are thankful offerings, and they are not just occasional, but continual. We offer the sacrifices of praise and of good deeds. These sacrifices please God.”

Our scripture passage this morning starts with the phrase “**Through Him then**”. It is emphasizing that everything we do in the Christian life must be through Christ.

BODY:

I. Everything We Do in the Christian Life is Through Christ.

The only way that we can approach our holy God is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. If we try to offer our good works to God apart from Christ, He will view them all as filthy rags. Our very best efforts to be righteous falls dreadfully short of God's glory because we live in a world of sin.

Isaiah 64:6 (NASB95)

⁶ For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Men have approached God through sacrifices since the beginning of human history. Cain brought a sacrifice from the fruit of the ground. His brother, Abel, brought of the firstlings of his flock. God did not reject Cain's sacrifice and accept Abel's sacrifice out of the blue. God had made it clear when He clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of an animal that the only sacrifice acceptable to approach Him was one that involved shedding the blood of an innocent substitute. The entire Old Testament sacrificial system that was later instituted under Moses pointed ahead to God's supreme and final sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died as the substitute for all that believe in Him.

The author of Hebrews has made it abundantly clear that Jesus **fulfilled**, in His death, what the Old Testament sacrificial system could only **point** to. As the author of Hebrews pointed out back in chapter 10...

Hebrews 10:9b-14 (NASB95)

...“Behold, I have come to do Your will.” He takes away the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ By this **will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**

¹¹ Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can **never take away sins; ¹² but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet. ¹⁴ For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.**

Christ fulfilled the law. Now, the only sacrifices we now can offer are spiritual sacrifices of praise and good deeds, and these may only be offered through Christ. If you have not come to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the substitute for your sins, you cannot not offer anything to God. You are still under His just condemnation for your sins. You must discard all of your good deeds and all sought after personal merit and flee to the cross.

Every sinner who comes to God in Christ, **with all his needs**, finds God coming to him in Christ, **with all his promises**. When a sinful person meets the holy God *in Christ* what he hears is "Yes". God, do you love me? **Yes**. Will you forgive me? **Yes**. Will you accept me? **Yes**. Will you help me change? **Yes**. Will you give me power to serve you? **Yes**. Will you keep me? **Yes**. Will you show me your glory? **Yes**.

All the promises and blessings of God are "Yes" in Christ Jesus. Jesus is God's decisive "Yes" to all who believe.

Everything in the Christian life comes through Christ. **Everything** we do in the Christian life must be done **through** Christ. It is an affront to Christ's sacrifice to think that we can come to God through any other mediator, whether the virgin Mary or the saints or some earthly priest or pope. Christ alone is our high priest. Everything is through Him!

Secondly, we see that we are to offer continual sacrifices of praise to God through Christ.

II. Offer Continual Sacrifices of Praise to God Through Christ.

Hebrews 13:15 (NASB95)

¹⁵ Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

Praise to God is not just a nice thing to do once in a while **when** you feel like it. The Psalms are filled with the command, "Praise the Lord!" It is not a suggestion for something you might try when you do not have anything better to do. It is a command that is to saturate everything you do. Praise to God should be the whole focus of our lives. We are to be so captivated and filled with the greatness and goodness and grace and majesty of God, that, like a cup full to the brim, we are always spilling over in praises to Him.

True praise must come from the heart, and so the command implies and demands that our hearts are right before Him. God is not swayed by our outward appearance. He sees our hearts. If we constantly grumble and complain about the way that God is treating us, and then we come to church, put on a happy face, and sing praises to God, we are being hypocrites. We must deal with our hearts before we can bring a true sacrifice of praise to God. Confess your sinful grumbling to God. Seek the satisfaction and joy that comes through faith in Christ alone. Otherwise, your praises will be hollow and not heartfelt. Your good deeds will not be acceptable to God. True praise and genuine good deeds flow from a heart that is satisfied in God and His abundant grace in Christ.

If your heart is not amazed by the grace of God, and your mind is not filled by the truth of God, and your faith is not resting in the power of God, and your imagination is not guided by the beauty of God, and your life is not steadied by the sovereignty of God, and your hope is not filled with the glory of God, then the service of God will be what Paul calls "**works of the law**", and not the **fruit of the Spirit**. Work for God that is not sustained by wonder at God is a weariness of the flesh. Our **Priority Number One** is the cultivation of hearts that stand in awe of God.

The author of Hebrews adds by way of clarification, “**that is, the fruit of lips that confess His name**”. To “**confess**” God’s name means to openly proclaim and submit to God’s attributes and gracious actions towards us in Christ.

Paul alludes to Isaiah 45:23 in Romans 14:11.

Romans 14:11 (NASB95)

¹¹ For it is written, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.”

At the judgment, every tongue will openly proclaim God’s holy justice and bow before His rightful sovereignty. At that point, they will have no choice. But **now**, by God’s grace, we can willingly offer a sacrifice of praise to God by yielding our hearts to Him and revel in **who He is**, as revealed in His Word. We must be very careful that our conception of Who God is grounded by the scriptures!

Praise flows from a heart that has been brought into submission to God and His Word. When we see and understand that His justice and holiness, along with His mercy and love, are upheld at the cross, where the Son of God bore the wrath that was due for our sins, we will continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to Him!

2 Timothy 1:8-10 (NASB95)

⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, ¹⁰ but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

We must all work at casting off every thought of grumbling or discontent and becoming a people who continuously praises of the glory of God's grace.

1 Peter 2:5 (NASB95)

⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Our text reminds us not only of the first great commandment, to express our love for God through genuine praises, but also of the second commandment, to love our neighbor as ourselves:

III. Offer Continual Sacrifices of Good Deeds to God Through Christ.

Hebrews 13:16a (NASB95)

¹⁶ And do not neglect doing good and sharing,...

“**Doing good**” is a general term for all kinds of practical ministry to others. Whereas “**sharing**” means sharing the essentials of life with those who lack them and are unable to work to obtain them.

James 2:15-16 (NASB95)

¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that?

The apostle John echoes this.

1 John 3:16-18 (NASB95)

¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Jesus taught the same thing.

Matthew 25:35-40 (NASB95)

³⁵ For I was hungry, and you gave Me *something* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *something* to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; ³⁶ naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You *something* to drink? ³⁸ And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? ³⁹ When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ ⁴⁰ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even the least of them*, you did it to Me.’

Our responsibility is primarily to fellow believers, but it does not stop there.

In our modern world, where we have the ability to know instantly about needs around the globe. It is not easy to know how much to give and to whom to give it to. But we should not let that stop us from "**doing good and sharing with others**".

Our text makes one last point:

IV. God is Pleased with Our Sacrifices of Praise and Good Deeds.

Hebrews 13:16b (NASB95)

¹⁶ And do not neglect doing good and sharing, **for with such sacrifices God is pleased.**

“**Such sacrifices**” refers both to our sacrifices of praise and of good deeds. If we have offered them apart from Christ, they will be a vain and offensive attempt to commend ourselves to God. But when we offer them through Christ, God is pleased with them. The aim of our lives should be to please God out of love for Him.

Paul prayed for the Colossians...

Colossians 1:10 (NASB95)

¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

He also explained...

2 Corinthians 5:9 (NASB95)

⁹Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

CONCLUSION:

We should live every day with the realization that one day we will stand before Him. We should live so that we will hear Him say...

Matthew 25:23b (NASB95)

‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’

If through Christ, we continually offer to God sacrifices of praise and good deeds, we will rejoice someday to hear those words from His lips.

God created you for the purpose that you would live to glorify Him **by** enjoying Him forever. How do you do that? By living in a manner pleasing to Him. How do you do that? By coming to faith in Jesus Christ and His shed blood as the only way to be reconciled to our holy God. Having trusted in Christ, you please God by daily offering your life to Him as a sacrifice of praise and good deeds.

So if we want to fulfill the chief purpose for which God created us, we must live to glorify God by enjoying Him forever, so that our joy in God spills over into continual praise of God that can follow us into eternity with God.

What a Day That Will Be.