

A Sacrifice of Praise

Hebrews 13:15

Halifax: 28 July 2024

Introduction:

Today we come to a section in Hebrews that tells us how we are to approach God in worship now that Jesus has come to be the Saviour of the world.

- There was a major change in the way we are to approach God in worship.
- Before He came, there was the great altar in Jerusalem where you brought sacrifices for you sin and priests offered them up to God for you there.

We have seen already that Jesus took the place of all those sacrifices and rituals.

- We don't need them anymore.
 - And it's a good thing. When Jesus came, God spread His salvation all over the world. It would be most inconvenient if we all had to go up to Jerusalem three times a year to worship.
- But the question is, what are we to do now?
 - Are there no sacrifices whatsoever?
 - Is there no place we are to go to worship?
- Those are questions that Hebrews 13:15-17 answer for us.
 - Keep in mind that this is God's holy word—a very precious gift to us as His people—that we might know His will.
 - I will begin in Hebrews 13:10 to give you a bit of context.

Hebrews 13:10-17: We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. ¹³ Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. ¹⁴ For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one

to come. ¹⁵ Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. ¹⁶ But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. ¹⁷ Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

Thanks be to God for His holy word.

You see that even though there is no need of any sacrifice for sin at Jerusalem (because Jesus is the sacrifice for sin), there are still a certain kind of sacrifices we are to offer.

Verses 15-17 shows us what they are and tells us where they are to be offered.

- Verse 15 tells us that we are to offer praise and thanksgiving as sacrifices to God.
- Verse 16 tells us that we are to offer the sacrifice of care and service to each other.
- Verse 17 tells us we are to offer these sacrifices as faithful members of a local church.

Today, we will concentrate the sacrifice of praise—verse 15.

- **Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name.**

I. Let's begin by looking at the basic sacrifice—offering praise to God.

- A. This brings us to the very root of a right relationship with God!
1. Praising Him is to see His glory and perfection as the supreme one, the most beautiful, glorious, wise, holy, true, faithful, kind, pure, excellent being of all.
 - It is to see Him in truth and to declare His praise to Him and to others.
 - It is to adore Him, to exalt Him, to magnify Him.
 - It is to thank Him for all that He has done for us.
 2. The praise here in our text is explained as **“the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”**
 - a. This is a bit of an unusual expression which is taken from the Old Testament—from the passage we read earlier in Hosea 14 where those who were coming to God for forgiveness were instructed as follows:
 - Hosea 14:2: **Take words with you, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity; receive us graciously, for we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.**
 - b. The sacrifice of the lips here is literally “the bullocks of our lips” (a bullock—an animal sacrifice).
 - The point is that the sacrifice that God wants from us is not animal offerings, but our praise. Praise takes the place of the animal.
 - The Greek version translated it “the fruit of our lips.”
 - It is the fruit of praise that grows up in us when God has restored us to Himself—
 - c. The word “thanks” here is properly the word confess—to confess His name.
 - The Greek word is *homologio* which is used for confessing our sins—speaking the truth about them—and it is used for praising God—speaking the truth about Him.
 - The Hebrew word *yadow* is like this. It is frequently used in the Psalms for our worship of God, sometimes translated confess, sometimes thank, and sometimes praise.
- B. If our praise and thanksgiving to God is right, everything else is right!
1. Think about that. Jesus said that our duty to God is to love with Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - If we see His surpassing beauty, glory, excellence, wisdom, power, love, and goodness and delight in Him as creator, ruler, and gracious Saviour,
 - Then we love Him.
 - Our whole life becomes an expression of devotion to Him, not as those who are bound and constrained to do so, but as those whose eyes have finally been opened and whose hearts have been restored to both see the truth and delight in the truth!
 2. When our praise is right, the first four commandments that speak of our duty to God are all obeyed.
 - a. We have no other gods before Him because we adore Him as God—we love Him and we don’t want another god—we can’t imagine another god who would even come close to Him.

- b. We do not make up our own idols of Him—that’s the second commandment—because we love Him as He has been revealed.
 - Idols are either substitutes or modifications of Him—but we love Him just the way He is—it is Him that we praise.
- c. We do not take His name in vain (the third commandment).
 - No, no! He is the most important one of all in our eyes. We see Him in His place of supremacy and majesty, and we want Him there—nothing is so important to us as all the things that pertain to Him and His worship—His names, attributes, ordinances, word, and works are all held in the highest esteem.
- d. And of course, we remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
 - If He has appointed a day for us to focus on worshipping Him, we are delighted and there is nothing else that we want.
 - We will gather in the assembly that He has appointed and we will lift up our voices of praise in the assembly.

TRANS> Surely you can see that if our praise is right, everything else is right!

- Surely, it is a wonderful and proper thing! It is how we ought to be.

II. Our text tells us how often we are to do it: “Let us *continually* offer the sacrifice of praise.”

- A. It only makes sense that this praise of God, this supreme duty, is not something that we should do for a while and then drop. It ought to be kept up.
 - 1. In fact, love and adoration of God should always be growing and increasing because for all eternity we will be finding out more and more of His greatness.
 - He is infinite, and He is our inexhaustible treasure.
 - 2. Not only that, but our thanksgiving will ever be growing—in two ways.
 - a. First, in that we will forever have a fuller and deeper understanding and appreciation of what He has done for us—
 - Of His work of creation and all the wonderful and beautiful things that He has made—including each other—especially when we are fully restored from our sin...
 - And even more, we will ever be growing in our appreciation of His work of salvation—and what it means that He gave His Son.
 - Can you imagine when we see the glory of Jesus on the day He returns and realise that it was *this one* who became sin for us—when we were so unworthy and hateful?
 - So the first way our thanksgiving will grow is that we will have a deeper appreciation of what He has done for us.
 - b. But the second way that our thanksgiving will always grow is because He will always be doing more new things for us.
 - Already it is so—every day He provides for us.
 - Every day He keeps us.
 - Every day He reveals more of Himself to us.

- B. The idea of *continually* offering the sacrifice of praise is not saying that we would always be speaking His praise and engaged in concentrated acts of worship.
1. There is a sense in which our devotion to Him should always be present.
 - But too often when people emphasise that they worship God all the time, what they mean is they never have times of focused worship—times that are set apart to give thanks to His name.
 - It's like a wife that says she always loves her husband, but never spends any concentrated time with him. Not much of a marriage.
 - This is talking about gathering up our praises and thanksgivings and offering them to God in a focused way. Thinking on Him and praising Him.
 2. The idea is that we are to keep our appointments with Him.
 - a. He has commanded us in the NT to gather on the Lord's Day for public praise and adoration.
 - The focus of our New Testament worship is on having His word preached where He and His beautiful ways for us are proclaimed...
 - And in which we lift up songs of praise and adoration and where we remember His saving work and give thanks for it at the Lord's table, and where we lift up our prayers as an assembly in Christ.
 - b. We should also meet with Him each day—preferably in the morning and evening.
 - Like Daniel, we should have a set time to read His word and pray to Him.
 - Fathers should gather their families—their wives and their children—to offer up praise to God.
- C. If you do not keep up such times, your relationship with God will dry up.
- Your lips will not be fruitful with the sacrifice of praise. They will be like a barren desert.
 - Your life will be filled with vain things—idols and empty things that cannot satisfy.
 - Sin will grow up and consume you.

TRANS> Surely, we ought to keep up our praise of God! To maintain this growing adoration and expression of praise to Him for all His excellence and perfection!

- But how can we do it?

III. Our text tells us how: “*By Him.*”

- “*By Him let us bring the sacrifice of praise...*”

A. It is only through Jesus Christ that we can praise God and give thanks to His name with the fruit of our lips.

1. Jesus Himself said that without Him, we can do nothing.
 - When He said that, He was talking about bearing fruit.
 - He said we were like branches growing out of Him. If we are cut off, we wither and die.
 - As we have seen, the fruit that God wants most of all is the fruit of our lips confessing (praising and giving thanks) to His name!

- When that is right, our relationship with God is right.
2. At the end of the day, this is what His salvation restores—a right relationship to Him.
 - We are not perfected yet, but have come to Jesus in faith to be reconciled to God—and that means to be able to see Him and love Him because we finally realise how excellent and delightful He is.
 - That is what our salvation is all about—restoring us to that relationship with God.
 3. When that is restored, everything else will be right.
- B. How does Jesus restore us?
1. First of all, He provides us with forgiveness.
 - We cannot come to God when we are defiled by sin.
 - Jesus is the sacrifice that God accepts for our sins.
 - We don't have the sacrifices of the Old Testament because Jesus shed His blood for us and we trust in that.
 - God assures us that His offering was sufficient for the remission of our sins. He seals it with baptism.
 2. Second, it is by Jesus that we come because He is the one who gives us the Holy Spirit to regenerate us.
 - a. Because of our sin, we are rebels who do not adore God or praise Him. We are all twisted and can't appreciate His excellence and glory. We do not see His supreme goodness and the work that He has done.
 - We actually think that we are in the right and He is in the wrong!
 - Such arrogance is inexcusable and malicious.
 - b. But God's Spirit opens our eyes to the truth—about our sin and about God.
 - We who were dead to God, who hated Him, who could not see His beauty are transformed.
 - Our heart is circumcised to love Him.
 - We are given a new heart and a new spirit that delights in Him and His ways.
 - c. It is such a radical change that is it called a new birth—birth by the Spirit—a spiritual resurrection—new life—washing of regeneration.
 3. Third, Jesus keeps on working in us by His Holy Spirit to sanctify us.
 - We grow in our adoration of God. We grow in our love and our praise of Him.
 - In this life, we are not yet perfected, but Jesus does not stop working in us once we have come to Him for salvation.
 - He uses His word, His sacraments, our fellowship, our prayers, our singing.
 - He even uses trials and sorrows and setbacks in a marvellous way to make us delight more and more in God!
 - What can beat this?
 - Just think of—to have the Lord showing us more and more of His glory and enabling us to adore Him and praise Him more and more.

- Before I came to faith, I had always gotten into things with great enthusiasm—then I would get tired of them and move to something else.
- My friends thought I would do that with the Lord, but it has been 43 years and it keeps getting better because I can praise God better.

IV. We are told what God thinks of our sacrifices of praise and service at the end of verse 16: “With such sacrifices, God is well pleased.”

- A. It is a very sweet and wonderful thing to be told that we can please God—and that we can please Him a lot (He is well pleased)!
- More than anything else, He delights in our affection and praise, in our service to Him and to others.
 - We are taught that He sings over us with joy.
 - We are taught that He takes great pleasure in our progress.
 - We are taught that one loving look of our eyes ravishes the heart of Christ and makes us irresistible to Him!
 - We don’t have a drop of such love apart from the work of His grace.
 - But once that grace has begun, it is there, and it delights Him.
- B. I have complained that this element is missing in our reformed theology today.
1. We emphasise sin because it is not taught.
 - Most preaching today leaves out the doctrine of sin and divine wrath against it.
 - This makes the love they speak about so much an empty idol.
 - We ought to preach about sin and God’s anger against it as much as the Bible emphasises it—and it is emphasised a lot.
 2. But our reformed forefathers equally taught about how deeply our Lord loves us.
 - They often referred to the Song of Solomon to describe Christ’s love for us.
 - When we began to de-emphasise this, the Pentecostal church came along in reaction to us—but they often err in the opposite direction.
 - When we have both God’s wrath against our sin and His delight in our love, we not only teach what is right, but what is delightful.
- C. It is so motivating and pleasing to know that He loves for us to love Him.
1. As we are who are the bride of Christ are described in the Song of Solomon, we see the one that our soul loves and we want our affection to fill the room with the aroma of our love!
 - We yearn for it to flow out from us to Him!
 - The sweet sacrifice of praise and adoration! Let it fill the church!
 2. He says, “I am well pleased with such sacrifices!”
 - And we are thrilled to have it so.
 - All that we have, we have by His grace that enables us to see His glory and respond to it with true love and praise.

Conclusion: Oh Lord, show us your glory!

- Open our eyes to behold your beauty and perfections.
- Fill us with delight in your ways, your guidance, your instruction, your care, your calling, your voice, your full and free salvation.

- Let the sacrifice of praise flow freely as a lovely sacrifice to you, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to your name!