

The Sacrifice of Doing Good

Hebrews 13:16

Halifax: 4 August 2024

Introduction:

Today we will continue our sermon series in Hebrews.

- We are in the last chapter of the epistle—chapter 13.
 - Hebrews 12 & 13 give us practical instructions about how we are to live as those who have Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.
- Essentially, He is bringing us to His Father’s house in glory.
 - As we go on in this fallen world with all its challenges, we are instructed to look to Him.
 - In chapter 13, we are given a lot of practical instruction about how to go forward in Christ with His people—living in the fellowship of His church.

Right now, we are in the part of chapter 13 that focuses on our lives as a worshipping community now that Jesus has come.

- With vv 9-10, we were told that we no longer have an altar made with human hands in our worship—now we partake of the benefits that Christ brings us by His sacrifice!
 - We should not be occupied with carnal altars. We have something much better.
- With vv 11-14, we were told that Christ becoming our sin bearer was and still is rejected by the establishment church.
 - They will have what they call Christ as a guide, a model, a helper, and a friend, but they reject the true Christ who is the bearer of His peoples’ sins.
 - That means that we must bear His reproach and be rejected by the mainstream.
 - This should not disturb us so much because we have no continuing city that is of this present world, but we seek the one that is to come.
- Last week, we began looking at verses 15-17 where we are taught that even though we don’t have an altar made with man’s hands where we offer sacrifices—
 - We still have sacrifices to offer that please God.
 - I will say much more about that after we have our scripture reading.
- This week, I am going to read from verse 8 to verse 17. Our text is verse 16.

Hebrews 13:8-17: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ⁹ Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. ¹⁰ 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.

May the Lord add His blessing.

I want to begin with a question this morning—a question that will help us pick up where we left off last week.

I. Would you like to do what you know would please God?

- A. Let me say first of all, that I very much hope you would.
- There is nothing more important than that.
 - We read about Enoch in chapter 11 where we were told that he had this testimony, that he pleased God.
 - If you haven't though much about pleasing Him, I certainly encourage you to do so.
- B. There are two great errors that people have when they think about pleasing God. This is going to sound contradictory, but it's not.
- The first great error is to think that they can please God.
 - The second great error is to think that they cannot please God.
1. The Bible is super clear about the fact that we cannot please God because we have all sinned and come short of His glory.
 - Addressing his fellow Jews in Romans 3:9-10, Paul says: **What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one."**
 - To say that there is none righteous is to say that nobody pleases God.
 - He goes on to explain that even though the Jews had God's law, all it did was expose their sin all the more—which makes it clear that the whole world is guilty before God.
 - In Hebrews 11:6, it actually says "it is impossible to please God!"
 2. But the Bible is also clear that people can please God.
 - Right here in our text—in Hebrews 13:16, it says plainly that God is pleased with our sacrifices of praise to Him and kindness to others.
 - He calls them sacrifices because they are done as an offering to Him.
 - Listen again to verses 15-16: **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. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**
 3. So can we or can we not please Him?
 - The key is in those two words, "by Him."
 - *By Him* let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise... and doing good to each other.
 - The context is clear. It is talking about offering these sacrifices by Jesus Christ.
 - He is our great High priest who offered the one and only sacrifice that can take away our sin.

- That is, in fact the focus of the whole book of Hebrews.
 - That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was made a priest and who offered Himself as a sacrifice that atoned for His peoples' sins, is the only one who can make us and our service acceptable to God.
 - I quoted Hebrews 11:6 which says that it is impossible to please God, but I left out two words that precede those words.
 - It actually says that "*without faith* it is impossible to please Him."
 - We must trust in the One that God gave us to be our priest.
 - He is the lamb of God who takes away our sins. As Jesus Himself told us in John 14:6: "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**"
 - It is only "by Him" that we can offer sacrifices that please God.
 - And make no mistake. Hebrews 13:16 not only says He is pleased with our sacrifices that are offered by those who are relying on Christ to take away our sin—it says He is well pleased with them!
 - That is a super great encouragement.
- C. Last week, we looked in detail at the sacrifice that is described in verse 15, "the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name."
1. I explained to you that the words "giving thanks" translate the word that literally means "to confess," which is to say the truth about God, about His works, and about ourselves.
 - So this is telling us that we are to keep up praise to God—expressing our adoration of Him in all His divine perfections and thanking Him for His wonderful works of creation and redemption.
 - We are to delight in Him and be grateful to Him, and we to express that adoration and gratitude with our lips! We are to do that at church and we are to do that in family and private worship.
 2. I told you that if by Christ we really do praise Him from the heart like this, everything else will be right.
 - The first four of the ten commandments tell us of our duty to God, and if we are truly adoring Him and thanking Him, we will have no other gods, we will not worship Him by idols, we will not take His name in vain or treat all that concerns Him as unimportant, and we will keep our appointments with Him, remembering the Sabbath day and not neglect daily worship in private.
 - Here in Hebrews, we have the positive practical direction of what it means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
 - It is offering praise to Him. The fruit our lips giving thanks to His name.
 3. But today, with verse 16, we see the second sacrifice that pleases Him when it is offered as those who have Christ as our high priest.
 - Doing good and sharing.

II. Doing good and sharing—what does that involve?

A. First let's look at the words.

1. Doing good is simply doing good to other people—it is well-doing.
 - The very design of our lives should be to do good to others...to do what will truly bless them and help them...to benefit them in ways that we are able.
 - It includes seeking to help them in temporal and (even more) in eternal ways.
 - We think of Jesus who went about “doing good.” That is what we are to do.
 - Surely it is obvious that this ought to be the way we live!
 - As those in Christ, we also know what is good. It is not always what people want us to do, but neither is it indifferent to what they want—if I am giving them food, I find out what they like, but if they want me to help them rob a bank, I will rebuke them instead of doing what they want.
 - And though they may not want me to push them to trust in Jesus, I will not cease to pray for them and seek to influence them.
2. Joined with doing good is *sharing*.
 - This is a Greek word you may know—*koinonia*.
 - It is often translated by the word *fellowship*. It speaks of sharing what you have with others—in every way.
 - God did not make us all the same. We have different gifts and abilities.
 - Nor does He give us the same opportunities and circumstances in His providence.
 - This affords us the tremendous opportunity to have true fellowship where those who excel in one area labour to benefit others.
 - For example, if you have more wealth, you share with those who are needy. If you are skilled at encouragement, you encourage others. If you have strong faith, you help to strengthen those who doubt. If you are gifted at teaching, you teach.

B. God made us social—like Him.

1. He is love because He is a triune God. He is not a lonely monad.
 - The Father has loved the Son from all eternity, and the Son has loved the Father and the Spirit.
 - Divine fellowship is unfathomable to us in how God who is one essence and unchanging is yet three loving persons who are in eternal loving fellowship,
 - But as those made in the image of God, it is quite easy to understand in the way it is expressed at our level as His image bearers.
 - As God, He is good and does good.
2. It is a tremendous blessing to be able to do things that bless and benefit others. It is a God-like thing that we can do.
 - You can give people food that they enjoy and need, you can warn them to keep them out of danger.

- Think of family worship—you can lead your family to confess the name of the Lord—to praise Him and thank Him; and you can instruct them out His word to impart truth to them that will bless them forever.
 - How terrible it would be if you could not do anything for others.
 - Selfish people are miserable because they do not experience the great blessing of blessing others.
 - Even when you are on your death bed and unable to speak, you can still pray for your neighbour and find ways to express gratitude to them.
3. Doing good and sharing is the divine design for society at every level!
- It is what holds any society together in beautiful harmony instead of strife and discord. It is what makes life in community taste good and what makes it satisfying.
 - Owen says, “This beneficence, in the acting of it, is the life, salt, and ligament of human conversation (sharing of benefits); without which the society of mankind is like that of beasts, yea, devils. The glory of real religion is that it makes men good and useful.”
 - He also explains that: God distributes unevenly for a reason—“for the exercise of those graces in them which their varied conditions call for: such are patience, submission and trust, in the poor; thankfulness, bounty, and charity, in the rich. Where these are mutually exercised, there are beauty, order, and harmony, in this effect of divine wisdom with a revenue of glory and praise to Himself...No man is rich or poor merely for himself, but to fill up the public order of things which God has designed unto His own glory.”
- C. When by Christ, we offer the sacrifice of doing good and sharing, we fulfil our whole duty to our neighbour.
1. We saw with the sacrifice of praise that when it is right, everything pertaining to our duty to God is right.
 - If we are truly filled with adoration and thanksgiving and are expressing it to Him, we are keeping the first four of the ten commandments that speak of our relationship with Him.
 2. So, also, if you are living by Christ to do good and share with your neighbour, you are keeping all six of the commandments that speak of your duty to your neighbour.
 - How will you not honour your father and mother if you are living to do good to them and share with them, and so parents who live to do good and share with their children will do their part? So in all your relationships with authority.
 - If you are looking to do good to your neighbour, you will not hate him or be angry at him without a cause...
 - Nor will you commit adultery or destroy your marriage...
 - Nor will you take what is rightfully his or cheat him in business. If you are seeking to bless him with good and share with him, you won't cut corners in your service and work for him.

- You will not try to deceive your neighbour or gossip about him if you are looking to do good to him.
 - And if you are eager to do good and share, you will not be envious or covetous. Your goal is to see him prosper and flourish.
3. So you see that when these two sacrifices are right, everything is right.
- Don't forget that they must be by Christ.
 - Otherwise, neither our persons nor our deeds are acceptable before God, but by Him, these sacrifices are well pleasing to Him.
 - Think of it. You are able to please God! He is well pleased with such sacrifices.

TRANS> There is another matter that we need to consider here.

III. Notice that it says *forget not—forget not to do good and to share.*

A. It says this because this is something we do forget.

1. Very often, we do not consider others and how we might bless them and do good to them.
 - We are at work and our thought is not, “how can I be a blessing to the people I am serving,” but rather, “how can I make it easier for myself.”
 - Or perhaps you are correcting your children and you thought is, “This kid is so irritating,” instead of “How can I do good to my child and share wisdom with him right now?” Perhaps you are cold, perhaps you ignore what they did that needs to be corrected, or perhaps you blow up at them.
 - Maybe you are a teacher, and instead of thinking, “How can I impart this information to my students in a way that will help them most,” you are thinking “How can I impress these students with my wisdom?”
 - You are at home and you know that your spouse wants to talk to you, but your thought is, “I have had a hard day and I am going to avoid them.”
 - You see someone who just made the team that you wish you could play on, but instead of encouraging them and speaking well of them to others, you criticise and find fault with the system or with this person who made the team.
2. You know that doing good and sharing is the right thing to do.
 - You know that it pleases God and glorifies Him.
 - You know that it contributes to the good of your family, your church, your place of work...
 - You even know that it will make you happier to do good and share, but still you don't do it.

B. We struggle because of the challenges of living in the fallen world.

1. You have your own sin nature to deal with.
 - We have remaining corruption as long as we live in the world.
 - Sinful selfishness causes us to indulge ourselves, to give way to our fears and our laziness—you know that battle.
2. You also have a busy devil with a host of minions.
 - He knows your weaknesses.

- He knows just how to play you with his temptations to sin against instead doing good to your neighbour.
3. You have few good examples to follow.
 - It helps tremendously when there are lots of people around you who make it their business to do good and share with others. They stimulate you by their example and by calling you to join them in ministry, or pointing out what you can do.
 - But sadly, even in the church, there are not many good examples.
 - As Paul said in Philippians 2:21: **For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.**
 4. Another challenge is that you don't have reciprocation.
 - The way it is supposed to work is that you pour your self into others and they pour themselves into you—maybe its as simple as saying thank you.
 - Or maybe it is paying you for your work.
 - But it certainly makes it more difficult to keep on seeking the good of others when they don't even appreciate it... which is often the case.
 5. Related to this, in this fallen world you don't have the harmony of a beautifully oiled society where everyone is looking out for of the good of the others.
 6. And even more difficult, in this fallen world you have people who attack you for doing good.
 - They oppose you for sharing the gospel—they are offended by it. That can stifle you.
 - Or maybe they are compromised Christians who accuse you of being too extreme or who call you unloving for admonishing others.
 7. And thinking of being unloving, you have people you ought to be serving who are harsh and demanding and it makes you want to pull away from serving them.
 - It is true, of course, that you don't give way to unjust demands of harsh and unreasonable people, but it is also true that because they are harsh and demanding, it can be easy to not keep on seeking their good in the ways that you ought.
- C. What can you do about these challenges of living in a fallen world?
- ANS> You must keep your eyes on Jesus Christ, your faithful Lord and Saviour. "Looking unto Jesus."
1. Yes, you have a sinful nature, but you also have a priest who not only atoned for your sin, but who also gives you life in Him, who writes His law in your heart so you can obey, and who gives you the Holy Spirit to transform you.
 2. Yes, you have a busy devil, but Jesus your Saviour has overcome him and now you can overcome by His blood and by the word of His testimony.
 3. Yes, you have few good examples, but you have the example of Christ who went about doing good and then humbled Himself and became obedient to the death of the cross for our sake. Besides that, there are those that He has worked in who are

good examples—people like David or Paul—or living people like a godly mother or friend.

4. Yes, you don't have reciprocation, but consider what little thanks and encouragement your Saviour had when He was here, yet He served, and He will give you grace to do the same.
5. Yes, you don't have the harmony of a beautifully oiled society that is serving one another, but you a Saviour who can more than sympathize with you because in His eyes this world is much worse than it is in yours.
6. Yes, you have people oppose you for doing good, but our Lord had even His closest friends opposing Him in going to the cross. And He had the leaders of His community standing in constant opposition. He is your priest and He understands, not in such a way that He gives you permission to give in, but in such a way that if you will look to Him, He will help you to stand—to love and do good to your enemies.
7. Yes, you have harsh and unreasonable people to deal with, but again, Christ knows all about that and He promises that He will judge them in time. Until He does, He calls you and will strengthen you to not give in to your selfishness.
 - Peter speaks of how He helps us to rise up in strength to serve harsh masters, harsh governors, and harsh husbands.
- The key is this: Keep up the first sacrifice—the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name—and it will help you remember the second—to do good and to share!
 - When you consider that He is good and does good:
 - It will make you want to be good like Him.
 - It will make you ready to endure hard things for His sake.
 - It will make you confident that He will help you, that His grace is sufficient to sustain you.
 - It will remind you to call on Him which will cause Him to act for you.
 - And the outcome of all?
 - God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit will be very pleased with you, and you will have the pleasure of glorifying Him.