

THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE
Hebrews 13:15

Intro: Our text tonight speaks of offering a sacrifice. We have "the sacrifice of praise" mentioned here, but the Apostle went on in the next verse to speak of other sacrifices -- the sacrifices of good works and of giving. Giving is what is meant by the verb, "to communicate."

It doesn't take a lot of thought to realize that the Apostle was writing to the people of God, indicating by this exhortation, that they were priests. Priests offer sacrifices.

Most of us have not had any contact with the kind of priests the Apostle had in mind. There are true priests, and there are false priests. The only true priests there have ever been as those priests which are spoken of in Scripture, specifically, the priests of God under the Law in OT times. We know that before the Law was given, the fathers in the families of God's people acted as priests. Abraham was a priest. Job was a priest. And so on. But when the Law was given, Aaron was anointed as the first high priest, and the men in his family were also priests, but not with the same authority and responsibility that Aaron had.

The OT priests ministered for the people to God. The people brought their sacrifices, prescribed by the Law, to the priests, and they presented their offerings to the Lord. The Lord carefully revealed to Moses in the book of Leviticus what those offerings were, and the priests were responsible to God to make sure that the right offerings were offered for the right purposes and at the right times.

Anyone who reads the book of Hebrews knows that our Lord Jesus Christ was "an high priest after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:20). His priesthood replaced that of Aaron and the priests from the tribe of Levi (which was Aaron's tribe). When the Lord died on the Cross He died as our great High Priest. He was both the Priest and the Sacrifice because He presented His own blood for the sins of His people. Tonight our Lord continues to act as our great High Priest at the right hand of the Father where "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

The Lord accomplished many things for us when He took our sins upon Himself at Calvary, and it is hard to say that one thing that He did was greater, or more important, than another. But surely among the most amazing things that He did was to offer of work so completely satisfying to God that the veil in the Temple was torn from top to bottom, indicating that the way into His presence was now open to all believers.

And by this our Lord by His death has made us priests.

The Apostle Peter made this clear when he wrote the words we find in 1 Pet. 2:5:

Ye also, as lively stones,
are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood,**
to offer up spiritual sacrifices,
acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The Apostle John has confirmed this when, in his introduction to the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, he wrote out this doxology to our Lord in Rev. 1:5b, 6:

Unto him that loved us,
and washed us from our sins in his own blood,
And hath made us kings **and priests** unto God
and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion
for ever and ever. Amen.

I think that you will find that there is general agreement among most grammarians that "kings and priests" could and should be translated, a kingdom of priests.

However, that may be, we are all priests -- from the youngest believer to the oldest. We all have access to the very presence of God, "the throne of grace," and we are responsible to offer sacrifices to God -- not the sacrifices that we may choose to offer, but those spoken of in Scripture as the divinely appointed offerings. These great truths are behind the exhortation that we have in our verse tonight. Other passages speak of other offerings, but I am going to let you search your NT to find out what they are. Tonight we are thinking about "the sacrifice of praise." And I want to examine Heb. 13:15 very carefully so that we can all be sure that we know what we are to do.

First notice what the offering is called:

I. THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE.

We don't offer animal sacrifices like the people of God in the OT offered; our Lord's sacrifice put an end to all animal sacrifices. We offer a sacrifice of praise. They offered sacrifices of praise in the OT but usually this was accompanied by an animal sacrifice, but no more. I have mentioned why that was the case, but we will see it more clearly in this verse before we are through.

As a sacrifice it is to be presented to God, but it is not something tangible that we bring, but it is "the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name."

So to praise means to give thanks. Our thanks are not to be

just a thankful attitude like so many people express that they are thankful that they were spared from this or that, or that they received something good they were not expecting to receive, but they say nothing about God. This is thanks rendered to God. It is an offering that we present to Him. It is expressed in words, "the fruit of our lips."

You know from experience, and it is clear from Scripture, that there are other ways that we can use our lips. Usually when a person is first saved, salvation becomes apparent in the way that person talks. People today especially have dirty mouths. They will also take the Lord's Name without even thinking about it. Or people may have very refined speech, but they never acknowledge the blessings of the Lord in the lives. Believers, on the other hand, are under a divine obligation to "offer the sacrifice of praise to God."

Now notice a second thing about this sacrifice:

II. WHEN THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE IS TO BE OFFERED.

The time of this offering is indicated in two ways:

- 1) By the tense of the verb, "let us offer."
- 2) By the word "continually."

If we didn't know the tense of the verb we would still be able to see that there is no time during the day or night that "the sacrifice of praise" is not acceptable. In fact, it is required "continually." We are to live with thankful, grateful, hearts -- hearts overflowing with thanksgiving to God. Our days should begin and end with praise. Paul told the Ephesian church that we are to be "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20).

However, the tense of the verb, "let us offer," is in the present. This means that we are never to stop praising the Lord. We are to be mindful of His blessings, that they all come from the Lord, and we are to render due praise to Him. In Psalm 50 Asaph taught us that:

Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God:
and to him that ordereth his conversation aright
will I shew the salvation of God (v. 23).

This means that thanksgiving to God leads to even greater blessings.

We worship God as a Person; we thank and praise Him for His many blessings.

But let me point out a third very important thing about our praise to God. Let me call it:

III. THE ONE BY WHOM WE APPROACH GOD EVEN WITH OUR PRAISES.

Don't overlook how this verse begins. The first two words are, "By him." Who was the Apostle talking about? We might respond by saying that as priests we have direct, personal contact with God. And that is right. But we must remember that we do not approach God in our own merit because we have none except what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Apostle was speaking about our Lord when he wrote this verse. So the words, "by him," refer to our Lord Jesus Christ.

We always need to remember, even when we are bringing our sacrifices of praise which delight the heart of God so much, that for such sacrifices our right to approach God is always and only through our Lord Jesus Christ. We could only be saved by coming to the God through Christ, and He is always the One, and the only One, through Whom even our praises are acceptable to God. And I am sure that those two words, pointing to our Lord, mean that God is delighted even more with our praise when we acknowledge in His presence that we are coming through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But now let me call your attention to one more word in the verse:

IV. THE PRIMARY REASON AND SUBJECT FOR OUR PRAISE.

The word that I want you to notice is the word "therefore." Remember it is always there for a purpose. It is a connecting word. It connects what the Apostle was about to say in this verse with what he had been saying in the preceding verses.

Once you start looking back, you can find many things which only a child of God can be thankful for. We need to be thankful for our health, our food, our clothing, our homes (the terrible fires which are presently raging out of control should make us very thankful that so far we have been preserved from such disasters). We need to be thankful for all of the temporal, the material, the physical blessings of life. But the Apostle was prompted to exhort the Jewish believers to praise the Lord for spiritual reasons.

Look at verse 14. We need to praise the Lord that we are looking for an eternal city where there will be no crime, no sickness, none of the things that ruin the cities here on earth. How wonderful it will be when we are all in heaven with the Lord.

Then look at verses 12, 13. Not a day should go by without a sacrifice of praise ascending from our lips for the Cross.

Look at verse 9. How thankful we should be for our Bibles, for the truth. And we can add to this verse 7.

Look at verse 8. What about our Lord? Have we thanked God recently for Him, and for the knowledge that He never changes?

Coming at the end of this epistle, I wonder if the Spirit of God was not indicating that one of the greatest ways we can glorify God is by starting at the beginning of Hebrews, and praising our way through the whole epistle! We know that we are to turn the Bible into prayer; why not turn our Bibles into praise? We need to follow the example of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1 when he praised his way through the doctrine of salvation. If this were our practice, the Bible would become a new book to us, and we would be praising God for the things which are of the greatest importance.

Concl: Now let me close by pointing out to you that this verse is an exhortation. This verse tells us what we need to be doing now, and what we always should be doing. As I told our people on the Bike Trip, quoting Dawson Trotman of the Navigators, "The commandments of Scripture are not just good advice; they are commandments." We need to obey them. And I need to be sure that I practice what I preach because the writer of Hebrews put himself with the people when he said, "By him therefore **let us** offer the sacrifice..."

Let us be thankful for all of our blessings, but let us always put our Lord and our salvation at the head of the list. Our praise is directed to God; the subject of our praise needs to be Christ.