

**THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE**

Hebrews 13:15

**Scripture Reading:** Psalm 116.

**Intro:** In our reading of Psalm 116 we had an opportunity to see that “the sacrifice of thanksgiving” is an OT expression. In fact, in Leviticus 7 we learn that one of the purposes of the peace offering was to express thanksgiving to God. In such a case the peace offering was called “the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” So “the sacrifice of thanksgiving” was an expression that the Jews were familiar with.

We can add to these verses the many times in the Psalms that the psalmists were either expressing their own thanksgiving to God or exhorting others to offer their thanks, their praise, to the Lord. Praise was to be constantly offered to the Lord for the many blessings that He was continually pouring out upon His people. An example from the Psalms is found in Psa. 103:1, 2:

1 Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.

2 Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.

And I am sure that most of you remember the last two verses of Psalm 100, verses 4 and 5:

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

The same is true in the NT. We have an expression like this in the first epistle which Paul wrote, 1 Thessalonians, chapter 5, verse 18,

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

When Paul wrote later to the Ephesians from his prison in Rome, he exhorted the believers in Ephesus with these words,

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:20).

And then in one of Paul’s last epistles we find these words in 1 Tim. 1:17:

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Even our Lord praised the Father while He was here on earth. We have

His words of praise in Matt. 11:25, 26:

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

26 Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.

In the light of all that the Scriptures have to say about thanksgiving and praise, it would be difficult to name a more prominent subject in all of Scripture. And of all of the things that we are to do as the Lord's people, nothing is more prominent in the Word of God than praise and thanksgiving and worship. The very heart of all acceptable prayer is praise to God. We need to begin our prayers with worship and thanksgiving, and we need to end our prayers in the same way. If there is one thing that should characterize our lives as believers, it is praise to God.

From the earliest days of our country thanksgiving has been observed. It originated when the Plymouth colonists gave three days to prayer and feasting in 1621, but there is also on record that the members of what was called the Berkeley plantation offered prayer without feasting on December 4, 1619. This was near what is now Charles City, Virginia. However, the first national Thanksgiving was proclaimed by President George Washington, and was first observed on November 26, 1789. Abraham Lincoln made it an annual holiday to be commemorated on the last Thursday of November. Franklin Roosevelt, who changed so many things in our country, changed Thanksgiving Day to the third Thursday in November for the years 1939, 40, and 41, but Congress changed it back in 1941 to the traditional day.

Today I am afraid that it has become just another holiday when families get together, but how much thanksgiving is offered to God by the people of our nation is very questionable. We have left God out of our thinking as a nation, and so it is undoubtedly the case that true thanksgiving in our country is practically non-existent. We have more to be thankful for than any generation before us, but we are inclined to take the glory to ourselves, and leave God out of the picture all together.

But this must not be the case with those of us who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. We have reasons to be thankful that most Americans don't know anything about, but our thanksgiving is not to be limited to one day in the year, but every day is to be Thanksgiving Day for us. We want to observe our national day, but this should just be the continuation of what we are doing every day. I have read to you where the

Apostle Paul exhorted us to give thanks to God in everything and always! The text I have chosen for my message today is Hebrews 13:15, and I would like for you to turn to that verse in your Bible as we consider it together. I want to examine this verse with you word by word, and I trust that the Lord will use it in your life and mine in a permanent way as we approach another Thanksgiving Day.

The first thing that I want you to notice about this verse is that it is:

## I. AN EXHORTATION.

It is stated very graciously. And the writer does not separate himself from the people to whom he was writing. He said, "Let us." But you can see that this is more than a good suggestion that he was passing on to his readers; *being a part of Scripture this is a command which is binding upon all who know and love our Lord Jesus Christ.* Praise to be acceptable to God must come from our hearts, but if we do not praise God I hope we will realize that we are sinning against God. He daily loads us with His benefits, as the Psalmist said in Psa. 68:19, and it is wrong, it is sinful for us not to return to God praise and thanksgiving and worship to Him as the Giver of every blessing that we have.

So to praise God is not an option; it is what we must do, and do it every day. The book of Psalms ends with this verse,

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord (Psa. 150:6).

So it is not just believers, but all people, angels, and in ways that we cannot understand, even animals, birds, fish, and all living creatures are in some God-given way offering their praise to God. Three times in the OT we are told to "bring unto the Lord the glory that is **due** unto His Name. See 1 Chron. 16:29; Psa. 29:2; 96:8. It is "due" Him. It is a debt we owe.

A children's song some of us used to sing is good for all of us to remember. The words go like this:

The birds up in the tree tops sing their song,  
The angels chant their chorus all day long;  
The flowers in the garden blend their hue;  
So why shouldn't I? Why shouldn't you,  
Praise Him, too.

I repeat, praise is not an option; it is commanded of all of us. May God Himself impress this upon all of our hearts.

But now let us look at the words of our text.

## II. THE WORDS OF OUR TEXT: HEBREWS 13:15.

The first words we come to are:

### A. "By him."

We need to read our Bibles carefully and thoughtfully, and, above all, prayerfully! So we need to determine the one about whom the writer is referring.

Well, the way to do that is by looking back to find out who was mentioned last. We go to verse 14, but no one is mentioned there. We go to verse 13 and we find "him" mentioned again, as well as "his reproach--" but we still do not know who it is. But when we go to verse 12 we find "Jesus mentioned."

Now let's read these verses and insert the Name of our Lord where we have pronouns, and so if this makes sense. (Read vv. 12-15.)

It does make sense, doesn't it? It is *by Jesus* that we are to offer the sacrifice of our praise to God. You know, most people, including a lot of Christians, think that if we want to praise God, all we have to do is to start talking to God. But that is not the case. Our Lord said, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). We must come to God through Christ in order to be saved, but every time we come to Him to bring our praise, or to bring our petitions, we can only approach God through Christ. That is what our Lord meant when He spoke about asking God for things *in His Name*. Apart from Christ God can have nothing to do with us--He is so holy, and we at best are only sinners saved by the grace of God. So remember this on Thanksgiving Day, and remember it every time you come to thank God for any blessing you have received, you and I must approach Him through the One Who became flesh for us so that He could die for us and save us from our sins, and His Name is JESUS! And God loves for us to recognize that we are coming to Him "by Him," by Jesus, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One Who opens the throne room of heaven for us, even when we come just to thank and praise God. And by the way, in the Greek as well as in the English, the words "by Him" are given the emphatic position in verse 15.

I am going to skip the word "therefore" for just a few moments, but I will

come back to it. But let's go on to the next words after "therefore." We find these words:

**B. "Let us offer."**

Now this is something that we can do together, or we can do it in the privacy of our homes (or wherever we might be), but the point is that this is something that we must do. And in the word "offer" is the idea that we are not doing this because we have to do it; *we are doing it because we want to do it*. We are not doing it because we are afraid of what will happen if we don't, but we are offering this sacrifice to the Lord because our hearts are full of thanksgiving for the blessings He has so graciously poured out upon us. The word practically suggests that we would do this even if the Holy Spirit had not told us to do it. And the present tense suggests that we need *to keep offering* the sacrifice of praise to God.

We all know the effect that some act of kindness has upon us when we know that people do it because they *want to*, and not because they *have to*. So come willingly, come joyfully, and come as though it is the most delightful thing that you ever have to do. We want our coming to bring glory to God, and it will if we offer it willingly and lovingly.

What do we bring?

**C. "The sacrifice of praise."**

Did you ever stop to realize that this is one sacrifice which everyone of us can bring? There are many things that we cannot bring, but we can all bring *a sacrifice of praise*. This, the Apostle went on to explain, is "the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name."

The Bible has a lot to say about our speech. Read the book of Proverbs, and you will find all kinds of verses dealing with what we say. James has told us in his epistle that if we can control our tongues, we won't have any trouble with the rest of our body. And one of the best ways to keep from saying the wrong thing is to **train** yourself to offer sacrifices of praise.

Along this line there is a very interesting passage in Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Listen to what he wrote in Eph. 5:3-4:

- 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;
- 4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which

are not convenient: **but rather giving of thanks.**

You see, if we are using our tongues to offer a sacrifice of praise to God (and we can do this in conversation with someone else), we are not going to be tempted to use our tongues in some sinful way. God is praised with our praise. The Lord Jesus is honored because we are going to God through Him, and we are blessed in more ways than one. So praising God is a spiritually healthy activity that we all need to be engaged in. We are “giving thanks” to God. And so we are not being overcome with evil, but we are overcoming evil with good.

This leads me to my next point--a point so obvious that it should not even need to be mentioned, but, unfortunately, it does. I am speaking of the words:

#### **D. “To God.”**

Aren't you always hearing people say that they are thankful for this, or that, or the other thing, but they never say to whom they are thankful. So many are just thankful to be thankful, as though our blessings were just a matter of good luck, or coincidence, or possibly our own efforts. The Apostle says here that we come to offer our sacrifice of praise “to God”!

Praise **God** from **Whom** all blessings flow;  
Praise **Him** all creatures here below;  
Praise **Him** above, ye heavenly host;  
Praise **Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

We are not just being thankful. We are not just saying words out into thin air. We come to offer our praise, our thanksgiving, our worship, **to GOD!**

Notice at the end of the verse the Apostle added, “giving thanks to His Name.” A literal translation is, *confessing His Name*. When we give thanks to God we are actually giving our confession to His existence, that He is the merciful, the loving, the mighty God Who bestows His blessings so freely upon us. This is one of the major differences between being merely thankful as compared with being thankful to God.

How often?

#### **E. “Continually.”**

*We can stop offering our praise when God stops giving blessings.* But He

will never stop giving, and we must never stop thanking Him.

This word “continually” is the translation of two Greek words, διὰ παντὸς, meaning *through all*. It speak of the time through which the sacrifice of praise is to be offered, but this would include *all kinds of times*--times of special blessing as well as times of testing and trial. Whatever the circumstances may be, there are always many reasons for offering praise to the Lord.

Now I go back to the word I passed by, the word

#### F. “Therefore.”

(Read the entire verse again.) The word “therefore” ties what is about to be said with what has just been said. We have many reasons for which to be continually offering our sacrifices of praise to God. Coming at the end of this epistle, the writer’s mind may have been going over all of the truth he had just written about, but if so, it could all be summed up in the verse immediately before our text: verse 14.

It is obvious from this epistle to the Hebrews that they were being severely persecuted for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart of Judaism was also the focal point of suffering for Jewish people who had turned to Christ for their salvation. How much they owed the Lord for their redemption, could never be calculated. But every part of it was a cause for praise, continual praise. But ahead was their hope. Jerusalem as it was not their continuing city. They were looking for one to come where all of the hopes of their salvation would be realized to the full. And though the present were hard, and the trials seemed unending, yet they were looking for “the heavenly Jerusalem” mentioned in 12:22, and this was to be one reason that they could always continue to bring their praises to the Lord.

**Concl:** Now here we have the instruction, not optional, remember, but binding upon all of us who know the Lord. And so at this Thanksgiving season, let us praise the Lord for all of the material and physical blessings which He has heaped upon us, but let us remember that we have blessings in Christ which the world knows nothing about--all of the blessings we have in Christ our Savior, and the future hope before us to be forever with the Lord, and even to be like the Lord. So let us give God our praise for all that He has done for us in Christ.

(Give an exhortation to those present who may not know the Lord.)