

Sacrifices of Praise without Good Deeds Don't Please God!

Heb.13:15-16; Rom.12:1-2; Ps.40:1-10

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I. Biblical Context.

We have seen that the repeated theme of the book of Hebrews is that we should continue to trust in Jesus Christ. Paul sums it up this way, "Jesus is worthy of your faith. Have faith in Him and do not fall away because He is better" Don't put your trust in anything or anybody but Jesus. In chapter 13, we see a series of exhortations about how to live as a follower of Christ. In brief summary:

- Love our Christian brothers and sisters.
- Honor marriage
- Not to fall in love with money but be content with what God has provided for us.
- For us to remember or imitate those who first taught the truth of God's Word
- To follow Christ no matter the cost

Verse 15-16 is another exhortation that Paul wants us to understand which is a sacrifice of praise to God.

Looking at the word Praise, we may conclude that praise is adequately performed through our corporate worship, preaching and music. These practices are not wrong, but they do not go far enough. Full worship and praise happen in the community, as we live out our faith, serving one another and helping to build up the body of Christ. The quality of our worship is not measured by what happens on Sunday mornings but by what happens when we are together any day of the week and if we are alone. Praise is boldly declaring and applauding what God has done.

II. The Lesson: Sacrifices of Praise Without Good Deeds Don't Please God!

1. Heb. 13:15-16.

These verses show us five things about sacrificial praise:

1. It is done through Him. (2) It is done continually. (3) Calls on us to give expressed thanksgiving which is the fruit of our lips that acknowledge His name. (4) Call on us to do good. (5) Call on us to give generously.

The terms sacrifice and praise might seem to be opposites. We think of sacrifice as offering something at great cost to ourselves. Praise on the other hand, sounds joyful as it overflows from a grateful heart. However, in the spiritual realm, they are intertwined. Praise does not cost us something. It's often our response to some action that has directly benefited us, and we extend gratitude. We often find it easy to praise God from the same motivation, as to when He has blessed us, helped us or protected us. We feel generous toward Him. We can sing worship and talk how good He is because we can see it. That kind of praise, although worthwhile, does not cost us anything.

There are times when God did not come through the way we thought He would. The test was positive; the divorce; the wayward child; bills are due etc. God seems very far away, and praise is the last thing to bubble up from our hearts. We can't see His goodness, and circumstances scream that He has forgotten us. To praise God in those times requires personal sacrifice. It takes an act of will, to lay our all on the altar before a God we don't understand at that moment. When we bring a "sacrifice of praise" we choose to believe that even though life is not going as we think it should, God is still good, and He can be trusted (Ps. 135:2; Nahum 1:7). When we choose to praise God despite the storms, He is honored, and our faith grows deeper (Mal. 3:13-17; Job 13:15).

The command in the verses says we are to continually offer praise, so it is not based on our opinion of His job performance. It can't be treated as a "reward" that we give to God for His obvious blessings. Is. 29:13 says, "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me". Real praise continues regardless of circumstances. Praise flows continually from a worshipping heart in good times and bad (Acts 16:23-25). The sacrifice of praise comes from a humble heart that has been purified by fire. It rises from a spirit that has chosen to honor God despite the pain that life is causing.

In James 2:26, he says True faith in Christ always produces good works. He is saying that faith without deeds is useless and when we do them it will prove the genuineness of our faith.

2. **Roman 12:1-2:** (1) So brothers and sisters, since God has shown us mercy, I beg of you to offer your lives as a living sacrifice to him. Your offering must be only for God and pleasing to him, which is the spiritual way for you to worship. (2) Do not change yourselves to be like the people of the world but be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you will know what is good and pleasing to him and what is perfect.

Spiritual worship involves the presentation of our bodies that have been renewed in the mind and heart. That renewal is because of our union with Christ (Rom.6:1-23; 8:1-13). Compare: 12:1-2 with 1:18-32. There the Gentiles engaged in improper worship of creatures rather than the Creator (1:23-25); dishonor their bodies (v.24) and fail to recognize God (v.28-32). The Jews worship was no better, because they suppressed the Truth and relied on the Law. Verse 2 shows us the results of a renewed mind that is good, acceptable and perfect will of God.

What God desires from the redeemed, is not conventional religion, but renewed obedience to his will. Not surface obedience, but a heartfelt obedience that is born of a deep desire to do God's will. When we have experienced God's love, our desire should be to seek the heart of God and do his will. God may not require us to die physical for Him, but He does ask us to die to self and to live for Him every single day. We are to give our entire being, all our heart, love, talents and strength to serve Him. He doesn't ask for something small like donating money to charity, wearing Christian jewelry, or going to church. Neither does it refer to something life changing. He asks each of us to serve Him thousands of small ways every day. He asks us to die to self and live for Him. Animals were killed as a sacrifice. For a living sacrifice, something must die in us. One way we can sacrifice to God is by giving up our sinful pleasures. Why should we make a sacrifice to God? Paul answer is in verse 1, because God has shown us mercy or in view of His mercy. He is not asking us to do something he is not willing to do. Jesus gave the ultimate sacrifice. If the Creator sacrificed Himself for the creation, should not the creation sacrifice for the Creator? God created us for the purpose of worshiping Him. This is our

highest calling or goal. Our purpose is to glorify the Father and not just while we are in the building on Sunday. We also worship Him by our behavior. We glorify God when we choose His way over our own way, even in the small matters. We must not just think of worship or praise time is just for the sanctuary. Every decision we make and every word that is spoken is a way to worship God. For Believers, this is what being a follower is all about. It is about living a life of worship to God through personal sacrifice and holiness. We fall short often in so many ways, but we have a God who will forgive when we repent and choose His way.

3. **Psalm 40:1-10**. This is a song of thanks because it describes the time of crisis for David and how he asked God for help (v.1-3). David then praises or expressed thanksgiving to God in verses 4-6, and he understood that God did not want animal sacrifices and the offerings that the Law required. He said God opened his ears, which means David was willing to listen and surrender to the will of God. Verse 7-9a, describe the help that God gave to him. Verses 9b-10 are David's testimony. When we receive blessings from God, the thank you note that He desires is that we tell others about His goodness and how to find Him for themselves.

III. Conclusion

As Paul has preached in this book of Hebrews, the Law couldn't take away the sin. We as believers should present ourselves as living sacrifices to the Lord with a willing heart because of his grace to us. We are to always do what will glorify the Lord. Php.1:27: Whatever happens conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Paul is saying to live as a sacrifice of praise to God, because of what He has sacrificed for you. There is nothing left for you to atone for, because has finished all the requirements.

Our money, talents and resources are opportunities to glorify God and serve others. Be cheerful givers in all we do (2 Co.9:6-7). In Hebrews 13:16, Paul let us know how to please God. When He looks down at us let Him see the thankfulness in our heart and hear thanksgiving coming from our lips. Let Him see us doing good to one another and being generous. God has not left us in suspense to understand what pleases Him.