

“BEing A Sacrifice of Praise”

Hebrews 13:15-16

September 8, 2019

Let's PRAY... **together** as we *PRAISE together!*

VIDEO: 1 *“Build My Life”* (5:10)

INTRO: Does that song make you want to celebrate?

➤ What & how do you think about celebrating?

I want to tell you about & then take you to the all-time GREATEST, single, most exclusive celebration mankind has ever known!

CONTEXT:

- **Hebrews:** Exalting Christ & Exhorting Church!
 - Remember the 5 structural warnings...
 - **Hold on to Jesus – He’s worth it!**
 - **BE the Church... No matter what!**

VIDEO: 2 *“Come To The Table”* (4:15)

BIG IDEA: *The true, Christian Church celebrates Christ & champions His Gospel best, by BEing a biblical sacrifice of praise!*

PREVIEW:

1. EXALT *Christ*
2. EXHORT *Church*
3. EXEMPLIFY *Christianity*

Share the Love **VIDEO: 3** *"The Same Love"* (5:15)

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

I. EXALT *Christ*

Through Him, then...

- Genesis 3:15
- The Ark & The Ram (Abraham & Isaac)
- Judaism's Festivals & Sacrificial Atonement sys.
 - The Great I AM / Deliverer
 - The Tabernacle
 - The Lamb of God
 - The Great High Priest
 - The ALTER!

VIDEO: 4 *"Grave"* (3:00)

- The LORD (Genesis 1:1 & John 1:1ff)
- The Light of the world
- The Good Shepherd
- The Door
- The Bread of Life
- **JOHN 14:6**

OFFERING **VIDEO: 5** *“In Christ Alone”* (4:50)

II. EXHORT Church

“Through Him, then/therefore, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name. Do not neglect to do good and share what you have...”

(Exhorting of our walk, worship, words, work, & witness!)

VIDEO: 6 *“Heaven Help Me”* (3:25)

1. Walk

A. *“Let us”* (Who?)

- ALL who CLAIM to be Christians...
 - Personal **engagement** is called for...
 - Personal **accountability** is clearly set forth
 - Personal **responsibility** comes next!
 - Personal **readiness** is our charge
 - Personal **obedience** is commanded
 - Personal **worship** is our commission

B. ***“continually”***

- **More than chronological... a 3-D word!**
- With ALL that you ARE & in EVERY way!

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:18).

Paul & Silas in jail...

"sang praise unto God" (Acts 16:25).

*"I will bless the Lord at all times;
His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Pss. 34:1)*

VIDEO: 7 “Believer” (3:25)

2. Worship

a. ***“offer up”***

- i. Voluntary vs. Obligatory
- ii. See the attitude behind the action...

(Ps. 51:17) *"When the heart mourns for sins God is better pleased than when the bull bleeds beneath the axe. 'A broken heart' is an expression implying deep sorrow... it carries in it the idea of all-but killing anguish... A heart crushed is, to God, a fragrant heart... - (C.H. Spurgeon).*

b. "a sacrifice of praise to God"

A sacrifice of praise requires two things; an understanding and definition of both 'sacrifice' and 'praise.'

- *Sacrifice means the giving/releasing/offering of something in one's possession.*
- **It's important to acknowledge, you cannot sacrifice what you do not have.**
- *Praise is the worship-oriented byproduct of a heart filled and overflowing with biblical faith and gospel-empowered obedience.*
- **Consequently, those who do not have a heart filled or overflowing with praise CANNOT, by definition, offer God a sacrifice of praise.**
- **Moreover, where praise & worship are lacking, groaning & grumbling take over and dominate the dynamics of the person's/people's heart.**
- Thus, only true, biblical-Christians can offer up to Christ genuine sacrifices of praise.

VIDEO: 8 *"Run To The Father"* (5:00)

Psalm 50:23 (ESV)

The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 15:8).

- Biblical definitions are critical
- Biblical contextualization is key
 - Acknowledge old sacrifices
 - Explain the end of the old...
 - Explain the NEW sacrifices
 - Explain why we have new...
 - Get ready to share the gospel!
- Biblical application is everything!
 - Old sacrifices defy the gospel...
 - Old covenant is now obsolete
 - Old sacrifices pointed to Jesus
 - Jesus fulfills the old covenant!
 - New sacrifices are really NEW

➤ **ROMANS 12:1**

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Spurgeon: *"Praise is the rent which God requires for the use of His mercies."*

- Context here is key:
 - Audience
 - Experience
 - Substance...
 - CRITICAL CONTEXT:
 - SACRIFICE links back to ALTER
 - ALTER links back to Lev. 16
 - Leviticus 16 links back to Peace Offering
 - Peace Offering links back to the "Thanks/Fellowship Peace Offering"
 - "Thanksgiving Peace Offering links directly to Hebrews 13:15
 - Thanksgiving Peace Offering and Hebrews 13:15 link to US...
 - Thanksgiving Peace Offering...
 - Celebration!
 - Christians/Church
 - Communion!

COMMUNION =

Free-Will Thanks-givng Peace Offering

VIDEO: 9 "Nobody" (3:45)

NOTE: *“through” & “to” are both CRITICAL*

- *“through Him” (the Son of God)*
- *“to God” (the Father)*
- Empowered by Spirit of God (Acts 1:8)

3. Words

C. *“that is...”*

D. *“the fruit of lips”*

“With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6)

“Praise the LORD,” in Hebrew hallelujah

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2)

- Words are the fruit of the lips...
- The heart is the root of the lips...
- The question is: are your words a sacrifice of praise OR a mere device of religious haze

A sacrifice of praise is described here in the biblical text (13:15) as “fruit of the lips”

- Biblically speaking/teaching, fruit is always an evidentiary representation and affirmation (or lack thereof) of the root that produced it...
- “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks...”
- “You will know them by their fruit...”
- “Can a leopard change its spots?”
- “...come down disguised as angels of light...”
- John 7:24
- Titus 1:10-16
- Psalm 55:6

E. *“lips that acknowledge His name”*

When the saints come together for public worship, it should be not only for the object of having their empty vessels filled and their hungry souls fed, but with the definite purpose of offering to God that which will please Him. The more closely we walk with God, and the more intimate be our communion with Him, the easier

the performance of this pleasant duty. The more we delight ourselves in the Lord and regale our souls by the contemplation of His perfections, the more spontaneous, fervent, and constant, will be our worship of Him. The more we cultivate the habit of seeing God's hand in everything, and are grateful to Him for temporal blessings, the more will the spirit of thanksgiving possess our hearts and find expression in songs of praise.

- Jesus over Judaism!
- Jesus is LORD!
- Jesus is MESSIAH!
- John 14:6

4. Work

F. "Do not"

- Here is another direct, divine COMMAND

- Clearly, this is an emphatic instruction
- GOD is saying: “Do not” – we better listen!
- When God says: “do not” it is for our good!

G. *“Do not neglect”*

The spirit of Christ in the heart will produce consideration and concern for others, and counteract our innate selfishness; but where Christ is absent, the Devil rules the heart. – John Owen

- See here more than negativity...
- To neglect what ought not be neglected is bad!
- Negligence is criminal both in culture & Christ
- The language here is emphatic...
- *“Do NOT NOT do what you ought to do!”* - JDP

H. *“to do good”*

- *“GOOD” must be defined by God!* - JDP
- “To do good” is an undergirding command that is embodied in the **5 Great C’s**:
 - Great Commandments
 - Great Commission
 - Great Combat

VIDEO: 10 "Surrounded" (4:45)

- Great Christian
- Great Church
- *If you take the Holy Scripture's Great Commandments, Great Commission, "Fruit of the Spirit," "Beatitudes," and "full armor of God" and fuse them all together, you'll have a beautiful, biblical-bullseye, in action & in attitude, for what it looks like to live a life of doing good!*
 - **See our BRIDGE Missional Manifesto!**
- Don't miss this form of praise...
 - ***Do not not do good!*** – JDP
 - The Scriptures are replete with this...
 - 2nd Greatest Commandment
 - All the "one another" texts
 - Ephesians 2:10
 - "live a life worthy of the gospel"
 - All Great Commission texts...

i. 1 John 2:6 & 3:18...

ii. Ephesians 2:10

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith" ([Gal. 6:10](#))

It is not enough to be good; we must do good.

Christ gave Himself for us that we should be a people who are "*zealous of good works*" ([Titus 2:14](#))

5. Witness

I. "*and*"

- See the intentional CONJUNCTION...
- It's like God is saying: *Wait! There's more!*

J. "*share*"

"the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen" ([1 John 4:20](#)).

CAUTION: sometimes helping hurts!!!

"This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" ([2 Thess. 3:10](#))

K. "*share what you have*"

- SHARE = active KOINONIA!!!
- WHAT YOU HAVE =

- *Gospel*
- *God*
- *Glory*
- *Grace*
- *Goods*
- *“You’ve been saved to share!”* - JDP
- *Everything you have has a purpose!* – JDP

***** QUILTS story *****

VIDEO: 11 *“BRIDGE Quilt in Action”* (4:40)

- What do you struggle to share?
- We have unhealthy (maybe even idolatrous) relationships with those things that we struggle to share...
- *When you care, you share. When you don’t, you won’t!* – JDP

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven” ([Matthew 5:16... cf. 25:35-40](#))

III. EXEMPLIFY *Christianity*

“...for, such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

➤ **“for”**

- “because”
- “for this reason”
- Jesus’ justification is forthcoming...

➤ *“such sacrifices”*

- ALL of us
 - Collectively
 - Individually
- ALL-in
 - Walk
 - Worship
 - Words
 - Work
 - Warfare
- ALL the time = WITNESS!
 - Doing good
 - **Loving Up**
 - **Loving In**
 - **Loving Out**
 - Sharing what we have
 - BEing the Church
 - BRIDGE Manifesto

VIDEO: 12 *“Changed”* (3:30)

- **“are pleasing to God.”**
 - Hebrews is warm up to one of two eternal conversations that church goers will one day have:
 - “Well done, faithful slave!”
 - OR
 - “Away from Me you evil doer, I never knew you!”

VIDEO: 13 *“Confidence”* (3:30)



One FAITH. One FAMILY. One FOCUS.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will BE My witnesses (locally, regionally, and globally).” – Acts 1:8

One Question: **WHAT DO YOU WANT?**
 One Offer: **COME AND SEE.**
 One Promise: **TRUTH IN LOVE!**

Our Truth-in-Love Distinctives: We are...

1. Responding to grace & repenting of sin...
2. Trusting the Bible & obeying God's Word...
3. Growing in-Christ & living Spirit-led...
4. Praying for guidance & following by faith...
5. Dying to self & carrying our cross...
6. BE-ing the Church & loving one another...(truly loving one another)
7. Equipping the saints & exemplifying supernatural unity...
8. Ministering as ambassadors & discerning matters shrewdly...
9. Worshipping God vertically & experiencing Him horizontally...
10. Proclaiming the Gospel (*no matter what*) & fishing for men...
11. Making disciple-warriors & winning spiritual-warfare...
12. Loving our King & serving His kingdom!

- This is your invitation to the celebration!
Let's PRAY!

VIDEO: 14 *“So Will I”* (6:50)

STUDY NOTES:

Hebrews 13:1-16 (ESV)

¹ Let brotherly love continue.

² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

⁴ Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

⁵ Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

⁶ So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.

¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.

¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.

¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

v.15:

➤ *“Through Him”*

- Jesus, the Christ!
- See the crescendo of Hebrews’ message
- mMm is the message/method of Hebrews!
- Key in on BOTH words:
 - *“Through”*
 - Creator, Crucified, Coming again...
 - CONDUIT Christ is critical
 - “I am the Door”
 - “There is One Mediator between...”
 - See Isaiah 53...
 - See Leviticus 23’s 7 Festivals
 - See Leviticus 16’s “Alter”
 - See Hebrews from “A to Z”
 - *“Him”*
 - The person of focus in 13:9-14
 - Jesus, the Christ!
 - Messiah!

➤ *“then”/“therefore”*

- What follows is a direct result and byproduct of what was just shared above
- Action is about to be called for...
- By definition, change is about to be explained &/or engaged...

➤ *“let us”*

- **Personal engagement** is called for...
- **Personal accountability** is clearly set forth
- **Personal responsibility** comes next!
- **Personal readiness** is our charge
- **Personal obedience** is commanded

- **Personal worship** is our commission
- *“continually”*
 - **More than chronological...**
 - **With ALL that you ARE & in EVERY way!**
 - Without stopping
 - Without end
 - Without interruption
 - Without compromise
 - Without excuse!
- *“offer up a sacrifice”*
 - Context here is key:
 - Audience
 - Experience
 - Substance...
 - **CRITICAL CONTEXT:**
 - SACRIFICE links back to ALTER
 - ALTER links back to Lev. 16
 - Leviticus 16 links back to Peace Offering
 - Peace Offering links back to the “Thanks/Fellowship Peace Offering”
 - “Thanksgiving Peace Offering links directly to Hebrews 13:15
 - Thanksgiving Peace Offering and Hebrews 13:15 link to US...
 - Thanksgiving Peace Offering...
 - Cause
 - Corruption/cleansed
 - Celebration!

- Christians/Church
 - Communion!
 -
- Note two parts of the phrase:
 - *“offer up”*
 - Key contrast:
 - Get-to! vs. Have-to...
 - “offer up” = voluntary
 - “pay with” = obligatory
 - Hear the heart in this term...
 - *“a sacrifice”*
 - Biblical definitions are critical
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 - Acknowledge old sacrifices
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 - Explain why we have new...
 - Get ready to share the gospel!
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 - Jesus fulfills the old covenant!
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- *“sacrifice of praise”*
 - First... the text will define this phrase...
 - Next... further texts add more context too
 - Let’s take a deeper dive into its meaning:
 - **Almighty**
 - **Acknowledgment**

- **Attitude**
- **Action**
- **ALL-in**
 - **Walk**
 - **Worship**
 - **Words**
 - **Works**
 - **Warfare**

➤ *“to God”*

- NOTE: *“through” & “to” are both CRITICAL*
 - **“through Him” (the Son of God)**
 - **“to God” (the Father)**
 - See the 10 Commandments
 - See the Great Commandments
 - Empowered by Spirit of God (**Acts 1:8**)

➤ *“that is”*

- This is a term of clarification...
- *“Sacrifice of praise”* is in need of unpacking
- A definition & explanation is forthcoming...

➤ *“the fruit of lips”*

- Words are the fruit of the lips...
- The heart is the root of the lips...
- The question is: are your words a sacrifice of praise OR a mere device of religious haze

➤ *“that acknowledge His name”*

- Jesus over Judaism!
- Jesus is LORD!
- Jesus is MESSIAH!
- John 14:6

v.16

➤ *“Do not”*

- Here is another direct, divine COMMAND
- Clearly, this is an emphatic instruction
- GOD is saying: “Do not” – we better listen!
- When God says: “do not” it is for our good!

➤ *“neglect”*

- See here more than negativity...
- To neglect what ought not be neglected is bad!
- Negligence is criminal both in culture & Christ
- The language here is emphatic...
- ***“Do NOT NOT do what you ought to do!”*** - JDP

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 - **See our BRIDGE Missional Manifesto!**

- Don't miss this form of praise...
 - ***Do not not do good!*** – JDP
 - The Scriptures are replete with this...
 - 2nd Greatest Commandment
 - All the “one another” texts
 - Ephesians 2:10
 - “live a life worthy of the gospel”
 - All Great Commission texts...

➤ ***“and”***

- See the intentional **CONJUNCTION...**
- It's like God is saying: ***Wait! There's more!***

➤ ***“to share what you have,”***

- *See the specificity here... (not “general good”)*
- **SHARE = active KOINONIA!!!**
- **WHAT YOU HAVE =**
 - ***Gospel***
 - ***God***
 - ***Glory***
 - ***Grace***
 - ***Goods***

- You've heard: You've been saved to serve...
- ***“You've been saved to share!”*** – JDP
- ***Everything you have has a purpose!*** – JDP
- What do you struggle to share?
- We have unhealthy (maybe even idolatrous) relationships with those things that we struggle to share...
- ***When you care, you share. When you don't, you won't!*** – JDP

➤ ***“for”***

- “because”
- “for this reason”
- Jesus’ justification is forthcoming...
- *“such sacrifices”*
 - ALL of us
 - Collectively
 - Individually
 - ALL-in
 - Walk
 - Worship
 - Words
 - Work
 - Warfare
 - ALL the time = WITNESS!
 -
 - Herein we have unveiled Christian sacrifices:
 - Praise from fruitful lips
 - Doing good
 - Loving Up
 - Loving In
 - Loving Out
 - Sharing what we have
 - BEing the Church
 - BRIDGE Manifesto
- *“are pleasing to God.”*
 - Bringing sacrifices of praise, doing good, and sharing what one has pleases God!
 - What do you want?
 - Who do you want to please?

- Hebrews is warm up to one of two eternal conversations that church goers will one day have:
 - “Well done, faithful slave!”
 - OR
 - “Away from Me you evil doer, I never knew you!”

NOTE:

“...to obey is better than sacrifice...”

“...sacrifice is a broken heart...”

Biblical praise is the fruit of gospel faith and obedience. - JDP

A sacrifice of praise requires two things; an understanding and definition of both ‘sacrifice’ and ‘praise.’

- *Sacrifice means the giving/releasing/offering of something in one’s possession.*
- **It’s important to acknowledge, you cannot sacrifice what you do not have.**
- *Praise is the worship-oriented byproduct of a heart filled and overflowing with biblical faith and gospel-empowered obedience.*
- **Consequently, those who do not have a heart filled or overflowing with praise CANNOT, by definition, offer God a sacrifice of praise.**

- **Moreover, where praise & worship are lacking, groaning & grumbling take over and dominate the dynamics of the person's/people's heart.**
- Thus, only true, biblical-Christians can offer up to Christ genuine, gospel gifted sacrifices of praise.

A sacrifice of praise is described here in the biblical text (13:15) as “fruit of the lips”

- Biblically speaking/teaching, fruit is always an evidentiary representation and affirmation (or lack thereof) of the root that produced it...
- “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks...”
- “You will know them by their fruit...”
- “Can a leopard change its spots?”
- “...come down disguised as angels of light...”
- John 7:24
- Titus 1:10-16
- Psalm 55:6

13:15 Verse 15 begins with “therefore,” and serves to draw to a conclusion the argument begun in v. 9.

The phrase “through Jesus” is fronted in the clause for emphasis, with the NIV substituting “Jesus” for “him” in the Greek text.

Christians are to offer continually (present subjunctive) to God a "sacrifice of praise" where the "sacrifice" consists in "praise."

The background of this exhortation is the fellowship offering of [Lev 7:11-21](#). A similar passage is [Ps 50:14,23](#) where God says he has no need of bulls or goats but commands the people to offer "a sacrifice of praise."

This sacrifice is further defined as the "*fruit of lips*," **an allusion to [Hosea 14:3](#) LXX**.

The readers still have sacrifices to offer, even if the sacrifices are not for sin. The sacrifice of thanksgiving was once accompanied by an animal sacrifice in the temple according to [Lev 7:12](#). Now Christians offer only the sacrifice of praise.

The participle *homologountōn* attributively modifies "lips" and can be translated "confess," but contextually it conveys the nuance of "praising." As Lane rightly remarked, the nuance in this Greek term *homologeō* must be determined by its usage in a clause that explains the previous clause "sacrifice of praise," and by its following object in the dative case in Greek: "praising his name." Given these contextual factors, "praising" is a superior translation than "confessing."

13:16 **The connection to v. 15 is marked by the particle *de*, translated "*and*."**

The verse serves as a contrastive expansion of the exhortation to offer a sacrifice of praise.

"Do not forget" renders a Greek verb in this context which conveys the notion of neglect.

The unusual Greek noun *eupoias* is translated verbally in the NIV as "to do good."

The noun *koinōnia* is rendered "*to share*" and is used here of giving in the financial sense. The application the author makes is his readers are to assist financially those who are in need. The phrase "with such sacrifices" can be taken in the sense of "by means of such sacrifices," or as expressing reason in the sense of "because of such sacrifices."

Although ***theos*, "God,"** is the subject of the **last clause in v. 16**, it is placed clause final by the author **for emphasis.**

In fact, it “theos/God” is the last word in the sentence.

Everything commanded in 13:1-8 can be summarized as "doing good & sharing" in v. 16.

Lane views vv. 15,16 as the climax of 13:1-21.

Furthermore, 13:1-8 elaborates on what it means to serve as priests who are pleasing to God, thus connecting with **12:28**.

The believers' priesthood is based on their sharing in the heavenly calling with Christ (3:1).

In Heb 4:14 Christians are exhorted to approach the throne of grace in priestly access to God.

Hebrews 7-10 explains how Christ's sacrifice consecrates believers to enter the holy of holies as priests, culminating in 10:22.

Priestly language permeates this section, even the hortatory paragraphs addressing the readers.

The author's conclusion in 12:28 and 13:15-16 is also expressed in unmistakable priestly language.

Jesus is our high priest, and believers have been brought into such a relationship with Christ that they too are priests with the concomitant responsibilities and privileges that adhere to the priestly calling.

Thus, the conclusion of the argument can be said in one sense to occur at Heb 12:28-29, but in another sense, it occurs at 13:16.

In the discourse unit of 12:28-13:16 the three discourse themes of the epistle are repeated, but only the theme of access to God is explicitly repeated with the formulaic hortatory subjunctive.

Westfall concluded:

"The priesthood is a vehicle that: A). gives them access to God, B). positions them to hear his voice, C). maintain the confession, D). gives them a vision for spiritual growth, and E). gives them a vision for doctrinal growth, F). as well as pastoral service."

- New American Commentary

The Christian's Sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15, 16)

The verses which are now to engage our attention are closely related with those which immediately precede, as is

intimated by the "therefore." The links of connection may be set forth thus.

First, "We have an Altar" (verse 10); what *use* are we to make of it? the answer is, offer sacrifice thereon.

Second, Jesus has sanctified His people "with His own blood" (verse 12). What is to be their *response*? the answer is, draw near to God as joyous worshippers.

Third, we must go forth unto Christ "without the camp." What then, is to be our *attitude* towards those who despise and reject Him? The answer is, not one of malice, but benevolence, doing good unto all as we have opportunity and occasion.

Such, in brief, is the relation between our present portion and its context.

Calvin suggested, we believe rightly, that the apostle here anticipated an objection which might have been made against what he had previously advanced. In saying that Jesus "suffered without the gate" (verse 11), plain intimation was given that God had done with, abandoned Judaism as such. *In bidding Hebrew believers to go forth unto Christ "without the camp," the Holy Spirit signified they must now turn their backs upon the temple and its service.*

But this presented a serious difficulty: all the sacrifices—those of thanksgiving as well as those of expiation—were inseparably connected with the temple system, therefore it followed that...

if the temple was to be deserted, the sacrifices also must have ceased. It was to meet this difficulty, and to make known the superior privileges of Christianity, that the apostle penned our text.

If the Christian was debarred from offering any sacrifice to God, then he would occupy an inferior position and be deprived of a privilege which

the Jews of old enjoyed, for sacrifices were instituted for the purpose of celebrating God's worship.

The apostle therefore shows that another kind of sacrifice remains for us to offer, which is no less pleasing to God than those which He appointed of old, even the praise of our lips.

Here we are taught what is the legitimate way of worshipping God under the new covenant, which presents another striking contrast from that which obtained under the old. As our "Altar" is not one of wood or stone, brass or gold, but Christ Himself, so our "sacrifices" are not the fruits of the ground or the firstlings of our herds, but the adoration of our hearts and the devotion of our lives. The contrast, then, is between the outward and ceremonial and the inward and spiritual.

The Jews offered to God a slain lamb each morning and evening, and on certain special days bullocks and rams; but the Christian is to present unto God a *continual* sacrifice of thanksgiving.

This brings before us a most interesting and blessed subject, namely, those sacrifices of the Christian with which God is well pleased.

- The **first** of these was mentioned by David: *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise"* ([Ps. 51:17](#)).
- *"When the heart mourns for sins God is better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe. 'A broken heart' is an expression implying deep sorrow, embittering the very life; it carries in it the idea of all but killing anguish in that region which is so vital as to be the very source of life. A heart crushed is, to God, a fragrant heart. Men condemn those who are contemptible in their own eyes, but the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He despises what man esteems, and values that which they despise. Never yet has God spurned a lowly, weeping penitent"* - (C.H. Spurgeon).
- John Owen pointed out that there were two things in connection with the O.T. sacrifices: the *slaying* and shedding of the blood of the beast, and then the actual *offering* of it upon the altar. Both of these were required in order to the completing of a sacrifice. On the one hand, the mere killing of the animal was no sacrifice unless its blood was placed upon the altar; and on the other hand, no blood could be presented there to God until it had been actually shed. Corresponding to these, *there is a twofold spiritual sacrifice in connection with the Christian profession. The*

first is what has just been made reference to in the paragraph above: the broken heart and contrite spirit of the believer. That signifies evangelical repentance and mortification, or the crucifixion of the flesh, which is the Christian's first sacrifice, answering to the death of the beast before the altar.

- The **second** sacrifice which the believer presents unto God is his offering of *Christ* each day. This is done by an act of *faith*—which is ever preceded by repentance, just as we must feel ourselves to be desperately sick before we send for the physician.

As the awakened sinner is convicted of sin and mourns for it before God, pride and self-righteousness are subdued, and he is able to appreciate the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the (elect) world. Christ appears to him as exactly suited to his case and need. He perceives that He was wounded for his transgressions and bruised for his iniquities. He perceives that Christ took his place and endured the penal wrath of God on his behalf. Therefore does he now lay hold of him by faith and present the atoning sacrifice of Christ to God as the only ground of his acceptance. And as he begins, so he continues.

A daily sense of defilement leads to a daily pleading of Christ's blood before the throne of grace.

There is first the *appropriating* of Christ, and then the *presenting* of Him to God as the basis of acceptance.

Now it is this laying hold of Christ and the offering of Him to God in the arms of faith which corresponds to the second thing in connection with the tabernacle (and temple) sacrifices of old. As the fire fell upon the oblation placed upon the altar, incense was mingled therewith, so that the whole yielded a "sweet savor unto God." Just as the mere slaying of the animal was not sufficient—its blood must be laid upon the altar and fragrant incense be offered therewith; so the Christian's sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart will not by itself secure the favor of God. Essential as repentance is, it cannot purchase anything from God. The broken heart must lay hold of Christ, exercise faith in His blood ([Rom. 3:25](#)), and *plead His merits before God*. Only then will our sacrifice of a contrite spirit be a "sweet smelling savor" unto Him.

- The **third sacrifice** which the Christian presents unto God is *himself*. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"* ([Rom. 12:1](#)). That is an act of *consecration*. **It is the recognition and acknowledgement that I am no longer my own, that I have been bought with a price**, that I am the purchased property of Another. Hence, of the primitive saints we read that **they "first gave their own selves to the Lord"** ([2 Cor. 8:5](#)), surrendering themselves to His scepter, taking upon themselves His yoke, henceforth to live to His glory; that as they had formerly served sin and pleased self, now they would serve God and seek only His honor.

As Christ gave Himself for us, we now give ourselves back again to Him. Hereby alone can we know that we are saved: not only by believing in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, but by yielding ourselves up to His government, as living sacrifices for His use.

➤ The **fourth sacrifice** of the Christian is that mentioned in our text, **namely, "the fruit of our lips"**; but...

- **before taking up the same let us say a few words on the order of what has now been before us. There can be no acceptable sacrifice of praise until we have offered ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead,** for as [Psalm 115:17](#) declares, *"The dead praise not the Lord."*
 - No, **those who are yet in their sins cannot praise God, for they have no love for Him and no delight in Him.**
 - **The heart must first be made right before it is attuned to make melody unto Him.**
 - ***God accepts not the lip service of those whose hearts are estranged from Him.***
 - Of old He complained *"This people draw near Me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor Me, but have removed their heart far from Me"* ([Isa. 29:13](#)), and...
 - **Christ affirmed "in vain do they worship" Him ([Matthew 15:8](#)).**
 - ***Such hypocrisy is hateful to Him.***

Nor can any man present himself acceptably to God until he has *believingly embraced Christ*. No matter how willing I am to live honestly in the future, satisfaction must be made for the debts contracted in the past; and nothing but the atoning work of Christ can satisfy the just demands which the Law has against us. Again; how can I serve in the King's presence unless I be suitably attired? and nothing short of the robe of righteousness which Christ purchased for His people can gratify God's holy eye. Again; how could God Himself accept from me service which is utterly unworthy of His notice and that is constantly defiled by the corrupt

nature still within me, unless it were presented in the meritorious name of the Mediator and cleansed by His precious blood. ***We must accept Christ's sacrifice before God will accept ours***; God's rejection of Cain's offering is clear proof thereof.

Equally evident is it, yet not so clearly perceived today by a defectively-visioned Christendom, that no sinner can really accept Christ's sacrifice until his heart be broken by a felt sense of his grievous offenses against a gracious God, and until his spirit be truly contrite before Him. ***The heart must be emptied of sin before there is room for the Savior. The heart must renounce this evil world before a holy Christ will occupy it.*** It is a moral impossibility for one who is still in love with his lusts and the willing servant of the Devil to appropriate Christ and present Him to God for his acceptance.

Thus, the order of the Christian's sacrifices is unchanging. First, we bow in the dust before God in the spirit of genuine repentance; then we appropriate Christ as His gracious provision, and present Him to God for the obtaining of His favor. Then we yield ourselves to Him unreservedly as His purchased property; and then we render praise and thanksgiving for His amazing grace toward us.

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (verse 15).

This is an exhortation to duty, by way of inference from what was declared concerning the Redeemer and the sanctification of the people by His sufferings. Therein we are shown what use we are to make of our Altar, namely, offer sacrifice. **The worship which the Christian presents unto God is the sacrifice of praise.**

Nothing is more pleasing unto Him, and nothing is more honoring to Him, than the praise of a renewed heart. Has He not declared,

***"Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me"?* - [Ps. 50:23](#)**

How thankful for that statement should those believers be who feel themselves to be poor and feeble. Had God said, whoso shall create a world, or even whoso shall preach wonderful sermons and be a successful winner of souls, or whoso shall give a huge sum of money to missions, they might well despair. But ***"whoso offereth praise" opens a wide door of entrance to every believer.***

And have not the redeemed abundant cause *for* praising God! First, because He has granted them a vital and experimental knowledge of *Himself*. How the excellencies of God's being, character and attributes, thrill, as well as awe, the souls of the saints! **Glance for a moment at Psalm 145**, which is entitled a "Psalm of Praise." David begins with "I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever. **Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised" (verses 1-3). In the verses that follow, one perfection of God after another passes in review and stirs the soul to adoration.** His "mighty acts" (verse 4), the "glorious honor of His majesty" (verse 5), His "greatness" (verse 6), His "great goodness" and "righteousness" (verse 7), His "fullness of compassion" and "great mercy" (verse 8), His "power" (verse 11), the "glorious majesty of His kingdom" (verse 12), His everlasting "dominion" (verse 13), His providential blessings (verses 14-17), His dealings in grace with His own (verses 18, 19), His preserving them (verse 20). No wonder the Psalmist

closed with, "my mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever."

If the Psalms be full of suitable petitions for us to present unto God in prayer, and if they contain language well fitted for the lips of the sobbing penitent, yet they also abound in expressions of gladsome worship. **"Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding" (Ps. 47:6, 7).** What vehemency of soul is expressed there! **Four times over in one verse the Psalmist called upon himself (and us) to render praise unto the Lord, and not merely to utter it, but to "sing" the same out of an overflowing heart.**

In another place the note of praise is carried to yet a higher pitch: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous; *and shout for joy*, all ye that are upright in heart" (**Ps. 32:11**). Not in any formal and perfunctory manner is the great God to be praised, but heartily, joyously, merrily. "Sing forth the honor of His name: make His praise glorious" (**Ps. 66:2**). Then let us offer Him nothing less than glorious praise.

The "therefore" of our text intimates an additional reason why we should praise God: because of *Christ* and His so great *salvation*. For our sakes the Beloved of the Father took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made under the Law. For our sakes the Lord of glory, entered into unfathomable depths of shame and humiliation, so that He cried "I am a worm and no man" (**Ps. 22:6**). **For our sakes He bowed His back to the cruel smiter and offered His blessed face to those who plucked off the hair. For our sakes He entered into conflict with the Prince of Darkness, and the pains of death.** For our sakes He endured the awful curse of the Law, and for three hours was forsaken by God. No Christian reader can reverently contemplate such mysteries and marvels without being stirred to the depths of his soul. And then, as he seeks to contemplate what the shame and sufferings of Christ have secured for him, **"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift," must be the fervent exclamation of his heart.**

And observe well, dear reader, how God has allotted to Christ the position of chief honor in connection with our subject. **"By Him (the One mentioned in**

verses 12, 13) let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God."

As the Lord Jesus Himself declared, "I am the *Way*, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me" ([John 14:6](#)). The saints can no more draw nigh unto God apart from Christ, than the sinner can: we are as dependent upon His mediation to render our *worship* acceptable to God, as we were at first for obtaining the *forgiveness* of our sins.

As our great High Priest Christ is the "Minister of the Sanctuary" ([Heb. 8:2](#)). He meets us, as it were, at the door of the heavenly temple, and we place our spiritual sacrifices in His hands, that He may, in the sweet fragrance of His merits and perfections, present them for God's acceptance. "*Another Angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto Him much incense, that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints*" ([Rev. 8:3](#)).

At every point God has made us dependent upon Christ, the Mediator. Only *by Him* can we offer acceptable sacrifices unto God.

- **First**, because it is through Christ's bloodshedding, and that alone, that our *persons* have been sanctified, or made acceptable to God—note how in [Genesis 4:4](#) Jehovah had respect first to Abel himself, and then to his offering!
- **Second**, because it is through Christ's atonement, and that alone, that a new and

living *way* has been opened for us into God's presence: see [Hebrews 10:19-21](#).

- **Third**, because He bears "the iniquity of our *holy things*" (fulfilling the type in [Exodus 28:38](#)), that is, through His perfect oblation our imperfect offerings are received by God: His merits and intercession cancel their defects.
- **Fourth**, because as the Head of the Church, He ministers before God on behalf of its members, *presenting their worship* before Him. Thus, "By Him" signifies, under His guidance, through His mediation, and by our pleading His merits for acceptance with God.

What has just been before us supplies further proof of what was pointed out in an earlier paragraph, namely, that it is impossible for the *unregenerate to worship God acceptably*.

"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord" ([Prov. 15:8](#)). And why? Not only because he is utterly sinful in himself, but because there is no Mediator to come between him and God.

This is brought out strikingly in the O. T. types. Not a single "song" is recorded in the book of Genesis. In Eden our first parents were fitted to sing unto their Creator, and join the angels in ascribing glory and thanksgiving to the Lord. But after the Fall, sinners could only praise on the ground of *redeeming grace*, and it is not until Exodus is reached that we have the grand type of *redemption*. That book opens with Israel in Egypt, groaning and crying in the house of bondage. Next, the paschal lamb was slain, Egypt was left behind, the Red Sea was crossed, and on its farther shore they looked back and saw all their enemies drowned: *"Then sang Moses and the children of Israel"* ([Ex. 15:1](#)). **Praise**, then, **is on the ground of redemption.**

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise."

Every word of Holy Writ is inspired of God, and throughout, its language is chosen with Divine discrimination. Therefore, it behooves us to carefully weigh each of its terms, or we shall miss their finer shades of meaning. Here is a case in point: it is not "let us render praise unto God," but "let us offer a sacrifice of praise."

Christ has made His people "kings and priests unto God" ([Rev. 1:6](#)), and here they are called upon to exercise their priestly functions. Thus, we are instructed to make a right use of our "Altar" (verse 10). We are not only partakers of its privileges, but we are to discharge its duties, by bringing our sacrifices thereto. The same aspect of truth is seen again in 1 Peter 2:5, where we read that believers are "an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Yes, offered "unto God" and not to angels or saints; and, acceptable "by Jesus Christ," and not the Virgin Mary!

This particular expression "let us *offer a sacrifice* of praise to God" not only emphasizes the fact that in their worship believers act in priestly capacity, but it also signifies that we now have the

substance of what was shadowed forth by the Levitical rites. It also **denotes that the Christian ought to be as particular and diligent in the discharge of his evangelical duties as the Jew was in the performing of his ceremonial obligations.**

As he was required to bring an offering that was without physical defect, so we must bring to God the very best that our hearts can supply:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

Content not thyself with offering to God a few formal utterances of thanksgiving, still less hurry through thy worship as a task you are glad to get finished; but strive after reality, fervency, and joy in the same.

When the worshipping Israelite approached the tabernacle or temple, he did not come empty-handed, but brought with him a thank-offering. Then "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God."

When the saints come together for public worship, it should be not only for the object of having their empty vessels filled and their hungry souls fed, but with the

definite purpose of offering to God that which will please Him. The more closely we walk with God, and the more intimate be our communion with Him, the easier the performance of this pleasant duty. The more we delight ourselves in the Lord and regale our souls by the contemplation of His perfections, the more spontaneous, fervent, and constant, will be our worship of Him. The more we cultivate the habit of seeing God's hand in everything, and are grateful to Him for temporal blessings, the more will the spirit of thanksgiving possess our hearts and find expression in songs of praise.

This sacrifice of praise is here designated "*the fruit of our lips*," which is a quotation from Hosea 14:2, where backsliding Israel vows that in return for God's receiving them graciously, they will render to Him "*the calves of their lips*"—the Hebrew word for "*calves*" being the same as for "*praise*."

The expression *"fruit of our lips"* may at first strike us as strange, but a little reflection will reveal its propriety. **Isaiah 6:5, 6 serves to open its meaning. By nature our "lips" are unclean:** "Their throat is an open sepulcher, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:13, 14). **But by God's applying to us the virtues of Christ's atonement, our lips are cleansed, and should henceforth be used in praising Him.**

"Fruit" is a living thing: the product of the Holy Spirit. When, through backsliding, the heart has cooled toward God and the music of joy has been silenced, cry unto Him "O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise" (Ps. 51:15).

This *"sacrifice of praise"* is to be offered unto God not merely on the Sabbath, but
"continually."

Have we not more cause to praise God than to pray?

Surely, for we have many things to thank Him for, which we never ask for. Whoever prayed for His election, for godly parents, for their care of us in helpless infancy, for their affection, for their faithfulness in training us the way we should go! Does not God daily heap upon us in favors beyond that we are able to ask or think? Therefore, we should be more in praising God than in petitioning Him.

"With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6): ah, is it not our failure in the former which explains why we are so often denied in the latter?

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2); "with thanksgiving" is as much a command as is the "continue in prayer."

"It is good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High" (Ps. 92:1).

Yes, it is not only glorifying to God, but it is beneficial to the soul, to cultivate the habit of praising God will preserve the believer from many evils.

The trials of life are more cheerfully borne if the spirit of thankfulness to God be kept lively in the heart.

*A man cannot be miserable while he is joyful,
and nothing promotes joy so much as a heart
constantly exercised in praising God.*

**The apostles forgot their smarting
backs in the Philippian dungeon as
they "*sang praise unto God*"
(Acts 16:25).**

The happiest soul we have ever met was a sister in a London garret (before the days of old-age pensions), who had neither eaten meat or fruit nor had a glass of milk for years past, but was continually praising the Lord.

Mary was offering to God a sacrifice of praise when she exclaimed "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46, 47). That was no mechanical act, but the spontaneous outburst of a heart delighting itself in the Lord.

**It is not enough that the believer should feel
adoring emotions in his soul: they must be**

expressed by his mouth—that is one reason why the sacrifice of praise is defined in our text as "the fruit of our *lips*."

Vocal, articulated praise, is what becomes those who have received the gift of speech: that is why the saints of all ages have expressed their worship in holy songs and psalms.

*None of us sing as much as we should—
how often the worldling shames us...*

Then let us say with David:

"I will praise Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in Thee: I will sing praise to Thy name, O Thou Most High" (Ps. 9:1, 2).

The Christian's Sacrifices (part 2) (Hebrews 13:15, 16)

From the eighth verse onwards (of Hebrews 13) the apostle is engaged in setting forth those spiritual duties of worship of which God Himself is the Object.

Therein *a series of contrasts are drawn between what obtained under the old covenant and that which pertains to the new.*

The Christian's privileges greatly excel those which belonged to Judaism as such. These superior blessings have been considered by us as we have passed from verse to verse. What is before us in verse 15 supplies a further exemplification of this general principle.

1. The Levitical rites required God's earthly people to provide material offerings: but the Christian's "sacrifices" are entirely *spiritual* in their character.
2. The Israelitish worshipper could not offer his sacrifices to God directly, but had to allow the priests to officiate for him: whereas Christians have themselves been made priests unto God, and therefore may sacrifice to Him *immediately*.
3. The praise-sacrifices under the Law were only presented at particular times and places (cf. the "Feasts" of Leviticus 23): but the Christian may, through Christ, offer a sacrifice to God anywhere, at any time—"continually."

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (verse 15).

More is implied than is expressed.

The language of **this verse** is **restricted to the duties of worship and our oral praising of God** therein, yet we know full well that He accepts not thanksgiving from us unless it be accompanied by what good old Matthew Henry called "thanksgiving."

Thus...

...it is the entire compass of evangelical obedience to God which is comprehended here. Those who have been dedicated to Him by the blood of Christ are under the deepest obligations to please and honor Him. The nature of Gospel obedience consists in thanksgivings for Christ and grace by Him, and therefore the whole of it may be suitably designated "a sacrifice of praise." Gratitude and adoration are the animating principles of all acceptable service. Every act and duty of faith has in it the nature of a sacrifice to God, wherein He is well-pleased.

John Owen suggests a threefold reason for the particular language in which the Christian's duty of obedience is here expressed.

1. "1st. The great obligation that is upon us of continual thankfulness and praise to God on account of Christ's atonement. The sum and glory of our Christian profession, is, that it is the only way of praising and glorifying God for His love and grace in the person and mediation of Christ.
2. 2nd. This obligation to praise succeeding in the room of all terrifying legal constraints to obedience, alters the nature of that obedience from what was required under and by the Law.

3. 3rd. Where the heart is not prepared for and disposed to this fundamental duty of praising God for the death and oblation of Christ, no other duty or act of obedience is accepted with God."

In bidding us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, two things are denoted:

- A. Freedom from the limitations of time and place (as were appointed under Judaism), and
- B. Diligent perseverance and constancy therein.

To abound in fervent praise unto God is the abiding duty of the Christian.

But for that there must be the regular exercise of faith. Calling into question the promises of God quenches the spirit of worship; doubts snap the strings of our harps; unbelief is the deadly enemy of praise. To praise God continually requires us to be in daily communion with Him. It is not to be wondered at that the joy of many believers is so sickly, when we consider how little fellowship they have with the Lord:

...if there be so little heat around the bulb of their thermometer, how can the mercury rise higher!

To praise God "continually" we must cultivate perpetual gratitude, and surely that should not be difficult!

"I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Ps. 34:1): at no lower standard than that must we aim.

How this meets the lament made by so many Christians. "There seems so very little I can do to express my gratitude unto the Lord." Ah, my brother, you may not be gifted with talents to exercise in public, you may not have much money to give to God's cause, but what is to withhold your offering unto Him a sacrifice of praise, and that "continually"! Is not this God's due? Did Spurgeon express it too strongly when he said,

"Praise is the rent which God requires for the use of His mercies."

Then...

...shall we rob God? Shall we withhold that in which He delights? Does not God give us abundant cause to praise Him "continually"!

"To show forth Thy loving kindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night" (Ps. 92:2). "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being" (Ps. 104:33). What a word is that for the aged and infirm Christian! Ah, dear reader, your eyes may have become so dim that you can scarcely read the Sacred page any more, your strength may have become too feeble for you to walk to the house of prayer, but your *lips* can still articulate and express thanksgiving! "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy *mercy*: for Thou hast considered my trouble" (Ps. 31:7): **rejoice in His pardoning**

mercy, preserving mercy, providing mercy.

"Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can show forth all His praise?" (Ps. 106:2).

Well did Goodwin close his reflections upon the Psalms of praise by saying, *"My brother, let us pray for such a heart as this, that the saints of the O.T. may not shame us who are Christians under the New."*

It is striking to note that the Hebrew word "bara" signifies "to create," while "barak" means "to praise," intimating that the praising of God is the chief end of our creation. Though nothing can be added to God's essential glory, yet praise promotes His manifestative glory, for it exalts Him before others.

In this manner the angels glorify Him for they are the choristers of Heaven, trumpeting forth His praise. An old writer quaintly pointed out that believers are the "temples" of God, and when their tongues are praising Him, their spiritual "organs" are then sounding forth. We read that the saints in Heaven have "harps" in their hands ([Rev. 14:2](#)), which are emblems of *praise*. Alas, that so often *our* harps are "hung on the willows" ([Ps. 137:2](#)), and murmurings and complaints are all that issue from our mouths. O my reader, be more earnest and diligent in seeking for grace to enable thee to be praising God continually.

***"But to do good & to communicate forget not:
for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased"
(verse 16).***

Here is the *fifth sacrifice* which the Christian is to offer unto God, namely, that of *ministering to others*, for all the acts and duties of love may fitly be termed "sacrifices."

In the previous verse the apostle has shown the
great obligation Godwards which the

sanctification of the Church by the blood of Christ places upon its members, but here he makes known what influence it ought to have upon our conduct manwards.

(*** Up – In – Out ***)

Thus...

he turns from the first table of the Law to the second, and insists that if redemption places us under additional obligations to love God with all our hearts, it likewise supplies added reasons why we should love our neighbors as ourselves.

The first word of verse 16 is a connective, but the commentators differ as to how it should be translated. Calvin's annotators insist it should be rendered "And"; John Owen suggested "Moreover"; our translators preferred "But." There is no material difference in these variants: if "but" be retained, it is *not* to be taken as exceptional, as though it introduced something adverse unto what had previously been presented. It is clearly a continuation, or an addition to the duty mentioned in verse 15.

As some might think that the *entire* duty of the Christian was comprehended in rendering to God that homage and devotion to which He is justly entitled, and that while we attend to that, nothing else need concern us, the apostle *added* "But"—*notwithstanding the diligence required in the former duty—forget not to do good unto men & minister to their needs.*

Herein we may perceive once more how carefully the Scriptures preserve the *balance* of truth at every point. The Divine Law is a unit, yet was it written upon two tables of stone, and the one must never be exalted to the disparagement of the other. True, there is an order to be observed: God Himself ever has the first claim upon our hearts, time and strength; nevertheless our fellow-creatures, and particularly our fellow-believers, also have real claims upon us, which we must not ignore.

To disregard the second table of the Law, is not only to inflict an injury upon our neighbors, but it is to disobey and therefore to displease God Himself.

There is a harmony in obedience...
a failure in any one point disturbs the whole, as is evident from [James 2:10, 11](#).

It is for this reason, then, that our verse closes with, "for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased."

It was at this very point that Israel failed so often under the old covenant. Instead of treating their servants considerately, they imposed upon them; instead of ministering to the widow, they robbed her; instead of relieving the poor, they oppressed them. Nevertheless, they were very strict in keeping up their worship of Jehovah! A striking example of this is recorded in the first half of [Isaiah 58](#).

The prophet was bidden to cry aloud and spare not, but to show the people their sins. They had sought God "daily," "forsook not His ordinances," yea, took "delight" in approaching Him (verse 2). **They were diligent in "fasting," yet God accepted not their worship**, saying *"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh"* ([verses 6, 7](#)).

Another solemn example is found in [Zechariah 7](#). God challenges them by asking, "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast *unto Me*, even to Me?" (verse 5). Then the prophet cried, "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassions every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart" (**verses 9, 10**). What a strange anomaly human nature presents! How glaring its inconsistencies! Punctilious in the performances of public worship, yet utterly remiss in attending to private duties! Diligent and zealous in keeping the fasts and feasts of the Lord, yet regardless of the needs and cries of their destitute fellows! How is such to be accounted for? Easily: it bolsters up self-righteousness, feeds the idea that the favor of God can be purchased by the creature, and causes such pharisees to be looked up to for their "holiness" (?) by certain superficial people. Hence it is that the duties of benevolence inculcated in our text are preceded by ***"forget not,"*** **intimating there is a more than ordinary proneness in professors of the Gospel to neglect them.**

It is a sinful neglect which is here prohibited.

John Owen suggested four reasons or vicious habits of mind from which such forgetfulness proceeds.

1. First, "**an undue trust unto religious duties, as in many barren professors,**" by which he means those who set a high value upon their religious acts and think to win Heaven thereby. How many there be who contribute liberally to "the church" and yet under-pay their employees and overcharge their customers!—the gifts of such are a stench in God's nostrils.
2. Second, "from vain pleas and pretences against duties attended with trouble and charge." **It is much easier and pleasanter to go to the house of prayer and sing God's praises, than it is to enter the dwellings of the poor and personally wait upon those who are sick. It costs less to put a coin in the collection-plate than it does to feed and clothe the destitute.**
3. Third, "a want of that goodness of nature and disposition which effectual grace will produce." **The spirit of Christ in the heart will produce consideration and concern for others, and counteract our innate selfishness; but where Christ is absent, the Devil rules the heart.**
4. Fourth, "A **want of that compassion toward sufferers, which is required of them** that are still in the body: verse 3." May God preserve us from all religion that hardens and produces callousness, stifling even "natural affection."

"But to do good and to communicate forget not." **"It is the duty of Christians to express their gratitude to God for His goodness to them, through Christ Jesus, by doing good: i.e., by performing acts of beneficence—in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked,**

relieving the distressed; and in this way communicating to their poor and afflicted brethren of the blessings Providence has conferred on them.

While the terms are of that general kind as to express beneficence and the communication of benefits generally, it seems probable that the apostle had a direct reference to doing good by communicating to others those blessings for which they were especially bound to give thanks. It is the duty of Christians to do good to their fellow-men by communicating to them, so far as this is competent to them, those heavenly and spiritual blessings for which they are bound continually to give thanks to God"
(John Brown).

"But to do good and to communicate forget not." That which is here inculcated is *the sacrifice of love unto our fellows.*

Two words are used to set forth this duty.

1. First, ***"do good"*** which concerns the whole course of our lives, especially with regard to others.
 - a. Three things are included.
 - i. First, a gracious propensity or readiness of mind thereto: "the liberal deviseth liberal things" (Isa. 32:8): ***he does not wait till he is asked, but seeks to be on the alert and anticipate the needs of others.***
 - ii. Second, ***the actual exercise of this benevolent inclination, in all those ways which will be useful and helpful, spiritually and temporally, to mankind.*** Idealizing and theorizing is not

sufficient: there must be the acting out of good will.

- iii. Third, by **buying up all occasions and opportunities for the exercise of compassion and loving-kindness to others.**

A spirit of philanthropy and benevolence is to be manifested by well-doing.

*It is not enough to be good;
we must do good.*

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" ([1 John 3:18](#)).

"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was *full of good works* and alms deeds which she did" ([Acts 9:36](#)): her charitable actions are called "good works" because they were profitable and did good to others. Nor is this ministering to the wants of others to be confined unto the members of our own family,

or even the limits of our denomination. *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto those who are of the household of faith"* ([Gal. 6:10](#))—therein the spirit of Christianity differs from the narrow and clannish spirit of all other religions.

God does good unto all men, and we are to be *"emulators of Him as dear children"* ([Eph. 5:1](#)).

*"But to do good and to communicate forget not."
Christians are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works"
([Eph. 2:10](#)), regeneration capacitating them thereunto.*

Christ gave Himself for us that we should be a people who are "zealous of good works" ([Titus 2:14](#)), for by them we honor Him and adorn our profession.

No matter what self-sacrifice they entail, nor **how ungrateful** be the beneficiaries, **we are to be diligent and persevering in helping all we can:** *"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing"* ([2 Thess. 3:13](#)).

"For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" ([1 Pet. 2:15](#)).

And even though our well doing fails to silence the criticism of those who believe not, yea, if our perseverance therein brings down upon us increased opposition and persecution, yet it is written, "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" ([1 Pet. 4:19](#)).

The second term used here in connection with the sacrifice of charity is "communicate," which means passing on to others what God has entrusted to us,

according as their necessities do require. Literally, **the Greek word signifies "having something in common with others."**

It is the actual exercise of that pity for the poor and indigent which is required of us in the distribution of good things unto them, according to our ability.

This is an important evangelical duty which the Scriptures repeatedly charge us with: the glory of God, the salvation of our souls, and the honor of our profession, are highly concerned therein. It is striking to note that when he commended the Corinthians for their liberal contributions to the poor saints at Jerusalem, the apostle declared that "they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ" (**2 Cor. 9:13**)—**obedience to the command in our text is required by the Gospel!**

John Owen rightly pointed out that "To be negligent herein is to despise the wisdom of God in the disposal of the lots and conditions of His own children in the world in so great variety, as He hath done always, and will always continue to do." What light that throws on those providential dispensations of God which are often so mysterious and exercising to the hearts of many of His people! **Here is an important reason intimated why God blesses a few of His saints with considerable of this world's goods and why many of them have scarcely any at all: it is to provide opportunity and occasion for the exercise of those graces in them which their several conditions call for.**

By the unequal distribution of His material mercies, the rich have opportunity for thankfulness, charity, and bounty; while the poor are called upon to exercise patience, submission, trust, and humility. Where those graces are mutually exercised, there is

beauty, order, and harmony, and a revenue of glory unto God.

Christians are rarely more sensible of God's goodness to them than when giving and receiving in a proper manner. *He that gives aright feels the power of Divine grace at work in his heart, and he who receives aright is very conscious of Divine love and care in such supplies: God is near to both.*

Consequently, to be selfishly callous on the one hand, or proudly independent and scornful of charity on the other, is to impugn the wisdom of God in His disposal of the varied temporal circumstances of His people. *No man is rich or poor merely for himself, but rather to occupy that place in the social order of things which God has designed unto His own glory.* From what has been before us we may see how that many even of those who believe not are the temporal gainers by the death of Christ and the fruits thereof in the lives of His people.

Many and varied are *the motives* which Scripture employs to persuade the saint unto this duty of ministering unto the needy of His fellows. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again" ([Prov. 19:17](#)). Do we really believe this? Do we *act* as though we did? The Lord allows none to lose by being generous, but repays him with interest one way or another, either to him or his posterity. "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse" ([Prov. 28:27](#)): the selfish man exposes himself to the ill-will of those whom he callously ignores, and brings himself under the providential curse of God. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law (on this matter), even his prayer shall be abomination" ([Prov. 28:9](#))—bear *that* in mind, dear reader, if you wish to have and retain the ear of God.

"Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again"

(Luke 6:38).

What an inducement is that! how it should stimulate unto liberality those who by nature have a miserly disposition. *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven"* ([Matthew 5:16](#)): how that should encourage us in the performing of good works!

"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" ([2 Cor. 9:6](#)): the writer has lived long enough to see many striking examples of both of these classes. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about *doing good*" ([Acts 10:38](#)). He was ever thinking of others and ministering to them: feeding the hungry, healing the sick, relieving the distressed; and He has left us an example that we should follow *His* steps.

Let it be pointed out, however, that God requires us to use discretion and discrimination in the bestowments of charity. There is a class of shiftless idlers who are ever ready to impose upon the compassionate and generous hearted, and make the benevolence of others a reason for their own indolence. *It is positively wrong to encourage those who seek to subsist on the liberality of others, instead of earning their own bread.*

Indiscriminate giving often does more harm than good.

It is our bounden duty to go to the trouble of properly investigating each case on its own merits, instead of allowing our sentiment to override our judgment.

God Himself has said, *"This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"* (2 Thess. 3:10), and it is sinful for us to *negative* that by giving money to able-bodied loafers.

"For with such sacrifices God is well-pleased." Whatever benefits the Christian bestows on others God regards them as done to Himself, and honors them with the name of "sacrifices." What gracious condescension on His part, that He should dignify our worthless works as to pronounce them holy and sacred things, acceptable to Himself! Rightly, then, did Calvin point out, "When, therefore, *love* does not prevail among us, we not only rob men of their right, but God Himself, who has by a solemn sentence dedicated to Himself what He has commanded to be done to men." How this consideration ought to stir us up to the exercise of kindness towards our neighbor. The more we do so, the more pleasure do we give unto Him to whom we are infinitely indebted. *Withhold not thy hand, then, from that which delights thy God.*

"For with such sacrifices God is well-pleased."

There is a twofold emphasis in the word "such." First, it implies a contrast, denoting that God no longer required those ancient sacrifices which He had enjoined until an abrogation of the old covenant. Herein was a clear intimation that Judaism had been set aside. Second, it graciously stresses the fact that, though we deem our feeble praises and charitable works as too poor to be worthy of notice or mention, God Himself regards those very things as acts of worship that meet with His hearty approbation.

A beautiful illustration of what has just been pointed out is found in [Philippians 4](#). The Philippian saints had sent a gift to the apostle Paul, which he not only gratefully acknowledged, but declared that the same was "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (verse 18).

"Beyond this the highest aspirations of a Christian cannot go. It is all he can wish; it is above all that he can think. To have the approbation of good men is delightful; to have the approbation of our own conscience is more delightful still; but to have the approbation of God, this is surely the highest recompense a creature can reach. This approbation is very strongly expressed in the Word: 'God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister' ([Heb. 6:10](#)).

It will be still more illustriously displayed when the Son appears in the glory of the Father, and in the presence of an assembled universe proclaims to those who, as a token of gratitude to God for the blessings of salvation, have done good and communicated: (John Brown).

'For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me: ' [Matthew 25:35-40](#)

- An Exposition of Hebrews.

Sacrifice

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
([13:15-16](#))

Sacrifice was extremely important to the Jew. It was God's provision for cleansing of sin under the Old Covenant. **Many Christian Jews were no doubt wondering if God required any kind of sacrifice under the New Covenant.** They knew Christ offered the one and only sacrifice for sin. But they were used to many kinds of sacrifice, and perhaps God still demanded some offering, some sacrifice, even of Christians.

Yes, He does, they are told. **He demands the sacrifice of our praise and of our good works in His name. He demands sacrifice not in the form of a ritual or ceremony, but in word and in deed—in our praise of Him and in our service to others.**

In Word

God no longer wants sacrifices of grain or animals. He wants only **the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.** The psalmists knew a great deal about this sort of sacrifice. If their writings could be characterized by any single word it would be praise. "I will give thanks to the LORD according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High" ([Ps. 7:17](#)). "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him" ([43:5](#)). "I will give thanks to Thee, O LORD, among the peoples; and I will sing praises to Thee among the nations" ([108:3](#)). All of the last five psalms begin with

"Praise the LORD," in Hebrew hallelujah.

The sacrifice God desires is the cry of our lips in praise to Him.

The Christian's sacrifice of praise is to be offered continually. It is not to be a fair-weather offering, but an offering in every circumstance.

"In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" ([1 Thess. 5:18](#)).

In Deed

John warns us that *"the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen"* ([1 John 4:20](#)).

In other words, if our praise of God in word is not accompanied by doing good and sharing, it is not acceptable to Him.

Worship involves action that honors God.

Isaiah gave a similar warning to Israel. When the people asked God, "Why have we fasted and Thou dost not see?" the Lord replied, "Is this not the fast which I chose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" ([Isa. 58:3, 6-7](#)).

Praise of God in word and deed are inseparable.

Lip service must be accompanied by life service.

"This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" ([James 1:27](#)).

The only acceptable sacrifice we can offer to God with our hands is to do good to one another, to share, to minister in whatever ways we can to the needs of others in His name.

"Little children," John says, "let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" - ([1 John 3:18](#)).

- MacArthur New Testament Commentary

Got Questions: "What is a peace offering?"

Answer: The modern idea of a peace offering is that of “a propitiatory or conciliatory gift.” A man who offends his wife will often visit a florist with the thought that bringing home flowers will help smooth things over—the bouquet will be a “peace offering” of sorts. Propitiate means “to make someone pleased or less angry by giving or saying something desired,” and conciliatory means “intended to placate or pacify.”

These definitions are interesting because the phrase *peace offering* has come to mean something completely different—almost the exact opposite—of what it originally meant in the Bible.

A peace offering in the Old Testament Law is described in Leviticus 7:11-21. It was a voluntary sacrifice given to God in three specific instances.

1. First, a peace offering could be given as a freewill offering, meaning that the worshiper was giving the peace offering as a way to say thank you for God's unsought generosity. It was basically just a way to praise God for His goodness.
2. The second way a peace offering could be given was alongside a fulfilled vow. A good **example** of this was when **Hannah** fulfilled her vow to God by bringing Samuel to the temple; on that occasion she also brought a peace offering to express the peace in her heart toward God concerning her sacrifice—it was a way to say, “I have no resentment; I am holding nothing back in the payment of my vow.”
3. The third purpose of a peace offering was to give thanksgiving for God's deliverance in an hour of dire need.

None of these three reasons to sacrifice had anything to do with propitiation, with appeasing God, or with pacifying Him.

There were under the Old Covenant sacrifices intended to represent propitiation (Leviticus 1–2; 4) but with the understanding that God has always been a God of grace (see Ephesians 2:8-9). He does not expect us to appease Him with our works but only to confess our need and dependence on Him. Under the Old Covenant, this relationship was expressed by the sacrificial system, which always looked forward to the sacrifice of the Messiah. Under the New Covenant, the Law has been written on our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3), and the Holy Spirit of God gives us the power to live our lives accordingly (Romans 8:1-8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). The sacrifices we give now are spiritual (Hebrews 13:15) and living (Romans 12:1).

Most sacrifices in the Old Testament system were not eaten by worshipers, but the peace offering was meant to be eaten—only a portion of the animal or grain brought to the altar was burned; the rest was given back to the worshiper and to the poor and hungry. The beautiful picture here is of God’s provision for His people, both physically and spiritually. His grace and goodness are present throughout the offerings. **In the peace offering, God was providing what we need: a way to thank Him for His goodness and physical sustenance.**

God is not interested in taking from us. That is not His heart at all. But the lie we so often believe is that our good actions bring about His goodness, and our sinful actions must be paid for in personal sacrifice. The peace offering shows that worshipers in the Old Testament were not any more responsible for their salvation than worshipers in the New Testament.

Throughout the ages, people have been tempted to think that sacrifices create God’s favor. This belief is evident in our modern understanding of a peace offering as a propitiation for wrongdoing. But only Christ’s sacrifice creates favor with God and covers wrongdoing, and the Old Testament sacrifices were a picture of that future provision.

Recommended Resources: [A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament](#) edited by [Roy Zuck](#)

The Peace Offering

“This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the Lord”

(v. 11).- [Leviticus 7:11–21](#)

Given the complex legislation and rituals found in the Mosaic law, it can be easy to assume there was no room for spontaneous praise under the old covenant. This would be a false assumption, however, because God has always been delighted to receive special offerings from those whose hearts have been set apart to serve Him
[\(Deut. 10:12–22\)](#).

When worshipers under the old covenant wanted to present a special offering before the Lord that was not part of those rituals for propitiation, dedication, or expiation that everyone had to offer (Lev. 1–2; 4), a peace offering was brought to the sanctuary out of the overflow of the worshiper’s heart. Today’s passage describes what was involved in the peace offering, which could be given any time people wanted to celebrate the peace they enjoyed with God. The peace offering was given under three circumstances — for thanksgiving, upon the payment of a vow, or as a free expression of the worshiper’s goodwill (7:11–18). Freewill offerings were given in response to God’s unexpected or unsought generosity. A vow offering was brought to celebrate an answer to prayer after a person vowed to praise the Lord if He answered the worshiper’s prayer. The peace offering for thanksgiving is probably better translated as a “confession” or “praise” offering that was given when someone was in dire need of deliverance. All of these peace offerings are seen in Scripture. Hannah’s lavish offering when she dedicated Samuel to the Lord is an example of a peace offering given to commemorate the payment of a vow ([1 Sam. 1:21–28](#)). [Psalm 22:22–31](#) was probably part of the liturgy that could be sung when peace offerings for deliverance or freewill peace offerings were given.

The peace offering was the only sacrifice worshipers could eat. Only part of the animal and cereal was offered up, and the rest was left for the person bringing the offering and anyone else in the vicinity of the sanctuary to consume ([Lev. 7:11–18](#)). Being at peace with God is a special occasion indeed and worthy of celebration with a great feast. For many Israelites, this may have been the only time they ever ate meat. Moreover, strict cleanliness laws had to be followed regarding the eating of the sacrifice (vv. 19–21). Though at peace with the worshiper, our Creator remained holy and could still not tolerate any impurity in His presence.

Coram Deo

The spontaneous expressions of gratitude portrayed in Israel's peace offerings remind us that we should never forget or take lightly the peace we have with our Lord. Being called and justified, each time we think on the truth that Christ has brought us peace with God we should be moved to praise Him and to declare the good things He has done for us to others. Do you view peace with God as a cause for perpetual joy?

Passages for Further Study

Genesis 31

Leviticus 3

[Luke 2:8–21](#)

[Ephesians 2:11–22](#)

Fellowship Offerings

There is a curious consistency—almost—in the Old Testament concerning offerings made to God. Anything made of grain which was to be presented to the Lord was to be unleavened—for as our Lord used it, leaven (yeast) is symbolic of sinfulness. Nothing made of grain was to have leaven it—absolutely nothing.

Except the fellowship offerings. Called a “peace offering” in the King James (and NASB), this offering is one which is not brought in obligation to the Lord, or as atonement for sin, or any other required thing. It is the offering of one who simply needs to express the peace God has planted in his life. When God is doubly good to you, then a peace offering is the fitting gesture of the thankful heart, living in God's own peace. That offering had to be leavened.

Fellowship—the word is also translated Communion—on our part means that we bring a fellowship offering which is inherently sinful, for we are sinners. Nothing perfect can we do. But our Lord knows that. So He blesses the fellowship offering, for if He is to have fellowship with us, He knows that it will be with sinners. Yet He knows we do not want to come to Him empty handed. So He gives us the fellowship offering.

What might a Christian bring today, and why?

· Sometimes it is sheer joy. When a child (or a grandchild) is born it is fitting to tell your Lord just how much joy is in your heart. Bring a gift for the church; let it be the symbol of your commitment to raise that child in the faith.

· Sometimes it is a noteworthy occasion, such as a special anniversary. When God blesses you with a wife who carries within her the beauty that only the saints of God can carry, it is fitting to tell the Lord that you are grateful.

· Sometimes it is at the end of a trial, such as a severe illness. When He has been your Rock, your Guide and Friend, it is fitting to acknowledge Him as best you can.

Nothing that we could bring in the way of a gift, an offering, could be as perfect as He is. But He knows that, and accepts from us the imperfect, for in Love's eyes God sees little Christs, not big sinners.

Communion is a chance to present to your Lord such a fellowship offering. We celebrate the sacrifice Jesus made, a sacrifice of all that He had—His life. By this He is Lord and Savior. What better time to bring to Him the greatest sacrifice you can make: your life, dedicated to Him. You might think that He would accept no such thing, for we are sinners. Instead, he who would save his life will lose it, and he who loses his life (for Christ) will save it. Bring it as your fellowship—your Communion—offering. He is gracious and kind; He knows what it is to give all. Even if all we have is sinful, He knows what it costs us.

Peace Offering

The third offering is the *shelem*, or Peace Offering. This category, first discussed in Leviticus 3, included Thanksgiving Offerings (Lev 7:12), Freewill Offerings (7:16), and Wave Offerings (7:30). The offering could be cattle (3:1), sheep (3:7), or a goat (3:12). It could be male or female, but must be without defect. If it was a Thanksgiving Offering, it could also include a variety of breads (7:12). The purpose of the Peace Offering was to consecrate a meal between two or more parties before God and share that meal together in fellowship of peace and a commitment to each others' future prosperity. The portions unsuitable for eating were given to God (7:19-27). Depending on the type of Peace Offering, the breast may have been given to the High Priest (7:31) and the right thigh may be given to the priest officiating the meal (7:32). The rest of the meal was to be eaten within one day by the fellowship of parties (7:16), and the leftovers were to be burnt after two days (7:17).

The Fellowship Offering

(Leviticus 3:1-17; 7:11-34; 19:5-8; 22:29-30)

Introduction

As I have studied the Book of Leviticus this past week, I have come to realize several things which greatly motivate and enhance my study. Let me share these with you as we commence our study of the "Fellowship" or "Peace" Offering.

First, I have begun to appreciate the opportunity to consider the benefits of Christ's sacrifice one-by-one. A friend of mine tells the story of the woman who is trying to decide how she should confess her sins. She asks, "Shall I 'fess 'em as I does 'em, or shall I bunch 'em?"

The problem of "bunching" is very much related to our study of the offerings. The offerings of the Old Testament are something like the tools in John Maurer's shop: He has a particular tool for each particular task, and you never use the wrong tool for the task.

The Old Testament seems to have more offerings than we can count. That can lead to a fair bit of frustration on the part of the New Testament saint. **There is a very important lesson to be learned here, which may help to motivate us in our study of these offerings. There is no one Old Testament offering which sums up the work of our Lord, and thus we must see that Christ's death, burial and resurrection served to accomplish many different functions, not just one.** I believe that it is Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer who lists over thirty things which the death of Christ accomplished.

We tend to "bunch" the benefits of the work of Christ, rather than to deal with them one at a time, and in so doing we miss much of the blessing which could be ours. One great contribution of the offerings in the Book of Leviticus is that they portray the blessings of the death of Christ, the Lamb of God, individually. **The Old Testament saint would sacrifice the various offerings and would grasp, to some degree, the blessings God had given him. With each offering was associated some particular blessing.** For us, all the blessings of God are realized by one offering, made once for all, the death of Christ at Calvary. In the Old Testament offerings, we are given the privilege to pause and to focus on the particular benefits and blessings we have received in Christ's death, and to do so one at a time.

Second, every sacrifice that an Israelite offered was of a certain type, and for a specific purpose. Every offering has very exacting rules as to what is offered, how it is offered, and by whom it is offered. For example, the Peace Offering could be eaten on the day it was sacrificed, or on the day after, but not on the third day. To eat this sacrificial meat on the third day would have serious consequences ([Lev. 19:5-8](#)). A burnt offering had to be a male, while the Peace Offering could have been a male or a female, but not a bird. An ox or a lamb with an overgrown or stunted member could be offered for a freewill Peace Offering, but not for a votive Peace Offering ([Lev. 22:23](#)). Because of the consequences for

failing to observe the “laws” of the offerings, one must be very certain what offering he was making, and then do it in accordance with all the laws God had laid down.

If you would, the law prescribed the plan, the way in which every offering was to be made. Before men could follow the plan, they had to determine the purpose, that is they had to decide which offering they were about to make, and why. **Thus, there was a built-in safeguard against mindless ritual, in which one went through the motions of making an offering without really thinking about what he was doing or why. The Israelite’s worship was to involve his whole heart, soul, mind, and strength.** The precise regulations encouraged the Israelite worshipper to engage his mind in his worship.

Third, the only meat which an Israelite ate from their cattle was that which was offered as a Peace Offering. I know this is hard to believe, but listen to the command of God as given in Leviticus chapter 17:

“Any man from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, or a lamb, or a goat in the camp, or who slaughters it outside the camp, and has not brought it to the doorway of the tent of the meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD before the tabernacle of the LORD, bloodguiltiness is to be reckoned to that man. He has shed blood and that man shall be cut off from among his people” ([Lev. 17:3-4](#)).

These are strong words indeed! **Any animal that was slaughtered had to be offered to God as a sacrifice. Any blood that was shed, was shed as a part of a sacrifice. Thus, any meat that was eaten (at least from the cattle of the Israelites) had to be that which was first offered to God as a part of a sacrifice at the tent of meeting. And since the Peace Offering was the only sacrifice of which the Israelite could eat, every time the Israelite wanted to eat meat for dinner, he had to offer a Peace Offering.**

There are three principle passages in the Book of Leviticus which deal with the Peace Offering. They are:

A. [Leviticus 3:1-17](#)—the mechanics of the sacrifice

B. [Leviticus 7:11-34](#)—the meaning of the sacrifice

C. [Leviticus 19:5-8](#)—The “law of leftovers”

[Leviticus 3](#) is structured similarly to the first chapter of Leviticus. The regulations for the sacrifice of the Peace Offering are dealt with in terms of the kind of animal sacrificed. Thus, in chapter 3 we find the following structure:

A. [Leviticus 3:1-5](#)—offerings from the herd

B. [Leviticus 3:6-17](#)—offerings from the flock

1. a lamb (vv. 7-11)

2. a goat (vv. 12-17)

Leviticus chapter 7:11-34 is structured differently:

A. [Lev. 7:11](#)—Introduction

B. [Lev. 7:12-14](#)—Grain Offerings which accompany the Peace Offering

C. [Lev. 7:15-34](#)—The flesh of the Peace Offering

1. Its Defilement— vv. 15-27

a. By delay, vv. 15-18

b. By contact with unclean thing, vv. 19-21

c. By definition, vv. 22-27

2. Its Distribution—vv. 28-34

The Peace Offering

Imagine for the moment that you are an Israelite in the days of Moses, and that you are about to make a Peace Offering, according to all of the regulations in the Pentateuch. **You could offer a Peace Offering as an act of thanksgiving ([Lev. 7:12; 22:29-30](#)), or to fulfill a special vow ([Lev. 7:16; 22:21](#)), or as a freewill offering ([Lev. 7:16; 22:18, 21, 23](#)). These were all optional offerings, which an Israelite could offer at any time**, except for the feast of Pentecost ([Lev. 23:19](#)) and the fulfillment of the Nazarite's days of separation ([Num. 6:13-20](#)), when the offering was mandatory.

You would begin by selecting an animal without any defect, either male or female, from the herd or from the flock ([Lev. 3:1, 6](#)). You would then bring this animal to the doorway of the tent of meeting, where you would lay your hand upon its head (3:2, 8, 13), thus identifying your sin with this animal, and yourself with its death. When you have slain the animal, the priests will collect the blood which is shed and sprinkle it around the altar (3:2, 8, 13).

The animal would then be skinned⁴⁶ and cut into pieces. The priests would then take the fat of the animal, along with the kidneys and the lobe of the liver, and burn it on the altar of burnt offering (3:3-5; 9-11; 14-16). God's portion of the Peace Offering would be the blood and the fat ([Lev. 3:16-17](#); cf. 17:10-13). The priests would be given the breast and the right thigh of the animal (cf. [Exod. 29:26-28](#); [Lev. 7:30-34](#); [10:14-15](#)). Aaron and his sons receive the breast (7:31), while the thigh goes to that priest who offers up the Peace Offering (7:33).

Along with the fat which is offered up to God there would also be the appropriate offering of grain. In the case of a thanksgiving offering both leavened and unleavened cakes were to be offered, some of which was burned on the altar, and the rest of which was to go to the priests (7:12-13). This was not the only grain offering which was leavened, for the celebration of Pentecost included the offering of leavened bread (Lev. 23:17). Those who would tell us that leaven is always a symbol of evil, and that, as such, it can never be used in conjunction with Israel's worship or offerings, have some explaining to do here.⁴⁷

Since the fat⁴⁸ and blood are offered to God and the breast and the right thigh are given to the priest, the rest of the sacrificial animal is left for the offerer to eat. Thus, after the offering of the fat portions on the altar, the Israelite would eat a meal,⁴⁹ partaking of the portions of the sacrificial animal which remained. **Not much is said about the meal that is eaten. In contrast, there is considerable emphasis placed on the disposal of the meat of the Peace Offering (cf. [Lev. 7:15-18](#); [19:5-8](#)).** I call this, "the law of the leftovers."⁵⁰ **The meat of the thanksgiving Peace Offering must be eaten on the day it is sacrificed (7:15); if it is a votive offering or a freewill offering, it can be saved and eaten on the next day, but then must be burned (7:16-18; 19:5-8). The one who disobeys this regulation must be cut off from his people (19:8).**

Distinctives of the Peace Offering

There are several distinctives of the Peace Offering, as compared with the Burnt and Grain Offerings of chapters 1 and 2. It is these distinctives which provide us with the key to the unique role of this offering.

First, the animal sacrificed in the Peace Offering could be from the herd or from the flock (but not a bird), whether male or female.

Second, the offering was shared by God, by the priests, and by the offerer. All of the Burnt Offering was the Lord's (except for the skin). Most of the Grain Offering was for the priests. But the Peace Offering was shared by all, each receiving their appointed portions.

Third, three of the occasions on which the Peace Offering was appropriate were for thanksgiving, for completing a vow, and for a freewill offering.

Fourth, **the Peace Offering was unique in that there was a meal associated with this offering.**

Fifth, ***the thanksgiving Peace Offering included leavened bread (Lev. 7:13).***

The Origin and Meaning of the Peace Offering

Sacrifices were not new to the Israelite, nor to the pagan, for that matter. The laws of Leviticus which pertain to the offerings do not initiate sacrifice, they merely seek to regulate it. The reason for these regulations, as for most all laws, is that men are abusing certain privileges. Before we seek to discern the meaning of the Peace Offering, let us take a moment to trace the history of sacrifice from the biblical data we are given.

Sacrifice was first offered by Adam and Eve and by their sons. Animals had to be slaughtered for the skins which covered the nakedness of Adam and his wife ([Gen. 3:21](#)).⁵¹ Then, in Genesis chapter 4, Cain and Abel made offerings to God ([Gen. 4:1-5](#)). Abel offered a blood (animal) sacrifice. It is especially interesting to note the wording here: "And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and **of their fat portions**" ([Gen. 4:4a](#), emphasis mine).

In the first recorded animal sacrifice by men, we are told that the "fat portions" are offered. And thus we read in Leviticus, "... all fat is the LORD's" ([Lev. 3:16b](#)). Then, after the flood, Noah offered animal sacrifices to God as burnt offerings ([Gen. 8:20](#)), and as a result, God made a covenant never to destroy mankind in this way again ([Gen. 8:21-22](#)). God then pronounced a blessing on Noah and his sons, and gave the animals to them for food, seemingly for the first time ([Gen. 9:1-3](#)). There was the stipulation, however, that the blood of the animals could not be eaten ([Gen. 9:4-5](#)), which, if it is not the precedent for this

command in Leviticus, is surely somehow related: “It is a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings; you shall not eat any fat or any blood” ([Lev. 3:17](#)). The prohibition against shedding man’s blood is then stated, along with the institution of capital punishment, as the penalty for murder ([Gen. 9:5-7](#)).

It is my speculation that from this time on, no animal was sacrificed apart from some kind of sacrificial ceremony, at which time the blood was poured out, and perhaps the fat was offered up in fire to the Lord. I believe that this practice persisted, in a perverted form, by the pagans who descended from Noah and his sons. I say this on the basis of two biblical texts:

So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play ([Exod. 32:6](#)).

“The reason is so that the sons of Israel may bring their sacrifices which they were sacrificing in the open field, that they may bring them in to the LORD, at the doorway of the tent of meeting to the priest, and sacrifice them as sacrifices of peace offerings to the LORD. And the priest shall sprinkle the blood on the altar of the LORD at the doorway of the tent of meeting, and offer up the fat in smoke as a soothing aroma to the LORD. And they shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations” ([Lev. 17:5-7](#)).

Before Moses had descended from Mt. Sinai with God’s instructions, which included the sacrifices, the Israelites were offering “peace offerings” as a part of their heathen worship. They did not learn to make peace offerings from Moses, and so they must have known similar offerings from their past. The text in [Leviticus 17](#) is even more explicit. The reason why God ordered the Israelites to slaughter every animal as a sacrifice before the tent of meeting ([Lev. 17:1-4](#)) was because they were slaughtering their animals outside the camp in the open field, not in a neutral way, but as a part of a heathen ritual which involved the worship of “goat demons” (17:7). Thus, the regulations of Leviticus pertaining to the offerings were to deal with the corrupted form of offering, which I believe stems from the sacrifices of Able, and later of Noah.

The killing of animals by the shedding of their blood thus was originated by God, and was normally associated with atonement (covering sin) and with God’s blessing, as expressed in His covenants. The Book of Genesis thus laid a vital foundation for the origins of worship and of sacrifice, intended to correct the distortions and perversions of it over time by sinful men. Much of Israel’s understanding of the Peace Offering (and the rest) was therefore based on the divine revelation of Genesis.

In the Book of Exodus we find further revelation concerning the Peace Offering,

which would assist the Israelite in understanding the significance of this offering. God spoke specifically of the Peace Offering in [Exodus 20:24](#): “You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.”

Again, in Exodus chapter 24, we find the Peace Offering. You will recall that God has just proclaimed the details of the Mosaic Covenant to Moses, and in chapter 24 this covenant will be formally ratified. Thus, we read:

And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. ... Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they beheld God, **and they ate and drank** ([Exod. 24:4-5](#), 9-11, emphasis mine).

Numbers chapter 7 is an account of the gifts and offerings which were initially offered by the leaders of Israel (7:2), which includes peace offerings. It seems to me that in both [Exodus 24](#) and [Numbers 7](#) the leaders are acting representatively for the people in making their peace offerings. While it is not stated per se in [Exodus 24](#), it would seem to me that the meal which was eaten by the leaders of Israel in God’s presence was the prototype and predecessor of the peace offering which would be made in conjunction with the tabernacle. Where did the leaders of Israel get the food which they ate in God’s presence? I think that it was that which remained from the peace offerings of 24:5.

It is against the backdrop of Genesis and Exodus, in the light of the previous sacrifices and peace offerings of God’s people, that the Israelite was to understand the peace offering. But this is not all the information we have concerning the meaning of the Peace Offering. In addition, we have (1) the meaning of the original term employed for the Peace Offering, (2) the instructions and regulations pertaining to the Peace Offering, (3) biblical examples of the Peace Offering, and, (4) the ability to distinguish this offering from the others (knowing the primary significance of the other offerings at least enables us to discern what facets of Israel’s relationship to God have not yet been enacted by their sacrificial ritual). Let us briefly consider each of these, so that we can discern the meaning of the Peace Offering to the Israelite of Moses’ day.

(1) The meaning of “peace.” There is considerable difference of opinion as to exactly what the Hebrew term employed for the “Peace” Offering actually means. Nevertheless, there is some help to be gained from a consideration of the general meaning of the root word.

Essentially “peace” has the connotation of “wholeness” or “completeness.”

An illustration of biblical “wholeness” can be seen in marriage, specifically in the marriage of Adam and Eve. When God made Adam, he was initially alone. When Adam named the animals, they all passed before him—in pairs! There was Mr. and Mrs. Sheep, Mr. and Mrs. Ox, and so on. Adam began to feel incomplete, and rightly so. God said that Adam’s aloneness was not good, and so he made a mate for him—Eve. When the two were joined together, they became one flesh. Adam became “whole” when he became one with Eve.

So the Israelites became whole when they become one with God in worship. “Peace” describes this wholeness. I believe “peace” refers to the condition of acceptance (cf. [Lev. 19:5](#), “So that you might be accepted”) which the Israelite experienced with God by virtue of the sacrifices, resulting in an inner peace on the part of each Israelite. Since the offerer places his hand on the animal that is sacrificed, the element of sin is clearly present. This offering assures the offerer that he has peace with God, based upon the shedding of innocent blood.

(2) The instructions pertaining to the Peace Offering. In particular, the most striking features of this offering are that the offerer personally partakes of the sacrificial meat by means of a festive meal. I take it, that in so doing the focus here is more upon the experiential benefits to the offerer than in the previous offerings. In the Burnt Offering, the offerer received none of the sacrificed animal at all. In the Grain Offering, the same was true, although the priests fared better here. But it is in the Peace Offering, indeed, only in the Peace Offering, that the offerer gets something back, something like a rebate. I believe this suggests that the emphasis falls on the benefits to the offerer, that the offerer is here more in view than previously has been the case.

(3) The biblical examples of the Peace Offering. In 1 Samuel chapter 1, Hannah made a vow to the Lord that she would dedicate her son to the Lord if He would but give her a boy child. When God answered her prayer, she fulfilled her promise, thus completing her vow. Thus, in obedience to the instructions found in Leviticus pertaining to the Peace Offering, Hannah went to Shiloh and gave her son to the Lord, offering her Peace Offering at this time (1 Sam. 1:22-28). As she had experienced the “wholeness” of child-bearing and of being able to fulfill her vow, she offered her “peace” offering.

In many other instances the Peace Offering was offered in the history of Israel. Interestingly, this offering was made both in times of great sorrow (e.g. Judg. 20:26; 21:4) and in times of great joy (e.g. Dt. 27:7; Josh. 8:31; 1 Sam. 11:15). In each instance the Peace Offering focuses on the benefits, the wholeness, which Israel is experiencing, or which she had lost (and for which she hopes), the offering then being an act of faith, a looking forward to a future wholeness or peace, which God will grant His people.

(4) The Peace Offering as contrasted to the Burnt and Grain Offerings. I said at the outset of this message that each of the sacrifices focuses on one particular facet of God's grace and of the benefits which God's people experience through the sacrifices. **The Burnt Offering focus on the satisfaction of God's righteousness because of the sacrificial death of the animal offered.** Here, as it were, the emphasis falls on God, and the satisfaction of His anger, due to the general fallen condition of man. **The Grain Offering focuses on the Israelite's dependence upon God, not only for forgiveness and spiritual life, but for physical life.**

The Peace Offering focuses on the Israelite's "peace with God," the joys and the peace of mind which comes from knowing that God is at peace with us.

Thus, whether it is the joy that God has enabled the Israelite to fulfill his vow, or in thanks for some gracious act of God, or a freewill offering, the Israelite's peace with God is in view.

The Peace Offering and the Contemporary Christian

(1) Christ is our Peace Offering. The primary significance of the Peace Offering of the Old Testament is to be found in its antitype, Jesus Christ. In the offering of the Peace Offering the Israelite was benefited by the peace of knowing and experiencing God's forgiveness. In fact, it was more than this. God's anger was not just appeased, God was no longer angry with the offerer, His favor was with him. There is the sense in which Christ's death appeased (propitiated)

God's anger, but the "Peace Offering" aspect of Christ's work went beyond this. **Because of Christ, God is no longer angry with the one who has identified with Him by faith, He is favorably disposed to Him.** And because this is true, we can experience the inner peace that comes from knowing God's favor is directed toward us.

Just as our love for God is reflected in a love for man, so our "peace with God" also manifests itself in a peace with men.

This is the message which Paul proclaimed:

*But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. and He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father **(Eph. 2:13-18)**.*

Some versions have translated the "Peace Offering" the "Fellowship Offering." Both terms, "peace" and "fellowship" are appropriate, in my opinion.

Through Christ's death we have peace & fellowship with God and peace and fellowship with man.

The meal that the offerer of the Peace Offering enjoyed, along with his fellow-Israelites, whom he invited, signified the peace which the sacrifice brought about.

Years ago, Dr. Billy Graham wrote a book entitled, *Peace With God*. There are a lot of expressions used for conversion which I do not care for, because they are not really biblical, but this expression, “peace with God”

expresses, perhaps better than any other, the blessing which salvation brings to the believer.

Have you experienced this peace with God my friend?

The Bible tells us that we are born at enmity with God. That is our natural state (cf. [Eph. 2:1-3](#)).

That condition of hostility, Paul tells us in the second chapter of Ephesians, is remedied and removed by the blood of Christ, and enmity with God is replaced by peace with God, and with our fellow men.

We are hearing a lot of talk these days about “fulfillment” and “self-realization” and the like. We can read much about “reaching our full potential” and having a “positive self-image,” but all these goals fall far short of the joy of having peace with God, through faith in our great Peace Offering, Jesus Christ. I urge you, if you have never received this gift, do so today, by simply trusting in Jesus Christ as your Peace Offering to God. When you receive Christ as your Peace Offering you will be able to sing with conviction and assurance, “It Is Well With My Soul,” for this is the peace which God offers us in Christ.

(2) The meaning of a meal. Throughout the Bible, the meal has a meaning much greater than that which our culture attributes to it. I believe that for the people of God, and often for the pagans (cf. [Exod. 32:6](#); [Num. 25:1-3](#)), the meal had a deeply religious significance. I do not think that the Peace Offering was the origin of this significance, but rather a reflection of it. Before Leviticus, Abraham offered meat and a meal to his unknown visitors ([Gen. 18](#)), as did Lot ([Gen. 19](#)). Later on, it was significant when the Levite was seeking a meal and a place to lodge without success ([Judges 19](#)). The festive meal which was a part of the Peace Offering simply added to the significance which the meal already had. Here, the meal was a symbol of the peace which the Israelite had with God and with men, through the sacrifice of the innocent victim.

When you stop to think of it, the New Testament is saturated with stories and teachings related to the dinner table. In Luke chapter 14 the entire chapter is dealing with “meals,” precipitated by the fact that our Lord associated with the “wrong kind of people” at the table, at least in the minds of the scribes and Pharisees (cf. [Mark 2:16](#)). Our Lord taught, for example, that one should not invite those to dinner who are wealthy and influential, and who can thus return the favor to us in some way (Lu. 14:12-14). Was not this especially applicable at the meal associated with the Peace Offering, when the poor would only be able to participate if the more affluent invited them? (Remember, there was no “poor people’s” alternative for the Peace Offering, as there was for the Burnt Offering, for example.)

The story of the “prodigal son” takes on even more significance once we understand the nature of the “Peace Offering.” What was it that the prodigal son missed so much in that foreign land, when he was longing to eat the pods which the pigs were eating, but his father’s table? And what was it that angered the older brother, if it was not the father’s slaying of the **fatted** calf? Now, in the light of what we know of the Peace Offering, what would the father have had to do, before the fatted calf could have been eaten? It would have been offered first as a Peace Offering. What, then, did the fatted calf signify, if not the fact that the son had been accepted by the father, and that there was “peace” in

the family again? The Peace Offering deepens our grasp of the significance of meals in the New Testament.

So, too, the significance of meat and of meals enhances our grasp of the problem which Paul dealt with in 1 Corinthians of eating meats, especially those eaten in the home of an unbelieving neighbor, who may very well have obtained meat which was involved in a pagan ritual, or which might take place in the meal itself.

The Peace Offering helps the Christian to understand the significance of a meal, especially since the Lord's Table was initially conducted as a part of a meal (cf. 1 Cor. 11).

The Lord's Table, or Communion, is, in large measure, the New Testament version of the Peace Offering festive meal.

The Peace Offering sacrifice is not offered, for **our Peace Offering is Christ, who died once for all, to make peace between men and God, and between men and men.**

The celebration goes on, however, and so in the communion service we are reminded of our unity with others, as well as our unity with God:

“Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

Because of the significance of the Lord's Table, as it pertains to the peace which Christ has accomplished on the cross, misconduct at this table is taken most seriously, even as infractions of the regulations pertaining to the Peace Offering are sobering.

The newly born church manifested its life and fellowship by sharing meals from "house to house" ([Acts 2:46](#)). **One of the greatest barriers between the Jewish believers and the Gentile saints was that of eating (cf. [Acts 10](#) & [11](#)). Thus, when Peter departed from what God had taught him in this passage, Paul rebuked him for departing from the very essence of the gospel ([Gal. 2:11-21](#)).**

The coming of our Lord and joy and peace experienced by true believers at this time are thus appropriately described in "banquet terms":

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready ... And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are the true words of God" ([Rev. 19:6-7](#), 9).

The dinner table has become much more secular to us than it ever was to the people of earlier times. I suspect that some of this is due to the pace of our lives, and to the instant "TV" dinners, which are eaten before the TV, rather than at the table, or which are gulped down at a "fast food" chain outlet. How much we can make of the meal table is suggested by the Peace Offering meal of the Old Testament, and by the Lord's Table of the New. May God enable us to make more of the meal table, and to meditate more on the peace which Christ has won for us on the cross.