

Hebrews

Hebrews 13:15-16 – Words of Wisdom - Part 4

May 16, 2010

I. Words of Wisdom

A. **Hebrews 13:15-16** . . . 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. [16] And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

B. Prayer

II. Words of Wisdom – Christian Sacrifices That Please God

A. **Hebrews 13:15-16**, continues from the previous several verses. And the point of **verses 15-16** when combined with **verses 12-14** is that of offering up to God, as a sweet smelling aroma, the praises, and gratitude, and thanks, and good deeds that are pleasing to Him, even though personally and corporately we are paying a price, and sometimes a high price, to share in the sufferings of Christ as we live the Christian life.

1. The fact that our praises and gratitude and thanks and good deeds are costly – especially during times of suffering – is offset, from God's perspective, and hopefully ours, too, by the rich truth that God states in **Hebrews 13:14** – this world is not our home.
 - a. We Christians are heaven bound – because heaven is our home.
 - b. We Christians are heavenly minded – because our Savior and our loving Father are there.
 - c. We Christians are occupied with heavenly things – because the things of this world are passing away. And according to **Matthew 6:20**, it is only what we store in heaven that lasts forever, and according to **I John 2:17**, it is only those who do the will of God who live forever.
2. And so God's people, down through the ages, have willingly offered up the costly sacrifices of praise because they know that whatever happens here in this life is temporary – but it is preparing us for what will be in eternity.
3. There is one more preparatory truth about the sacrifice of praise and good deeds that I want to share before digging into these two verses today. Jesus said in **John 17:3** . . . This is eternal life, that

we come to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

- a. To know God and Jesus in the way described by Christ in this verse requires the serious pursuit of a pure heart and intimate fellowship with God. Such a two pronged pursuit leads to consciously living in the presence of God.
- b. When we consciously live in God's presence, two things happen related to our study today.
 - (1) We love God more nearly as we ought.
 - (2) We praise and thank God often because living in His presence like this lifts our sights from our circumstances to how good God is and how blessed we are.

B. With these thoughts in mind, let's look more carefully at the truths conveyed to us by God in **Hebrews 13:15-16**.

C. **Hebrews 13:15** . . . 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. **I want to draw your attention to five truths stated in this verse.**

1. First, our praise is to be **offered through** Jesus Christ. Why?
 - a. Because we have no right and no way to gain entrance into the presence of God on our own.
 - b. It is only through Jesus Christ, and His saving, redeeming, sanctifying, and intercessory work on our behalf that we can come boldly into the presence of God. Therefore, the first point here in **verse 15** is that we are to come to God with our praise through Jesus Christ!
2. Second, our sacrifices of praise are to be **offered continually**
 - a. **Psalms 145:1-2** . . . I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. [2] Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever.
 - b. **Ephesians 5:18-20** . . . And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; [20] always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

- c. **Philippians 4:4-7** . . . Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! [5] Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. [6] Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
 - d. **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** . . . Rejoice always; [17] pray without ceasing; [18] in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
 - e. **Lamentations 3:22-23** . . . The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. [23] They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.
3. Third, our sacrifices are **offered to** God
- a. **Ephesians 4:6** . . . There is one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.
 - b. And because our sacrifices are being offered to God, they must be acceptable to God. We don't decide what is acceptable to Him, He does.
 - (1) **I Peter 2:4-5** . . . And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, [5] you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices **acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ.
 - (2) **Romans 12:1** . . . Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, **acceptable to God**, which is your spiritual service of worship.
4. Fourth, our sacrifices are **offered by** lips speaking or singing praise to His name
- a. The picture here is one of fruit coming forth from a vine or a fruit tree. The fruit reveals the nature of the vine. In other words, the life that is in the vine is revealed by the fruit coming forth from the vine.
 - (1) This picture takes on great meaning when we Christians are being treated unkindly or even harshly, when we are passing through hardships, or when we are suffering

unjustly for the cause of Christ, or when we are being persecuted physically. You see, what comes out of our mouth during those times reveals what is in our heart.

- (2) When praise is what comes forth from our lips during the hard times of life, it is because our hearts are filled with genuine faith in God, contentment with what God is doing or allowing, confidence that God will work all things out for good – in due time, a longing to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ (for it is in hard times that we grow like a weed), a settled recognition that what is happening here is only temporary and we are headed home to the eternal, and the joy of intimate fellowship and communion with God that is undisturbed by our circumstances.
- (3) It is easy to put on praise when life is good.
 - (a) It is somewhat easy to put on praise Sunday after Sunday during our worship services – for that is the expected response and its only required for a short time.
 - (b) But it is neither natural nor easy to pour forth praise when life is harsh and painfully against you. Yet this is the mark of a Christian.
- b. **Psalms 69:30-31** . . . I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving. [31] And it will please the LORD better than an ox or a young bull with horns and hoofs.
- c. **Psalms 51:15-17** . . . O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. [16] For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. [17] The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.
- d. **Psalms 116:12-19** . . . What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me? [13] I shall lift up the cup of salvation (*the drink part of the offering – wine which the one offering was to drink with joy*) and call upon the name of the LORD. [14] I shall pay my vows to the LORD, oh may it be in the presence of all His people. [15] Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones. [16] O LORD, surely I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid, You have loosed my bonds. [17] To You I shall offer a sacrifice of

thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the LORD. [18] I shall pay my vows to the LORD, oh may it be in the presence of all His people, [19] in the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

5. Fifth, our praise and thanks in the hard times of life are a sacrifice – that is, something costly, yet gladly paid! To give us a better sense of the cost of praise during the hard times of life, I want us to look at two portions of scripture which contrast suffering with the cheerful payment of praise.
 - a. **Acts 5:40-41** . . . They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they **flogged them** and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them. [41] So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, **rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame** for His name.
 - b. **II Corinthians 6:4-10** . . . but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, [5] in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, [6] in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, [7] in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, [8] by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; [9] as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, [10] as sorrowful **yet always rejoicing**, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.
- D. **Hebrews 13:16** . . . And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.
1. This is both a picture of Christ and an example of His attitude. In his most trying hour, he was focused on pleasing God by doing His will, and on serving us by redeeming us from sin and bringing us into a life of holiness.
 - a. In our hard times what is our focus? Is it inward? Is it a self-pity or a why me focus? Or do we continue to nurture and maintain an outward focus – one which follows Christ's example of pleasing God and serving others?

- b. It is a sacrifice to purposefully do good to others when you are experiencing hard times, hardships, suffering, and personal loss – just as it is a sacrifice to give praise and thanks to God during those same hard times. Yet these are the kinds of sacrifices that please God. Why? Because they demonstrate our love for God, our trust in God, our contentment with what God is either doing or allowing, and our commitment to live for God and His honor, His kingdom, and His purposes.
- 2. **Galatians 6:9-10** . . . Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. [10] So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.
- 3. **Romans 12:9-13** . . . Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. [10] Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; [11] not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; [12] rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, [13] contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

III. Conclusion

- A. **Psalms 50:23a** . . . He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me.
- B. It is a sacrifice to sincerely give praise and thanks to God when you are experiencing hard times, hardships, suffering, and personal loss – just as it is a sacrifice to do good to others during those same hard times.
 - 1. Yet these are the kinds of sacrifices that please God. Why?
 - 2. Because they demonstrate our love for God, our trust in God, our contentment with what God is either doing or allowing, our confidence that God will work all things out for good – in due time, our longing to be conformed more and more to the image of Christ (*for it is in hard times that we grow like a weed*), and a settled recognition that what is happening here is only temporary and we are headed home to the eternal.