



God is spirit, and those who
worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

John 4:24

On Worship

with Pastor Steve

Sacrificial Praise

In chapter thirteen of Hebrews the writer offers us a definition of sacrificial praise. Verse fifteen reads, *Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* According to this definition a sacrifice of praise consists of two things; the fruit of our lips and giving thanks to his name.

While driving home from work one evening I found myself following a quarter ton truck loaded with rotten fruits and vegetables. The farmer must have gathered them to feed his animals. They were certainly not fit for human consumption. According to the original Greek manuscripts, the fruit spoken of in the above passage refers to plucked fruit, ripe, ready to eat, good fruit, fresh from the tree. This would lead us to believe that our sacrifice of praise is the best fruit of our lips, the first fruit of the picking, not something that is left over, blemished or rotten.

Many people over the years have taught that a sacrifice of praise is praise that is given when the worshiper doesn't feel like praising. This definition totally misses the meaning of the scripture and places the focus of worship on the worshiper instead of the one receiving the worship.

As you read the Old Testament book of Leviticus you learn that the sacrifices required in the Tabernacle of Moses were only acceptable if they were without blemish. The worshiper didn't bring something he didn't want or could not use. He brought the best of his flock, and brought it willingly. The requirement of a true worshiper is the same today. He must bring the best he has, not his leftovers, and he must bring it willingly.

Worship doesn't depend on how the worshiper feels but on how great a God he is worshipping. Worship doesn't depend on the outward appearance of the worshiper or his circumstances, but on the greatness of the one who controls the circumstances and the work he has done on the inside of the worshiper.

Notice the writer of Hebrews says, *Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise.* . . . (emphasis mine). The "him" he is referring to is Jesus. In verse twelve of the same chapter he writes, *Therefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate.* In chapter ten of Hebrews the writer states that the worshiper enters the Holiest by the blood of Jesus.

We cannot offer to God the best we have apart from the blood that Jesus shed on the cross. His sacrifice makes our sacrifice of praise acceptable. We must come to the Father by him. Though we have a responsibility to worship the Father, we cannot come to him on the basis of our own merit. We only have access to his presence by the blood of Jesus. Not only that, but Jesus' sacrifice should fuel our worship. We should offer to him the best that we have because he offered for us the best that he had.

The second aspect of a sacrifice of praise is giving thanks to his name. Many verses of scripture encourage us to give thanks to God's name. Psalm 92:4 says, *It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to your name, O Most High.* In Psalm 107:1 we read, *Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good! For his mercy endures forever.*

In Old Testament times a person's name revealed his character, for example, the two sons of Jacob; Isaac and Esau. When Esau was born he was covered with hair. His name means hairy. Jacob was born second and his hand took hold of Esau's heel. His name means supplanter. We know from scripture that when the brothers were older Jacob stole Esau's birthright. A few years later Jacob manipulated his uncle Laban's flock of sheep and gained for himself a stronger flock.

God revealed his name in scripture as well. On one occasion, after Joshua had defeated the Amalekites, Moses built an altar and called its name Jehovah-nissi, which means, "The Lord is My Banner." Another time Gideon built an altar after he had seen the Angel of the Lord face to face. The Angel granted Gideon peace so Gideon named the altar Jehovah-shalom, which means, "The Lord is Peace."

Giving thanks to his name is simply the making of a confession. It is agreeing with God about who he is and acknowledging his authority and character. Giving thanks is the expression of a heart that is spilling over with gratitude.

The writer of Hebrews said a sacrifice of praise is the fruit of our lips. Isaiah 57:19 quotes God as saying, *I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near, says the Lord, And I will heal him.*

In Genesis 22 we read the story of Abraham's obedience to offer his son Isaac to God as a sacrifice of worship. Isaac was God's promised heir to Abraham, and Abraham had waited for many years to see the promise fulfilled. As Abraham and those with him neared the place where the sacrifice was to be made, Abraham took the things necessary for the sacrifice, and he and Isaac went off together. On the way Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the burnt offering. Abraham replied that God would provide the sacrifice.

When they came to the place where God had shown Abraham, Abraham built an altar, put wood on it, bound Isaac and laid him on the altar. When Abraham stretched out his hand to slay his son, the Angel of the Lord stopped him. The Angel said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." Then Abraham looked behind him and saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. He took the ram and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. Abraham named the place Jehovah-jireh, which means, "The Lord Will Provide."

Abraham's sacrifice was acceptable to God because he offered the best that he had. He could have offered Ishmael, the son born to him by Hagar the Egyptian maid servant of Sarah, Abraham's wife. However, that sacrifice would not have been acceptable because God did not recognize Ishmael as Abraham's son. When Abraham offered his best, God provided the sacrifice for worship.

The Father's requirement is that we offer the best we have. What God demands, he supplies. Just as he supplied the Old Testament sacrifices, he creates the fruit of our lips enabling us to give thanks to his name. Only then can we offer an acceptable sacrifice of praise.