

Offering A Sacrifice Of Thanksgiving

Text : **Hebrews 13: 7-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Have you ever known anyone who grew up with money and then inherited the mother-load ?

1. Those who have earned wealth are clearly distinguishable from those who received it.
2. Those few I've known who were heirs of wealth were not nice people.
 - a. They tended to be self-indulgent and spoiled.
 - b. They felt entitled to all they received and more. (**Every problem was another's fault.**)
 - c. Consequently, they were generally ungrateful peoples.

ILL – Rich man would not leave money to his daughters because he feared it would destroy their character. (gave house + education)

B. That's a pretty fair description of America today.

1. Our forefathers built a great nation and left it to us.
2. Most living today have never known true poverty.
 - a. **Have you ever even seen someone starve to death ?**
 - b. **How many days have you gone without food because none was available ?**
 - c. **These are both common events in most of the world, but we're Americans**
3. In general, we Americans feel entitled to have more than the rest of the world.

C. Consequently, true gratitude has become a rare commodity in America today.

1. We have inherited a great nation built by others, but feel little gratitude to them.
 - a. Veterans day, memorial day, 4th of July, etc. are nothing more than party days.
 - b. Most don't even think about the reason for these great holidays.
2. Like Israel of old, Americans have received God's blessings and then forgotten Him.
 - a. Religious holidays receive no more respect than patriotic holidays.
 - b. There is an organized movement to completely secularize our country.
 - c. Religious symbols are banned even in the holiday season.
3. Americans in general do not acknowledge God as the giver of that which they enjoy.
 - a. The holiday set aside to thank God is commonly called "Turkey Day."
 - b. Sadly, people spend more time watching football games than thanking God.

By this lesson I will attempt to remind us that gratefulness is a part of the Christian character that we should cultivate, nurture and express freely.

I. When God gave His law to His people, He included thanksgiving as part of worship.

A. Read ... Lev. 7: 11-18

1. There was a specific sacrifice for thanksgiving.
2. It was one of the few sacrifices that contained different kinds of elements.
3. Both leavened and unleavened bread was required.
4. It was given freely. (*Peace offering was required only at the feast of booths. Lev. 23:19*)
 - a. It was not on a set time table.
 - b. It was an expression of one's heart.

B. It was customary to conclude a thank offering with a communal meal.

1. This is the origin of the custom of the Thanksgiving feast we observe today.
2. Though it was a large meal, no leftovers were to be eaten past the second day.
3. Read ... Lev. 22: 29-31 (*Reinforced the command*)

Ladies take note :

- 1) Men are not over-eating, they are obeying the command to eat all of it.
- 2) Eating leftovers beyond the day after is a sin so cook less or give it away.

C. When God blesses us, we should thank Him for his blessings as they did.

1. Read ... Psalm 107: 17-22

- a. Of all people on the earth, no one is more blessed than Christians.
(*We have been saved from terminal sin.*)
- b. Of all nations on the earth, no nation on earth has more reason to be grateful.

2. Thanksgiving is the natural response. (**Public response for public blessing**)

a. Read ... Psalm 116: 12-19

- b. The greater the blessing, the greater should be the response.

3. Notice ... The paying of one's vows is intrinsically linked to gratitude.

- a. A truly grateful person will not be selfish with the giver.
- b. It's easy to make promises when in trouble **and** easy to forget them when delivered.
Lord if you'll let me survive this, I'll be your faithful servant the rest of my life.

4. Read ... Jer. 33: 10-11

- a. We give thanks for blessings yet anticipated. (**personal, church, nation**)
- b. Christians anticipate Heaven; how often do we give thanks for it ?

II. Thanksgiving is also a part of New Testament worship.

A. Remember our text :

1. **Heb. 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.
2. A verbal sacrifice is not just a N.T. concept :
Hosea 14:2- Take words with you and return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity and receive *us* graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips." (literally "*our lips as bulls*")
3. God both desires and accepts such sacrifices.

B. One's mouth is a window into his heart.

1. **Luke 6:45-** The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.
2. When verbal sacrifices express one's heart, they are worship.
3. God NEVER accepts hypocrisy.
Matt. 15:8- This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me.

C. The giving of thanks is directly linked to our :

1. Singing :
 - a. **Col. 3:16-** Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
17- Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.
 - b. **Read ... Eph. 5: 17-21**
 - c. **THUS .. acceptable singing comes from a grateful heart.** (*Spiritual sacrifices*)
2. **Compare ... Psalm 95: 1-5**
3. Prayers :
 - a. **I Thes. 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.
 - b. Approaching God without expressing gratitude is incomprehensible.

III. A truly grateful heart is a fruit of faith.

A. Read ... Psalms 50: 7-15

B. A truly grateful heart recognizes God as the sovereign of the universe.

1. All that we enjoy in life belongs to God.
 - a. Men compete with each other to increase their stewardship, but never truly own any of God's possessions.
 - b. Men are created by God **and** are created for God. (**Col. 1: 15-17**)
 2. All of the possessions of those possessed belong to the possessor.
 - a. When Jesus came to the earth, He took upon Himself the form of a "Bondservant."
 - b. There is NO man who does not belong to God. (**Psa. 24: 1**)
- * A rebellious slave does not become free, just a criminal.**

C. Trusting God as the owner and the giver of all gives one peace.

1. It is only when one comprehends that God is in control that he can have peace.
Phil. 4: 6-7 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.
2. The peace only comes when one is able to turn everything over to God and TRUST.
 - a. One must "allow" or "let" the peace come by turning everything over to God.
 - b. **Col. 3:15-** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Cf- **2:7**)

D. Faith enables one to be grateful even in difficult physical circumstances.

1. Difficult circumstances provide opportunity to bring glory to God.
2. Difficult circumstances accepted in faith will cause one's faith to grow.
3. **II Cor. 12: 9-10 -cf- James 1: 1-3**

IV. Christians do good works to cause others to give thanks to God.

A. Read ... II Cor. 9: 6-15 , 4:15 (*Thanks is the natural response to salvation.*)

1. God gives blessings to those who use them to do good deeds.
2. God is glorified when the recipients of good deeds thank God.
 - a. Christians do good works so God will be glorified, NOT themselves. ... **Matt. 5:16**
 - b. This was what Jesus did. **Luke 5: 25-6 , 7: 16 , 13: 13 , 17: 15 , 18: 43**

B. Customarily the “Thank Offerings” of the O.T. ended with a communal feast.

1. This gave people an opportunity to have their faith increased by hearing the thanksgiving.
2. Joy should be shared. (**Remember : Psa. 116 ... in the presence of all His people**)
3. More people giving thanks brings more glory to God.

CONCLUSION :

A. Who on earth should be more thankful to God than us ?

1. We live in the freest country on earth.
2. We live in one of the most prosperous countries in the history of man.
3. We live in the country where the gospel is most freely preached in history.

B. We have nothing that did not come from him.

1. Why were we :
 - a. Born in this country ? (**Why were you not born in Ethiopia ?**)
 - b. Born mentally and physically sound ? (**Why were you not handicapped ?**)
 - c. Put in circumstances where we were taught the gospel ?
2. **BUT** God can take away all that he has given to us :
 - a. Mental and physical strength.
 - b. Freedom and prosperity.
3. God humbled Israel from the greatest nation on earth to slaves scattered abroad.

C. What are we doing with God’s blessings ?

1. All that God has given us is on loan from Him.
2. God expects us to use all that He has given us to accomplish His will on the earth.
3. It is God’s will that :
 - a. Everyone on earth hear His good news, the gospel of Christ.
 - b. All men repent and be saved.

D. All will give an accounting of how they used God’s blessings.

1. Our nation will be called before God into give an account.
2. Our congregation will be called before God into give an account.
3. Each one of us individually will be called before God into give an account.

Our stewardship demonstrates our gratitude or the lack thereof.
Enjoy God’s blessings with great thanksgiving, but use them to HIS glory.