

## A Christian's Guide to Worship

Hebrews 13:15-16

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, August 6, 2023

Well, good morning, everyone. Someone asked me this morning if today was the last sermon in the book of Hebrews, and I said, "Don't be so hasty. Give the spirit time to work here." No, but in all seriousness, it's one of the last sermons; we're almost done. We've got a few more weeks left in this book.

Afterwards, next week, I will tell you what we're doing next, after this particular series; but we are savouring this last chapter. And we are trying to enjoy every moment of it before it's time to wrap the book up. Some of you know this, but if you've studied the Bible before, you'll know it is hard to divide it up at times. You don't always know how long something will take you. Your three months series becomes a three-year series. There was a famous Puritan that took 10 years to finish Isaiah 40 through 50. Well, we're not going to do that here, but you come to these sections, and you find yourself saying, "Well, that looks good. Let's talk about that." And then you come to the next one, you say, "Oh, that's even better. Let's talk about that". But this is coming toward the end of it.

And if you would open your Bibles to Hebrews 13. This is the last chapter in the book. It's one of the last sections in the letter, and it's on the topic of worship. One reason why we study the Word of God like we do here at Grace Fellowship Church, is because we want to praise His name. We want the Word of God to go into us, and we want it to come out of us in worship. And that's what this is about. If you start reading in verse seven, we can get the context of this. Hebrews 13:7 says this, it says,

Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. So, let us go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking *the city* which is to come.

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.

This will end the reading of God's word for now, but as you read that you can see very plainly that a theme in this passage is that of Christ. His name kind of leaps off the page. And then it's mentioned a couple of times here. Verse eight, says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." And that

leads the author off into a tangent, if you will, or leads him in a different direction from the subject of leadership in verse seven, where he goes into several images like that of an altar, and a tabernacle, and the bodies of animals to say Jesus took the place of that now. He's so much greater than all these images that you've had in the Old Testament, because He fulfilled what they stood for.

So, here's how you respond to that great and awesome and amazing message in verse 15, and that is to worship. When you understand Christ and what He has done for you. The only choice you have is to offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. You needed an altar; He gave you an altar. You needed a tabernacle; Jesus gave you a tabernacle. You needed a sacrifice; He gave you a sacrifice. And now you have to give Him glory.

Verse 15 says not only do you give Him glory, but you do it continually. That's an interesting word. It means don't just do it every once in a while, do it all the time. And don't just praise Him for a few minutes on Sunday morning between the hours of 9:30 and 11:30, and then forget it when you walk out the door. You do with the rest of the week as well. Your worship should be a never-ending thing. Praise him every moment of the day,

That same verse says there's a sacrifice involved in that, which means it should cost you something. When the Jews worshipped God, they understood it costs them something, you don't go to God empty handed, you don't come to Yahweh with nothing to show for it. And it's the same way for you in the spiritual realm, you bring Him the best thing you have. That's worship. You can't just show up at church and watch and call that worship; that's not worship. And you can't come into this room and prop your feet up and relax, and say He'll be glorified in that; He's not glorified in that. It has to mean something to you. You have to give back to the Lord.

I tell you this because our sermon this morning is called a "Christian's Guide to Worship from the Book of Hebrews." But we could have called it an earth-shattering guide to worship from the book of Hebrews or a revolutionary guide. Because if you're honest about it, that's not the way we approach worship today, is it? I mean, for most of us, we see worship as a spectator sport, where you come to church and then go home and you say, "What did I get out of it? What did you get out of it?" Or you sit in the car, and you ask your wife on the drive back, "How was the sermon? How was the music? How were the programs?" And you judge it in a sense, and you put it under the microscope, like a judge at the Olympics. And if it passes mustard for you, it's worship. And if it doesn't pass mustard for you, it's not.

The problem is where do you see that in this verse? Where do you find that kind of selfish mentality to worship in the Bible? It's just not there. The worship in the Bible is very different from that. It's selfless; it's not selfish. It's a worship designed to give and not to get. Now you do get something when you come to church. Absolutely. You worship in the ministries of the church as people serve you, but you got to serve them back too. Otherwise, this doesn't work. So many people say, "I didn't get anything out of

church today.” Well, did you put anything into it? And they say, “It didn't mean anything to me.” Well, did you serve?

In one of his books on worship, RC Sproul asked the question, “If God designed our worship service, what would it look like?” And he said, “Well, I'll tell you what, it wouldn't have fancy PowerPoints and flashy music. There wouldn't be any strobe lights or fog machines or pastors who tell cute, funny stories. But it would have godly people who serve each other. The people would come to church with a mentality of practicing the great commandments, love God and love others.” I think he's right.

This is an important passage for us to look at because listen, we all struggle with our preferences when it comes to church. And we all wrestle with wanting things to look a certain way, but you got to remember this, there's only one judge in this room, and that's Christ, amen? And there's only one person we answer to, and that's Him. And we need to worship Him in the way He desires. And so that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at three lessons this passage teaches us about worship. So it's a very simple outline this morning. It's a text that will take a little thinking about and pondering and meditating on. But if you're taking notes, three lessons we're going to learn about worship, the worship God requires and the praise that He wants.

And the first one is you worship God through Christ. That's simple, right? That's easy to understand. The first one is you worship God through the Lord Jesus Christ, which means your worship comes through one thing and one thing only, and that is the gospel. That's where it begins.

And as you come to verse 15, I have to be honest and tell you this is a part of the passage, it would be easy to pass over this quickly. It's just one of those expressions that it would be very simple to just move on past it and not see this. It's only two words in English, but you want to stop and give this your attention. Because there are two words that say so much about what this passage is about. If you look in verse 15, it starts off this way “through Him.” Now you can stop right there. You don't have to go further at this point.

The word “Him,” that's a grammatical device known as a pronoun, if you remember your English lessons from many years ago. It's something that's used to replace a noun and point you back to it. Which raises the question, okay, well, what's the pronoun pointing back to? What's it referring to? The answer is Christ, or the one he's been talking about all throughout this passage. If you want to see this, if you look back up in verse 12, it says, “Therefore, Jesus,” that's the Him, that's the person he's talking about. “Therefore, Jesus, also that He might sanctify the people through His blood suffered outside the gate.” And that means this is how you're sanctified now, it's through the blood of Jesus. This is how your sins are washed away. This is how you're made clean. This is how you approach God; that's through the cross. It's not through the blood of bulls and goats anymore, like the old covenant. It's not through the priests and Levites. It's not through the temple, and the tabernacle, and the altar. It's all on account of Him. So if you're going to talk about the topic of worship, this is where you start. You start at the cross,

Verse 10, right above this also says that “We have an altar from which those who served the tabernacle have no right to eat.” And you don't see the word Jesus there, but His fingerprints are all throughout that verse because the altar refers to the place where the sacrifices were made. That's where worship happened in the Old Covenant. And the author mentions this to say, this is what the cross is for you. It's your altar now. So if you want to come to God, you go through that, the cross.

Verse eight adds to this when it says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.” That means Jesus is eternal, and infinite, and ageless, because He has the same nature God does. So if you want to be reconciled to God today, you go through Him. If you want to be reconciled to God tomorrow, you go through Him. If you want to be reconciled to God the day after, you go through Him because He's alive. Amen?

But the point is that all of this is wrapped up in this expression, “through Him.” Even though it's a very small part of this passage, you got to underline and highlight in your Bibles and put a gold star beside it because it has the force of the entire Book of Hebrews behind it. This phrase should bring to mind everything we've talked about over the last year and a half. I counted it up this week and found that the name “Jesus” or “Christ,” it's mentioned about 24 times in this book. It's about twice per chapter. But if you add up all the pronouns, like this one, it's far more than that. And it goes up to about 60 or so. Because the author is telling you repeatedly that salvation is found in one way, and one way only. And that is this, there is no other option.

The word “through” when it says, “through him.” That's another interesting grammatical thing. It's a preposition of, you could call it movement, that describes the means by which you go from one place to another you. So for example, if you're going from here to Vancouver Island, you go through the ferry. You don't walk there, you don't swim there, at least I don't think. You find a boat to help you out. And the Bible says you do the same thing if you're trying to get to heaven. You go through this, through Christ. There's an infinite chasm that separates you from God. And there's a barrier that stands between the two of you that's impossible to overcome due to sin. You cannot cross it. And that's why God came down in the form of Jesus Christ to deliver you from that through Him.

You know, I've said so much about this in previous weeks, I don't want to belabor the point here. But I do want to mention, this is so important to the author of Hebrews that he just keeps bringing it up over and over and over again. So I don't want to leave without saying a few more words about this. So you can follow his train of thought. We're trying to get ourselves in the minds of the author here. So if you want to write these verses down.

In chapter 1:3, he calls Jesus the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of His nature, and the one who upholds all things through His power. In order to say that when you look at Jesus, you're seeing the face of God. And when you think of Him, you're thinking of Yahweh Himself. He shares the

same essence. Jesus is not some ordinary man. He's the God man, and He's not a normal person. He's the divine person, one with the Father blessed Trinity.

Then he tells you in chapter 2:9, that as God, this is what Jesus did, he became a man, and He made Himself lower than the angels; so He could taste death for everyone and provide a sacrifice for you. You needed that. You could not come to God without a sacrifice. Your sins cost something, and that's what He provided for you perfectly in His humanity.

In chapter 4:14 it says He became a great high priest for us and passed through the heavens. You couldn't pass through heaven yourself. There's no way you could get to heaven on your own, so Jesus made a way, and He threw the doors open wide.

Chapter 6:19 says He is the anchor of the soul.  
Chapter 8:6 says He is the mediator of a new covenant.

Chapter nine says He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle.

Chapter 10:20 says that He made a new and living way.

Chapter 12:2 says He is the author and perfecter of our faith.

Why? So you can worship. Why do He do all that? So you can have a relationship with God. But it all goes back to Him. In the words of verse 15 of chapter 13, it's through Him, let us continually offer up this sacrifice of praise.

Now, listen, friends, I know I'm repeating myself here. We've talked about all this before, but I'm doing this for a reason because I want this part of the text to be imprinted in your minds. Because I don't know where everyone's at on this issue of worship this morning, but I'm guessing for some of you, your worship feels flat. It feels empty because you do look at it like a spectator sport. You've fallen into the trap of showing up at church and watching and walking into this room and propping up your feet, and then going home after the service and saying what did you get out of it? How was the music? How are the programs? How was the sermon? How did it make you feel? Me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me, me. And you know that's wrong. You understand, as we talk about that, that you really shouldn't be doing that. Well, you know what you need to do? You need to think about the cross again. Do you know how to fix that problem in your life? You go back to Calvary because you've gotten distracted from this one basic thing.

You've allowed yourself to be pulled over here when you need to be thinking about the things that are over here because this is what true worship is about. It's not about the music, no offense to our worship team; our worship team does a great job. And it's not about how the programs are done. Whether we

have a children's program, youth program, missions' program. It's not about sermons and whether the preacher preaches well enough to draw a big crowd and pack them in and blow-up social media.

Worship is about the fact that Jesus Christ died for me. Amen? It's about the fact that through Him, I have access to the Father. And through Him, I have a relationship with God.

And through Him, the two of us are one. That's what matters the most. I mean, who cares about the programs if you don't get that right? And what does it matter what kind of songs you sing if you forget about this? Jesus is everything to us.

Listen, if you think about this, doctrinally, we talked about this last time, but the cross is the centerpiece of the Bible. It's where all the great purposes of God meet in time and eternity. It's where my sin was paid for, your sin was paid for. It's where our guilt was pardoned. It's where God's wrath was satisfied on my behalf, our behalf. It's where forgiveness was enacted. It's where Satan was defeated. The powers of hell were vanquished. God's love was displayed in a way that's beyond human description. At the cross, Jesus sweat drops of blood for me. At the cross, he drank the cup of God's wrath. At the cross, he bore the sins of the world. At the cross, He allowed the Father to crush Him. At the cross, He was pierced for our transgressions. At the cross, by His wounds we're healed. At the cross, He said, "It's finished." No more to pay.

And so the question the author of Hebrews is asking you here is that if you can't glorify God when that is being preached to you, when can you do it? And if you can't praise Him when that's being proclaimed, what's going on? What does God have to do to get your attention and make you worship?

You know, if you came to me this morning, and you said, "You know, I'm sorry I'm late Pastor Jeremy, but I got hit by a truck on the way to church." I would say, "No, you didn't because I don't see any evidence of it. I don't see the bruises. I don't see the scars. You're not on a stretcher." And in the same way, I would say the same thing to you if you got hit by the cross, and you didn't want to worship. And if you got impacted by Christ, and it didn't move you. And if you believe this gospel, but you don't want to praise, I would say that's impossible. One look at Jesus and it changes everything. One glimpse of this, and it turns your whole world upside down. Listen, if nothing else, it humbles you. When you think of the cross, it kills every bit of pride in your human heart. Which means if you understand what Christ did, it'll make you drop the critical attitude and the thinking that says, "I deserve more when I come to church, more than these programs, more than the songs, more than this sermon." The fact is, you don't.

Do you know what you deserve? You deserve to go to hell. Praise God you get to go to a little church and little programs. Praise Him that you get to come to any kind of body of Christ. He should send you to the lake of fire, but He's not because of His grace. And this first part of this passage just has grace written all over it. Remember these things; it will help you learn to worship again.

And that brings us to a second lesson that we learn in this passage, and that is that our worship needs to be continual. So, if you're taking notes, the first one is that it is through Christ. That's how we worship.



That's the means by which we come to the Father, to sing our songs, to pray our prayers, to fellowship. But he's not going to end there. He's going to go on and tell you that a second lesson about worship here is that our worship needs to be continual, which means that it should never end. It's something we should do every day in our lives.

And this one is found in the next part of verse 15. When it says, "through Him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God." Now, I want to walk you through the rest of this big expression here in a moment. But before I do, let me just say when it says, "Let us," that's the call to action here. This is how the author is taking the message of Christ and Him crucified, and the salvation that comes through Him and applying it to our lives. And that is to let us continually offer up a sacrifice. That's what you do now that you're a Christian, this is what you do now that you're saved.

And the key word here is the word "continual," at least is the word that sticks out. It means you don't just do this once; you do it regularly. And you don't worship Him only on Sunday morning between the hours of 9:30 and 11:30, and then that's it. This is something you do every moment. The Sacrifice is ongoing.

I looked up this word "continually" during the week and found that it's a very colourful term you could define it a lot of ways. For example, it means you should bring a sacrifice, ceaselessly, endlessly. You should bring one tirelessly, nonstop, ongoing, perpetually, persistently, permanently tenaciously. You get the idea. There should never come a time when your worship of God is over.

Just some background on this, it was said that there were no chairs in the Jerusalem temple for this reason, because the priest's job was never over. He could never sit down because there was always another sacrifice to make, there was always something else to do. It's the same way in the Christian life. There's no chairs in a sense.

It was also said that the fires at the altar were always burning for this reason too, because the worship was continual. It was a 24 hour a day, seven day a week type of thing. And the verse is saying your worship is like that now, except the fire doesn't burn to the temple, it burns inside your heart. It's uninterrupted; you're literally on fire for God on the inside. There should be smoke coming out of your ears.

And to go back to this verse here, the way this is worded in verse 15, it's interesting because it says, "Let us continually offer" but not just offer, offer up like this, like a priest would do. They hold up their hands when they would offer up something to God, we should do the same thing in our minds, and not just offer up, but continually offer up a sacrifice, something that costs us something. And not just offer a sacrifice, he keeps going and says offer up a sacrifice of praise. That's the heart behind it. And not just that but offer it up to God because that is the recipient. We don't praise Him for the opinions of men. We do it for Him.

But the author's writing this because he's building this up to something and moving it to a great crescendo, in order to say you should offer God the very best you have. That's the idea of this. You should bring Him the finest thing you can offer. Nothing is too much for God, and no sacrifice is too great. You lay it all on the line.

In fact, as you read this, it kind of sounds like the author is saying, "Okay, let's see, how do I say this? How do I describe the type of worship God deserves? You should offer up offer something. No, that's not enough. I want to say more. Okay, how about this? You should continually offer. Well, that doesn't, that doesn't work either. That's not expressing what I'm trying to say. How about this? You should continually offer up. Well, that's better. I like that, but it's still not enough down the line. You should continually offer up a sacrifice. No, He needs more. You should continually offer up a sacrifice of praise. No, God wants more. You should continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God." It's like he's running out of words. It's like he's stretching the length of his vocabulary as far as it'll go. To highlight the fact that this worship needs to be excessive. When you worship God, it's got to be over the top.

You're not just worshiping anybody here, you're worshiping Yahweh. And you're not praising a normal person, you're praising God on the throne, the Maker of heaven and earth. And there shouldn't be anything you hold back from that. You give and give and give and give again. If your worship is wearing you out, I would say good. It needs to wear you out. And if it's causing you to age prematurely, that's fine. Die young, make a healthy corpse. Don't quote me on that. Give it all to Him. He's worthy.

We praise all sorts of things in our life, don't we? We praise our hockey teams. We praise our football teams. We praise our kids. We praise our jobs. We praise all types of things. But all that's nothing compared to this. One commentator said, "When God saves you, he gave you the very best that He had, the Lord Jesus. And so this is what he expects you to give Him in return. He wants your best; nothing less will do. God's not pleased when you give Him your trash. He doesn't care when you throw Him your leftovers. He wants you to give Him the choicest thing from the flock. If you remember the Jews, they did this toward the end of the Old Testament. They gave God their trash in the book of Malachi because they were bringing their blind and lame for sacrifice and they were giving God these animals that they were just going to take in the backyard and shoot anyway, they weren't worth anything. And what did God say? I'll tell you what He didn't say. He didn't say, "Well, at least they're coming to church." He didn't say, "I'm so happy they're here." He said in Malachi 1:10 that "Oh, that there were one among you, who would shut the temple gates." In other words, "I don't want it; I don't need it. If you don't come to Me for the right reasons, stay home, don't come."

And this passage, in its own way, is expressing the same idea. And that is that you bring God your best or don't come because when the Lord saved you, here's what happened. Friends, He saved all of you. And when He redeemed you, He redeemed every part. He didn't leave anything out. And that's what He wants you to give Him now when you worship. And the way the way this works is that your marriage



should look like a saved marriage. There should be something different about the way you interact with your spouse than then is what is found in the world. When someone walks through the doors of your home, they should see Jesus there in the way you treat each other and speak to each other and just work through your problems, just go through life. Your job needs to look like a redeemed job not because all these people are redeemed, but you are. And so when they show up in your office unannounced, they won't find you sinning, but they'll find you doing something that honours the Lord instead. Your friendships should look like redeem friendships. Your relationships with your neighbours should have some flavor of the gospel, and you shouldn't be fighting with everybody all the time over anything. That's what it means to worship. That's what it looks like to praise. Yes, you do it on Sundays. Yes, you praise and worship Him when you come into this room, 100%. Absolutely. But it doesn't stop here. You can't cram a week's worth of worship into two hours and think it honours God. It does not. It's got to be a lifestyle.

So many churches have a ceremonial idea of worship where you come to church on Sunday, and you kneel, stand, sit, tie, bow, sing all this kind of mechanical robotic stuff, and you go out the door as if nothing ever happened. That's wrong. Listen, anybody can come in here and fake it for a few hours on Sunday. That's easy. And it doesn't take anything to walk into this room and act like a Christian simply because you pray a few prayers and you put some money in the offering plate. It's way harder to do it when you leave. Amen? It's harder to worship when you go out in the world and deal with all this kind of crazy stuff. That's what it's telling you to do here. God wants you to praise Him in both places.

Listen, God is everywhere. So the worship you give Him should take place everywhere. And He's omnipresent. Which means the glory you bring to Him, it's an omnipresent type of thing. You can't just do it here, but not there. You can't just praise Him in this room, but not that room. It's not the way the Bible works. That's what false religion does. You study any cult or wrong belief system in the world, whether it's Islam, Hinduism, the Mormons, you'll find all of them try to compartmentalize God. And they want to say that as long as you're honouring him here, it doesn't matter what you do there. And as long as you praise Him by going to the mosque and praying to Allah five times a day and keeping the feast of Ramadan, He doesn't care if you murder someone under jihad. He's okay with that. Fact is that He's not the worship the true God wants is far more vigorous than that.

I know some of you may be hearing this and saying, "Well, I can't do this pastor Jeremy, because this is too much." Well, let me ask you, "It's too much for who? For God? There's nothing too much for God. He deserves all of this. This is very logical." Some of you may say, "Well, okay, but this is puritanical." I agree it is puritanical. We want to be pure. We want to run as far as we can from sin and as close as we can to God because He's worthy of it.

Listen, when you are saved, you need to understand. Worship is the highest end for which you were created. There's nothing more important in the Christian life than this. As the first question of the Westminster shorter catechism said, "What is the chief end of man? It is to glorify God and enjoy Him

forever.” Which means that as a human being, you're either doing that or you're dead on the inside. You're either living for His glory, or you don't live at all; you're just a walking corpse.

And the lesson behind these verses is that in light of what Christ has done on the cross, we want to live. We want to enjoy Him all the time because we can't help it. When you come to church, your soul should feel like a volcano wanting to burst and worship. Your heart should feel like a geyser welling up you to the point of explosion because you just have to let it out. No one's forcing you to worship, no one's twisting your arm and saying you need to be happy right now. You're already that way. Nothing stops it. Bad days don't stop it. Rainy days don't stop it, trials, tribulations, persecution, suffering. None of that gets the worship out of you. In fact, the harder that hits you, the more worship comes out.

I'll never forget the time a pastor told me the story of when a young lady came to him after a service, and she gave a bunch of money to him for the church. A cheque that was worth 1000's of dollars. And he said, “I can't take this. I know it's all you have.” She said these words. She says, “It's not for you. It's for God. And that's what I want to give Him. I want to give Him all I have.” Friends, do you worship God that way? Do you want to give Him everything? You should. That's what this is telling us to do.

And it brings it to one more lesson for worship from this passage. And I don't think we've ever gotten to the last point in the sermon so quickly. We usually spend more time on the front end, but this is a passage where a lot of it is found on the back part of this text. So that's how we're going to approach it today. But before we do, let me review these other points. The first lesson we learn about worship is that it is through Him. Remember that it's through Christ. This is what makes our worship so precious to us. This is why it's so amazing. I told you the Psalm that says the Word of God is sweeter than honey to our mouths because you can't get enough of it. That's what Christ is like. One look at Jesus and you want to worship. One glance at the cross and you want to pray.

It brings you to the second lesson here, and that is that it's also a continual thing. Just like the priests had to keep serving the temple, and the fires kept burning, the fire in you to praise God is the same way. The Bible says, “If I go to the heavens, You are there. If I make my bed in the depths, You are there.” That's where you praise God now. You praise Him in the highest points and the lowest points, mountaintops in the valleys, because God is in both places.

All this takes us to this final lesson in verses 15 and 16, and that is that our worship, it's also specific. So it's through Christ. It's continual. But a third lesson here is that your worship needs to be specific, which means that it occurs in very distinct ways.

And I put this one at the end of the section here because as you hear this sermon, some of you may be wondering, “Alright, Pastor Jeremy, you said, worship is through Christ, and I get that that's obvious in the text here. And you said it's continual, and I see that too. But what does it look like specifically? What's the author asking me to do?” Because some of you, depending on your church background, your

mind might be going to the point of saying, "Okay, well, is he telling me to sell everything I have and go live as a missionary in Africa?" Well, not necessarily. Maybe for some of you, but not everybody maybe. "Is he telling me to downsize my house and give him a million dollars?" Well, not necessarily either. The answer to the question is found in the rest of these verses. And if you look in verses 15 through 16 with me, I want to walk you through this because he goes on to say this, he says,

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.

And so what is he pleased with? Well, He's pleased with all of these things that we just read.

And the reason I wanted to read it to you all these verses is because if you look back at them, you'll see that verse 15 mentions a sacrifice to God, that's singular, an individual sacrifice. It's referring to a sacrifice we present to God in heaven. And verse 16, mentions sacrifices, plural; it's more than one because he's talking about many different offerings, we present to each other. We give them to God, but we actually also give them to one another on Earth. And that's how commentators have split up the passage. They say it has a Godward and a manward aspect to it.

And that's what we're going to look at because in reference to God, verse 15 tells us we offer the fruit of your lips, see that word there. This is the first sacrifice that he mentioned here. Because God doesn't necessarily want you to give Him a million dollars or go live in Africa. But He wants you to worship Him with the things that come out of your mouth. And I'd say that's harder. Anybody in here always say the things you're supposed to? No.

The fruit of your lips here, it's another word way of saying the words of your lips or the statements of your lips. It's a convicting part of the text because we all go through life speaking and saying and talking about things we shouldn't. We say sarcastic things, mean and angry things, hurtful, rude, and bitter things, we don't show discernment, we have no guard on our mouth. What this verse is saying is that God doesn't want you to act that way because it doesn't honor Him. He wants you to worship by looking at it this way. If it's in your mouth, you give it to God. And it's on the tip of your tongue, you bring it to Him. No one should come into your home and hear you sinning with your mouth. No one should go to your job site and hear that because the worship carries over to these places.

Also, on the Godward side of this sacrifice, verse 15 also tells us to give thanks to His name. See that one there? The word "thanks" it's telling you to go through life with an attitude of gratitude toward God, and approach Him with a spirit of joy for all the things He's done for you in Christ. And instead of being so critical all the time, you need to have this kind of heart. Instead of thinking you deserve better when you come to church, or better with your job or better with wherever. Anytime you're sour that way, it's an indictment against the Lord. It's like telling Him that He made a mistake in your life, and He didn't

know what He was doing when He set up the universe. And the idea here is that's wrong. Your heart should always be grateful to Him. Thank you, Lord, I have this church. Thank you, Lord, I have this job. Thank you, Lord, I have this family.

Because the idea here is if you put these things together, this is what you bring to the altar now. This is what you take to God in worship. The priests brought the animals, or the people did, you bring this. And the Levites brought offerings, you bring words in a heartfelt of thankfulness. And I might add that we've not even gotten to the next part of this yet, but you could stop right here and say this is already humbling. And I mean, if it's not humbling, I need to go back and explain it again because it's telling you you can't worship God if your heart is not in the right place. And you don't give Him glory if your attitude is wrong. You can be in the right place with the people of God on a Sunday morning, but if your heart is in the wrong place, the worship is wrong. Your words and your thankfulness, they're both related to attitude. They're issues of the soul, and that's what you have to focus on when you bring a sacrifice to God. Your top priority is not whether you show up here on Sunday, your top priority is why you show up and how you show up. And what is the motivation behind it. Your number one goal is not just to sing, but to sing out of a heart overflowing with grace for all the blessings. Don't ever buy the lie, friends, that God just wants you to come to church. He doesn't. And don't ever get into the deception, that it doesn't matter why you're here, God doesn't care. He cares very much why you're here.

It brings you to the next part of the sacrifice, and that is the manward side. So we've seen the Godward side. Verse 16 starts off with the word "and" which can demonstrate this is a continuation of thought here. He's not changing subjects. He's giving you more information about the sacrifice you are to bring. And it's focused on the people around you when it says, "and do not neglect doing good." That's not talking about doing good to God. It's talking about doing good to others, people in the world.

If you notice this phrase, it's left open ended. The author doesn't give you a lot of details as to what it looks like to do good because he doesn't need to, it seems like it's pretty obvious. It means if there's something good you can do for someone, do it. It's not rocket science, is it? And if you know of some way you can serve, then serve. Don't hesitate. Don't say, "I need to pray about it first, or I need to seek the will of God." No, this is the will of God. Do good to others. You can pray while you do it. But you shouldn't pray as an excuse not to do it. Here the word and obey.

It brings you to the second man word sacrifice and that is to share. "Do not neglect doing good and sharing." He actually puts the phrase "Do not neglect" on the front of this because he knows what we're like. We all can be forgetful of these basic things at times, and we can be so distracted that we don't pay attention to them.

And the word "sharing," It's the Greek word *koinonia* from which we get the word fellowship. Which means this is how generous we need to be as we serve one another this way. We do it with the feeling of fellowship where we say that what is mine is yours and yours is mine. Mi casa; su casa, my house is

your house, we're one and the same. I don't look at all that I have and hold it with a tight grip. I don't take all the blessings God has poured in my life and put a No Trespassing sign on it. You can trespass all you want; you can step on my things all day long because they don't belong to me anyway; they belong to the Lord.

This idea of sharing, it's just as broad as the other one. It can refer to anything really – sharing your time, sharing your resources, sharing your listening ear, sharing your money, sharing your food, sharing your homes in hospitality as the chapter talked about earlier, sharing your clothes, sharing your knowledge, sharing your information, sharing the good things God has taught you in the Word just sharing, sharing, sharing.

As I read this verse this week, I'd have to say this is something you guys do very well, by the way, as a church. We have a very generous church in this department because we've had several people end up in the hospital lately due to an accident or injury, and you guys just take off and go see them. I don't have to call and ask you to do it repeatedly. You're just there. Maybe you like the hospital food, I don't know. You're just sharing. We've had other ones who have lost friends or family or loved ones and their phone rings off the wall. You're preparing meals for them. You're going over there to pray with them in the hour of need. We've had other ones have a baby recently, you share with them. Then other ones have moved to another part of town, you shared with them. And then other ones look for a new job, you share with them and then you start calling your network of associates at work to see if you can get them employment.

And here's the thing that seems like a small thing to you. You do it so much as a congregation. Most of you don't even think too much about it. It's just a natural thing. But if you look back in this verse, it says you should think highly of that because it says, "For with such sacrifices, God is pleased." Remember, RC Sproul said God isn't necessarily pleased with your PowerPoints, or your fancy music, or your pastors that tell cute flashy stories in order to pack out the building. He's pleased with this. This is the kind of worship He's looking for. So when you're worshipping that way, I would applaud you and say, "Well done. Well done." I know that this is not the kind of thing you put out there on social media. I can't tell you how repulsed sometimes I am by people; they go do something nice for someone and take a picture of it and broadcast it to the world. "Hey, look at the tip I gave the waitress. Hey, look, at the time I was talking to my kids." It makes me wonder. Do you not talk to them that often? Do you not give tips to the waitress very often? Is that why you're talking as if it's such an unusual thing? We're not to serve like that. You serve in secret. You serve in hiding, but you serve and serve and serve again because you're doing it to God. That's the audience of the service.

On the flip side, do you know what kind of worship He's not pleased with? This is the kind of worship that pleases Him. What doesn't please Him? What does He hate? He hates it when you come to church and don't do any of this. He can't stand it when you show up on a Sunday. And you don't think about anybody but yourselves because you don't serve anybody during the week. You just walk in here and

criticize everything and say it's boring. The music is boring. The programs are boring, the building is boring. Well, let me say this, it's no wonder if you think that way, and you're acting like that because it's showing evidence that your Christian life is boring. It's dull because there's no life in it. So when you show up here, your worship, it's like trying to jumpstart a dead battery. And we're like trying to hook up the jaws of life or something to you to give you life support. Do you know what you should be doing? You should learn what this passage says, and throughout the entire week, find ways to share what God has given you so that when you show up for worship, it's like pouring gasoline on the fire. It's like striking a match to dynamite. The fire is already burning. The praise is already there. All we're doing is just fanning the flame of it. We're just trying to maybe take you by the hand and steer you in the right direction. That's all. But you're already going hard for God. You do that and your worship will flourish.

I've had people come to me and all our elders have, and they've said, "Pastor Jeremy, I want to do something for God, can you help me?" And anytime someone comes with that mentality, I know they're gonna get along fine here. They're coming to church for the right reasons. They've got the right focus. All we're doing is just encouraging them to keep going, keep on keeping on. On the flip side, we've had other ones come and say, "Pastor Jeremy," or they don't call Quentin and Kevin, Pastor Jeremy. They say to them, "Kevin or Quentin," why aren't people doing more for me? Why aren't they meeting my needs and doing this and that, and this and that, and this and that?" And when they say that we know there's going to be a problem. They'll never be happy with us no matter what we do. It will never be enough because the church is not about that. It's not here to make demands. It's here to make sacrifices. And we don't exist to do what you want. We exist to do what God wants. And as we do that, we do serve, but it's done with a vertical focus. We don't come to church to take; we come to give.

In my studies this week, I came across the story of the time the great missionary to China, Hudson Taylor was struggling in his work because he'd been in China for several years and he had seen very little fruit and he was getting sick a lot. And so someone from back home wrote to him and said, "Maybe you should quit because the sacrifice is too enormous." And Hudson Taylor thought about that. And he wrote back and said, "If Jesus gave His life for me, nothing I could ever give Him is too enormous. I'm staying put."

Listen, friends, he's right. There's nothing you do that was ever too enormous for Christ. No matter how big or small. You can praise God by singing and you should. You can praise Him by giving your tithes and you should. You can praise Him by coming to church. You can praise Him by taking the Lord's Supper, seeing baptisms. You know what? You can praise Him by washing dishes, can you believe that? You can praise Him by sweeping the floor. You can praise Him by cleaning out the gym. You can praise Him by taking out the trash. You can do it by passing out bulletins. You can do it cleaning up the nursery. You can do it serving doughnuts. You can do it working as an usher, giving someone a ride, going to the hospital, being a listening ear, whatever it is, it is worth it if you do it in His name. He's worthy of all of it.



And listen, I said earlier, I don't know where everyone's at, on this subject of worship, but I mention this now because for some of you, maybe it's hard to hear this stuff about worship, because you're lost. You can't worship God because you don't know God. And you can't praise Him because there is an infinite chasm between you. And there's this barrier where God is up here and you're down here, and you can't get up to the Father. If that's the case, I want to tell you, you might have come in the room that way, but you don't have to go out that way.

The Gospel says God is holy and man is sinful, and man cannot reach Him on his own works. But that's why Jesus Christ has come to live a perfect life die on the cross for your sins. So God could punish Him there and offer you a complete and perfect forgiveness, so you can be reconciled to the Father.

You might say, "Well, you don't know what I've done." And you're right. I don't know what you've done. And you might say, "You have no idea how bad it is." That's correct. I have no idea, but here's the thing, was it sinful? That's what He died for. Was it evil in the eyes of God? That's what the cross was about. To take care of the evil in you if you believe. So will you believe today?

I wouldn't be doing my job as an evangelist and a pastor and a minister of the gospel if I didn't end this by pointing you back to the cross. We started with the cross, let's end with the cross. We began with Jesus Christ as the only way to the Father and the way to worship and praise Him. Let's go back to that. Trust in Christ. Listen, behold, all things will pass away, new things will come. And that means a new way for you to worship.

Let's close in a word of prayer and ask the Lord to take these things and drive them home to our hearts.

Heavenly Father. My prayer this morning is that all this talk about worship would fill our hearts full of the glory of You. You are an amazing God. And we do want to repent this morning of the attitude that we often have when we come into Your presence, and act like all these things are supposed to be about us. They're not. They're about You.

You are the one who has given us salvation and redemption and atonement, full and free. And so I pray for our church family that we would have this attitude about us, that drives us back to the cross continually in all things. We all have a temptation to be distracted in our lives and our walk with You. We get pulled away by the culture, we get pulled away by the chaos around us, we get pulled away by just things that go on in church life, and may we be redirected back to the One who is worthy of all these things?

Lord, I do pray for those who are lost this morning among us. I pray Father because this is a sermon that's just going to fly right over their heads, but maybe the last part would stick home with them. They need to believe in You. I can't change their hearts. The people in this room can't change their hearts, but maybe You can.

And Lord I pray the same prayer for the believers in this room if they find themselves becoming halfhearted in their approach to You. Would You change their hearts as well? Lord, if anything we want our church to be known for its worship. It's taking the things of You and pointing them back to You out of a heart overflowing with praise.

Lord, would You be glorified as we've considered these things? Thank You for Christ. Thank You for these reminders. May He be praised this morning. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.