

Text: Hebrews 13:14-16

Title: The Christian Sacrifices

Truth: Christ's sacrifice should result in us sacrificially giving our lives to God.

Date/Location: Sunday March 11, 2012 at FBC

I. Christ's Sacrifice Calls Us Outside the Camp to be Cleansed, v. 13

Christians share in the huge benefits of the sacrificial death of Christ, which include cleansing from sin. This is the Christian's "altar."

The Jews who cling to the Levitical forms have no right to those death benefits. Why? The closest thing to full atonement for sin in the Levitical priesthood was the sin offering on the Day of Atonement, the blood of which was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the most holy place in the tabernacle. This was a temporary, repeated, and incomplete ritual. It did have an effect in the sinner's relationship with God. But the Levites could not partake by eating of that sacrifice; nor could anyone else. They had to take the sacrificed animal out of the camp and burn it (Lev. 6:30).

They have no right to eat of our sin sacrifice, because they do not accept Christ, and are not permitted to eat of their own sin sacrifice anyway. That sacrifice was taken outside of the camp to be burned. No one was allowed to eat it or have anything to do with it other than the high priest in the specified Day of Atonement ritual. But Jesus went outside the gate of the city to die for sin. The **Jewish mindset** was "in the city, animal-sacrifice, I can't partake of atonement directly." When your thinking is like that, there is no way you can partake of the Christian altar.

You need a total change of mindset to realize how God finally deals with sin. Sin is so bad that it had to be handled by taking the substitute animal, laden with sin as it were, outside of the camp to a place designated for unclean stuff, where it was burned. Jesus was taken to that place, a place of uncleanness, to pay for sin. So instead of the Jewish mindset, the **Christian's mindset** is "out of the city, Jesus' sacrifice, I can partake of full atonement directly by faith."

Christ's suffering outside the camp, away from "Israel" beckons us to go to him, sharing in his humiliation, and receiving the blessing of forgiveness.

II. Why? Because the Old System Does Not Continue Forever, v. 14

A. The meaning of the words "camp" and "city."

1. Observe the author's use of the words *gate* and *camp*. Jesus went outside the literal gate of the city, and the animal was burned outside the literal camp.
 2. In verse 13, the idea of "camp" is used by analogy to refer to Judaism the religion. The readers have to fully leave that camp to come to Christ and have continuing faith in Him.
 3. Just like "camp" is used as a reference to something more than the Israelite camp, so also the "city" means something more as well. Instead of Jerusalem the literal city, the "city" that doesn't continue refers to Jerusalem of old with its religious practices. The "city" that is to come refers to an eternal dwelling place of God.
- B. Why should we come fully out of the old religious system? The text says it is because we do not have an enduring city here. Jerusalem, as constituted presently with its religious rituals, will not continue forever. In fact, it has already become obsolete.
- C. Therefore, we look to a future "city" that replaces the old one.
1. There will be a new heavens and new earth, with a new Jerusalem – see Revelation 21:2. This is where God will live with His people, apart from all the bad in the world today. See Hebrews 12:22, 11:10, 11:14-16. This future-looking for a city has to do with the coming of the kingdom of God, a thought that is rich with truth from the Old Testament, the gospels, and many other places in the Bible. It is promised to God's people.
 2. As a statement of fact, the author says we look to the coming city. While recognizing the decay of the old system, we, the author says, seek the coming dwelling place of God. That's what he was looking for. **Question:** Is that what you are looking for?
- D. This future-looking thought compels us to go to Christ despite the reproach.
1. Jesus was rejected by the people and was crucified outside the city to symbolically identify with the utter reproach of sin.
 2. Christians are followers of Jesus. Since he took sin upon Him and died outside of Jerusalem and outside of the Jewish religious system, we will necessarily follow Him away from that system as well and thus take a share in His reproach in the sight of men.

Application: What do we do with verses 13-14?

- A. The text calls the Jew to go to Christ, despite the reproach, and because the Jewish system has no continuing city.
- B. Similarly, we are called out of whatever “religion” we might have grown up in. You have to go outside your camp, whatever that is. If it is not fully Christian, then it doesn’t give access to the sacrificial death of Christ.
- C. But, the familiar often rules. The known is more comfortable than the unknown; or as the Lord Jesus said, “No one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says ‘The old is better’” (Luke 5:39). “I was born a _____, I am going to die a _____.” Old traditions die hard, but die they must if they do not square with the words of the living God. For these Jews this meant leaving useless rituals and going to Christ in faith. For us this means substantially the same thing.
- D. The idea also arises from this truth that our values and priorities should be shaped by the reality that this world is passing away. Temporal things should not capture our fancy as they too often do. Things unseen, eternal, matters of faith, the Triune God, etc. should have our attention.

Transition: That city to come is the city our Lord Jesus—the city whose builder and maker is God (11:10). He has provided us all the blessings of salvation, including forgiveness and a future dwelling place in the heavenly Jerusalem. So...

III. As Our Thanks, We Should Offer “Sacrifices” to God, v. 15-16

There are three sacrifices we can offer to God:

- A. The **sacrifice of praise**, acknowledging God with our mouths.
 - 1. Praise is a sacrifice. It is not material; not animal; not as a payment for sin. God was never impressed with animal sacrifices that were offered apart from obedient faith (1 Samuel 15:22, Psalm 51:16, Isaiah 1:11).
 - 2. What is this praise? Praise is the outpouring of lips that confess His name, a sacrificial work of the tongue/mouth/lips (Hosea 14:2). Some translations render it as giving thanks to His name, and that is OK, but it is more than just thanksgiving (like the holiday). This praise is a **confession** or **acknowledgement** of God with the mouth. Thus, it is generally a public profession. It is an expression of an in-the-heart belief that naturally comes to outward expression. The mouth exhibits what is in the heart.

3. How should we offer such sacrifices:

Through Christ – the only way that we can approach God.

Continually – not just on Sundays; not just at the three festivals in the year when Jewish men were to appear at Jerusalem (Exodus 23:14-17). All the time!

God wants our mouths, because if He has our mouths, He has our hearts. And if He has our hearts, He has our bodies and souls.

B. The **sacrifice of doing good** to all men, but especially believers (see Galatians 6:10). This is closely tied to the next sacrifice.

C. The **sacrifice of sharing** with those who have need.

These two (B and C) are what we could call “benevolence.” They would include the practical sharing of goods or skills, time, encouragement, wisdom, etc. We are to be zealous in doing good works (Titus 2:14).

These actions demonstrate the reality of the praise in verse 15. See 1 John 3:17 in support of this notion that praise that is empty of doing good is not genuine at all.

God is pleased with these sacrifices. We should note that even these, however, must be done in faith, just like the OT sacrifices of animals, in order for them to “count.” Empty praise, fake thanksgiving, and heartless, faithless doing of good out of duty or for self-adulation are not “sacrifices” at all, much less ones that God will be pleased with.

A question arises: if I am in Christ, how can I please God more than that?

When we behave in these ways, we are pleasing God as our **Father**, not as our **Judge**. After salvation, the issue of sin has been dealt with and what we have is a personal relationship with God. We desire to please Him by obedience, not out of a “paying back the atonement” mindset. These sacrifices have an air of thanksgiving about them, not as a way to earn God’s favor in salvation, but to gratefully acknowledge his favor in an ongoing way.

Conclusion

All three kinds of sacrifices (praise, doing good, and sharing) should be evident in our lives. One without the others is empty. Each is a sign of spiritual life. If there are no signs of spiritual life, that might just mean there is no life—yikes! God is pleased when He sees the gift of His salvation well used and very active in the lives of His children.