

The Sacrifice of Praise

by H.J. Vine

We are called to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, despite obstacles and adversity, through faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Luke 2:13-24, Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 2:12, Hebrews 5:4, Hebrews 7:4, Hebrews 13:15

Topics: "Worship And Praise", "Jesus Christ"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the importance of offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, despite the challenges and influences that may try to hinder our worship. He emphasizes that true revival in the assembly is marked by constant praise, not just on special occasions, and that both servants of the Lord and saints should never cease to praise God, even in the face of adversity and opposition. The sermon highlights the greatness and faithfulness of Jesus Christ as our Apostle and High Priest, encouraging believers to consider Him in His glory and in His sufferings, which leads to deep-toned worship and offerings of praise.

Transcript

Notwithstanding the declension in the assemblies which profess Christ's Name, by Him we are told in Hebrews 13:15 to offer "the sacrifice of praise to God continually." When depressing influences would rob God of such offerings--just as Israel's altars were desolated of old--it is good that those who know the redeeming work and the royal worth of our Lord Jesus Christ should be told to give to God just that which the Spirit moves them to offer up by the One who saves them to the uttermost, and to do so "continually," in spite of every effort of dark powers to drown or deaden the sweet tones of spiritual praise which are so pleasant to our God and Father.

Any real revival among those who belong livingly to the assembly, which is God's house, has always been marked by this; but the Spirit would have it to mark us continually, and not only on special occasions.

"One string there is of sweetest tone

Reserved for those who know His grace,

'Tis sacred to one class alone,

'Tis touched by one peculiar race;

And pleasant is its sound of praise,
Becoming well the saints of God;
Should they refuse their song to raise,
The stones might tell their shame abroad."

It also becomes the servants of the Lord as well as the saints. Neither care for the welfare of those who belong to God's house, the assembly, nor toil in the quarries of sin and darkness to win souls for Christ, nor circumstances of adversity in the path of service for His name, nor the opposition of the wakeful enemies of the truth, should be allowed to still the praises of the Lord. See the apostle and his companion initiating the work of the gospel and of the assembly in Europe! Behold them cast into prison with backs bleeding! Their feet are made fast in the stocks, the darkness of midnight is upon them, when--Hearken!--"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." Those praises were none the less acceptable to God because they ascended from a vile Macedonian jail. Should ours be less fragrant and plentiful now that we can come together in assembly around our living Lord in peace, with none to make us afraid?

The One who is in our midst says "I will sing!" Nor will He fail to do so! We may, but, blessed be God, our Lord and Leader continues to sound the praises of God, as we read, "I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing Thy praises" (Heb. 2:12, N.Tr.). He makes God known to us and He sings praises to God. In other epistles Paul may address himself to the saints as an apostle, but in Hebrews Jesus is the Apostle, none other is to be thought of. He it is in whom God has spoken fully and finally to us. He is also the one High Priest by whom we draw nigh to God.

We are told to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, who is faithful to Him that has constituted Him." Yes, faithful and merciful too! Fail He cannot! Greater than angels, He has seated Himself on the right hand of the greatness of the throne on high, having by Himself first put away our sins at Calvary;--greater than the heavens and the earth, the works of His hands, He shall continue still; "the Same" when they are changed;--greater than man as seen in Adam, He, the Son of Man, after having tasted death for everything, is crowned with glory and honour; greater than Moses, "counted worthy of greater glory than Moses," He is now Son over God's house;--greater than Joshua, He has passed through the heavens and leads His own into eternal rest;--greater than Aaron, He is after the order of Melchisedec, Minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord has pitched and not man;--Aaron was priest on earth, Melchisedec was king and priest on earth, and it is said, "Consider how great this man was" (Heb. 7:4), but it is said of our Lord who "sprang out of Judah" (v. 14); "If He were on earth, He would not be a priest" (Heb. 5:4); He has gone "into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us." Fail! how could such an One fail? He remains faithful, as we have said, and He is over the house where the sacrifice of praise ascends continually, "Whose house are we if, indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end." It is in Him we have boldness,--not in ourselves,--and access, too, in confidence by the faith of Him where He is. Faith makes good to us the things hoped for, as well as the things not seen.

The departure from first love in the assemblies, the degrading doctrines of libertines, and the downgrade principles and practices of lawless leaders, began even when apostles were on earth, and they have sunken deeper and deeper since. Nevertheless the path of the just shineth more and more till the perfect day, and the Son of the God glorified on high, encourages the praises of His own to ascend with

increasing sweetness, constancy and volume meanwhile.

Is it not touching when we read down through psalm 22 to see the deep sufferings which the forsaken One of God endured upon the tree, and then near the close to find those words we have already mentioned, "I will praise Thee;" and again, "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him;" and then, "My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation"? The Sufferer becomes the Singer, the One who knew sorrow beyond all others sings the song of songs, and, those who fear the Lord, tuned by His pangs and moved by His suffering love and sorrow, respond to the heavenly voice of the Living One and offer the sacrifice of praise to God also. He endured the cross, He suffered outside the religious camp, but He has gone into heaven now. Those who go forth to Him are exhorted therefore to "consider well Him who endured" so much. In His greatness and glory we are enjoined to consider Him again and again, but in the sufferings He endured we are told to consider Him well! It is this which tunes the souls of those who know His love to praise, and makes deep-toned worship flow forth. We know Him in the heights of His glory, we consider Him well in the depths of His sorrow, and offerings of praise follow.

"Yes, He can make us sing,

None else our souls could tune,

Jesus alone can music make

In hearts where there was none;

To God shall anthems loud

Break forth in glorious strains,

When over all in blissful joy

His love eternal reigns."

It is "by Him." Those who go forth "to Him" offer up the sacrifice of praise, as they enter "through Him" into the holiest of all in full assurance of faith, and look forward to be "with Him" when He comes again, and meanwhile" in Him "they are received into the favour of God their Father, through the work and worth of our Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. The truth frees us from what hinders, and the Son gives us freedom indeed before the Father's face.

Right at the close of the Old Testament, when God's people and the priests of Israel were exceedingly depraved, those who feared the Lord were often together, and "HIS NAME" was their glorious theme! Fragrant, indeed, was it to Him, for He "hearkened and heard it." The choice Gospel concerning the Son of Man introduces us later to those of similar spirit in Israel. That most excellent treatise of Luke shows to us those who thought and spake of Him, and that when failure abounded. Their subject was perfection, not imperfection and corruption. It has often been said that Luke's Gospel illustrates Paul's doctrine which frees us from the principle of sin and death and turns us from self to One in glory and life, so that the Spirit may make our hearts overflow with praise and worship, even as we are told both in Ephesians and Colossians, "Making melody in your hearts to the Lord;" "Sing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." It is a matter of the heart going out to Him who loves us. In harmony with this Luke opens with burst after burst of praise as God's Son, the perfect man Christ Jesus, comes forth. His mother is hailed with blessing; Mary magnifies the Lord and rejoices in God her Saviour; Zacharias, who maintained his priestly function in

God's house, blessed the Lord God of Israel, and the heavenly host praised God, and said, Glory to God in the highest; the shepherds praised Him; and Simeon, who waited for Christ to come, when He saw Him, blessed God and uttered his Nunc Dimittis in the temple, for his eyes had seen God's salvation. And this precious book of Luke, set out "in order," as we are told, giving us the record of the Man whose perfection excels all others (written as inspired of the Spirit accordingly, so that even a critic such as Renan admitted, "It is the most beautiful book that has ever been written"), shows us that great joy and rejoicing may be the portion of true believers,--the true circumcision,--"who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh;" closing, as it does, by letting us see the disciples gathered together "with great joy," "continually in the temple praising and blessing God" (chap. 24:53).

Those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, born again by the living Word of God, having come to the Rejected of man but the Chosen of God, are builded together a spiritual house today, a holy priesthood, to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God by Him.

"Then let our gladsome praise resound,

And let us in His work abound."

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