

What Sacrifices Please God?

[Hebrews 13:15-16](#)

Hebrews, Day 55

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

- Hebrews 13:15-16, ESV

My wife's birthday is December 12th, less than two weeks before Christmas. We've been married for 20 years, and for most of those 20 years, I have struggled to figure out a good birthday present for her and then to also come up with a good Christmas present idea within just a few days. My wife is not a picky person, not hard to please. But sometimes I'm just lacking in the creativity to come up with something original and interesting twice in such a short period of time.

The worst birthday present I've gotten her was probably David Brainerd's journal, edited by Jonathan Edwards, accompanied by John Piper's lecture on the life of Brainerd. She was gracious, but I have to admit I was being purely selfish with that one. I had heard Piper's lecture, and I really wanted to read Brainerd. I still haven't. I think I feel too guilty every time I pick up the book.

Many Christians over the centuries have thought they needed to do something creative for God, to show Him how much they love Him or to somehow get Him to smile on them and bless them. One extreme example from the Middle Ages were the flagellants, men who would whip themselves, leaving their backs bleeding and scarred, in a mixture of repentance and devotion to God. Another, perhaps equally extreme example, were the crusades, in which people went to kill and be killed in the name of Jesus. And what about the grand cathedrals of the late Middle Ages, which kings and bishops built at extreme cost to themselves and their people, seeking to leave a lasting legacy to honor the Lord? Martin Luther went to Rome as a young man and climbed the stone steps on his knees, saying the Lord's Prayer with each stair climbed. Was God pleased with all these sacrifices? No!

Lest we look down our noses at the Middle Ages, our modern evangelical world is full of people who make offerings to the Lord that the Lord never commanded or encouraged. It's an old problem. More than 3,000 years ago, God commanded King Saul to wipe out the Amalekites and to leave nothing alive, but Saul let the people keep the best livestock alive, as an offering to the Lord. God told Saul through the prophet Samuel:

*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
as in obeying the voice of the Lord?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
and to listen than the fat of rams. - 1 Samuel 15:22, ESV*

So, God is obviously not pleased with just any sacrifice, especially with sacrifices that involve disobedience to His word. But what sacrifices do please God? Hebrews 13:15-16 tells us very clearly.

Hebrews has already established the foundation truth that no sacrifice we offer atones for our sins. Christ has already paid the price and made the once-for-all sacrifice for all our sin. We cannot add to His offering for sin. What we can do is offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving in two ways: by praising His name and by doing good to others.

In response to Christ's perfect salvation, we are to "*continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.*" We don't just praise God on Sunday mornings but all throughout the week. We are also to do good and to share what we have with people in need. We're told God is pleased with these sacrifices.

These may not feel sacrificial enough for some people. They may want to do more for Jesus. They may not seem grand or life-changing or earth-shattering, but they actually are. If God's people were to consciously praise Him and acknowledge His name at all times, and if we were to really give and share with others, these sacrifices would change us deeply and would speak loudly and clearly to a world that desperately needs to see more of Jesus in His people.