

## **Acceptable sacrifice**

*To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

*Proverbs 21:3*

*By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*

*Hebrews 13:15-16*

When we compare scripture with scripture, we can find helpful perspective to not only rightly divide God's word but also apply it. The precept from the Proverbs reminds us of king Saul, who through bad judgment impatiently offered a sacrifice that he was not permitted to offer, instead of waiting for the prophet Samuel as he was clearly instructed. Through this and other instances, we see Saul's disregard for obedience to God's authority coupled with his pretense of sacrifice. What he demonstrates is a misunderstanding of the nature and purpose of sacrifice. In his impatience to wait upon the Lord, he evidently viewed sacrifice as either a good-luck charm or an appeasement. But neither of these is a rightful understanding of God's purpose for sacrifice. These were possibly learned from the idolatrous neighbors of Israel, whose notions of religion were borne from the minds of sinful men and not of God. These notions continue throughout history to the present, as religion continues to view some form of sacrifice as somehow a trade-off for lack of justice, judgment, or goodness. What is necessary to understand is that sacrifice does not oppose or negate justice, but completes it. With a right view of sacrifice, we understand the true nature of justice with respect to righteousness. Thus, the Proverb does not discourage sacrifice, but comparatively shows that it must be understood based on a reverence for righteous judgment. Then as the writer of Hebrews announces, as we understand the completion of God's justice through the sacrifice of His only Son, we can then by Him offer acceptable sacrifices to God, through continual praise for the gift of His righteousness, and through sharing with others His goodness bestowed upon us. Without Christ in us, our sacrifices are a pretense. With Christ, they become an acceptable offering of thanksgiving (Romans 12:1).

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