

New Covenant Sacrifices

Hebrews 13:15-16

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Well, it's good to see you here to worship our wonderful Savior together.

We're back in Hebrews chapter 13, today specifically in verses 15 and 16. So if you would turn there with me, Hebrews 13:15-16.

And you know, there really are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who really need to know why and those who don't. This is a tendency that usually demonstrates itself all the way back in grade school and moving forward. Some of you really didn't need to know why the math formula was the correct formula or why it worked the way it worked. You just wanted to memorize it, take the test, and move on with your life. Others have this continual unsettled feeling inside until they really understand the mechanics of how those formulas work and why this one instead of that one.

Some of us just enjoy eating sausage. Others won't eat it until they know how it's made, which means they probably don't eat sausage. Now, honestly, for most endeavors, it really doesn't matter which kind of person you are. It's a matter of preference.

But there are certain instances in which knowing why you should or should not do something makes a crucial difference. And when it comes to the Christian life, the answer to the question of why is of crucial importance. The Bible is full of both indicatives and imperatives. Indicatives, grammatically, are statements of fact. They're truth statements. The indicatives of Scripture give us the basis of our theology, for example. They teach us about the nature of God and the nature of the world in which we live, even much about our own hearts and our own lives.

The Bible also is full of imperatives. Imperatives are commands. They tell us how we should live or how we should not live and how to live in accordance with God's will. Both indicatives and imperatives in Scripture are of crucial importance. They are to be studied and memorized and meditated on.

But if we seek to fulfill the imperatives of Scripture with little to no interest in the indicatives of Scripture, we'll find ourselves in trouble. It is a deep understanding of the key truth statements of Scripture that keep us from either legalism or license in our attempts to fulfill the commands of Scripture. So in short, when it comes to the Bible and its directives for our lives, we should all be interested in the why behind these commands.

Because it's not as if we demand of God that He explain to us why He calls us to do this or that. That's not what I mean. Rather, we should all be interested in the why behind the commands of Scripture because those indicative truth statements teach us of our God, the character of our God, the heart of our God, and the basis of our theology in our very lives.

This is why the Apostle John can say this in 1 John 5:3: ***“3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. ”***

Now the only reason the Apostle John can say that last part, that the commandments of God are not burdensome, is because John understands the why behind the commands of God. Specifically, he understands who God is, the heart of his God. There's theology in that statement. His commands are not burdensome.

And that relates to where we're going to be in Hebrews today because we're going to see here in verses 15 and 16 two more practices that we're to put on as Christians, as those who have steadfast faith in Christ.

But these commands, these imperatives, are built on the indicative truth statements that we studied last time. And it's crucial that we put the two together so that we rightly apply why it is that the author calls us to do these things.

Before we get to our specific verses, just remember where we've been and this grand theme of the book of Hebrews, **The Superiority of Christ**, that He truly is Lord of all. He is superior to everything in the Old Covenant. And in chapter 13 specifically, we're looking at these corporate applications that we should live out in response to all the wonderful truth that we've seen in the other chapters preceding this in Hebrews. So far, we've seen seven practices just in chapter 13.

We are to practice **Brotherly Love, Intentional Hospitality, Compassionate Care, Marital Honor, Contented Trust, Faithful Imitation**. And then last time, we are to **Reject Error** is what we've studied in verses nine to 14.

And if you just quickly remember the structure of what we studied in those verses, we saw the command that we are to **Beware of False Doctrine** followed by the argument that we are to **Rest in Christ's Sacrifice** because it is a superior once for all sacrifice. And then finally, the response to that is that we should **Identify With Christ's Reproach**, go outside the camp and identify with Christ.

Now that leads us to verses 15 and 16. If you would read with me, Hebrews 13, beginning in verse 15:

"15 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. 16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

The grand idea that we see here in these verses is simply this, **Christ's physical sacrifice should compel believers to offer spiritual sacrifices**. Christ's physical sacrifice should compel believers to offer spiritual sacrifices. And as I mentioned before, the next two practices that we see here in these verses are intricately connected to what we saw in verses 9 to 14, and especially in verses 10 to 12.

Verses 10 to 12 give us the why, the truth statements behind these practices. Look with me again at Hebrews 13, verse 10:

"10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 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. 12 Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate."

If you were with us, you remember we learned here that in the New Covenant, we still have an altar, and it's an altar that's better than the altar under the Old Covenant in the temple because the altar of the New Covenant is the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, an atoning sacrifice, a truly atoning sacrifice that Hebrews has told us over and over again was once and for all sins paid for in full.

And the result, those verses tell us, is that we have been sanctified, set apart, and declared as holy, not because of holiness within us innately to ourselves, but because of the holiness of Christ applied to us, His righteousness imputed to us by faith. This is the good news of the gospel. The key point then here that ties into this is that God the Father is pleased with us because we are those who have been sanctified by the atoning sacrifice of His Son. We are His, and He is ours if we're in Christ, and this will never be undone. It will never change.

Now, those truth statements lead the author to give us this instruction, and we have to consider this instruction then in that context. Otherwise, if we just jump to verses 15 and 16, we might be tempted to wrongly think the author is just piling on legalistic works that we as Christians must do. That's not at all what's happening. He's saying because of what Christ has done, because God is pleased with you in Christ and your sins are atoned for, now go and live this way.

And what we find here is that in the New Covenant, this may be a surprise, but we actually have our own sacrificial system, so to speak. The Old Covenant had a sacrificial system, but the New Covenant now, we're told, has a different kind of sacrificial system. The content and the purpose of this sacrificial system are radically transformed in the New Covenant, but there are sacrifices under the New Covenant.

What are they? Well, first of all, verse 15 and practice number eight is **Sacrificial Praise**, the sacrifice of praise. Sacrificial praise. Look back at verse 15:

"15 Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God,"

Notice that first phrase, through him then. Him must be the Lord Jesus Christ in context. Through Christ let us offer this up. This assumes, by the way, that we're very familiar with what has previously been taught in the book of Hebrews. He's already told us in Hebrews that we've been granted access to the Father through the atoning work of Christ. In that sense, through him, through the access granted to us by grace through faith in Christ, let us continually offer up, he says.

Now the word, the verb there, offer up, that's borrowed from Old Testament language. It's the same commonly used verb for offering up a sacrifice under the Old Covenant, only now it's referring to something entirely different. And this offering sacrifices through Christ reminds us of the priestly role that Christ plays in our lives, the high priestly role of Christ that's been emphasized throughout the book of Hebrews.

Remember in chapter 10, for example, the author says this:

"19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a

sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

What he says there to us is that because of Christ's atonement on the cross and the fact that He is even now seated at the right hand of the Father, acting as our high priest, we now by grace have continual access to God the Father through the Son.

You remember in the story of Esther, for example, when she was afraid to go before the king because the law at the time was that if you entered the king's presence without his invitation, that could be punished by death. What was the gesture that the king had to make in order to pardon or welcome that person? He would extend his scepter from his throne in the direction of that person as to say they are welcome. Theologically, in Christ, if you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, it's as if the scepter of God the Father is continually extended in your direction and you are granted access and you are welcome. That's the idea.

That's why on that basis, the word "continually" is included here. Through Him then, let us continually offer up. As a pattern of life, we have been granted access and we must use that access, take advantage of the fact that we're welcome into the presence of the Father.

To be in Christ is to have a relationship with God that is fundamentally different than the relationship with God under the Old Covenant because the system of the Old Covenant, as we've seen so many times already in Hebrews, that system was a constant reminder of the fact that we have no business being in the presence of God. That on the basis of our sin, we are unwelcome and don't have access into the presence of God.

All of that is flipped around in the New Covenant because Christ has paid by His blood the atoning sacrifice. Now we have continual access to God the Father through the Son. And so it is, we begin to understand why the apostle John said that the commands of God are not burdensome.

Why not? They're not burdensome if you understand that the purpose of the commands of God for New Covenant believers has nothing to do with earning or maintaining God's acceptance. Instead, the commands under the New Covenant simply outlined the way that we as sons and daughters of God are to obey Him and live out His will for His glory.

God has made us what we must be to be accepted as His children. And therefore, we can apply this phrase through Him, let us offer this sacrifice. In that sense then, the obedience of the Christian is not a burden. It is a privilege.

It is a gift to have been invited to be a son, daughter of God through the blood of the Son.

The burden, the sense of being weighed down by the commands of God comes when we wrongly interpret them as if their purpose is to maintain our acceptance before Him. The joy of fulfilling God's commands comes when we realize these actually are the privilege of adopted children.

So, the New Covenant does come with its own offerings, its own sacrifices, and they are to be brought continually, non-stop. This is not just a morning and evening. This is not just a holiday in which these sacrifices are to be present. Continually make your sacrifice to God,

but understand they serve an entirely different purpose, and the content, therefore, of these sacrifices is entirely different as well.

Look back at the passage. It says we are to *"continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God."* That's the content of the sacrifice. Praise to God. Notice there's no animal here. There's no blood being shed. There's actually nothing physically offered to God in this sacrifice at all.

The continual offering of the believer under the New Covenant then is a sacrifice of constant praise. That's the sacrificial system. The need for sacrifice as it relates to sin is completely done. No more. Christ has paid it all. So all now that remains are spiritual sacrifices that overflow from a heart that's been transformed and regenerated by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's why he goes on to describe it this way if you look at the rest of verse 15. He says: *"that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."*

That's a description of what this sacrifice of praise is. It's the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name.

So in short, this sacrifice of praise is sanctified speech. Speech that declares the glory of God, that declares our devotion to God and our love for God and our appreciation for God. To praise God in this sense is to verbally confess not only our faith in the fact that He is who He says he is, even the demons understand who God is and even aspects of His nature, but to verbally confess the fact that He is who he says He is but also to love Him for who He is and to adore Him and worship Him for who He is.

As believers, we see who God is in Scripture and we see that as an infinitely good thing, a person that we want to know and draw near to and therefore this is the fruit of the lips of those whose hearts have been transformed.

This is how we're to think about these spiritual sacrifices, not as burdensome commands but as a heart overflowing, gushing over if you will, because we know our God and we delight in our God. It's the most natural thing in the world then for our mouths to speak of Him, to praise Him, to sing of Him.

This is part and parcel with what the Scriptures describe under the New Covenant of a transformed heart so that what happens is, if you're in Christ, you have a new nature and that new heart, as Jesus says, from the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Your mouth is transformed when you become a true believer because your heart is transformed. So the heart starts to pour out different things and it stops pouring out things that it used to pour out.

You know the scriptures often use this language that's used here of a fruit bearing tree, a tree bearing fruit and the reason is because it's so easy to understand. It's the simplest concept in the world. An apple tree bears apples, always. A blackberry bush bears blackberries, always. Why? Because of the nature of the plant. It expresses its nature in the fruit that it bears.

This is what was prophesied about the New Covenant all the way back in Ezekiel 36. Listen to this description of what the New Covenant would be like. Verse 26 and 27:

"26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

In Christ and the regeneration that comes by the spirit through the gospel, this is fulfilled in us as being fulfilled in us, as He gives us a new heart, a new nature, and He fills us with His spirit. Therefore, that new heart bursts forth like an apple tree bearing apples, the Christian heart bears praise. It's the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. Now, that last phrase "that gives thanks to His name", I actually believe there's a better translation for the words give thanks.

The literal word in the Greek is the word "confess", that confess His name. I think the New American Standard translates it this way, give thanks, because it's sort of an application of the meaning of the word, but the literal word is confess. So, what does it mean to be a person who confesses God's name? You know, we say that a lot, like God, we give thanks to you or your name. We give glory to your name, praise to your name. What does it mean to confess the name of God or to praise the name of God?

Well, to understand that, we have to know a little bit of the background about the significance of names in the Scripture and culturally how the original audience would have thought about names, specifically God's name, because even pagans at this time in their pagan religious worship attach special significance to names because the name of a person at this time was understood to represent the person as a whole, so that when you say, we praise the name of God or confess the name of God, we mean God Himself. That's what we even mean as we use it that way today.

But there's something even deeper here, because God's name is special, and it's special because God's name is not a name that we gave to Him. It's a name He revealed to us. In giving us His name, and we may even say names, while God the Father has a proper name, Yahweh as we'll see, the Bible refers to Him by many names. This is God revealing graciously aspects of His nature to us. In giving us His name, the transcendent God, condescends to reveal Himself to us.

You understand, we can't know God unless God chooses to make Himself known. We are cut off from knowing God on our own unless He reveals Himself, which is why we're so thankful for His word, and we're so thankful for His Son, in whom He has revealed Himself to us, but He also reveals Himself simply in giving us His name.

We see this in the first instance when God gives us His proper name in Exodus 3, beginning in verse 13, when Moses asks for his name:

"13 Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?'" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM (or Yahweh) has sent me to you.'"

And God furthermore said to Moses: "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations."

Now we could do a whole series just on understanding God's name more deeply, but at a high surface level, even in this name, Yahweh, I am, we have the eternality of God, He has no beginning and no end, and that's since He's in the present tense all the time. The immutability of God, He does not, cannot change. We start to see some of the aspects of who God is through the revelation of this name.

But God goes on later, actually to preach a sermon on His own name. Later, when Moses wants to see God, God passes by, and he gives us a greater description of who he is, Exodus 34:6-7:

"6 Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "Yahweh, Yahweh God, "

Now it's as if he announces who he is, and now he's going to graciously reveal more about who is this Yahweh.

"Yahweh God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."

So we see even more revelation of God and this name, Yahweh. One more example, we see some revelation prophetically of who the Messiah would be simply by giving us His names in Isaiah 9:6:

"For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

Do you see how these names are revelatory? They teach us about who God is and about His nature. So understand, to say that we are the people who confess God's name is significant. What does it mean then to confess God's name?

Well, to confess God's name is actually an act of worship because what it really means is not just that we say the name. What it means is as one who confesses God's name, we believe that He is who He says He is. We delight in who He says He is and we recognize He deserves our worship because of who He says He is. To confess the name of Yahweh is to believe He is the one true God and He's worthy of our worship.

This is Moses' response actually on that day when God reveals himself to him in Exodus 34: 8. Notice what Moses does:

"Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship."

This is the right response when we come to truly confess his name.

So let's put all this together then. As those who have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, we have come to be those who confess His name. To have faith, of course, requires that we believe God's testimony about who He is and His testimony of His gospel. And to repent of sin requires that you believe that because God is who He says He is, your sin makes you guilty before Him and in need of His forgiveness.

So all true Christians, then, must necessarily be those who confess God's name. We believe He is who He says He is. We delight in who He is and we then worship Him for who He is.

That is why, all of that is why the author says this sacrifice of praise is the natural fruit of the lips of those who confess His name. It's in keeping with their new heart and with their new nature in Christ.

So by way of application then, if you're in Christ this morning, continually praise the name of God. Let that be your continual spiritual sacrifice unto God. Make full use of the fact that God has already purchased you and paid for your sins in His Son. And make full use of the fact that the Son ministers as your high priest right now in the presence of the Father so that in a sense, the scepter of the Father is extended in your direction continually as if to say, welcome, come, you are accepted here on the basis of My Son.

Continually, day in, day out, praise the Lord. Praise Him in private, praise Him in public. Let praise towards God flow from your lips without ceasing. And listen, don't give a moment's notice to who you're talking to or what they think about you. Praise God. Remember, we are those who are to freely go outside the camp and identify with Jesus no matter the cost. And certainly that means that our language should not change when it comes to praising God depending on who we're with.

Do you ever notice that you change the way you say things depending on whether or not you're talking to a believer or an unbeliever? For example, when we're talking to a Christian and we're talking about something good that happened in our life, we may say, praise God, such and such happened. But then at work or with a neighbor or an unbelieving family member, we may tone it down and say, thankfully, such and such happened.

We ought to just continually praise the Lord. It ought to be obvious to those around us that we delight in Him. And we're not ashamed to give thanks where thanks is due. God has done it, and so I will give Him thanks. And actually, in speaking just normally how we would speak about God to others, we may even find ourselves with an opportunity to share the gospel. But this is a spiritual sacrifice that delights the heart of God. Sing His praises. Speak His praises. Pray His praises.

There's a ninth practice that should be true of us as well that comes in verse 16. Practice number nine is **Sacrificial Obedience**. Sacrificial obedience.

So we have praise in verse 15 and obedience in verse 16 because he begins with this command, "*and do not neglect*". This is a clear command, and it's actually the same command that's given back in verse 2. There he said, "*do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.*" I mention that connection not just because it's the same verb, but it actually

even ties in thematically to what we're going to see here in this command of what we're not to neglect.

And these are two descriptions of further spiritual sacrifices that we are to offer to the Lord, further examples of how we worship Him under the New Covenant. The first relates to our speech. The other relates to our actions and how we live, which ties in, by the way, well with what Paul says because Paul tells the Romans that actually our whole lives are to be a spiritual sacrifice.

In Romans 12 verse 1:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."

The worship of God then is not to be thought of only in the sense of speech, but in action because when the heart is transformed by the gospel, it not only bears fruit in our speech, it bears fruit in our bodies and the way we live.

Now look specifically at the two actions that he narrows in on here:

"And do not neglect doing good and sharing"

Now let's look at those each individually. Do not neglect doing good, first of all. Doing good means "rendering of service with implication of being generally recognized as laudable." (BDAG) Well doing is a good translation. So this is a broad term.

Now the New Testament's clear that the new relationship we have with God should overflow into a new relationship with other people. The two should correlate. In Christ, God relates to us on the basis of grace. Therefore, we ought to relate to one another as His sons and daughters on the basis of grace. This in fact is so pervasive, this doing good, it even applies to our enemies. Listen to Romans 12:17:

"17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. 20 'But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

So the New Covenant effect then on the heart, the work of the Spirit regenerating us, is so extensive that it goes beyond just those closest to us, even to our enemies, in how we ought to seek to do them good.

But if that's true, if we're to even do good to our enemies, how much more should we do good to one another in Christ? That's Paul's argument in Galatians 6: 9-10:

"9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith."

So yes, we must be careful to do good to all of those that the Lord brings into our lives. But there should be a special place in our heart for the people of God. It ought to be obvious in this community as a family that we do good to one another.

So let me just ask you, how frequently do you do good to others? How frequently do you serve others for no other reason than to give glory to God and to be a benefit to them? This is the New Covenant privilege of this sacrificial offering to the Lord to do good.

But now the author goes into a second broad term. These two terms really tie together thematically as they're referring to how we do good now to one another. The second term is do not neglect in sharing.

Now what's interesting is this is probably one of the Greek words you know. It's one of the most more famous Greek words. This is the word *koinonia*. Normally we translate *koinonia* as fellowship, but here it's translated as sharing because in this context it's highlighting an aspect of *koinonia*, one aspect of what it means to fellowship and to share. Literally the word is defined this way. It's "an attitude of goodwill that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity or fellow feeling."

It goes hand in hand with doing good. It's an expression of one of the ways that we do good and that is in the attribute of generosity. It's a call again to an open-handedness with what God has given to us.

You know I found it interesting in our study so far in chapter 13 of Hebrews that how frequently this theme keeps coming up of generosity, of being generous with what God has given to us. You remember in hospitality we talked about that and the need to share our resources there. But really we shouldn't be surprised because it's all over the New Testament isn't it?

As we saw with hospitality one of the immediate effects on the early church of the gospel was an open handedness with resources. It began in the first church there in Jerusalem. This church primarily a Jewish church. These Christians are selling things and they're using the proceeds to care for the needy among them. But what's interesting is that that impulse towards generosity didn't stop with the church in Jerusalem.

Because remember the gospel goes forth. The great commission is fulfilled. It goes into the process of being fulfilled and we see that especially in the apostle Paul going to Gentile nations and Gentile churches are formed and we see generosity as an immediate aspect of their lives as well. In fact there's this interesting passage in 2nd Corinthians where Paul is collecting a gift from Gentile churches to go back to the primarily Jewish church in Jerusalem because they've fallen on hard times due to a famine. And listen to how Paul describes this financial gift that these Gentile churches are collecting for the church in Jerusalem.

This is 2nd Corinthians 9:12-15. He says:

"² For the ministry of this service (that is the financial gift) is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also abounding through many thanksgivings to God. ¹³ Because of the proven character given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the generosity of your fellowship toward them

(notice that combination of generosity and fellowship) *and toward all, ¹⁴ while they also, by prayer on your behalf, long for you because of the surpassing grace of God on you.*" And then he says this in verse 15: "¹⁵ *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!*"

Now at some point maybe we'll do a message on this because this is a wonderful passage but what I want you to see just quickly is the connection here between this financial gift and the worship of God and fellowship. It's not about the gift. It's about what the gift expresses and what the gift provokes. Because what he says is this gift that you're giving is provoking thanksgiving in the hearts of these people towards God. That is a spiritual sacrifice. So your spiritual sacrifice of generosity is flowing over to giving thanks which is another spiritual sacrifice.

And then he even goes on to say here's the basis of all this generosity, verse 15, "*Praise be to God for His indescribable gift.*" What are we doing with all this giving away of our resources? We are living out as sons and daughters what God has done to us. If He did not withhold from us when we were in a state of need, the greatest, most costly gift of His Son how can we withhold resources we have to help those in need among us in the church? And as we do this there's this cyclical pattern of spiritual praise going up to God.

This is the New Covenant. This is this idea of koinonia in this sense. Koinonia by the way is a good way to think about that word is mutual sharing. It's a mutual sharing of relationship with one another. It's a mutual sharing in the sense of serving one another. And here we see it's a mutual sharing in the sense of resources that we share to care for one another. It's a wonderful reality of the New Testament church. And these things are like a pleasing aroma to the Lord.

Notice how He describes them here at the end of verse 16: "*do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*" God is pleased with such sacrifices. To do good to others, to be generous to others is to bear the indelible mark of a child of God. And therefore it's like a wonderful pleasing aroma to Him. A spiritual sacrifice.

Notice the author says specifically that these sacrifices please God. I want to stop there for a moment and just point out, I meet a lot of Christians often who have misapplied certain aspects of theology, often the doctrine of depravity, to the point that they find it very difficult to imagine that God could ever really be pleased with them or that they could ever offer God anything, even as a Christian that He would find acceptable or pleasing. This passage says otherwise. We're not to live our lives, Christians, as if we're a constant disappointment to God.

If we were on our own, apart from Christ, of course we would be a disappointment. We would be condemned for our sin. The good news of the gospel is we are not on our own anymore. We are cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that means He has made us pleasing to Himself. And therefore, as those who now please Him by grace in Christ, we are allowed to do things by the work of the Spirit in us that actually please the heart of the Father.

Does that mean we have perfect obedience as a Christian? Of course we don't. Not this side of heaven. It means that He is pleased with us in Christ. This is such a key thing for us to get

our minds around. Because I think we get caught up and we say, yeah, but even when I serve God there's mixed motives there. Sometimes I'm not even aware of them but I know they're there because I know how sneaky my heart is.

And what if I'm truly trying to do good but I really want the praise of man? Or I'm really trying to do good but there's some other selfish motive of how I hope it will come back to me. And we go in this hamster wheel in our minds and we convince ourselves that we can never do anything that God would be pleased with. But listen, the Bible is either true or it's not true.

The Bible says, with such sacrifices of seeking to do good to others and seeking to be generous with our resources and giving Him praise, He is pleased with such things. The Bible knows full well that God knows full well as He inspires in the Scriptures that we're not doing these things in perfection but we are doing those as those who have been bought with the blood of His Son.

And therefore we can please God and here's the reason: Because God's pleasure in us is always a gracious pleasure. God's pleasure with us and in us is always a gracious pleasure, meaning it's always based on what Christ has done for us. And it's always filtered through His work on the cross as well as His continual work as our high priest standing in the throne room of God.

So Christian, if you're tempted towards that hamster wheel where you wake up every day and you act as if God starts the day with a frown that He expects you to turn into a smile, you've missed what the Scripture describes as the Christian life.

The New Covenant Christian life is you wake up with a God who is graciously pleased towards you through His Son who then aids you by His Spirit giving you the strength both the desire and the will to work for His good pleasure that you might then truly please Him by seeking to fulfill His will not in perfection but faithfully in the direction of your life. This is the gospel. This is the New Covenant. These are the sacrifices of the New Covenant.

You know some people say well you can't describe it that way you're going to lead people towards antinomianism and they're just going to think well I can just live how I want then because God's already pleased with me in Christ. But listen, what we've just discovered is the why behind our obedience. Back to where we began. Getting the why right behind our obedience keeps us, I would argue, from both license and legalism and keeps us on the right pursuit of obedience.

And I would say when you understand the true why, the theological reasons for who we are in Christ and why God commands us to live the way He commands us to live, when you understand the why it will cause a fervency for holiness in you that legalism could never rival and on the other side it will cause you to have a sense of freedom in Christ that license could never rival because now we're walking in true obedience. Yes we're giving our maximum effort to glorify God, to offer these spiritual sacrifices, but we're doing so as John said without burden because we realize it's a privilege and it's all based on grace.

This is the Christian life. So with that in mind Christian, live your life as a living sacrifice unto God. This is your privilege and joy as a son and daughter of the King.

In his commentary, William Lane, I believe, does a really good job of striking the balance that I'm trying to strike right now so listen to how he says it. He says "only those who are consecrated to God and who have been made pleasing to Him can offer to Him a well pleasing sacrifice. On the other hand, the sacrifices of praise, acts of kindness, and generosity together constitute the worship that God desires from the New Covenant community in response to the experience of saving grace."

God has made us what we must be to be pleasing to Him so that we can offer sacrifices that please Him and this is what He calls us to do as a New Covenant body of believers.

So as we turn this now to application let me just lay three things before you to consider. Number one: **Consider Your Confession of God's Name.** Consider your confession of God's name. And I mean that in the sense of what we've learned today. Do you truly confess God's name in the sense that you truly have come to Him for salvation? You have bowed your knee before a holy God, recognizing your sin and your need for His forgiveness, and you have recognized that the gospel really is true, that Jesus really is the Son of God who came to die for your sins and rise again.

Have you personally put your faith in this God, confessing Him to be who He says He is, delighting in who He says He is, and receiving His gift of salvation by repentance and faith? That's where this must begin. This is only an application for those who confess His name, so begin there.

But now for those of you who would say yes, I am a believer, I confess His name in the saving sense, then consider the final two points of application. Number two: **Consider The Quality of Your Speech,** the quality of your speech. Would you say that your speech in general is a spiritual sacrifice, a pleasing aroma to the Lord? By that I mean, take for a moment the content of your speech and think of the content of your speech in two categories. Number one, the category of praise. Proactively, how often is your mouth filled with praise and thanksgiving to God privately and publicly? How freely do you express your gratitude and appreciation and love for God with those around you verbally?

But secondly, thinking about the content of your speech, is your speech careful in the sense of guarding your mouth from sin? Think of Ephesians 4:29:

"29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear."

This is the kind of speech that is a pleasing aroma to the Lord. So think of it positively, do you verbally praise God, but on the negative side, do you guard your mouth from sin, that is do you guard your mouth from curse words, filthy words, bitter words, angry words, spiteful words, manipulative words, lying words, gossiping words, and on and on the list would go?

Thinking on the commands of scripture regarding our speech both positively and negatively in the sense of guarding your speech would you say now your speech is characterized

generally as a spiritual sacrifice unto God? And in the areas where it's not simply repent of those and remind yourself of who you are in Christ and what He's done for you and that this is the proper natural fruit that ought to overflow out of our mouths from our heart.

Finally number three: **Consider The Quality of Your Obedience.** Consider our speech. Now ask yourself, who have you done good to recently. And even think of it this way, in general, are you in the habit of viewing other people through the lens of how you might be a benefit to them or are you more in the habit of viewing people through the lens of how they might be a benefit to you? Is there an unbeliever in your life perhaps that you find it particularly difficult to do good to? Have you considered the fact that we're to do good even to our enemies and that it may be your returning good for evil that opens the door for the gospel with that hard person?

And finally, **Consider Your Generosity.** When's the last time you used some of your resources that God's given to you simply to be a blessing to someone else? Honestly is that even how you really think about your resources? The bible is clear God gives us resources for a multitude of reasons. We are to enjoy in part what He gives. We are to see it as provision for our needs both now and in the future as we save, but also, we are to see our resources as God giving us resources we can use to bless others in His name. Is that last category of generosity towards God and others in your framework of thinking about your resources?

And I would just give us all an assignment for this week. I would ask you to take some time and block out some time to really consider how you use your resources. If you're married, I would encourage you to sit down with your spouse and I mean generally look at it. How are we using what God has given us, including finances specifically, but even beyond that think about your time and the talents and gifts that God has given you and your energy as well as your money. Is love for God and others reflected in the generosity with those things?

But praise God we are the people of God redeemed by the blood of His son and He has made us what we must be to be pleasing to Him and now He gives us the privilege to please Him still seeking to fulfill His will by His grace.

Let's pray together. Lord God, we're so thankful for these truths. Help us when we come to the commands of Scripture to realize they are bathed in the truths of scripture of the indicatives of who You are and what You have done and how You think about us and how You think of us specifically by grace because of your Son. Help these truths to encourage us today to propel us to love and good deeds because of what Christ has done for us. God may You be honored and glorified in us as we seek to apply these things by Your grace in Christ's name, amen.