

Our Bible reading for today: **Hebrews 13:1-16**

“A Sacrifice of praise”

The “*sacrificial system*” of the Old Testament is over. It began with Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel. It can be seen in practice in the lives of spiritual heroes of the faith in their altars and sacrifices throughout the history of early mankind. In the Law of Moses, it was clearly defined and regulated. The Torah abounds with lengthy detail.

The “*sacrificial system*” of the Old Testament is over because Jesus Christ – the ultimate, complete sacrifice – came and offered Himself as “the atoning sacrifices for our sins” (1 John 2:2). He was the beautiful fulfillment of all that old system, which covered sin, but could never take it away. The system pointed to Him! The blood of animals was offered as an obedient sacrifice to cover sin, but only the shed blood of Jesus Christ can take away sin. Faith claims it!

Though the “*sacrificial system*” of the Old Testament is over, “*sacrifice*” is not over. The New Testament speaks of sacrifice which God wants, and with which He is pleased. Sacrifice not for redemption, but sacrifice in love and thankfulness. For our thoughts today I’d like to mention just four of the sacrifices God wants from us now.

Our commitment of ourselves to the Lord as His servants is a sacrifice pleasing to God. **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.”** (^{NIV} Romans 12:1) Paul is clear that no other commitment makes better sense. Every other personal sacrifice pales in comparison to the special commitment we can have to God in Christ.

Another sacrifice which pleases God is helping someone in their need. **“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”** (^{NIV} Hebrews 13:16) It is tritely said, but true, that we are God’s hands and feet as we help a fellow human being, whether a dear friend or stranger. God honors and blesses that sacrifice.

Paul praised the persecuted believers in the church at Philippi because of their sacrificial giving in support of the work of God. They gave even when it hurt. **“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”** (^{NAU} Philippians 4:18)

A 4th sacrifice worth mentioning any day is worship. **“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.”** (^{NAU} Hebrews 13:15) As we privately and with our church family worship, we are offering, not the blood of a sacrificial animal, but our praises to the God who loves us.

In our modern secular world we often speak of our lives as an investment. Our lives are our own to use as we see fit. But the greatest joy is not in investment, but in sacrifice. The sacrifice of ourselves, our actions, our means and our words – all as unto the Lord! **“For with such sacrifices God is pleased.”**