

DEVELOPING A THANKFUL HEART - "Lesson 4" - "A Sacrifice of Thanksgiving."

We conclude our series on "developing thankful hearts" with a lesson from **Psalm 116:17-19**. For what should I'm hoping will be obvious reasons, I'm calling this lesson "A Sacrifice of Thanksgiving." Our text says on page 955 of our pew Bibles: ¹⁷ "I will sacrifice a thank offering to You and call on the name of the LORD. ¹⁸ I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people, ¹⁹ in the courts of the house of the LORD..."

First, of all what was David talking about? According to the Old Covenant, certain sacrifices and offerings were commanded. The thank-offering, however or "the sacrifice of thanksgiving" appears to have been optional under the Law of Moses. Yet, even though a free-will offering, there were some rules when it came to the giving of it. We can read about it in **Leviticus 7:11-15**.

¹¹ These are the regulations for the fellowship offering a person may present to the LORD: ¹² If he offers it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering he is to offer cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil. ¹³ Along with his fellowship offering of thanksgiving he is to present an offering with cakes of bread made with yeast. ¹⁴ He is to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the LORD; it belongs to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the fellowship offerings. ¹⁵ The meat of his fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered; he must leave none of it till morning. So, here we're told what to bring and how it is to be prepared. With all these rules attached, how can it really be a thank offering?

Think of it this way: Suppose you were moved to bake a cake for Shyna's birthday. Her mom (*Bibi*) says it's not necessary_ but if you insist that you really want to do this, Shyna has a peanut allergy. So if you're going to do it, there can't be any nuts in the recipe. She also says they're leaving town tomorrow afternoon, so it'll have to be dropped off in the morning. Oh yea, She also insists that you can't just drop it off, but must stay and have a piece with them. It's totally up to you, but if you choose to do it, some instructions must be followed.

Part of any sacrifice to God, if you will, involves surrendering our will for His. So often we're quite willing to serve or to give as long as it's on our terms. It's got to be according to our schedule; fitting comfortably into our plans. Heaven forbid that we be inconvenienced. We'll give an offering as long as it comes out of our extra time, money, or energy_ offering God our leftovers. God deserves far more than that.

Sometimes, this offering was made to **thank God for His deliverance**_ and **accompanying a vow**. That's the case in our text for today. Consider also these words from the Psalms:

In **Psalm 56:12-13** David declares: "I am under vows to you, O God; I will present my thank offerings to You. For You have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." And for anyone God has delivered, **Psalm 107:21-22** tells us: "Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love and His wonderful deeds for men. Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of His works with songs of joy."

No wonder thank-offerings so often were made as part of rededication and/or renewal: The occasions of Hezekiah's reformation in **2nd Chronicles 29:31** and Manasseh's repentance in **2nd Chronicles 33:15-16** are just two examples. What if this Thanksgiving_ we not only said grace but we also dedicated ourselves to service? What if we not only said "Amen" to let's eat_ but agreed to live lives of gratitude to God. What if we not only enjoyed a wonderful meal, but we also joined in a commitment to the One who provided it? And isn't that what "Thanksgiving" ought to be about...

Of course, anything we may offer to God is already His. We're like kids asking our dad for money to buy him a gift. On the other hand, the words that flow are uniquely ours. When we give thanks to God we are giving Him something that only we can_ our own thankful hearts. And when we do, we honor Him with our offering.

It may seem **strange that bread with yeast would be included** in this Thanksgiving meal. In scripture, leaven is almost always is a symbol of something impure or sinful. It seems odd that we would bring our imperfection, our brokenness, and our sin to the altar. God doesn't want that, does He? Yes. Matter of fact, until we bring Him that offering, He is not really interested in what else we might bring.

Something else that may strike us is that, after it was offered to God **the priest was to be invited** to join you in eating it as part of a meal. (*Turkey leg illustration*) This offering is referred to in some versions of scripture as a wave or heave offering. It was to be symbolically lifted to God_ and then served at the table. I'll finish this later since the instruction was for it to be finished before morning. So, it's entirely Biblical to go back for seconds – if not thirds. In my humble opinion, fourths would be gluttony, but that'd another lesson.

Don't miss this. A sacrifice of thanksgiving blesses the giver. How? Consider Paul's words in his **2nd letter to the Corinthians**: **⁶ Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷ Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.** God loves a cheerful giver_ and He rewards them. The term for "cheerful" here is the word we get "hilarious" from. There is a joy that comes from a freewill offering of thanksgiving - giving in gratitude that the world may never understand. It's knowing God provides not just the bare minimum of what we need but so much more. Enough to enjoy for ourselves and to share with others.

I cannot help but think of **communion**_ referred to as early as the 1st century as the eucharist_ which means "giving thanks." It is certainly a meal of thanksgiving, for in it we remember what God has done for us in the sacrifice of His Son on the cross, and express our gratitude to Him. In the process we also dine with Christ, our High priest. But, think a moment_ are we not also prompted to make solemn pledges to gratefully serve Him all the days of our lives?

Listen to **Psalm 50:23**. Here God says: **"He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me..."** Why? Because such offering come from the heart. The rest of the verse says: **"And he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God."** Thankfulness "prepares the way" because it opens our hearts to God, so that we can better comprehend and accept His message of redemption. It seems as if some blessings are contingent on a partnership of thanksgiving for in the verse God says, "I may," not "I will."

Offerings of thanksgiving remove barriers to our faith and obstacles in our thinking that oppose God's blessings_ so He "may show" us His salvation.