

THANK OFFERINGS FOR GOD – “ANTICIPATE BLESSINGS”

In our 2nd lesson in this series for the month of November I'm calling **“A Thank Offering for God,”** we'll consider **Psalm 50:7-15**. While you're turning there, let me remind you that thank offerings were given out of a spontaneous gratitude which according to **verse 23** of that chapter, truly honor God. Now, picking up in verse **7-15**, the LORD says,

7 “I am God, your God. 8 I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before Me. 9 I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, 10 for every animal of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. 11 I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are Mine. 12 If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all that is in it. 13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? 14 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, 15 and call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me.” Notice though God wasn't chastising them for making sacrifices, He lets them know that He doesn't need them. I'm afraid that we forget that sometimes. In **Acts 17:24-25**, Paul said God is not served by human hands – as if He needed anything. In fact, He gives everything to us, including our very life and breath. So, He doesn't need our money, or our service, or our worship. But yet, He asks for them. Why? The answer is both simple and profound.

First of all, **He “deserves” them**. We spent a fair amount of time on that idea in last week's lesson. As the Almighty Creator and Controller of the universe, all honor and praise is due Him. It's all His anyway.

Secondly, **we “need” to give them**. In the giving of all the sacrifices that God has asked from His people, there are lessons for us. Though we don't have the time to cover them all, let me illustrate with just two.

The first we'll consider is the Thank Offering itself. Last week, I shared that they are sometimes referred to as **“Fellowship Offerings”** - especially when food is sacrificed with the intent of eating it afterward (**Leviticus 7:11-18**). Though God doesn't need it and He certainly doesn't eat it in the manner we do, there was a sense of *“closeness and sharing.”* Listen to the words of Jesus:

To His followers, Jesus says, **“If anyone loves me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”** (**John 14:23**) Then, to the church in Laodicea, Jesus says: **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.”** (**Revelation 3:20**) If that's not *“a picture of fellowship,”* I don't know what is. (*Thanksgiving Dinner?*)

The next sacrifices to consider are **sin offerings**. These involved shedding the blood of a bull, lamb, or goat. Though some are repulsed at the idea - **Hebrews 9:22** says, **“Without shedding blood, there is no forgiveness.”**

God didn't "need" for blood to be spilled, but His people "needed" to learn the severity of their sin, and realize that the consequence of sin was death – physical and spiritual separation from God. Such sacrifices were also intended to prepare them - intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually – for the sacrifice that Jesus would make in the fullness of time; the offering of the spotless Lamb of God that could take away the sins of the whole world. For them, these sacrifices anticipated the coming Messiah.

Both examples **remind me of our "communion" service** which is sometimes called "the Eucharist," a term related to thanksgiving. Though we remember with gratitude the past sacrifice that Jesus has already made, we also share in present "fellowship" with God. I don't know that we always recognize that aspect. We commune with one another as we commune with Him. How grateful we should be for that! Paul also said in **1st Corinthians 11:26** that those who participate in this way, remembering with appreciation what Jesus did on the cross, could also look forward to future glory.

So whenever we commune in this "thank offering," may we be encouraged to **"anticipate as we participate."** (Ricky's story about "saying grace" over an "empty plate")

Now, back to our text: ¹⁴ **"Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High,** ¹⁵ **and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."** Nothing in the syntax / language in this passage that indicates God's response to be conditional. In other words, it is not saying, "**IF**" you sacrifice thank offerings to God, then He'll deliver you when you call. Instead, God Himself is saying that He will deliver His children when they call, so we should express our gratitude in advance.

What's going on in your life right now? **Is your plate empty?** Are you feeling a void in your life? That you're missing out on the goodness of God? Or **is your plate full** of anxiety or stress? With addictions or chronic pain? Heartache or grief? Weariness and brokenness? What have you to be thankful for? Call out in your trouble; He will deliver you. While you're waiting, thank Him for the help that is on the way.

Or maybe your life is going well right now. **You're plate is full** of so many blessings! Even so, I'm sure you have people close to you that are having a rough time. And because you care you not only sympathize with them, you empathize with them. You mourn with those who mourn and hurt for those who hurt. Call out to God on their behalf – and as you do, **anticipate blessings of rescue and deliverance** – and give thanks! While you're at it, remember that one of the greatest was to express gratitude to God is to bless others with what He blesses you with.