

Reasons For Praise

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[0 : 00] Hebrews chapter 13, I'm reading again verse 15. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Now as we know, the Bible is full of rich teaching to help us to live here in a better way. You see, God's word brings a responsibility with it.

And that's why so many people hate the Bible. Because God's word is challenging us. And if we read God's word, then we have a responsibility to put into practice, by God's help and by God's grace, what God's word says.

And that's a challenge to us. Because you and I know sometimes it's difficult. It's not easy. And that's why a lot of people hate the Bible. They close the Bible, they walk away from the Bible.

A lot of people have walked away from church, never to come back. A lot of people have shut their Bibles, never to open them again. For the simple reason that they don't like the challenge.

[1 : 19] They don't like what God's word is saying. But the wonderful thing is, and how thankful we are, that God has given us his word. Because it's through his word that we come to understand more and more of who he actually is.

Because the creation tells us something of who he is. But it's limited in what it conveys. Whereas God's word gives us a great picture.

And even although our minds are limited in what we can absorb or take in, yet we have a far greater understanding through the word of who God really is.

So every day we ought to give thanks to God and praise his name for the word of God that he's given to us. Now in Hebrews chapter 11, we have examples of people who lived by faith.

We have that great list of going through people like Abel and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Sarah and all these people. They're great men and women of faith. And they're dotted here and there little bits about their lives.

[2 : 30] And then in chapter 12, we have given to us an encouragement of how we in turn ought to live by faith. We have this cloud of witnesses in chapter 11.

All these great people, they're there as an example to us. In chapter 12, we are told of how we ought to live. By laying aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us.

And to focus upon Jesus, to run the race looking to Jesus. And then when we come to chapter 13, it shows us more of what the kind of characteristics that ought to be in our lives if we are living a life of faith.

And although there's many things spoken about in this chapter, in verses 15 and 16, with regard, this is it of course into a spiritual nature of things.

It talks about two spiritual sacrifices that are required from us. And the first of these is continual praise to God.

[3 : 34] Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise. And we're always going to remember, a sacrifice costs.

If something doesn't cost you, there's no sacrifice in it. We talk about giving sacrificially. If you're giving sacrificially, it's costing you. And that's what it's talking about here.

That we are to offer praise. Through him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise. And yes, we're giving. There is the ongoing sacrifice, as it were, of our lives in giving praise to God.

But it means that even in the difficult times, the sad times, we can still praise God. Not praising God necessarily for what has happened to us, but still praising God for who he is.

And then in verse 16, the other sacrifice that is required of us is that we are not to neglect to do good. And to share what we have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

[4 : 44] So these are two things in the Christian life that God is looking for, is our continued sacrifice of praise to him. And our doing good to others and sharing what we have for the good of others.

So it's the first one, verse 15, that I want to focus on. Now, recently, as the minister's going through Philippians at night, part of what Paul was talking, and he mentioned a bit about that, about the grumbling to which we're so prone.

And you and I know that it's part and partial of the sin-filled world that we grumble. I suppose we all, some grumble more than others. But we'd grumble far, far too quickly.

And we're far, far too slow to praise. So often we have it the wrong way around. Because praise, in a sense, is the very opposite of grumbling.

You know, you'll find it very hard to be a constant grumbler if you're constantly praising. The two just don't go together. If you're somebody, or if I'm somebody who's constantly giving praise to God, it's going to be very hard to spend your whole life grumbling as well.

[6 : 04] Because the two are not compatible. Grumbling is of this world. Now, of course, we can't help grumble. There are times, because of things that happen in life, we do grumble.

But you know, you look at the history of Israel as he journeyed through the wilderness. And it was just grumble, grumble, grumble, grumble. And you know, there's times I've looked at that history and I thought, what a grumbling, complaining lot.

And then I look at myself and I think, there we have it. There's nothing new under the sun. So the thing is, praise is a language of heaven.

Eternal, everlasting praise. And the Christians should be speaking the language of heaven more and more in this world. And particularly, the closer we get to the borders of heaven, we should be speaking the language of heaven more and more, which is, as we say, the language of praise.

So we have this duty to praise God. Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. And of course, again, the minister was looking at Psalm 50 recently there, and we see there that whoso offers praise glorifies me.

[7 : 15] So this is our great duty. Now, we've spoken before about how praise changes things.

And even if it doesn't change God, it changes ourselves. But it changes God in the sense that God responds to the praises of his people in a way that you don't really find him responding to anything else.

Do you know, we are reminded in the Psalms that God inhabits the praises of his people. Think about that for a moment. That God inhabits like it's a special place that he comes right in to the praise of his people.

And you think of examples. We've often spoken about these examples in the word. But say, for instance, remember when Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, was facing this invasion with a three-fold army against him.

And he didn't know what to do, and he took himself before the Lord. And God had told him to stand still and that he would see the salvation of the Lord. And Jehoshaphat, in a wonderful moment of faith, what did he do?

[8 : 26] Did he get the SAS troops of the day to go out and find? No. He got the temple choir. To lead the army out. What a statement of faith.

And they went out praising God. Praising his steadfast love. And that his mercy endures forever. And do you remember what happened when they began to praise?

That God sent ambushments. And the three-fold army turned in on themselves. And obviously past feuds and rivalries broke out. And they began to slaughter each other.

And Judah just stood by and watched. They didn't have to do anything. See how God responds? He inhabits the praises of his people.

Like for Jonah when he was in the belly of the whale. And you can read in Jonah chapter 2 about, talk of being in a dark place. Literally, physically, mentally, spiritually, everywhere.

[9 : 29] And you read about it. And then at the very end of chapter 2, we find Jonah turning it all around. And he begins to praise God. With a voice of thanksgiving.

And what happens? At that moment, Jonah is vomited out onto dry land. Again, you think of Paul and Silas. They're beaten up and they're in prison in the dark dungeon.

How do we find them at midnight? They're praising God. What happens? As they praise God. God sends an earthquake. The doors are burst open.

And remember how the jailer was converted and so on. But the point that we're making here is that God responds to praise in a wonderful way.

And that's what I want us to think about this morning. And just very briefly, what I want to do, because our verse tells us this very simply.

[10:29] We're told, Through him then let us continually offer. So, you'll notice that it says then. So, what does that mean?

It means because of what has gone before. As through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise. So, I want us just to think of three or four things that have gone before.

Reasons. There's an endless reason for praising God. But let's confine it to what this chapter is speaking about. Reasons for praising God. And the first takes us back to verse 5.

And it tells us, when we go to verse 5, a very simple thing. That the Lord is always with us. Isn't that wonderful? That is something absolutely awesome.

That there is no place. If you today love the Lord Jesus. If you're following Jesus, even if you're following a Pharaoh, but you're still following. Remember this.

[11:31] There's nowhere that you can go. There's no road you can go down. But he's going down that road with you. As Psalm 139 says, supposing I go and I dwell in the utmost parts of the sea.

Even there, Lord. You're there with me. There's nowhere. He's with us. It's not just through the day and then you're on your own at night. Or he's with you part of the day.

He's with you always, day and night. Throughout your life. There is no point. When you, if you're a follower of the Lord. You are on your own.

And what I thought that is. The creator of this world. The God who holds the nations of this world in the palm of his hand. The God who is going to call time up.

On this planet. There will be no more saving the planet. Because the planet will be burned up with fervent heat. That's what we're told.

[12:28] Now, don't get me wrong. We have an obligation and a duty to do everything that we can. In order to save the planet. But the word of God tells us that the planet.

And I mean, we're being to have no idea what's going to happen at the end. But when people talk about a scorched earth and all these things. Well, the fact of the matter is one day it is going to be scorched.

And it's going to burn up. We're told that in scripture. It's going to happen. And he has that day already set. It's all mapped out.

And you know, that gives so much peace and assurance into the heart. It's to know that God's in control of everything.

And the God who is in control of absolutely everything is your God who's with you. And is that not a reason to praise God and to thank him? Do we thank him sufficiently?

[13:30] Do we say, Lord, I can't get over this. This is incredible. Here's poor me. Little me. And yet you're with me all the time. So we have this amazing fact that the Lord, the God of heaven and earth.

That he is with us all the time. There are people today with massive wealth and power. People like Gates and Musk. And a piece of the Amazon man.

And I know that they do a lot of great work with their wealth. And supposing one of them, or all of them, were personal friends. You'd say to yourself, and they would say, you know, just give me a shout any time.

And I would say, well, that's amazing. But you know, although wealth brings power and influence, there's lots of things they couldn't do anything for you. They've got nothing when you lose a loved one.

They've got nothing with a breakup of relationship. They've got nothing for death. All the power, all the wealth, all these, they've got nothing for death. But the Lord, he says, I'm with you.

[14:37] There's no point when he won't be with you. Even when you go down into death's dark veil, he's got a hold of you. He's with you all the time.

So we have that. But then it goes on to the next verse. It tells us not only is the Lord with us. Verse 6, so we can confidently say, the Lord is my helper.

So it's not just a matter of being with us. He's there in order to help us. And you know, the actual word is the idea in it of running to help, running to your aid. And that's what the Lord is doing.

Because we have the paraclete, the comforter. He's the one who draws near to us. The one who is actually there. But he makes his presence known to us in a wonderful way.

What reasons for praise and thanksgiving. And then as we saw in another time at verse 8, we move on and we see there that the Lord, he never changes.

[15 : 40] Isn't that wonderful? Here we are in this world where opinions change and views change and laws change. And everything is changing all the time.

And what was okay one day, it's not okay the next day. Imagine if God worked like that with us. Imagine if he said and revealed again and he sent more word from heaven and he says, See the old plan I had?

I've ripped it up. I've got a new plan. We would be distraught. But he doesn't change. And he's never going to give up on you.

He's never going to say, you know, you've let me down so often. You're supposed to be an ambassador for me in this world. And look at your life and all what you've done. No.

He still sticks with you. He's faithful. He never changes. He doesn't change his opinion. He doesn't change his verdict. He doesn't change.

[16 : 44] There's nothing. He's free from change. And that's another wonderful reason for us today to praise God. Before I go any further, I need to ask you, do you have the Lord as your own Lord and Savior today?

Because if not, you don't have this. But you can have. Because Jesus today is available to save. He's here right now. He's here in all his saving power.

All his capacity to save. That hasn't changed. And it's what he loves to do. It's why he came into this world. He came into this world to seek and to save those who are lost.

And who are lost? We're all lost by nature. So you qualify for saving. And that's what he loves to do. It's his great delight.

In the previous chapter, that's what we're told this was a joy that was set before him. So, again, we have this great assurance that the Lord, that he's always the same.

[17 : 48] Same yesterday, today, and forever. And then when we go to verse 9, we read there, Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings. For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace.

There's another reason to praise. God's grace. Do you praise? Do I praise God for his grace? Why are you here today?

One simple reason is grace. How are you a Christian today? One very simple reason is grace. Not you. You haven't anything. You couldn't bring anything to the Lord.

You couldn't say to the Lord, You know, Lord, you owe me salvation. The Lord says, No, I don't. I don't owe you anything. It's all of grace. It's the most wonderful gift in the world.

And that's what we're told about here. About the grace that strengthens the heart. And again, let me say to you, If you don't know Jesus today, Ask for this grace.

[18 : 51] Lord, touch my heart by your grace. Bring me into the kingdom through your grace. It is the only way of salvation.

It didn't cost us anything. Of course, it cost the Godhead everything. We cannot even begin to put a price on what it cost Father, Son, Spirit, the Godhead.

But it didn't cost us anything. That's the beauty of grace. It's free. As they say, it's unmerited favor. Amazing grace. And then verses 12 and 13 bring us to another place for praise.

Because we're told there, So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore, verse 13, Let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach that he endured.

Now, you might say to yourself, Oh, I don't see too much cause for praise there. Oh, yes, there is. This is a separation that is in the Christian life.

[20 : 01] We've got to remember this. There's a call, Come out from among them and be ye separate. Now, you and I know that in life, We don't always walk in the way that we should.

But if you're a Christian, You know as you look back over your life, You don't run to the things that you used to. In the way that you used to.

The things that used to occupy your life and take up your life and motivate your life and make your life, These things have begun to fade. You've lost the flavor.

You've lost the taste. And yes, there might be days and there might be times where you've slipped here and there. But the overriding thrust of your life is different. You're running in a different direction.

And it's a direction that separates. You're in the world. But you're not off the world. There's that distinction. And that is a reason for praising God.

[21 : 04] If you today, you're able to see us. You look back and you say, You know, I've completely lost the taste I used to have for these things. They made my life. These are the things that made my life.

I lived for them. I don't anymore. Oh, there might be fleeting moments here and there. But by and large, I have new desires.

I have new longings. I see things in a different way. That is a great reason for praise. And then we come to verse 14.

And we see here the last reason we have for praise. For here we have no lasting city. Now, that is not a reason for praise.

The first part. If that's all we had. Imagine if that's all we had. We'd say, I know that. Because we live, we die. But this is a great difference.

[22 : 00] For here we have no lasting city. But we seek the city that is to come. That's another reason for praise. Because today you're still on a journey.

And even although your foot might be almost at the end of that journey. You don't know it. But it might be. But the fact is this.

You're looking forward to somewhere else. And we're told there that we're looking to a city. Now, of course, said before, Old Testament idea of a city is different to where we are today.

But three great features were the Old Testament city. First of all, it was a place of rest. Cities today aren't a place of rest. But it was compared to the wilderness and the danger that was attached to the wilderness.

Where there were all the wild beasts. And where there was hunger. And where there was thirst. And where there were bandits. And people longed to get into the rest of the city.

[23 : 05] That's what heaven is going to be. A heavenly rest. Where they will rest from their labors. But we're told that our works follow. So there's this rest.

There's also, it's a place of refuge. It's a place of safety. And that's, again, a wonderful concept. You know, this world is dangerous.

It's dangerous at every level. And so often we maybe come to new levels of understanding. What a dangerous place this world is.

But, you know, in the city that is to come, there won't be one danger. There won't be one thing lurking anywhere on the horizon. That will ever threaten you again.

No wonder we have a reason to praise and to thank God. And the city was also a place of company. Where there were lots of people. Lots of, very opposite to the wilderness and the desert.

[24 : 09] You're in a place of company. While we're here in this world, the church is a very important, it's a family. It's a company. And that's why when part of the church fellowship, when anyone leaves or goes or passes away, it always hurts us.

Because we're a company. We love one another. We're family. But here's this idea of an everlasting company. Where we'll all be together forever and ever and ever.

Sharing in all the glory that Jesus Christ has won for us. We won't just be in glory and get a glimpse of King Jesus.

We're told in Scripture that we will reign with him. Isn't that an awesome thought? You know, people sometimes get an invite to the Queen's Garden party and maybe they won't even get a glimpse of her.

She might not even be there. I don't know. It won't be like that in glory. The King will be at the very center of it. And all his people will be part of that great company.

[25 : 16] That great fellowship. So no wonder we have a reason to praise. So today, if you're a Christian, you have every reason in the world to praise God.

Just simply from what we have here in this chapter. And if you haven't yet come to faith in the Lord Jesus, as we said, today you can.

You ask him. That's what it says. Those who seek the Lord will find. And it can only take a second. And we believe that that's one of the great surprises.

People often talk about that in glory. There'll be a lot of people in glory we never expected to see there. But they'll be there. Because they called on the name of the Lord.

And that's all it takes is a call. You call and ask the Lord to save you, to have mercy on you, and to give you his grace. So let us make sure that praise is an integral part of our lives.

[26 : 21] Let us pray. Lord, we pray to bless us. We give thanks for your word. We pray that this word will be a source of encouragement to us.

And a source of light into our lives. We give thanks that you are merciful and gracious. That you don't deal with us according to our deserving. If you did, we'd all be finished.

But we give thanks for that grace that just does such an amazing work within our lives. Lord, bless us. Bless our homes and our families and all whom we love.

Pray, Lord, for those who maybe we might even, maybe some here today, and they feel that there are those that they love are almost out with the reach of you.

But no, they're not. We ask, Lord, that you'll be with them. We pray that you'll watch over us and bless us and fill us with yourself. Take us to our home safely, we pray.

[27 : 21] We ask all in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude singing in Psalm 72, a great psalm of praise and thanksgiving and glory to God.

Psalm 72, the last three verses. And the Scottish psalter. Psalm 72, the last three verses.

His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall. Men shall be blessed in him, and blessed all nations shall him call.

Now, blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel, for he alone doth wondrous works and glory that excel. And blessed be his glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be. Psalm 72, verses 17 to the end. His name forever shall endure.

[28 : 19] His name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall.

Men shall be blessed in heaven, and blessed all nations shall be born.

Now, blessed be the Lord our God.

The Lord our God.

Blessed be the Lord our God. Blessed be the Lord our God. To all eternity.

[29 : 53] The whole earth let his glory fill.

Amen. Amen. Amen. For heaven in need. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen. Thank you.