



A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

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Reflecting on the sacrifice of Jesus is always a humbling process, and with it a great challenge in all areas of my life. As a lead worshipper I am convinced that my call is to get people into the presence of God through setting an example of living a life that is praise-filled and God-centred. Thinking about Jesus on the Cross, and thinking on the price it cost is a process that brings my calling in a sharp focus and gives direction to the choices I make in life.

I would like us to briefly consider the fact that we are called to share in the life of Christ, and that sharing includes everything from good days through to suffering. Jesus warned us that if the world was going to reject Him, so too would we be rejected if we chose to carry our own cross for His sake. Peter reminds us that Jesus left us an example that we are to follow Him in all his suffering. The beauty of accepting this call to suffering is the fact that God's wisdom is foolishness to the world! Hence we are to rejoice in the suffering because it speaks of a greater hope and ultimately, addresses the issue of our faith; after all, faith is the substance of things hoped for!

In worldly terms the word "sacrifice" conjures up pain, having to go without, denial and at best a price that is not easily afforded. In the language of faith, the word sacrifice is an honour and carries with it the hope and promise of blessing uncontained. The language of God, which is the language of love, defines the word sacrifice as the ultimate expression of love. Now, if sacrifice is the ultimate expression of love, the phrase "a sacrifice of praise" takes on a whole new meaning for those who follow after the example of Jesus Christ!

Then through Him let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God always, that is, the fruit of the lips, confessing to His name.

But do not be forgetful of doing good and sharing, for God is well pleased with such sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15-16 LITV).

In light of the above definition of sacrifice, the well known scripture in the letter to the Hebrews speaks about our life as an expression of love toward God the Father. The fact that God is pleased when we act according to His nature is confirmed by the writer.

We misconstrue this reference to mean that our praise of God is something difficult for us to offer, or that it implies a burden on our side to offer God our praise. On the contrary! Our sacrifice is the expression of our love to the Father through our praise. To help us in this is our constant, faithful Companion, the Holy Spirit. Look at what the prophet Isaiah has to say about the fruit of our lips: *I create the fruit of the lips: peace, peace, to the ones far off and near, says Jehovah, and I will heal him (Isaiah 57:19).* This is awesome!

The Spirit of God gives the language of love to us so that we are able to commune with God through Jesus Christ! Peter writes that God has chosen us as His own, and that the Holy Spirit has sanctified us, so that we are able to be obedient to Jesus Christ. Jesus says that we will be known as His followers, as people who choose to live His example, by the fact that we speak a common language – the language of love.

So our sacrifice is indeed a celebration of love. The Divine sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is the ultimate and final expression of God's love for a world that has forgotten Him. Let you and I go out and live our lives in honour of Jesus Christ, making our daily purpose a sacrifice of praise. ▣