

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God for our fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work among us will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:2-6). Amen.

THANKSGIVING MEDITATION:

Your Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

– **ONLY IN CHRIST** –

I. Freely Given

II. Perfect

III. Sanctified by the LORD

In Jesus, the Lamb of God who freely, perfectly, and in all holiness gave Him self for you to present you freely, perfectly, and in all holiness giving thanks to God the Father, dear fellow redeemed,

“These are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ...” This is how the Spirit describes the ceremonies that, under Old Covenant Law, Israel was prescribed to keep. These shadows of Old Testament rituals such as the ones found in our text are brought to fulfillment in Jesus our Savior – “the substance is of Christ.” The book of Leviticus deals primarily with fellowship and worship aspects of the Old Covenant Law. The temple, the sacrifices, the rituals all looked ahead – a shadow of the coming Lamb of God who would make an end of the Old Covenant, and bring to us the New Covenant where the atonement and holiness we need are accomplished in Him.

Our text deals with something called “the peace offering,” also known as “the thank offering.” Whereas other types of sacrifices dealt with what we’ve done wrong, the peace offering was a response to what the LORD has done right. This peace offering is sometimes referred to as the thank offering. Thanksgiving is a result of being at peace. And how has that peace been accomplished? As we give thanks today our text reminds us of how impossible it is properly give thanks apart from Christ. **YOUR SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING is given ONLY IN CHRIST.**

We pray... As we hear Your Word we ask you dear Lord to grant us the gift of true hearing in Your Spirit that we would receive the Word not as the words of men, but as it is, Your Word alone. Lord, sanctify us by Your truth, Your word is truth. Amen.

The text which forms the basis of our three part Thanksgiving meditation is Leviticus chapter 22.

I. Freely Given

Leviticus 22:17–19,29 (NKJV) — 17 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 18 “Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his

freewill offerings, which they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering— 19 you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats. ... 29 And when you offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord, offer it of your own free will.

This is the holy Word of God.

The sacrifice of thanksgiving is an acknowledgement of peace with God, something freely given without constraint. You could think of it as similar to how we place our offerings in the collection plate today. We don't gather them as some sort of sacrifice to appease God, we offer them freely out of thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. The "peace offering" was meant to be a spontaneous expression of true thankfulness; it was to be a voluntary action of faith. The sacrifice that expresses thankfulness to God is only acceptable if it is **FREELY GIVEN**.

"Now don't forget to say thank you" we say to our children. "Go and tell grandma thank you." From little on we need to be taught to "say thanks." It is something that just doesn't come naturally to us. Where were the other nine lepers? By nature, we are the other nine. Yes we are happy to feel we are keeping the Law by going to show ourselves to the priest. Doesn't some part of me think that coming to church, dropping a check in the offering plate, makes me a better Christian. The nine lepers went to the priest because that was what they were told to do so. Sure we can go to the priest as commanded; we can go to church; we can contribute; and we can say thank you today; but can we do so freely?

The First National Proclamation of Thanksgiving was given by the Continental Congress in 1777. The Congress began by saying: "FOR AS MUCH as it is the indispensable Duty of all Men to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty God... Do we come to church today because it is our duty? ... what about the other 364 days of the year? Apart from Christ we are just like children. We need to be told to say "thank you." It just doesn't come naturally; and it most certainly doesn't come freely.

Woo easily we offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving thinking we are fulfilling a debt. So easily that is what this day turns into – a day where give God what we owe Him ... we appease Him by our pious offering. Such thinking leaves us under a burden, not free in any way. So often this is what the offering plate turns into – an obligation. We can never give freely while under these constraints of the law.

Only in Christ do we find a truly voluntary sacrifice. ***He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth. (Isaiah 53:7)***

Jesus laid down His life freely. What we mean is, the Son of God had no constraint obligating Him to offer up His life for us. He was led as an innocent lamb. He opened not His mouth. This was just what was needed. A "no strings" redemption was the only way you and I could be forgiven and truly set free from the Law. He fulfilled those obligations perfectly, freely and forever loving you.

You may now offer your sacrifice of thanksgiving. You may now recognize what it means to give thanks freely. See yourself now as the one leper who has returned to give thanks, who sees

the freedom and righteousness that has come not by means of the law, but freely in Jesus. No longer are you under a debt to thank God for the countless blessings He has showered. God doesn't need your money or even your thanks. What He desires is your heart. Rather than seeing in the offering plate a guilt trip coming your way, see a basket to catch the fruits that the LORD is producing. Whatever those fruits are – the amount, the action, the gift is only a secondary in the work of the Spirit.

YOUR SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING – FREELY GIVEN IN CHRIST

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Sing: **TLH 442:1,2,5** Lord of Glory, Who hast Bought Us

II. Perfect

Leviticus 22:20–21 (NKJV) — 20 Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf. 21 And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.

This is the holy Word of God.

Lord, continue to sanctify us by Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Remember the thankful Pharisee in Luke 18? *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ (Luke 18:11–12)*

Here was a thankful fellow. He was thankful for all that he had done – the offerings, the fastings. Is this the thanksgiving that pleases God? How easily we see ourselves today as the one leper who gave thanks – and where are the other nine? And how often does there remain something within is just like that Pharisee – thanking God for what I've done.

v.21 ...it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it. The Old Covenant meant so much more than a mere outward show of how religious you are. It was a picture of what it means to worship and dwell in God's presence. Our thanksgiving must be perfect.

The problem that the lepers suffered from was more than outward leprosy. It was inward. A leprosy of the heart. Only one recognized this. Only one saw that in Jesus came the power over all imperfections. Only in Jesus is an answer to the inward corruption we suffer from. Only in Jesus do we find the perfection God expects.

Christ is the truly unblemished Lamb. He is the only perfect sacrifice that is accepted by the Father.

Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and

the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:12–14)

It is not that hard to say thanks to God today. A Muslim says so to Allah. A Buddhist says so to Buddah. However what does it really mean to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the true God?

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart— These, O God, You will not despise. (Psalm 51:16–17)

With the tax collector we stand afar off: “God be merciful to me, the sinner!” Every day you spend in repentance, broken over the sins you commit, is a day spent in Christ. Every time you care for your spouse because of how Jesus has cared for you is a day of thanksgiving. Every time you visit an elderly neighbor or family member to carry groceries or simply talk, remembering what Jesus has carried for you – this is a day of thanksgiving.

True thanksgiving – a heart which thanks God for taking all your defects, and giving you the unblemished work of Christ instead.

YOUR SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING – PERFECT IN CHRIST.

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Sing: **TLH 371:1,3,7** Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness

III. Sanctified by the LORD

Leviticus 22:30–33 (NKJV) — 30 On the same day it shall be eaten; you shall leave none of it until morning: I am the Lord. 31 “Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the Lord. 32 You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you, 33 who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord.”

Lord, sanctify us again and forever by Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

“Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.” This is what the word “sanctify” means. It means to be made holy – literally, to be set apart. This concept of holiness is central to the worship life of Israel and likewise, to our worship today. To come into God’s presence, even to give thanks, a person must be holy – completely set apart from sin. As we have seen, this is never possible on our own. We will bring sin with us where ever we go and whatever we do. Only by the intervening work of God could this fellowship exist. Only through God’s substitutionary atonement could “the peace offering” be given. Only through the cleansing work of God could sinners come to Him for forgiveness, praise, and thanksgiving.

Our sacrifice of thanksgiving is sanctified by the LORD in Christ.

There are many things for which we give thanks. The lavish tables that we sit down to today. The sumptuous food that we hopefully will enjoy in moderation. But of what value are these gifts if they and we are not sanctified. Yes, in Christ even your food is sanctified. ***For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. (1 Timothy 4:4–5)***

Through the Word and prayer, we receive these things in Christ. We see food, clothing, shelter as gifts, not of just any nameless god, in the name of the One true Creator who has redeemed us from sin and death.

Hence our text, ***32 You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you, 33 who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord.***

The name of the LORD emphasizes His enduring love and unchanging promises. He is the One who rescued the children of Israel from Egypt as promised. He is the One who established this rebellious people in the land promised to Abraham. He is the One who preserved them, set them apart from perishing in the midst of mightier nations. He is the One who came forth from the tribe of Judah, the only One who could truly sanctify us in body and soul. ***By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. (Hebrews 10:10,14)*** This is the God we give thanks to – the One who has cast your sins into the depths of the sea and given you heaven itself. This is the God who dwells with us here, today – not in prayer and thanksgiving, food or family, but in the WORD.

What thanksgiving is there apart from knowing this? Apart from this knowing the unchanging redemption we have in Jesus, what is left? We eat, we drink, we die in our sins.

for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)

Only hearts touched by the Spirit of Christ know this thankfulness. He has taken you from Egypt where you were captive to the pleasures of this world, to the promised land – set apart from sin and dedicated to One thing – following our Savior.

And such [condemned sinners] were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

In the Spirit, we truly have the purpose and the power to “keep His commandments” and “hallow His name.” Now that God credits Christ’s perfect work to you, you can give thanks. You can offer what Paul calls “a living sacrifice.” Not a dead outward thing like the lambs in our text. A living sacrifice.

“He is the LORD who sanctifies you.”

There were a few good reasons why the priests were instructed to leave none of the sacrifice until morning. For one, sanitation. But think also of how we offer to God our thanksgiving sacrifice. God allows not one ounce of that which is offered in Christ to go to waste. He will fully consume every fruit of your faith. Our possessions, our home, our life itself are set apart and dedicated fully to the LORD. All these gifts of thanksgiving He uses to further the eternal goals of His kingdom. Like the feeding of 5000 from a few small gifts, God is able to work the greatest of miracles among us.

Kind of makes “O Give Thanks...” at the dinner table take on new meaning. In Psalm 136 when this phrase is repeated several times: “Oh give thanks...” it is followed up some 26 times by “for His steadfast love endures forever” 26 times. Truly, above all else, we give thanks in this – that His steadfast love has sent a Savior to be the satisfactory payment for our sins.

YOUR SACRIFICE OF THANKSGIVING – SANCTIFIED BY THE LORD IN CHRIST.

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. Amen. (2 Cor. 9:9,10)

Sing: **TLH 360:1,2,7** Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing