

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving Leviticus 7:11-15

Slide 1

Thanksgiving is just a few days away. Already, turkeys by the thousands have given their lives so that we may celebrate a day of rest, although I don't know how much rest will be involved.

It's one of those days when it takes a lot of time, effort and expense to make sure that everything is cooked just right and all the favorite foods are on the table.

This holiday is based upon that first day Thanksgiving was observed by the Pilgrims back in 1621.

After a long, hard winter, when many of the pilgrims had not survived, they were thankful to God for the coming of spring and a chance to build a new life in their very own "Promised Land."

The New World offered them an opportunity but made no promises of success.

Many days of hard work and great struggles lay ahead, but those who were strong, and those who wouldn't lose faith, would make it through.

Their faith in God was a major factor during those times, and faith in God has brought us to where we are today.

Where we go from here will also be determined by our faith in God, or our lack thereof.

The observance of Thanksgiving as a national holiday day was officially established by George Washington during his first term.

Many in our land today have become unthankful, but this is to be expected when man looks to himself for answers and not God.

Why should men be thankful to a God that they refuse to serve, refuse to worship, or even refuse to acknowledge His very existence? Today, man's focus is upon himself, not upon a Supreme Creator.

None of this should come as a surprise to the Child of God who's rooted and grounded in God's Word.

We were warned that these days would come. We were also told exactly how the heart of man would turn away from all that's holy.

2 Timothy 3:1-5, "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."

In these verses, that Paul wrote to Timothy, is a nutshell description of the society in which we live. I believe that we're raising the most unthankful generation that has ever been born.

The courts of our land have taken away our right to tell them about Jesus, and has given the youth, not a freedom to choose whom they'll worship, but a freedom from religion of any kind.

We've created a whole generation of self-indulgent; self-worshipping people who're thankful for nothing.

They believe they have the right to have everything right now. Things that took their parents 30, 40 or 50 years to attain.

Slide 2

As I was studying for this message, the first passage of scripture I found, which specifically spoke about thanksgiving, was in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus.

This is the book where the Lord dictated the Law of Moses. This Law was to be the guiding instructions for God's chosen nation until the coming of Christ, at which time it would all be fulfilled in Him.

The first thing we need to recognize is that the sacrifice of Thanksgiving has to do with maintaining peace with God.

A thankful heart is a heart that recognizes the greatness, mercy and provision of Almighty God, and that nothing is given to us by accident, or without His permission.

When we offer our prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord, we are recognizing His power and control over us.

We're also acknowledging His great love for us and, because God loves us, He provides good things for us.

James 1:17, *"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*

So, why is thanksgiving a part of a peace offering? Because, without Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for us, there could be no peace with God for man.

Therefore, we can come to God with thanksgiving in our hearts because Jesus made a way for us to know God and be a part of His family.

Thanksgiving can only be a truly day of thanks if we believe that Jesus made a way of peace for us.

God said the sacrifice of thanksgiving was to be in the form of thick unleavened loaves mingled with oil, and thin unleavened loaves brushed with oil, and thick loaves made with fine flower mingled with oil.

Leviticus 7:11-12, *“These are the regulations for the fellowship offering anyone may present to the Lord: “If they offer it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering they are to offer thick loaves made without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, thin loaves made without yeast and brushed with oil, and thick loaves of the finest flour well-kneaded and with oil mixed in.”*

Every part of this offering must be included, or God wouldn't accept it as a peace offering. So, what did God mean by all of this?

Slide 3

First of all, our sacrifices of thanksgiving must be offered only through Christ Who is represented by the unleavened bread.

Leviticus 7:12a, *“If they offer it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering they are to offer thick loaves made without yeast and with olive oil mixed in, thin loaves made without yeast and brushed with oil.”*

All of the offerings must be either mingled with oil or anointed with oil. Today, that oil represents the anointing of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

I don't believe that a man can be truly thankful without the oil of gladness that's given to us by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

When we truly know the Lord. When we have that abiding presence of the Holy Spirit on the inside, we can begin to understand what God has done for us and who God is.

Also recognize that to make bread, leaven or unleavened it had to be placed in an oven. In other words, we can't be completely thankful until we've been through the fire, through the heat of trials and tests.

That's when we can know the wonderful grace and mercy of God. That's when we become the most thankful to Him, for the good times as well as the bad.

In everything, we should learn to give God thanks, especially when we realize that it's all about God working in and through us to bring about His perfect will for us.

Slide 4

Leviticus 7:13, *"Along with their fellowship offering of thanksgiving they are to present an offering with thick loaves of bread made with yeast."*

Until now, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, as a part of the peace offering unto God, has only included unleavened bread which acknowledges the perfect sacrifice of Christ and its effect upon our lives. Now God says we're to offer leavened bread as well.

In the offering of the leavened bread, we're recognizing the fact that, as living sacrifices, we must be holy and acceptable to God.

Yes, we were made holy through the blood of Jesus, but we're still bound in earthly tabernacles of flesh that are subject to sin.

Therefore, the giving of our own bodies, in living service as a part of the sacrifice of thanksgiving, is required.

But it's not enough just to thank God for Jesus' sacrifice. We're also required to offer ourselves as sacrifices in service if we're to have peace with God.

That means living a life of holiness and sanctification, being faithful and fully sold out to God; anything less is not a true *"sacrifice of thanksgiving."*

Slide 5

Leviticus 7:14, *"They are to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the Lord; it belongs to the priest who splashes the blood of the fellowship offering against the altar."*

What's being done here is called a "heave offering."

A "heave offering" in Scripture refers to a portion of a sacrifice that's elevated or "heaved" before the LORD as an act of dedication.

It's sometimes called a *"contribution," "lifted portion,"* or *"the portion that is raised up,"* depending on the translation.

The sacrifice was lifted toward Heaven with extended arms as though it was being placed directly into the hands of God.

As with our sacrifice of thanksgiving, we must lift holy hands unto the Lord, placing our hearts into the hands of God as a sacrifice to Him.

This is why we must learn to place our trust in Jesus. We must hold back nothing. We're to "heave" ourselves toward Heaven, fully and completely, giving our all as a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord.

It's at this time, when we have given ourselves wholly unto God, that we're finally in the place where God can commune with us. This is for our sake, as well as for the honor of God.

So, Lift your hearts in thanksgiving. Lift your hands in praise. Lift your life in surrender. Lift your body in obedience.

Lift all that you are as a “heave offering” to the Lord. Then you can say that you’ve truly given a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Slide 6

Leviticus 7:15, *“The meat of their fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered; they must leave none of it till morning.”*

This sacrifice of meat was the only sacrifice that was offered in the temple where everyone was to eat a part of the sacrifice.

When we’ve offered a true sacrifice of thanksgiving, then everyone is blessed by it at the same time.

God is glorified and praised, men are blessed and sanctified, and the priests become one with them in thanksgiving.

God brings us all together in a wonderful fashion when we all give the sacrifice of thanksgiving together. What a wonderful picture of the unity of the church with God and with one another.

Our fellowship with God and man, in peace and unity, is all wrapped up in the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Note that the sacrifice of thanksgiving was to be totally consumed on the same day that it was offered. Nothing was to be left over.

This was a reminder that every day is a new day, and that every new day brings with it a fresh requirement for us to have a heart of thanksgiving unto the Lord.

Even though we were thankful yesterday, we must continue to be thankful afresh with every new day.

What we did for the Lord yesterday was great, but what are we going to do for God today, and tomorrow?

Our walk with the Lord is a daily walk. Every day brings a new commitment, a fresh anointing must be upon us, and with every day there comes a new opportunity to praise Him.

Thanksgiving may be a once-a-year holiday for our nation, but for the Christian, every day is Thanksgiving. We're to offer up the sacrifice of thanksgiving with each rising of the sun.

With the setting of the sun, we're to reflect upon God's blessings and then look forward to the coming of the new day.

There is a little chorus that says:

*"Every day with Jesus
is sweeter than the day before.
Every day with Jesus,
I love Him more and more."*

This should be our way of life.

Slide 7

Leviticus 22:29, *"When you sacrifice a thank offering to the Lord, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf."*

It's a personal thing to be thankful to the Lord. We must each give our own sacrifice of thanksgiving.

I can't offer yours and you can't do it for me. It's a sacrifice between one person and God alone, but you can offer up thanksgiving to God at any time.

If that sacrifice of thanksgiving is offered up to God, according to the conditions we've talked about in this message, then that sacrifice is always accepted as praise and honor and the God of Peace will give you perfect peace.

Now today, we don't observe the letter of the Law found in the Book of Leviticus, but we do find the Spirit of the Law being taught in the New Testament.

We don't offer sacrifices of animals to be cooked and burned, but we do offer spiritual equivalences. We ourselves are the sacrifice that's offered.

Philippians 4:6-7, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Here is the peace offering at work in the New Testament. When we truly have a thankful heart that obeys the Lord and praises Him with a sacrifice of thanksgiving by the surrendering of our lives to Him, then the peace of God will keep us close to Him.

Slide 8

Conclusion

There's a scene in Heaven that John saw and recorded in the Book of Revelation.

A day when all of God's people, along with the angels, stand around God's throne and, in one voice, offer up a wonderful sacrifice of thanksgiving together.

Revelation 7:11-12, "All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

The next few verses tell us that there stood with them a multitude, a number that no man could count, dressed in robes of white and standing on a sea of glass.

These had come out of the great tribulation, who stood victorious over sin and death to sing the sacrifice of thanksgiving one more time to God.

Don't you want to be in that number? I want to be there. I want to be a part of that great Thanksgiving Day!

Today, as you're here in the service; tomorrow as you go about your business; on Thanksgiving Day, when you sit down for your celebration dinner; and every other day of the year, don't forget to offer up your sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Give yourself wholly unto the Lord and allow the peace of God to reign in your life.