

**Hebrews 13-9-16**  
**More on Worship!!!**

**Preamble:** sermon notes sheet....

**Prayer for illumination:**

**Sermon introduction:**

What do the following people have in common?

Consider the Seahawks fan who goes to every single game (home and away). He paints his face, he dyes his hair, and he wears his carefully crafted costume.

Consider the kid who has eight LeBron James posters in his bedroom. He wears his LeBron James jersey, LeBron James shoes, and follows LeBron James twitter feed.

Consider the shopaholic, she spends hours and hours online every week looking for more clothes, furniture, or shoes to buy.

Consider the person who will do anything to be accepted and respected by others.

Or consider the person who is obsessed with health. They work out 3 hours every day, read all the books, and count their calories meticulously.

What do all these people have in common? They are all worshippers! They are worshipping something. We can't avoid worship, since God preprogrammed our hearts for worship. Sadly, we often worship the wrong things leaving us empty, broken, and guilty.

Who or what are we supposed to worship? And what does worship look like? That brings us back to the book of Hebrews.

Let me provide context for this morning's text. Chapters 1-12 describes several key truths and chapter 13 describes how we are supposed to live (worship) in light of those truths.

We see the transition from truth to worship in 12:28-29.

**Hebrews 12:28-29 (ESV) — 28** Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

What does worship look like in light of all that we have learned so far in Hebrews?

Our text gives us four suggestions...

First, we worship through strengthening grace.

Second, we worship through suffering.

Third, we worship through speaking.

Four, we worship through sacrificial giving.

**First, we worship through strengthening grace!**

**Hebrews 13:9 (ESV) — 9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.**

Satan often tries to destroy the church in one of two ways. He tries to destroy the church from the outside through persecution. If that does not work, he tries to destroy the church from the inside through false teaching. According to verse 9, the original audience was being led away by false teaching.

The author of Hebrews describes the false teaching as “diverse and strange teachings.”

Apparently, some taught that the key to our hearts being strengthened (i.e. spiritual growth) was eating the right foods. Which foods and practices is he talking about? We don’t know for sure. But we don’t need to know the details of this false teaching to understand and apply this passage.

The heart of this false teaching was simply this, one could have their “heart strengthened” if they ate the right foods.

How does the author respond?

**Hebrews 13:9 (ESV) — 9 Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.**

Our hearts are not strengthened by what we eat. On the contrary, our hearts are strengthened by grace.

**Illustration:**

Christians have done all sorts of strange things over the years to strengthen their hearts.

The monastic movement... (our hearts are strengthened when we leave the world)

Pillarites... (in the early church some thought that our hearts would be strengthened if we lived on pillars in the desert)

Flagellists... (a 14<sup>th</sup> century movement... they thought that God would have pity on them if they whipped themselves with little whips, this is still practiced in some Roman Catholic countries today)

Shakers... (our hearts are strengthened when we practice celibacy and ascetic living)

RCC (our hearts are strengthened through participation in the sacramental system)

All of these techniques ignore grace...

**Application:**

What is grace? Grace is often defined as God’s unmerited favor or God’s favor freely given to those who deserve judgement. These are both good definitions. But we need to expand these definitions. The Bible uses the word grace in a variety of ways. Grace not only describe God’s unmerited favor in salvation, the word grace also describes the provision or power that God gives us to do his will. This strength is called grace, because it is freely given. We can’t earn it.

*Grace is supernatural, freely given, spiritual power*

Grace is described this way often...

**2 Corinthians 12:9 (ESV) — 9** But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

**2 Timothy 2:1 (ESV) — 1** You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus,

**Hebrews 4:16 (ESV) — 16** Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

These verses speak of grace as provision, help, or strength to do what God wants us to do.

We don't earn spiritual strength by eating certain foods, practicing certain rituals, or engaging in religious practices. We obtain God's grace (i.e. God's strength) freely. In other words, there is nothing we can do to earn it.

If we could earn strength from God through some practice or ritual it would no longer be grace, it would be merit.

Where do you need strengthening grace to help you worship God this week?

Anger  
Parenting  
Anxiety  
Pride  
Trusting God  
Forgiving others  
Etc....

If you are a Christian, God's strengthening grace is available to you free of charge, but you need to ask Him for it.

*First, we worship through strengthening grace!*

**Second, we worship through suffering!**

**Hebrews 13:11–14 (ESV) — 11** For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. **12** So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. **13** Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. **14** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

This complex paragraph presupposes knowledge of the OT sacrificial system. Let me briefly provide some historical context.

In the OT, on the day of atonement, which happened once a year. The high priest sacrificed a ram and a goat. Then he brought the blood of these animals into the holy of holies. This was done to remind Israel that their blood deserved to be shed, because of their sins. But instead of their blood being shed, the blood of a substitute was shed. Because blood was shed the high priest could be in God's presence without being struck down.

But what happened to the bodies of these animals? After they were sacrificed, their carcasses were taken outside the camp of Israel and incinerated. Why? Because they were considered impure and unclean.

In verse 12 the author compares the suffering of the sacrificed animals with the suffering of Jesus.

**Hebrews 13:12 (ESV) — 12** So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

According to our text, Jesus was crucified outside the gate (that is the gate of Jerusalem). In other words, he was crucified outside the camp. Why? When all of our sins were placed on him, he was considered unclean, impure, and abandoned by God just like the bodies of the OT animals sacrifices.

Because he died in our place, outside the camp, we can be sanctified. This is not a reference to progressive sanctification. The author of Hebrews uses the word sanctified to refer to the cleansing that comes through the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus suffered and died on the cross for us, our penalty was paid, therefore our sins can be forgiven.

Jesus blood, unlike the blood of bulls and goats, did something to us. It sanctified us!!! It washed us clean and placed into the realm of the holy.

Because he shed his blood for us, we can be in God's presence, just like the high priest on the day of atonement.

### **Application:**

How should we respond to the sanctifying sacrifice of Christ? With worship and gratitude...

How else should we respond? With a willingness to suffer...

**Hebrews 13:12–14 (ESV) — 12** So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. **13** Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. **14** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

The original audience was called to follow Jesus to the place of shame and suffering outside the camp. We too are called to identify with him in his shame and suffering outside the camp.

The original audience was tempted to go back to the community of Israel, back inside the camp (metaphorically speaking), back inside the walls of Jerusalem their holy city, back inside the synagogue, where life was peaceful and easy.

But the author of Hebrews exhorts them, and he exhorts us to go outside the camp and associate with the suffering of Christ.

He exhorts us to stand outside of the inner circle for Christ's sake.

He exhorts us to be willing to be snubbed, passed over, and laughed out.

He exhorts us to be willing to be outside of the corridors of power because of our faith commitments.

He exhorts us to be willing to be outside of the circles of influence.

He exhorts us to be willing to be outside of our biological families for following Jesus.

What will motivate us to go outside the camp and suffer with Jesus? The author of Hebrews tells us...

**Hebrews 13:13–14 (ESV) — 13** Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. **14** For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

Life is very short.

Someday all of our suffering will be in the past.

One million years from now, all of the suffering in this life, will be a very distant memory.

Our suffering for Christ is an act of worship. When we suffer for Christ, we are saying that Christ is more valuable than our own comfort.

Fortunately, there are more ways to worship...

*First, we worship through strengthening grace.*

*Second, we worship through suffering.*

**Third, we worship through speaking!**

**Hebrews 13:15 (ESV) — 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.

In the Old Covenant the people of God had to sacrifice animals for their sins to be forgiven. That may seem barbaric and cruel to some, but it was designed to be a painful reminder that blood had to be shed for sins to be forgiven. Why? The penalty for sin is death.

Bottom line, the OT sacrificial system was a complicated, bloody, labor intensive, and rigorous system that lasted for over 1400 years. Think how many animals were sacrificed... thousands!!!

But now that Jesus has come, we no longer have to sacrifice animals to be forgiven. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice. He was the lamb of God slain for the sins of the world.

Since he suffered and died in our place....

You don't have to sacrifice animals to be forgiven.

You don't have to light candles to be forgiven.

You don't have to read your Bible to be forgiven.

You don't have to travel to a foreign land to be forgiven.

You don't have to go inside a religious building to be forgiven.

You don't have to confess your sins to a priest to be forgiven.

You simply look to Jesus. He is the perfect and final sacrifice. Nothing else needs to be done.

**Hebrews 10:14 (ESV) — 14** For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

On the cross Jesus said, it is finished. Nothing else needs to be done.

How should we respond? We should say thanks, this is part of what it means to worship.

**Hebrews 13:15 (ESV) — 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.

Instead of sacrificing animals, we offer up a sacrifice of praise to God with our lips. We are called to do this continually, just like the OT priests offered sacrifices continually (Ex. 29:38-42).

Under the New Covenant every Christian is a priest. This means that every Christian is called to offer sacrifices of praise to God with their lips every day. We do this as we sing God's praises. And we do this as we tell others about the mighty works of God.

All though worship is more than singing God's praises, it is not less than singing God's praises.

*We worship through strengthening grace.*

*We worship through suffering.*

*We worship through speaking.*

#### **Fourth, we worship through sacrificial giving!**

**Hebrews 13:16 (ESV) — 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

According to verse 15, motivated by Christ's sacrifice, we worship God by offering up a sacrifice of praise to God with our lips.

According to verse 16 there are more ways to worship God, we also worship God by sharing with others. This specifically means that we give financially to those in need. According to scholars, "The word "share" in verse 16 almost certainly refers to giving to meet the material needs of others (Rom. 15:26, 2 Cor. 8:4, 9:13)."

We can worship God by giving sacrificially to others.

Doesn't this make sense in light of what God has done for us? Since He has given himself freely to us, we are motivated to give freely to others.

We treat others the way we think God has treated us. And God has been very generous towards us.

#### **Conclusion:**

There are many ways to worship God in light of what He has done for us.

*We worship through strengthening grace.*

*We worship through suffering.*

*We worship through speaking.*

*We worship through sacrificial giving.*

I would like to conclude by focusing on the last few words of verse 16.

**Hebrews 13:16 (ESV) — 16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

The author of Hebrews says that such sacrifices are pleasing to God. The immediate context is sacrificial giving, but all the sacrifices we make for God are pleasing to God.

**Here is the point, your acts of worship please God!**

Again, your acts of worship are pleasing to God!!!

God is pleased when you tell your friends about Jesus.

God is pleased when you pray.

God is pleased when you give money away.

God is pleased when you suffer for him.

God is pleased when you are content.

God is pleased when you give thanks.

God is pleased when you have your neighbors over.

God is pleased when you led you read the Bible to your children.

For more proof see Col. 1:10; Rom. 12:1, 14:18; Col. 3:20; 1 Thes. 2:4; 1 Tim. 2:1-3; 5:4; 1 John 3:22.

You, child of God, can please God!!!

*Objection!*

Doesn't Isa. 64 teach that even our best deeds are filthy rags? No! This interpretation ignores the context of Isa. 64. Isa. 64 was written to people who were guilty of performing empty religious rituals in unbelief. This has little to do with Christians living under the new covenant.

*Objection!*

Are you saying that I can get to heaven through my righteous deeds? No!

Our righteous deeds can never get us into heaven.

We get into heaven only if we are wrapped in the robes of Christ's righteousness. Christ's righteousness is an alien righteousness, that has nothing to do with us.

Our righteous standing is based solely on the righteousness of another.

Kevin Deyoung writes,

“There is no righteousness that makes us right with God except for the righteousness of Christ. But for those who have been made right with God by grace alone through faith alone and therefore have been adopted into God's family, many of our righteous deeds are not only *not* filthy in God's eyes, they are exceedingly sweet, precious, and pleasing to him.” (Deyoung, 70)

Why does this matter? Because many Christians walk around thinking that they can never please God. How do you think God feels about this? Imagine how a father would feel if his daughter said to him, “I feel like I can never please you.”

Why do we imagine that God is so hard for us to please? Isn't He our heavenly father?

What sort of father looks at his six-year-old sons homemade birthday card and says, “Why did you color outside the lines? And why did you use green and not blue crayon? Don't you know that blue is my favorite color? I'm very displeased.”

What kind of father looks at his daughter after she has volunteered to clean the garage and says, “what were you thinking? Don't you know that the hammers and screw drivers are supposed to go on third shelf and not the second shelf? I'm very displeased. Your work is worthless in my sight!”

What kind of father gets angry when his son falls down eight times within his first ten minutes of snow skiing? A lousy impatient father.

Good fathers are pleased with their children's imperfect attempts to honor and obey them. In the same sense, our heavenly father is pleased with our imperfect attempts at worship him.

If you are a child of God, you are wrapped in the robes of Christ's righteousness. You are loved. And you can please your heavenly father.

The imperfect acts of worship that you will perform this next week will be pleasing to your heavenly father. Let's pray...