

## Sacrifices Pleasing to God, Part 1 (Heb. 13:1–19)

By Pastor Jeff Alexander (12/31/2017)

“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” (Heb. 12:28).

### Introduction

This verse forms the conclusion of the apostle’s argument and also his exhortation for readers to serve the King in His kingdom. The verse also introduces the exhortations in chapter 13 as specific instructions on what the King expects, so that His people can serve Him correctly—according to His will. This is the first and introductory message of Hebrews 13.

Remember, Jewish believers were the first audience of this epistle, wavering due to suffering and persecution. Therefore, the exhortations must be read in light of their situation. They desired to adhere to the old temporal form of the kingdom represented by Sinai (12:18). That kingdom focused on “*eating and drinking*” (13:9). The new kingdom, represented by Zion (12:22), focuses on the spiritual and eternal—“*righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 14:17).

### I. A Present Motivation

1. New Covenant believers have received a heavenly kingdom—one not of this world, thus, eternal and permanent (John 18:36).
  - a. The nature of this kingdom is one of *grace* and *glory*; both now realized (grace, present but invisible), yet anticipated (glory, future and visible).
    - 1) This present form of the heavenly and invisible aspect of the kingdom is realized by *faith* generated of the Holy Spirit through the promises of the Word of God (11:1, 6).
    - 2) Its fullness is anticipated by a present *hope*, which serves as the “*anchor of the soul*” (Heb. 6:19).
    - 3) The true Old Covenant saints placed their faith, not in the temporal form of the kingdom of Israel, but looked forward in hope to the permanent heavenly form to be realized in the Messiah (11:10, 13–16, 26, 27).
  - b. The permanence of this kingdom is demonstrated by its lack of susceptibility to shaking, or removal (vv. 25–27, especially note v. 27).
    - 1) The apostle references the kingdoms in two stages, one set for removal (to be shaken) but the other unshakeable. (See Daniel 2:44, 45.)
    - 2) The evidence of the temporal kingdom of Israel (symbolized by Mount Sinai) as destined for removal (shaking), is demonstrated in the Gospels by the Jews’ treatment of Jesus. (See Matt. 21:13; 21:17; 21:19; and also 8:11, 12; 23:38.)
2. The conclusion of the apostle is stated in verse 28.
  - a. The *security* of the citizens in this final aspect of God’s kingdom is seen in the first words of the verse in the English translation: *echomen charin*—“*let us have grace.*” Warnings are just that, warnings. They are for information and direction. The saints’ security is not

dependent on their *performance*; however, their performance is rather the *proof* of their security (2:13–18, 2 Tim. 2:19).

- b. The term for *grace* is much more than a simple reference to gratitude because “*reverence and awe* [fear]” modify the verb: “*let us have grace with reverence and awe.*” Thus, it is best to understand the phrase to mean, “*let us have perseverance driven by the fear of God*” (v. 29) as our motivation for serving God in this kingdom.

## II. A Brief Overview

1. The first verses (13:1–13) relate to our *person*, respecting our serving God acceptably.
  - a. *Brotherly love* (vv. 1–3) is to continue as the prime Christian virtue, without which we cannot claim to be Christians (John 13:34; Gal. 5:22; 1 John 4:20, 21).
  - b. *Marriage* (v. 4) is the first human relationship established by God in the Garden (Gen. 2:18–24; Matt. 19:1–12) and one that models the glorious heavenly relationship between Christ and His church (Eph. 5:32, 3; Rev. 19:6–9).
  - c. *Covetousness* (literally, a lover of silver, v. 5a) is not to rule one’s heart or regulate one’s life.
  - d. *Contentment* (vv. 5b, 6) is letting Christ rule the heart and regulate life’s issues.
  - e. *Faithfulness* (vv. 7–13) is the fruit of perseverance as encouraged by faithful ministers of the Word (v. 7), the unchangeable character of Christ (v. 8), the trustworthiness of sound doctrine or teaching (vv. 9–11), and the better sacrifice of Christ (v. 12).
2. Verses 13–19 specifically focus on our priestly *service* of worship.
  - a. Offering the sacrifice of public *identification* with Christ in His reproach (vv. 13, 14)
  - b. Offering the sacrifice of *worship* through Christ as the fruit of our lips (v. 15)
  - c. Offering the sacrifice of our *means* to help those in need (v. 16)
  - d. Offering the sacrifice of *obedience* to the leadership God has placed over us for our welfare (v. 17)
  - e. Offering the sacrifice of intercessory *prayer* for those who serve Christ and His people honorably (vv. 18, 19)

## Application

In this day of exerted efforts to divide people into hostile camps at home, with the constant menace of war and nuclear threats from abroad, we need the comfort and security of knowing that God is sovereign and all things are under His control. Jesus is King and rules over all things until He has made His enemies the footstool of His feet. Yes, we may be called upon to suffer, but He is with us and will never forsake us. “*The Lord is my helper, I will not fear; what can man do to me?*” (Psa. 118:6). We are waiting for the full and visible realization of a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Therefore, as we wait, “*Let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe.*”