

Heb. 13: 7-19; I Peter 3:13-18; Following the Footsteps of Jesus I. Suffering as He Suffered II. Offering as He Offered

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, sacrifices and offerings are a part of the old way- right? They are part of the Old Covenant- with their blood and their rituals- that's part of the Law that has been abolished right? We no longer have sacrifices and offerings that need to be brought- since Jesus has accomplished this all and fulfilled the type and shadow! Well, today we are going to build upon this concept of sacrifice and offerings as we consider the connections between what Christ has fulfilled and our calling to follow in His footsteps. Although it is true that we are part of the New Covenant in His blood as we saw back in ch. 12- that we have access to God by way of Christ completed sacrifice- there remains a calling that we have to take up our cross and follow Him. So today we consider this theme: Jesus Christ calls His sheep to follow after Him in a life of denial and service. Our focus is on v. 12-16.

I. Suffering as He Suffered

In our first point we find that we are called to follow after Christ in a life of suffering- denying ourselves and forsaking this world as we follow in His footsteps. In v. 12 we find that Jesus suffered outside the city gates- the place of Jesus' crucifixion is of importance. Just as the animals sacrificed on the Day of Atonement had their carcasses burned outside of the city- so Jesus needed to be rejected by His own- lead and even driven outside of the city- there to suffer and die on the hill of Calvary. So Jesus suffered outside of the city- away from the comfort, support and embrace of his own countrymen. And the reason that Jesus suffered is so that He might sanctify to Himself a people by way of His blood v. 12. The suffering of Jesus was absolutely necessary and unique in that He purchased our salvation- once for all. As Rom. 6 puts it- He died unto sin, once. Or again in I Peter 3:18 as we read, Christ suffered once for sins that He might bring us to God. So when Jesus died, His passion was unique. Dying to pay for our sins- to satisfy the justice and wrath of God- to give His life as a ransom and propitiation. We find righteousness and forgiveness through His blood- we are sanctified- or set apart and brought unto God

as v. 12 states. He has made us holy- but also calls us to a holy life as we will see. So we need to keep this point clear, we are not called to suffer in the same way for the same reason and to the same extent as Jesus did. He did this as a unique mediator and savior. We cannot add to His perfect ransom and atonement that has been made. However, we find in v. 13 that we are in fact called to follow after Jesus- to walk in His footsteps if you will. As I Peter 2:20 states- the suffering of Christ left us an example to follow! So we are called to suffer in a similar way- in a like manner- as Jesus suffered. As Col. 1 says, our suffering fills up the afflictions of Christ. We are called to bear the same shame- suffer the same reproach and reject that He suffered. Notice that Jesus suffered outside of the city- proving to us that we are always going to be outsiders- we are exiles and pilgrims as Peter would call us. If they hated Jesus- they will hate His followers. If the world rejected Christ- it will reject those who are called by His name. In fact, the name Christian was given as a derogatory term- to slander the name of those who followed this Jesus of Nazareth! So we bear the reproach that Christ bore- think of how He was rejected and scorned those last days. From the soldiers to the Jewish leaders- the thieves on the cross to all those who walked by. They shook their heads and said- He can save others, why can't he save himself! Let him come down from the cross, and then we will believe in Him! We are reminded that this world is not our home- we have as v. 14 says- no lasting city here! As aliens and strangers, we walk through and in a world that is hostile to our faith and has rejected our savior! The world hates us- and as we see in v. 14- we are leaving this world behind. That not only helps us keep our possessions in their proper place as we saw a few weeks back, it also keeps our expectations grounded. We should not be surprised when people say things that are mean or untrue about us! We should not be surprised when we suffer ill treatment at the hands of those who hate the Lord! We are simply sharing His reproach! As Jesus did- and as we will see in our next point, we are called to do good- to bless when cursed by others. Even willing to suffer when we do good as I Peter 3:17 says. Or as James 4:4 puts it, whoever wishes to be a friend with the world makes himself an enemy of God! We find no lasting peace on this side of glory- no

lasting home- no permanent resident- because this world is temporary- passing- and soon to be shaken and burned up! We are in this world- not of it! We are morally and spiritually set apart! And the worldly people- those who have the spirit of this age- will hate anything that exposes their sins or reminds them of their own need and mortality! As Jesus said in John 15- understand that the world first hated and rejected Me- therefore they will hate and reject you. So we are called to suffer along side- or in the footsteps of Christ! Let us bear the reproach and shame that He bore- willing to be slandered because of the precious name by which we are called! (Most of us know that that is like- when people say- Oh- you are one of those kinds of Christian! The Media labels us as fanatics- right wing conservatives- antichoice- anti progressive! You believe Genesis is historical? Come on! You are a fascist or xenophobe!) Whatever they say- if you believe and embrace God's Word and they scorn or shame you- you are bearing the reproach of Christ! As I Peter 2:20 says, if you do good and you suffer for it, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God! We have to be willing to leave this world behind- to go to Christ and to be with him! We cannot live for eternity when we hold on to this world! If we set our eyes and hearts on these earthly things- we are living for this world! We must not crave worldly approval- refusing to live like the world- to be conformed to this earthly way. We are called to sacrifice- to give these things up! Rather we seek to live as Christ lived – being transformed with renewed minds! Never craving the approval of those who reject Christ! So then, disappointment, hostility and rejection are all normal aspects of the Christians life here below! This text serves to remind us- to show us what to expect from this world. In fact, one of the jobs of our elders is to warn us- preparing us- know that you will suffer! As II Tim. 3:12 says- anyone who seeks to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted! But there is good news- remember that if we suffer with Christ- we will also reign with Him! If we die with Him below- we will live with Him above! So the first calling of this text is to follow after Christ- walk the road He did- willing to suffer the reproach of being His sheep! Come out from them- be separate and set apart as Paul said in II Cor. 6. But our text has more to say- not just a

negative – willing to suffer slander and to be shamed by this world- but also the positive- willing to live as a holy and acceptable offering – even a living sacrifice!

II. Offering as He Offered

Not only did Jesus suffer reproach, He also was perfect in His offering of His life as a pleasing aroma to God! The fact remains, there is a bloodless offering that is still being offered to God! To offer something is to give someone a gift- we are offerings- we give ourselves to God! As v. 15 states, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise. Note that this offering is offered up through Christ- and it is offered to God! We are not going back to the OT- back to Law to find a new way in which we might make ourselves pleasing and acceptable to God. No- through Jesus we already are acceptable- and we can bring an acceptable offering which is praise through Him- the new and Living Way! Jesus offered His life- in it's entirety- as a pleasing offering. He fully kept all of the commandments- fully obeying every Law- using his words to bless and build up- offering His life as a pleasing sacrifice of praise. Through Him- in His- we can now do the same. So we are called to be- to present our lives as a living sacrifice of praise as Rom. 12 puts it. Interestingly, while in the context of Heb. 12- we have considered how the NT is so much greater- how we have so many more blessings and privileges than the OT saints. And yet- sacrifices and offerings remains. Namely you- your life is that offering! Note also how often we are to offer this offering- continually as v. 15 states. Not just 3 times a year- not with the morning and the evening sacrifice- continually! At all times and in every way! As Psalm 34 puts it, I will praise the Lord at all times! A living sacrifice of praise that is always being given over and offered up to God! The word that describes this is consecration- being dedicated to God at all times and in every place! No longer belonging to myself- I have been purchased- I belong body and soul to my Savior- so my life I live is not mine- but Jesus who is living in me! We are priests- who offer ourselves as the sacrifice of praise! As v. 15 continues- our sacrifice is the fruit of lips. We sing our songs, hymns and spiritual songs- we give our God the glory by using our tongues to utter His praise! And by our lips, we acknowledge His name! We

believe in our heart, and confess with our mouth! We give a defense for the hope that we have in our hearts. We confess Christ before men- every week confessing the truth as we recite the AC- acknowledging His name before others and praise His Name! Using our mouth to make know His faithfulness! Giving thanks and blessing the name of our God who has saved us- as we get to do again later this week on Thanksgiving Day! So the first offering is the fruit of lips that are sanctified to speak the truth- to build others up- to praise God as He deserves- and even to defend the truth when it is attacked. But there is a second offering in v. 16- doing good and sharing! This also is a sacrifice that is pleasing to God. Doing good to all as we considered a few weeks back from Gal. 6- sharing what we have with those in need. As James 1:27 puts it, religion that is pure and undefiled before God is this- to visit the orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. Did you note that v. 16 says that this sacrifice is pleasing to God! We offer ourselves to God- and God is pleased! Using our lips rightly- and using our hands rightly- is an act that pleases God! You can bring joy to God- a smile to His face if you will- when you offer your life as a living sacrifice of praise! Speaking and living to the praise of His glory! This is a bloodless sacrifice- but it is pleasing to God none the less! It is the obedience of children whose lives have been purchased. As Phil. 2:17 says, if I am poured out as a sacrificial offering, I am glad and rejoice!

To conclude, understanding our role as living sacrifices helps us see our calling. If we would seek to do good- if we would do all to God's glory- then we will seek to follow in the footsteps of our Savior! To follow Him means to suffer with Him- and to offer ourselves as He did! Not to gain salvation, but because we are holy and our offerings are acceptable through Him! As our theme stated: Jesus Christ calls His sheep to follow after Him in a life of denial and service. Listen to these closing words from I Peter 2:5- you yourselves are living stones built up into a spiritual house. You are a holy priesthood, called to offer spiritual sacrifices that are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ!