

Psalm 4:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

Analysis

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD. This verse calls for both proper worship and wholehearted trust, connecting external religious observance with internal faith posture. "Sacrifices of righteousness" (zivchei-tzedek, זיבחי-צדקה) can mean sacrifices offered righteously (with right heart attitude) or sacrifices that are themselves righteous (meeting God's standards)—likely both dimensions are intended.

In contrast to merely external religious ritual, David emphasizes that sacrifices must be offered in righteousness. The prophets would later elaborate this principle extensively: "To obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22); "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice" (Hosea 6:6); "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice" (Proverbs 21:3). God rejects worship divorced from obedience and ethical living. Sacrifices must flow from hearts oriented toward God in covenant faithfulness, not religious manipulation attempting to buy divine favor while harboring sin.

The phrase "sacrifices of righteousness" anticipates the ultimate sacrifice of Christ, who "offered himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). Only His sacrifice was truly righteous—offered with perfect obedience, perfect motive, and perfect atoning efficacy. All Old Testament sacrifices pointed forward to this perfect offering. For New Testament believers, Romans 12:1 applies this principle: "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our lives become the sacrifices of righteousness, offered in

grateful response to Christ's atoning death.

"Put your trust in the LORD" (bitchu baYahweh, בְּתַחַת בֵּיתְךָ יְהוָה) uses batach, meaning to trust, be confident, feel secure, rely upon. This isn't passive hoping but active, confident reliance on God's character and promises. Trust is the heart's response to knowing God—it transfers security from self-effort, human strength, or material resources to divine faithfulness. The command is plural, addressing not just David but all God's people. Trust, like the sacrifices, is both corporate worship and individual disposition.

The connection between offering sacrifices and trusting God is crucial: true worship flows from and cultivates trust. We offer sacrifice because we trust God's promises. Our offerings express dependence on divine grace rather than self-sufficiency. Conversely, trust naturally produces worship—those who genuinely trust God will honor Him through obedient sacrifice and grateful praise. The verse thus integrates external religious practice with internal spiritual reality, refusing to separate them.

Historical Context

The sacrificial system was central to Israel's covenant relationship with God. Leviticus details various offerings—burnt offerings, grain offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings—each serving specific purposes in worship, atonement, thanksgiving, and consecration. However, from the beginning God emphasized that sacrifices without right heart attitudes were unacceptable. Cain's offering was rejected not for wrong procedure but wrong heart (Genesis 4:5-7). The prophets consistently called Israel back to sacrifices offered in righteousness rather than empty ritual (Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8).

David himself deeply understood both the importance of sacrifices and their limitations. When confronted by Nathan after his sin with Bathsheba, David confessed in Psalm 51:16-17: "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." David recognized that no animal sacrifice could atone for his sin against God—only genuine repentance

and divine mercy could cleanse him. Yet David also zealously planned and prepared for temple worship, understanding that when offered rightly, sacrifices honored God and expressed covenant faithfulness.

For Christians, this verse applies through the lens of Christ's perfect sacrifice and our response. No longer bringing animal offerings, we offer "the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15), along with the living sacrifice of our bodies presented to God (Romans 12:1). These sacrifices of righteousness must flow from trust in Christ's completed work, not attempts to earn salvation through religious performance. Our worship and obedience express faith in the finished sacrifice of the cross.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to offer 'sacrifices of righteousness' rather than merely external religious observance?
2. How do you distinguish between worship that flows from trust in God versus religious activity aimed at manipulating or impressing God?
3. In what ways might you be tempted to separate external religious practices from internal heart attitudes?
4. How does Christ's perfect sacrifice as the 'sacrifice of righteousness' transform your understanding of worship?
5. What 'living sacrifices' is God calling you to offer in practical areas of daily life?

Interlinear Text

וְתַחַטֵּא אֶל־יְהוָה יְהוָה תַּחֲטָא
Offer the sacrifices of righteousness and put your trust in the LORD
H2076 H2077 H6664 H982 H413 H3068

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 37:3 (Faith): Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

Psalms 51:19 (Righteousness): Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

Psalms 62:8 (Faith): Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

Deuteronomy 33:19 (Righteousness): They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.

1 Peter 4:19 (Faith): Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Isaiah 61:8 (Sacrifice): For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Psalms 50:14 (Parallel theme): Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

Matthew 5:23 (Sacrifice): Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;

Malachi 1:8 (Sacrifice): And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 50:10 (Faith): Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.

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