

in His sight. For an unregenerate human being to think that he can win God's favor by building Him a temple is absurd. The same applies to the various types of sacrifice described in verse 3. Under the Old Testament ceremonies killing an ox was a very worthy method of serving the Lord, since it prefigured the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary's cross. Yet when this is performed apart from true worship of God and from a heart anxious to do His will, it is not a good deed in His sight, but is in fact actually harmful. It is almost as if one murdered a man. To sacrifice a lamb is one of the glorious symbols of the Old Testament. Yet apart from sincere worship of God it has no more meaning than if one were to cut off a dog's neck. Offering oblation and burning of incense were important parts of Old Testament ceremony, but apart from the proper heart attitude they were of no more value than to have offered swine's flesh or to have blessed an idol.

This principle also applies to members of the church in our own day. Attendance at church services, partaking of communion, and performance of our present means of glorifying God and showing forth His grace are excellent in themselves, but they are absolutely worthless if they are not accompanied by a heart that is filled with desire to serve the Lord and that recognizes that these are merely symbols of something far greater, of the grace of God mediated directly by His Spirit to the believing soul.

Thus these three verses condemn all formalism in worship and all attempts to gain God's favor by external acts alone. By way of contrast, they include a brief word of blessing: at the end of verse 2 it is pointed out that one who has a poor and contrite spirit and trembles at the Word of God will receive God's favor.

Verse 4 concludes this section of the chapter by indicating that God will not merely rebuke formalism in words; he is going to bring real punishment upon those who substitute a building or a ceremony for true obedience to God. The very things that they fear will be the instruments of punishment. The delusions and imaginary worries that bother them will become real, for God will pour out His anger against them.

In verse 5 the attention turns to the remnant of grace. Men who have suffered for the name of God at the hands of those who should have been His followers are given words of