

Biblical Theology: The Story of Scripture
Class 7: Sacrifice

What did Christ's sacrifice accomplish? What was he doing on the cross? The answers to these questions are at the heart of Christianity, and so you can be sure that the doctrine of Christ's sacrificial atonement are target number one for the devil. You can be sure that all sorts of controversies will surround the meaning of this central event in Christianity.

In fact, you can be sure that many of the most compelling answers given to the question "What was Christ doing on the cross?" will be compelling and true; they just won't be the whole truth. Did Christ die to demonstrate God's love for us? Yes! But is that all?

Today, we want to look at the storyline of sacrifice in the Bible, in order to understand this central moment in biblical history rightly. Remember, the fundamental premise of this course is that the Bible is a single narrative, a story that isn't fiction, because it's the revelation of God unfolding in time and space. And we're learning how to determine what to believe according to this storyline.

I. STORY OF SACRIFICE

A major theme in Scripture is the idea of sacrifice. Today we think of making do with little or giving it "your all," when we think of sacrifice. But as we trace the OT history of sacrifice the awfulness of sin and the centrality of God's salvation work will be illuminated in wonderful ways. This theme slowly unfolds through at least seven different episodes:

1) [**Adam and Eve**] The idea of Sacrifice in the Old Testament starts with Adam and Eve and their two oldest sons. In **Genesis 3:21** God provides animal skins for Adam and Eve. It displays an important link that will mark sacrifice: the anticipation that death and sin are physically linked. [NOTE: *who provides the sacrifice?*] Cain and Abel in **Genesis 4** offer sacrifices to the Lord. There's no mention of sin or blood with this sacrifice.

"The Bible calls it an offering, a gift, and the idea is one of tribute to a great King, and submission to his lordship." (Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry, by Michael Lawrence, p. 155)

[The word offering is to offer something freely, and some of the Hebrew (& Greek) words for sacrifice mean gift.] We see here the beginning of another great principle of sacrifice, much emphasized by the prophets, psalmists and wisdom writers, that the inward disposition of worshippers must be right if their 'outward' gift is to be accepted.

[takeaway: sacrifice involves death because sin brings death / inward attitude of the worshipper important]

2) [**Noah**] The next sacrifice is found in **Genesis 8**. After the Flood, Noah takes some of the extra clean animals he had brought along, and sacrifices them to God.

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, “I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man’s heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. 22 While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:20–22)

From this text, we see that a sacrifice can please God and avert his wrath/judgment. The ESV Study Bible points out

“While this is undoubtedly intended to express gratitude for divine deliverance, it is also an act of atonement. This is a normal aspect of burnt offerings (see Lev. 1:3–17, esp. v. 4) and is supported by the mention of the pleasing aroma (Gen. 8:21; cf. Lev. 1:9, 13, 17).” (ESV Study Bible, notes at Gen. 8:20–22)

And further, the word for “pleasing” is *nikhoakh* which “conveys rest and tranquility” and sounds like Noah’s name – which meant something to his father, Lamech:

“When Lamech had lived 182 years, he fathered a son and called his name Noah, saying, ‘Out of the ground that the LORD has cursed, this one shall bring us relief from our work and from the painful toil of our hands.’” (Genesis 5:28–29)

Noah brought relief in that through his obedience and then his subsequent burnt offering, he soothed “God’s anger at human sin.” The ESV Study Bible goes on:

In spite of the human propensity to sin, atonement through sacrifice is possible, securing a peaceful relationship between the Lord and humanity.” (ibid)

Sacrifice continues throughout the patriarchal age, and altars are recorded as having been built, or sacrifice as having been offered, by Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The gift offered is a basis for prayer, for calling on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 26:25). [Meeting with God connected with sacrifice.]

[takeaway: sacrifice can please God and avert God’s wrath]

3) **[Abraham & Isaac]** God not only promises to never again destroy humanity, he promises to bless all nations. In particular, he promises Abraham a seed who would be a blessing to all. Then, interestingly, the Bible’s next recorded sacrifice, which occurs in **Genesis 22**, when God tells Abraham to do something alarming with his son, the promised seed:

“Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen. 22:2b)

Incredibly, by faith Abraham obeys.

“Once again... the idea seems to be that of tribute and Lordship. It all belongs to God, and he has the right to take it back. At the last second, God stops Abraham.... The test of Abraham’s devotion is over, but not the sacrifice. God provides a ram to be sacrificed in Isaac’s place. It turns out that God will accept a substitute.... What’s more, he’ll even provide that substitute.” (Michael Lawrence, p. 156)

[takeaway: sacrifice can involve a substitute]

4) **[Passover] Exodus 12** Pharaoh refuses to release the Israelites, even after 9 terrible plagues. God will strike down the first-born male of every family in Egypt. But the Lord promises to spare the firstborn of Israel if they take a spotless, year-old lamb and kill it as a sacrifice. Then take its blood and paint it on the doorframe of their houses. The death angel will see the blood and pass-over their houses, sparing them from the death that Egypt faced. This sacrifice and its special meal:

“will be a sign that sets them apart, as God makes a distinction between Israel and the rest of world, consecrating them as his special people.” (ibid)

Building on the sacrifice of the animal for clothing, the sacrifice that averted God’s wrath, and the substitute ram provided for Abraham, with the Passover lamb we can again see how sacrifice is a display of God’s magnificent grace.

3 elements in Passover (also part of the consecration of priests for service – Exod. 29/Lev. 8):

- 1) Killing of a lamb as a sacrifice [an unblemished/perfect lamb]
- 2) Smearing/sprinkling of its blood
- 3) Eating of its meat (as a Holy Meal)

(drawn from From Eden to the New Jerusalem, by T. Desmond Alexander, pp. 127-130)

Here is emphasized the role of blood (later underscored in Lev. 17:11). And interestingly, the blood on door posts became later enacted as a sprinkling of blood on the altar -- 2 Chron. 35:10-11 (for “threw the blood,” cf. 29:22).

The Passover was a special sacrifice that involved God redeeming the firstborn from death – and then ransoming them by taking the Levites in their place to serve Him as priestly servants. In the Passover, God consecrated his people to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6).

[takeaway: sacrifice requires a perfect lamb, shedding of blood, sprinkling of the blood, and can provide a sacred communion/holy meal, through sacrifice God consecrates his people]

5) **[Law, Tabernacle and Day of Atonement]**

“Up until this point, there have been less than a dozen instances of sacrifice recorded in the Bible. It doesn’t seem to be a major theme. But that changes with the giving of the Law. An entire book of the Bible, Leviticus, is largely given over to detailing all the different sacrifices that Israel [is to] offer God. There are fellowship offerings and whole burnt offerings.... But now there are more, the most important of which are sacrifices to atone for sin and guilt. Now, all the pieces that had been slowly revealed come together.

- *Only clean animals without defect can be sacrificed.*
- *Every first-born Israelite, who represent[s] the nation as whole, must be redeemed with a sacrificial substitute.*

- *Prominent is the taking of life, the shedding of a blameless victim's blood.*" (Michael Lawrence, p. 156)

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. (Leviticus 17:11)

- *[Again,] "the idea of a substitution is prominent: We're told that if anyone brings a sacrifice, "He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf..." (Lev. 1:4) It's a way of saying, 'This sacrifice stands for me; what's about to happen to it should happen to me. [It is taking my place.]'*
- *Sacrifices now begin and end every single day in God's temple, presented by priests who serve as intermediaries between God and his sinful people.*
- *There are additional sacrifices that mark the beginning of each week, each month, and each season.*" (ibid, 157)

The sacrifices are called the bread or food of God and priests, and even occasionally the people, are invited to join God at his table.

"The peace/fellowship offering is, like the Passover, a sacrifice in which lay worshippers are allowed to share in the sacred meal, normally a priestly privilege. Nor do they just share the food of priest; they share the food of God. The tabernacle and temple symbolize the court of a king; indeed, the same word in Hebrew (heykal) is used for a temple and a palace. The altar of burnt offering is the king's table (Mal. 1:7, 12), and the regular sacrifices there are accompanied by cereal offerings and drink offerings (Exod. 29:38-41; Num. 15:1-12) because the table of a king must have not only flesh on it but also bread and wine. The sacrifices are described as his bread or food (Lev. 3:11; 21:6,8,17,21;22:25; Num. 28:2; Ezek. 44:7), which his servants the priests are regularly allowed to eat (Lev. 21:22; cf. 1 Cor. 9:13), but this is a privilege which at Passover time and in the peace offering he bountifully extends to all his subjects." (NDBT, "Sacrifice," by R.T. Beckwith, pp. 757-758)

- *"And at the pinnacle of this entire system of sacrifice was the Day of Atonement." (Leviticus 16, center of the Pentateuch) "The high priest alone took the blood of the sacrifice into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, the symbolic throne of God, to make atonement for his own sins and the sins of the people."* (Michael Lawrence, p. 157)

Now the Day of Atonement ritual was performed in the Tabernacle for hundreds of years, but ultimately David prepared the way for a Temple to be built. And it is in his purchase of the site for that Temple where we see the next significant sacrifice in the Old Testament.

[takeaway: endless sacrifices, day and night, presented by priests as mediators, food for God and we get to partake, Atonement yearly]

6) **[David's sacrifice at Mt. Moriah]** David's great sin of numbering the armies of Israel is recounted in 2 Sam 24/1 Chron. 21. For directly violating the law (and the warnings of Joab), David is faced with an impossible choice for what punishment will befall his people: 3 years famine, 3 months oppression from enemies, or 3 days of pestilence. Ultimately a death angel wreaking havoc with a plague is given power to kill thousands of Israelites.

1 Chron. 21:12,14 describe the what Israel ultimately faced like this:

three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, with the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the territory of Israel... So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel, and 70,000 men of Israel fell.

This is an unthinkable disaster, but it didn't just end automatically... The angel is about to destroy Jerusalem and has a sword in his hand stretched out over the city, but God relents and tells the angel to stay his hand. David sees the angel and intercedes for the people asking that the plague fall on him because it was his sin. Then God instructs the prophet Gad to tell David to build an altar on the threshing floor of Ornan/Araunah the Jebusite. David takes pains to purchase the threshing floor and the oxen with his own money, and builds an altar. The last verse of 2 Samuel's account (and of the whole book of 2 Samuel) is:

And David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel. (2 Sam. 24:25)

1 Chronicles 22:1 points out that afterward, David declares:

"Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

And 2 Chronicles 3:1 affirms that this happened:

"Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to David his father, at the place that David had appointed, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite."

Solomon goes on to offer sacrifices, and just as with the Tabernacle, God sends fire from heaven to light the fire for the brazen altar in the Temple. (1 Chron. 21:26 even says that David's altar at the threshing floor saw God answer with fire from heaven as well.)

And that's where this theme in the Bible

"stops, or at least stalls. Century follows century, and nothing changes. No new sacrifices are introduced; the old ones are endlessly repeated, day after day, week after week, year after year. And therein lies the problem. They [obviously weren't] getting rid of sin. In fact, they increasingly become a nauseating reminder of just how sinful the people remained. (Michael Lawrence, p. 157)

Repentance, not ritual is what God desired. But for Israel, repentance had vanished and all that remained was ritual. And so God banished the nation to exile.

Many times in the build up to the exile, the prophets emphasized that God wanted a sacrifice from the heart – that sacrifices themselves were not what he desired.

1 Samuel 15:22 *"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.*

Hosea 6:6 *For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.*

Micah 6:6–8 “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Psalms 51:16–17 For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Proverbs 21:3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

When God brings them back from Babylon, and the temple is rebuilt, sacrifices resume. But the people have not changed. Other things have changed, though. The Holy of Holies is empty. There is no mercy seat for the high priest to appear before and plead for forgiveness. There is just an empty room. Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, declares, “ ‘Oh that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and I will accept no offering from your hands’ ” (Mal. 1:10). Those are chilling words. If there is no sacrifice that God will accept, then God’s people are as exposed to God’s judgment as Egypt was on the night of the Passover, or as Isaac was as he lay bound on that altar. (ibid)

But the prophets also prophesied that a final sacrifice that would be provided.

Isaiah 53:10–11 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

[takeaway: averting God’s wrath over sin, tied to a specific place - Zion, God’s representative can make atonement, obedience and contrite heart more important than ritual of sacrifice]

7) **[Christ, our Passover Lamb]** The suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, of course, is Jesus Christ – who is the seventh sacrifice in this overview. Just like with Abraham, God provided a sacrifice Himself. Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), John emphasized this with his mention of Jesus’ not having broken bones on the cross (John 19:36).

It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. (Exodus 12:46, also see Num. 9:12)

Just like the Passover, Jesus’ blood sprinkles us clean (1 Peter 1:2, Heb. 12:24). And his sacrifice is also associated with a meal and unleavened bread (Lord’s Supper).

Jesus is “the lamb of God.”

Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29b)

A Lamb standing, as though it had been slain (Rev. 5:6b)

And just like Israel was ransomed on account of a lamb, so too are we redeemed by the “precious blood of Christ.”

Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (1 Peter 1:18–19)

At Calvary, Christ fulfilled everything the OT sacrifices meant, and accomplished what they were unable to do.

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. (Hebrews 10:4)

Through his blood, he made atonement for the sins of his people and reconciled them to God. And to demonstrate that God accepted this sacrifice, he raised Jesus from the dead. So that starting now and continuing on into eternity, whoever repents of their sins and places their faith in Christ’s sacrifice, is redeemed from slavery to sin and is free to live a life of tribute and praise to God.

II. PATTERNS IN THE STORYLINE

We won’t spend much time on tracing the patterns as we have been marking them as we go – the whole theme of sacrifice is a pattern throughout Scripture.

III. SYSTEMATIZING IT ALL

Why study the Biblical Theology storyline of Sacrifice? Because it helps us understand more of who Jesus is and what his death on the cross actually accomplished. This helps us understand and appreciate Jesus more.

Over the years, some have suggested that Christ died primarily as an example for us, to inspire us to greater love for God. Others have suggested that Christ’s death was merely a demonstration of God’s hatred for sin. Still others have said it was a demonstration of his compassion and identification with sinners.

These days, some are saying Jesus died simply to declare victory of [the fallen authorities,] sin, and death and to demonstrate his lordship. And we can point to verses in the New Testament which say all these things—that Jesus died as an example, to demonstrate God’s hatred for sin, to declare victory over sin and death. Well, all those comprise a part of why Jesus died. They comprise a part of what’s wrong with you and me. We do need someone to set a good example. We do need someone to identify with us in weakness and to defeat death. But is that all we need? (Michael Lawrence, p. 159-160)

But let us try to see a more well-rounded understanding of Christ's sacrifice based on this storyline and the patterns that we have observed.

[note the steps 1-8 below are drawn from Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church, by Michael Lawrence, pp. 160-163 – Lawrence was an assistant pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church which developed this lesson, and so it borrowed heavily from his work.]

1) The fundamental problem with the world and humanity is our sin and the guilt it incurs.

It's not death. It's not a broken relationship. It's not our need for love or an example of love. The fundamental problem is sin, guilt, and the wrath of God incurred.

I'm talking about the need for sacrifice here. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve had no need to kill an animal and offer it to God. They were in a right relationship with a good and holy God. But the moment sin entered in, Adam and Eve's lives were forfeit because of sin and guilt.

Romans 6:23, echoing God's words to Adam in **Genesis 2**, tells us that the penalty for sin is death. Sin came first; then death.

Here is the problem that sacrifice in the Bible is designed to solve. Our need is not just an inspiring example of love. It's not just a victory over the powers of darkness. It's not just a victory over death. Rather, there is an eternal and holy God is justly angry with us for our rebellion, and we need a way to escape the penalty of his justice, because we cannot ever hope to bear that penalty ourselves. According to Scripture, what we need is a sacrifice.

2) Christ came to die as a substitute.

An effective sacrifice is a *substitute*. We saw God provide a ram as a substitute in the place of Isaac. We saw the Passover lamb slain in the place of the first-born. And we see it in the book of Leviticus, as the person lays his or her hand on the animal.

3) Christ came to die as a penal substitute.

The victim receives the penalty I deserved. The sacrificial victim doesn't just die; it's judicially executed in my place.

Both the Old and New Testament are clear that on the cross, Christ died as a substitute, taking the punishment that his people deserved. So the prophet Isaiah foretold.

Isaiah 53:4-5 Speaking of the Messiah,

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment

that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed...the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Jesus said in John 10:11

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Jesus did not understand his own death as an example, or as a demonstration, or even as an open-ended general death with reference to nobody in particular. No Jesus laid down his life as an effective sacrifice, a penal substitute for his sheep.

Paul said in **Romans 3**,

“Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
(Romans 3:25–26)

4) Christ came to die as a penal substitute to propitiate the wrath of God.

Christ’s sacrifice propitiates God’s wrath. What do I mean by that? I mean simply that by enduring the penalty our sin deserves, an effective sacrifice actually satisfies the demands of justice, and so removes the reason for God’s wrath against the sinner. If you think back to the story of sacrifice, we saw this in Noah’s sacrifice and in David’s offering. We also see it in the repeated reference throughout Leviticus that the aroma of a burning sacrifice was “pleasing to the Lord.”

5) Christ came to die as a penal substitute to propitiate the wrath of God and make atonement for his people.

This turning aside of God’s wrath leads to the other effect of sacrifice; an effective sacrifice atones for sin. We’ve already seen that the high point of the Jewish year was the Day of Atonement. So what exactly is atonement? The Hebrew word for atone means to “cover.” The English word simply means to be “at one with,” so a sacrifice, you could say, covers our sin and makes us “at one” with God. Having assuaged God’s wrath, the sacrifice obtains forgiveness for the sin that caused God’s wrath in the first place, and it removes the guilt that sin had incurred.

6) Christ came to die as an effective penal substitute to propitiate the wrath of God and make atonement for his people.

While the Levitical sacrifices were repeated endlessly, the book of Hebrews draws our attention to the fact that Christ was sacrificed once. So in **Hebrews 7:27**, “He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.” And again in **9:12**, “He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” And again in **9:26**, “Now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

The whole sacrificial system had only been a picture, a teaching aid, designed, as Paul says in **Galatians**, to lead us to Christ, and to recognize him when he appeared. Now that he was here, the picture was no longer needed.

As the writer to the Hebrews says in **Hebrews 10**, “*it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins*” But, he goes on to say, “*we have been made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ.*” Jesus Christ’s death on the cross turned aside God’s wrath and satisfied it.

The good news of Christianity, is that on the cross, Jesus Christ accomplished salvation. He turned aside God’s wrath. He made atonement for sin. The only question is, did he do this for you? Jesus said that he gave his life as a ransom for many. Are you among the many? Jesus said that he lays down his life for his sheep. Who are his sheep? They are those who listen to his voice, who respond to his call. John put it this way in **John 3**: “*Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, but God’s wrath remains on him.*”

O friend, Jesus Christ has accomplished redemption for everyone who listens to his call to repent and believe. What are you listening to?

Which leads us to the final thing to consider today, and that’s the *end* of sacrifice in the Bible. In a story that is so saturated with the repeated shedding of sacrificial blood, it cannot escape attention that sacrifice comes to an end at the cross. There’s no further or other sacrifice to be given to pay for our sins before a holy God.

7) We’re saved by faith alone.

This is why the Bible talks about the necessity of personal faith in a crucified and risen Christ for salvation. It’s not that faith itself is saving. It’s that faith is the way you acknowledge Christ as your substitute. Like the Old Testament Israelite who laid his hands on the victim, so faith leans on Christ and trusts that when Christ died on the cross, he was dying in your place, for you. It’s not enough to be born in a Christian family, or to be baptized, or to go to church, or anything else. No, by faith you must believe that Christ was sacrificed for you.

8) We’re saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

It’s not just that he’s the best example of a substitute—he’s the only substitute, for no one else has ever lived a perfect life. It’s not just that his death approximates the judgment we deserve—it’s that on the cross, Christ endured the holocaust of God’s wrath against our sin, and exhausted it. He is the last sacrifice, because in reality, he is the first sacrifice and the only effective sacrifice that has ever or will ever be made.

I really want you to observe the exclusivity of this sacrifice. There will be no second chances after death, no alternative means of getting to heaven. There is only one sacrifice that

reconciles sinners to God, and so there is only one name under heaven by which we may be saved. O friend, you need a sacrifice, and his name is Jesus.

CONCLUSION—ONE MORE SACRIFICE?

There is, however, one more sacrifice to observe. It's not one that gains salvation or adds anything to salvation. It's one that follows salvation. When Jesus calls a person, he calls him to pick up his cross and to follow him. Paul uses similar language when he says in **Romans 12** that as Christians we are to offer ourselves as "living sacrifices." What does he mean? Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were made in the image of God, their lives were a tribute, an offering of praise back to God. Ultimately, the end or purpose of Christ's sacrifice is that we might offer our lives back to God as sacrifices, not in payment for sin, but living sacrifices of praise to his glorious grace.

Sacrifices of our Life

Overriding purpose – "to offer spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2:5)

- 1) **Personal devotion/holiness** – Rom. 12:1 "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"
- 2) **Confession of sin** – Ps. 51:17 "sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart"
- 3) **Personal worship** – Heb. 12:28 "let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe."
- 4) **Praise** – Heb. 13:15 "let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name."
- 5) **Prayer** – Ps. 141:2 "Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." (see also Rev. 5:8)
- 6) **Faith** – Phil. 2:17 "the sacrificial offering of your faith" (or laying down one's life for sake of gospel – also 2 Tim. 4:6, Rev. 6:9)
- 7) **Thanksgiving and Song** – Ps. 107:22 "And let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving, and tell of his deeds in songs of joy!"
- 8) **Love** [Covenant loyalty] – Hos. 6:6a "I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice."
- 9) **Knowing God** – Hos. 6:6b "the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."
- 10) **Giving to spread the Gospel** – Phil 4:18
- 11) **Good deeds, sharing possessions** Heb. 13:16 "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God." (see also Mic. 6:6-8)
- 12) **Communion** as the One Feast in the New Temple – Heb. 13:10 "We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat."

Acceptance - Reminder that all of these sacrifices are only made acceptable through Jesus Christ (2:5).

Christian, do you struggle with sacrifice? Do you find it hard to lay down your life in love for others, to love your enemy, to return kindness for insults, to let go of the riches of this world for the treasure of heaven? Consider that in all of this sacrifice, you are being conformed to the image of Christ as a living sacrifice.

Christian, Jesus Christ, whose death was planned by God from before the foundation of the world, will for all eternity bear in glory the marks of his sacrifice. And more than anything else, it will be those marks that are the object of our eternal wonder, and adoration, and praise, for they are the marks of our salvation. That is the image to which you are being conformed, that is the destiny to which you are heading, an eternally living sacrifice of praise to the one who alone is worthy of praise, Christ, our Passover, the Lamb who was slain, but now lives forevermore.

“saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12, ESV)