

## **9. Christ, the Sacrifice for the Sins of Humankind**

A sacrifice, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, primarily denotes "the act of offering"; then, objectively, "that which is offered." The act of offering as it relates to the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of humankind is two-fold: God gave his one and only son for humankind, and the son gave his life for humankind. Two divine beings having such mercy and love challenges human comprehension. The subject of Christ, the sacrifice for the sins of humankind, is central to understanding God's grace.

### ***God, Giver of His One and Only Son***

In John's gospel, the preaching of Christ began with this declaration in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Perhaps the most memorized passage in the Bible, John 3:16 reflects all of God's mercy, love, and sacrifice for those who believe in his one and only son. The requirement to believe includes all of man's confidence and trust, and not mere credence. The fullness of God's love and the fullness of man's faith go together, hand in hand.

In Eph 2:8-9, Paul combined these two aspects—God's gift and man's faith—to illustrate how they work together, complementing each other: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — 9 not by works, so that no one can boast." Again, in Rom 6:23, Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God was the giver of the gift and that gift was his one and only son. The sinful nature of man created the need for an atoning sacrifice. Rom 3:23 declares that all men are sinful, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". Unto man in this sinful condition came the grace of God, which freely justified man and redeemed him by the gift of Christ Jesus according to Rom 3:24: "And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Thus, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood," according to Rom 3:25. God is the presenter of Christ, the sacrifice.

### ***Christ, an Offering and Sacrifice to God***

Just as God gave his one and only son, Christ gave himself for a sacrifice to God. Eph 5:1-2 teaches, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." It is important to understand that Christ sacrifice was for our sins, but to God. He came at the end of the ages to do away with sin. In Heb 9:26, overcoming sins and sacrifice go together: "Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The superiority of the sacrifice of Christ stands above the previous sacrifices of the Old Testament and set those sacrifices and the law that required them aside. Christ's sacrifice is once for all, and it is through that sacrifice that we are made holy. Heb 10:8-10 reads:

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made).  
9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second.  
10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Heb 10:11-13 teaches that the one sacrifice of Christ was for all time; and that, by one sacrifice,

he made perfect forever those who are being made holy:

12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

In Heb 10:17, the Hebrew writer describes those whom Christ makes perfect and holy by his one sacrifice as those whose "sins and lawless acts, I will remember no more." He concludes in verse 18, "18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."

In addition to the Hebrew's passages, John confirmed the atoning nature of Christ's sacrifice in 1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." The sacrifice not only atones for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world. In 1 John 4:10, John relates the sacrifice of the Son to God's love as the providing source, and to the forgiveness of our sins as resulting from the sacrifice: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." Other major translations use the word propitiation in place of atoning in these passages. W. E. Vines explains accurately the meaning here:

2. hilasmos NT:2434, akin to hileos ("merciful, propitious"), signifies "an expiation, a means whereby sin is covered and remitted." It is used in the NT of Christ Himself as "the propitiation," in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His death, is the personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

## **Conclusion**

Heb 10:26-31 explains what will happen to us if we deliberately keep on sinning:

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The benefits of the sacrifice of Christ are available to all. However, all men must believe firmly and fully in him and obey his covenant. If you have obeyed and fallen away, do not keep on deliberately sinning. Follow the teaching of John and be restored to the only Lord and Master: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9-10

## **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. John 3:16: How much did God Love the world? What must we do to have eternal life?
2. Eph 2:8-9: What is God's part in salvation? What is man's part in salvation?
3. Rom 6:23: What are the wages of sin? What is the gift of God?
4. Rom 3:23: Who all have sinned?
5. Rom 3:24: Through whom did redemption come?

6. Rom 3:25: What is the sacrifice of atonement?
7. Eph 5:1-2: Who are we to imitate? What kind of life are we to live? For what did Christ give himself up?
8. Heb 9:26: How many times did Jesus appear? When did he appear? How did he do away with sin?
9. Heb 10:8-10: What law was set aside? What law was established? By what will are we made holy once for all?
10. Heb 10:11-13: Where is Christ, our high priest, sitting? Whom does Christ make holy? Whom does Christ make perfect?
11. Heb 10:17-18: Whose "sins and lawless acts" will God remember no more? When is there no longer any sacrifice for sin?
12. 1 John 2:2: Who is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world?
13. 1 John 4:10: What is love?
14. Heb 10:26-31: What may we expect if we keep on sinning? What will happen to those who trample underfoot the Son of God? What is a dreadful thing?
15. 1 John 1:9-10: What will happen if we confess our sins?