

Title: The Sacrifice and Sacrificer
Date: 4/6/25
Subject: Jesus is the sacrifice and sacrificer.
Scripture: Hebrews 9:6-14; 10:1-7

Few things speak so loudly and clearly as a red F on a school assignment. Is it just me or did it seem like some teachers relished making the F extra big on certain students' papers? Like they wanted it to cover the entire page. "In your face. You failed to measure up!"

If God were to hand out letter grades, he'd put a big red F on the Old Testament sacrificial system for being unable to deliver full and complete salvation.

Read Hebrews 9:6-14.

I. The Old Testament sacrificial system was ineffective.

v. 9. The gifts and sacrifices weren't able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. The person remained under a cloud of guilt. He'd be able to participate in Jewish life, but he knew his situation remained the same. The rules, regulations and ceremonies might feel good at the moment, but there was nothing lasting in them. They were merely external regulations that didn't change inward reality.

The OT Day of Atonement was the most solemn and important holy day. It wasn't festive like the others. It was marked by reflection, mourning, repentance, full of ritual and sacrifices. The annual commemoration had 14 steps that were precisely followed.

Much of the day was centered on the high priest. Most days he could be mistaken for a king. Skilled craftsmen created exquisite garments of blue, turquoise and scarlet which included intricate embroidery. Gold and precious jewels added to the splendor, dignity and glory of the office. Bells were attached to the hem of his robe so people knew he was coming with some feeling it was a signal for them to stop gossiping. The high priest represented God to people.

It was a different story on the Day of Atonement when he entered the Most Holy Place into the presence of God to represent people to God. Human position, honor and achievements meant nothing. He wore plain white garments which made him look like a humble servant, a simple slave. That's what he was, a servant of the king.

It was a busy day for the high priest. He sacrificed a bull, a ram and a goat. He sprinkled their blood in the Holy Place and Most Holy Place which he entered twice. He put his hands on the head of a live goat and pronounced the sins, wickedness and rebellion of the people, symbolically transferring them to the scapegoat. It was driven into the wilderness to signify the removal of sins. They could be forgotten.

What if the goat somehow found his way back? How would people react? Would they think their sins weren't forgiven? The person in charge of the scapegoat likely wondered and exercised extra effort to take the

goat far away. Jewish tradition fed off the insecurity. It holds that the man took the goat to a high cliff and pushed it backwards to fall to its death. There'd be no way for it to reappear.

The day ended with the priests washing to signify everything that needed to be done was done. But it wasn't done. Next year was always looming.

Skip ahead to chapter 10.

Read 10:1 - 4.

The subject of guilt is brought up...again...with pretty strong language. V.1: "it can never by the same sacrifices." Sometimes "never" doesn't really mean "never." A teenage girl who's mad at her friend and tells her, "I'll never speak to you again." Five minutes later, she's texting and messaging as if nothing happened.

In God's economy, "never" means NEVER. The same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year could **never** make people perfect or whole. V. 11 echoes: the same sacrifices done day after day could never take away sins. It's not going to happen.

Another strong word is used in v. 4: "it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." People have felt that there are things that have been impossible. "It's impossible for people to fly. It's impossible for men to run the mile in under 4 minutes." Those ideas have been proven wrong.

For God, "impossible" means IM...POSS...I...BLE. Sins couldn't be permanently removed by the OT sacrificial system. Consciences couldn't be freed from guilt. Animals didn't provide a satisfactory substitute for people. If those sacrifices were sufficient, the worshipper would no longer would have felt guilty for their sins as they would have been cleansed once for all. The truth is those sacrifices only served as a reminder of people's need.

A previous verse tells us the former regulation was weak and useless and that the law made nothing perfect (7:18, 19). The OT ceremonies, rituals, sacrifices, regulations couldn't result in the declaration of being not guilty and place a person into a right relationship with God. The repetition of sacrifices pointed to the fact that the ultimate and perfect sacrifice was yet to come.

One commentator: "The law is holy and good (7:12), but it is not able to make right those who sin by breaking it, nor can it give the power necessary to fulfill its demands (v. 19a). The law was only preparatory (see Galatians 3:23-25) and brought nothing to fulfillment (see Matthew 5:17)" (NIV study Bible notes on 7:18&19).

The Holy Spirit used the Old Testament sacrificial system as an illustration to show that people couldn't gain full and unlimited access into God's presence. A greater sacrifice was needed to fulfill God's requirements. "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (9:22).

II. Means of salvation

The book of Hebrews constantly presents a contrast and comparison between Jesus and the OT sacrificial system. The word *sacrifice* is used 300 times in the Old Testament, about 1/3 in the first five books. That would be expected as they contain the institution of the Mosaic Law with the instructions about sacrifices and offerings. The New Testament uses *sacrifice* a little over 50 times with about half in the book of Hebrews.

V. 11 brings in Christ as the fulfillment of God's plan. He's presented as the high priest. Last week we saw him in the priestly role of intercessor. Today it's about him as the priest who is the sacrificer. However, Jesus Christ is unique in that he's both the sacrificer and the sacrifice.

Even as the high priest offered gifts and sacrifices, so it was necessary for Jesus to have something to offer (8:3). The Old Testament high priest sacrificer brought the sacrifice of the blood of an animal to the earthly Most Holy Place and sprinkled it on whatever needed to be cleansed (9:19-21). Jesus, the sacrificer, brought his own blood, the sacrifice, into the heavenly Most Holy Place once for all. The difference between all previous sacrifices and any other sacrifices people try to offer with Christ's sacrifice is Christ's sacrifice was unblemished. He wasn't marred by sin. People always have been. He had no defect. He was the perfect sacrifice. He is the perfect sacrifice. And the perfect sacrificer.

Jesus sacrifice was substitutionary. Earlier in the book we're told Jesus became human so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone (2:9). He experienced death fully and completely. He is our representative in that he is the one who died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14). He died for you and for me.

We have Jesus' own words as it relates to sacrifice:

READ 10:5-7.

Jesus knew the Old Testament sacrifices weren't sufficient. He knew they weren't pleasing to God. He knew there needed to be a different sacrifice, one involving a person. He knew what would be required of him. He came to do God's will, to complete it. He willingly gave himself as the sacrifice and offering for people's sins. He endured the cross, complete with all the shame attached to it, the shame he suffered at the hands of people, the shame of sin (12:2).

Jesus declared he is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. This is such an important point that he proclaims it another four times (John 10:11-21). "I lay down my life for the sheep...The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again."

How did people respond to Jesus? Many said, "He's demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" Others believed the teachings couldn't come from a man possessed by a demon as a demon couldn't open the eyes of a blind man. They referred to Jesus' miracle of giving sight to a man who'd been born blind. It isn't noted if these people completely gave their trust to Jesus. Hopefully they weren't simply saying he was a really good man, but that they were ready to acknowledge him as the Savior and placed their trust in him.

V. 12 introduces us to the key phrase *once for all*. Hebrews makes it abundantly clear that Jesus offered *one sacrifice* when he offered himself *once for all* (7:27, 9:12, 26, 28, 10:10, 12, 14). His death on the cross is the final and permanent solution. He is the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (5:9). He rescues, delivers, brings to safety all who follow his teachings, commands and authority because they've responded to him in faith (Romans 1:5, 8:4). This is in contrast with the priests who needed to repeatedly offer daily and annual sacrifices, again and again, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people (5:1, 3; 9:25).

The effects of Jesus' sacrifice are universal. It's sufficient for all. We're told Christ died for all, "the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). However, there's a limitation because it's only effective for those who enter into a relationship with him.

III. Results

Redemption. V. 12. Jesus obtained and secured eternal redemption through his death on the cross. It wasn't for himself. Jesus didn't need redeeming. He didn't need to be purchased out of the devil's slave market of sin. Sinful people do. Redemption is the act of ransoming and the ransom that was paid.

Christ cleanses consciences from acts that lead to death. Vv. 13, 14. The blood of bulls and goats could only make people ceremonially clean and sanctify them. Christ provides purification (1:3). He washes away sins from the sinner. As it teaches later in the chapter, Christ does away with sin, takes away the sins of many people (9:26, 28). He nullifies sin as being in control. He cancels it. He removes sin.

Ray Stedman: "Conscience is that internal voice that sits in judgment over will. There is a very common myth abroad that says that conscience is the means by which we tell what is right and what is wrong. But conscience is never that. It is *training* that tells us what is right or wrong. But when we know what is right or wrong, it is our conscience that insists that we do what we think is right and avoid what we think is wrong" (raystedman.org/new-testament/hebrews/a-clear-conscience).

Sometimes our consciences allow us to do what's wrong, to sin. Because of that we acquire the legal status of guilt. Christ provides the solution. He takes away the guilt or expiates it.

We no longer live under sentence of being guilty (10:22). This is the idea of justification. It's a legal act of the sovereign Judge in the court of heaven who declares the guilty sinner "not guilty." He no longer views us in a position where we would need to be held accountable for our sins because we've placed our trust in Christ's sacrificial death for us. We're released from the punishment. We've been acquitted, declared innocent.

We can think in terms of pardon. Chief Justice John Marshall in an 1833 landmark decision described a pardon as "an act of grace...which exempts the individual on whom it is bestowed from the punishment the law inflicts for a crime he has committed." The Supreme Court in 1866 further described pardon: "a pardon releases the punishment and blots out of existence the guilt, so that in the eye of the law the offender is as innocent as if he had never committed the offense...A pardon removes the penalties and disabilities and restores him to all his civil rights; it makes him, as it were, a new man, and gives him a new credit and capacity."

God pardons the person who trusts in Christ. In an act of grace, the punishment is removed, the person is declared not guilty and they've become a new person.

Reconciliation. It's two formerly estranged people being made right. We've received the righteousness of Jesus Christ so we can draw near to God (10:22). How near? So near that we're able to enter the Most Holy Place (10:19). We're reconnected with God. We're at one with him.

More info on sanctification. It describes what God does for those who trust in him. It means to be set apart - set apart from sin and set apart to God. 10:14 address the two aspects of sanctification. "he is made

perfect forever.” This is the positional part. A person is placed into right standing with God. They are viewed as holy (2:11; 10:10). The second part of the verse: “those who are being made holy.” There’s to be continuous action in our spiritual growth and maturity. Progressive or experiential sanctification.

A broader term that encompasses Christ’s work of salvation is atonement. The root meaning is to cover. The OT sacrifices and Day of Atonement provided a temporary covering for people’s sins as they couldn’t completely pay for the sins of people. Those sacrifices pointed to Jesus who would be able to cover sin. He had no sin became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). He absorbed God’s wrath so that he could turn God’s wrath away from us.

This action can be referred to as propitiation or the appeasing God’s wrath. We often think of appeasing in negative terms as in how people tried to prevent war with Hitler by appeasing him by allowing him to take over neighboring small countries. It didn’t work as each land grab never was the last as he had promised. He wasn’t satisfied.

Jesus Christ appeased God’s wrath and fully satisfied the demands for punishment of sin. God didn’t require anything more. A former President of Colorado Christian University phrased this wonder in the form of a question: “How could one man pay the penalty of eternal condemnation for so many sins by so many people in just a few hours on the cross?” He could do it for two reasons. Jesus was infinitely valuable and could take the place of an infinite number of people. And because He was infinitely righteous, He could pay the penalty for an infinite number of sins” (Joe Wall, *Going For The Gold*, p. 29).

Because of what Jesus has done, there’s no longer any sacrifice or sacrificing needed for sin (10:18). Believers can have assurance and confidence in their salvation because it’s based on Christ’s work, not on repeated rituals or human efforts. We can rejoice because Jesus Christ, by his death has destroyed the devil who holds the power of death and frees those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (2:14).

Some of the last words in Hebrews draw attention to Christ’s completed work (13:12, 13). They’re followed by a call for us to make sacrifices: “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess his name” (13:15).

We can be like John the Baptist who drew attention to Jesus, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). He knew Jesus would be the sacrifice for people’s sins and his sins. We praise Jesus for taking away our sins.