

Seeking God'S Will (Part 4): Sacrifice

God's Sacrificial Nature

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Given 08-Oct-11; Sermon #1070

We frequently read or hear stories about sacrifice, especially since America has been going through a prolonged war for ten years now in Afghanistan and Iraq. These stories slowly filter back into the States about the rough things that men and women do while fighting for us over across the seas.

Most of these stories are military in nature. For instance we have descriptions of the winners of the Medal of Honor, and the things that they have done. And these medals are often handed out posthumously to their next of kin because the sacrifices they made took their lives. It says in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends." That is what these men and women have done for their comrades in arms.

They do things like throw themselves on live grenades, or these days, IED's or various other kinds of explosive devices; or they take fatal wounds while carrying their buddies to safety, giving their own lives in exchange. Or they take responsibility to cover the retreat of their brigade or company so they can get away to safety; or they volunteer for what are obviously suicide missions of some sort to achieve a critical objective, or to make sure that others will live.

There is also the sacrifice in which one person voluntarily takes the punishment that was intended for another. A possibly spurious example of this is in Howard Fast's book, and later in the movie based on this book *Spartacus*. If you might remember the final battle between the rebellious slaves and the Roman Legions results in the almost total defeat of the rebel army. The Romans captured a great number of survivors, including Spartacus and his best friend, Antoninus. The Roman commander, Crassus, promises the captives assembled in front of him that he will not punish them if they would identify Spartacus, or his body. Well, just before Spartacus speaks to identify himself, his friend Antoninus jumps up and shouts, "I'm Spartacus!" And then, each of the captured slaves begins jumping up and also declaring that they are Spartacus. And so in response, Crassus condemns them all—6000 men to be crucified along the Apian Way from the battlefield to the gates of Rome.

So the slaves are marched along the road, where one by one they are crucified, and the real Spartacus too, last of all, at the gates of Rome. In their *esprit de corps* they were all willing to give their lives to keep their leader from being singled out for cruel exhibition

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and execution. So they, in themselves, shared in the punishment that was intended for him alone.

There are other kinds of sacrifices that are not related to war. Some give their last morsels of food so others can live. We might hear of people who volunteer to donate a kidney to someone in need, or to give bone marrow, a mighty painful experience. Some adult children essentially give their lives to care for an elderly parent with a debilitating disease like Alzheimer's. Some women sacrifice promising careers in order to have children and raise a family. Other people give up lucrative promotions, or prospects that would have monetary advantage in order to keep their family intact. I have heard of young people giving up very prestigious scholarships in order to attend a school closer to home, and therefore might be giving up promising careers as well.

All of these are sacrifices. And there are many other kinds, big and small. Small ones go like giving up your seat to a woman or an elderly person while riding the bus. It is a small sacrifice, but it is still a sacrifice. You gave up your seat. Or maybe you allow someone ahead of you in your line. It does not happen often. But, it is still a sacrifice when we do it. We are all rushing around, and you see somebody in need, and they are trying to get out quickly, then that is a sacrifice that we can make.

People give of their time to some charity. It does not have to be a charity; some people could be just giving time to someone else in their need. Other people give blood, sometimes on a regular basis—that is a sacrifice. That is your life you are giving. You are giving some of your life so others might have a chance at life too. There is the sacrifice in taking a co-worker's shift when they have a need, and need to take the time off. Or, there is also the sacrifice for taking a seat on the bench in order for someone else to get some playing time.

Sacrifices come in all shapes and sizes. They can be important on the one hand, or rather trivial on the other. They can be total sacrifices like we have seen above, or they can be partial sacrifices where it hardly affects us personally. They can be monumental, in which great things were done or accomplished, or they can be rather foolish. Sometimes sacrifices can work against us where we think we have done something in wisdom, but it ends up being folly.

But, they are all linked by the simple act of *freely giving up something for the benefit of another*. That is the basic definition of sacrifice.

However noble our sacrifices may be, the sacrifice of the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, are infinitely greater and more efficacious than ours are. Really there is just no

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comparison whatsoever. We will see this today as we go through this sermon.

Obviously, this is a characteristic of God and Jesus Christ. So, I have been able to add this to this series of sermons I have been giving of late on seeking God's will. As you know, this series of sermons is based on the verse found in Ephesians 5:17, which says, "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." And so, I have used this as a springboard to help us to understand what the will of the Lord is by using this theme of understanding the character of God. This in turn helps us to understand what the will of the Lord is.

These sermons explore various traits of God in the hope that we can distill from them what His will is in just about any situation we find ourselves in. And, I place particular emphasis, in terms of these situations, on resolving personal conflicts with each other—with the way that we interact with each other. Because, if we act in a godly manner with one another, then a lot of the problems, bumps, scrapes, and bruises that we have when we collide with one another for one reason or another will be diminished. They will not be totally overcome, because some of those things are necessary. But if we act properly and godly in any of these situations they are going to work out far better than if we did not do them.

So, what we know of His character can help us to speak and/or act in a godly manner. And that is especially necessary when we are acting and reacting among one another.

This is the Day of Atonement, though, so before we go any further on this idea of sacrifice, I need to touch base with God's instruction about this particular holy day. So if you will, turn with me back to Leviticus 23. What I would like for you to do as we go through this is listen to the emphasis. I probably will not make a big deal of emphasizing certain words, but just notice the things that are repeated down through the passage. See what is on God's mind as He inspired this instruction.

Leviticus 23:26-32 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God. For any person who is not afflicted in soul on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict

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your souls; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath."

I do not know if you do the same things that I do, but I mark my Bible. I use various colors to emphasize certain things. One of my colors is yellow, which I use for prayer and fasting. I find here three times the phrase "afflict your soul," which is one way to say "to fast." So, I can see immediately that it is something that God emphasizes in this passage—that we are to afflict our souls. It is easy for me to see the emphasis because it is so clearly marked in this.

Now, it is clear to me that by seeing that, this is one of the big emphases in this section. We are afflicting our souls right now. We know all about that. We have been doing it for years. We know how it feels to afflict our souls. We know how it feels for our stomachs to be empty, for our heads to get a bit woozy, and maybe we get a bit lightheaded, or perhaps some will get a headache coming off caffeine. Maybe we have low blood sugar and it affects us that way. We know how it feels to afflict our souls. And, God is teaching us something by that exercise.

Now, I also use orange in my Bible marking. Orange is typically my more general highlight color. I have also highlighted in this section, "You shall do no work." Every time "no work" is mentioned, I can see at a glance that this is another thing that God emphasizes here in this passage.

So the first thing is afflicting our souls, while the second thing is doing no work. And if you will remember five years ago I gave a sermon on the Day of Atonement, this is the day of no work. We went through asking the question, "Why is this so critical that we do no work on this day?"

For one thing we do not have any energy to work on this day. But that is not God's reason, that is ours. God's reason is far more spiritual. My conclusion was that doing no work illustrates to us that we have nothing to do with the atonement between us and God. It is God's work. He does it for us in terms of all the sacrifice and everything that was done on our behalf. There is nothing we could do. We did the sinning. We cannot pay for it. And so it took the work of God and His sacrifices to make sure that we are redeemed; that our sins are paid for by the blood of Christ.

And so these two things seem to be emphasized here. The fact that we afflict our souls and are humbled before God, and we come to the realization that we owe Him everything, that He provides all that we use, and if He was not around we would soon

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die, and dry up, and blow away.

So, He provides everything that is good for us. When we afflict our souls, we realize that, because we so quickly start to wear down, and break down when we are not putting in those things that He has given us. And this, of course, applies in spades spiritually. It is not just physical things, but the spiritual things that He gives us that gives us life.

And then, there is this other thing of not doing any work. We are to solemnize this day by commemorating the fact that God does all the work for us by (us) not doing any work, taking the time to read, study, meditate, and pray about all that God had done for us in making atonement for us.

But, there is yet another emphasis here that I have not mentioned yet, and that is found in the word "Atonement" itself. It is mentioned three times as well. It is all in the first portion of the passage, once in verse 27 and twice in verse 28. (By the way, I use blue for the Sabbath, and holy days. So, that is highlighted in blue.) We see here that atonement is a special name for this day. It is not just a holy day, but it is the Day of Atonement. This comes from the Hebrew word, "kappar," which means to cover over, to atone, to propitiate, or to pacify. It is very easy to see the link between this "kappar" and the Hebrew name they use for this day, "Yom Kippur." It is a cognate. It means the same thing. It is the Day of Atonement. It is the day of covering.

Most uses of the verb, "kappar" in the Old Testament, are theological. There is one instance, though, in the building of the ark, where it commands that they cover the ark with pitch. Maybe you can get an idea from that illustration of what it means. Obviously, they covered that entire ark with pitch so no water could get in. It saved their lives, did it not? Well the same thing happens when you cover sin—it hides it completely and makes it impervious. That is the mental image from "kappar." But, like I said, most of the Old Testament usages are in the theological sense of covering over or atoning for sin. Most of the time it means to cover over a sin, or to atone for a sin, by use of the life blood of a sacrifice.

So, a bull, goat, ram, or some other animal allowable for a sacrifice is killed, its blood drained out, and is offered to cover the sin.

But we know in reading the New Testament:

Hebrews 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

It is a very important principle in terms of the Old Covenant versus the New Covenant. ***It is not possible*** that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin. This means that there needed to be a greater sacrifice than just the sacrifice of a bull or goat in order to take away the sin. All that happened when they offered an offering back in the times of the Old Covenant was that it was kind of smoothed over, covered over; it was kind of hidden, put to the side. But, it was not removed. It was not totally forgiven. It was not forgotten like the sins are under the New Covenant. And the reason why, is that the blood of bulls and goats did not have what it took to take away that sin; to cleanse the guilt.

There is a very simple reason why this is so. It is because the life of a bull or goat is not as costly as the life of a man. You cannot pay for something with something of lesser value. So, even though you might have many bulls and goats, and slaughter them all, it is still not the price of a man with his sin.

So, it does not work. You go out with your clunker of an automobile, and go to a Porsche dealer, and say, "Okay, we're going to trade my clunker with all this rust for your latest and greatest Porsche." Do you think that they will go for that? I do not think so. You could take 20 of those clunkers up there, and they still will not give you a Porsche.

God is the same way. He is in the same place in this illustration as the Porsche dealer. You are not going to be able to go up to Him and ask for forgiveness of your sin by wanting to pay for them with something cheap. Even though there is a life there (bulls and goats) and it means something, it is still less than the cost of the sin. This is because what you have done in sinning is given up your life! You have come under the penalty of death. And so, in order to give that life back to you, there must be a sacrifice that is worth as least as much, or more, than you.

A lesser thing cannot redeem a greater thing. It is a fact of life.

Paul was obviously right that the blood of bulls and goats could not possibly remove sin. It just does not work. So, a suitable, costly-enough-sacrifice had to be brought forward and made so that the sins of mankind could not only be covered like they were in the Old Covenant, but be completely paid for and removed. This sacrifice had to be brought forward, and made for us.

Now a man, even if he gives his own life in payment for his sins in death, pays only for himself and there is no hope for anything beyond that. It is death. The person who

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makes such a payment has made his transaction: his life for his sins—no hope of a future. That is it. So, there must be a greater offering than just what a man's value is.

The only worthy sacrifice, of course, was the life of the Creator God, who became flesh and dwelt among us—Jesus Christ. He only has the value enough to pay for my sins, your sins, and everybody else's sins, and still have value beyond all that.

So, He could die, and because of His merit—who He is—He could be raised again to life, and become the life for us.

Turn to Leviticus 16 where we can see something of this in the ritual of the atonement—mostly I am thinking of the great sacrifice that was made, not necessarily the worth of it. But, I want you to see this atonement ritual, maybe in a different way than you have in the past. We will hop, skip, and jump through here. I do not want to read the whole thing, because it is rather long. I do not have the time for that.

Leviticus 16:5-6 "And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering. Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house."

So, he did it for the high priest, and the house of Levi, but mostly for the priest.

Leviticus 16:7 "He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting."

So now, we are on to the two goats.

Leviticus 16:8 "Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat."

So, he is like throwing dice, or calling heads or tails in a coin toss. And, the scapegoat should be properly rendered Azazel goat.

Leviticus 16:9-10 And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement

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upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.”

Leviticus 16:15-19 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel. And he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.”

So now we see the blood of this goat being used in tandem with the sin offering of the blood of the bull, which covers Aaron and his house, being put on all these things to cleanse them, because of the uncleanness of the people. And this blood is used, not just for these things, but also the cleansing of all the people too. He made it pretty clear, here, all the ways that it says, “because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, because of their transgressions, and for all their sins.” And so, he covers all the bases there. This blood of the goat covers everything. It is *the sin offering* that is made on this day covering all the sins of all the people—any and all of the sins of all the people, whatever they may have, from their uncleanness, their transgressions, and their sins. So, this is a very effective all-encompassing sacrifice for sin.

Leviticus 16:27 "The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal.”

The reason I read this passage is because I want you to see the link between this particular sin offering and the fact that it was carried outside of the camp of Israel, which is one of the big details of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice—that He was crucified outside the city

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of Jerusalem.

What we see here, then, is an identification between this sin offering and Jesus Christ. It is very clear, here.

Leviticus 16:29-31 "This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you. For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever."

I also needed to emphasize the fact that the priest is the one who did all this. He is the one who made atonement. Now, who in the type is the priest? Jesus Christ is the priest. He is our High Priest. He is the one who makes atonement for us.

So we see in all this symbolism a lot of what goes on in terms of our redemption—of the paying the price of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. All the little types fit.

Let us go over what we have seen here.

The first goat, which is the Lord's goat—it represents Christ—is killed as a sin offering. And, its blood, representing the blood of Christ, covers man's sins. It says in different ways that it cleanses, and it sanctifies those who come under it.

The second goat, the Azazel goat—representing Satan, which we did not go over—(it is found in verses 20-22), bears Israel's and mankind's sins upon its head, showing that the sins of mankind return upon the head of the one who ultimately bears responsibility for them. He cannot be forgiven. But the sins of mankind will be attributed properly to the one who influenced them, the one who is the source of them—the instigator. And so, in the ritual, it is shown very clearly where sin began, and who it is around us urging all mankind to follow his lead.

What we find here, then, is that this is a type of atonement as well. I suppose you never thought of it that way. The putting of the sins upon Satan's head is a kind of atonement, more than just the blood of the sin offering making atonement, but the putting of the sins upon the head of the instigator Azazel goat is also an atonement. It is a covering over because it puts the sins of mankind and the deception that he has engendered all this

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time upon the rightful party.

It is an act of justice. It is an act showing where the true responsibility lies. What it does is that it sets matters right in the great judicial courtroom of God, and it apportions the guilt to the proper entities, and paves the way for reconciliation. So, the sacrifice of atonement and all of these activities do what atonement is supposed to do—bring the two parties (mankind and God) together, to make them one—the at-one-ment. It brings reconciliation.

Once everything is separated out properly, the guilt is placed on the proper parties, the sin is paid for by the blood of Christ, then there can be a coming together—a unity, an at-one-ment. And mankind—individually, and as a whole—ultimately will be one with God.

So this whole ritual in Leviticus 16 shows all these disparate pieces coming together under the high priest and his sacrifice, and atoning work. It is really neat.

Now, I did mention that the High Priest—Jesus Christ—which we saw in verses 10, 21, and 30 performs this atonement. He does all the atoning work. He is the sin offering. The high priest is the one who places the guilt on the head of the Azazel goat. And the high priest is also the one who takes the blood of the sin offering and places it all in the appropriate places so that everything is cleansed and sanctified. But, it is the high priest who does all this atoning work.

Notice John 12:27. I want to show the connection between the atoning work in giving His own life, and the condemning of Satan. I want you to see how these two go together in the New Testament.

John 12:27-28 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose [reason] I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." [The proper thing to say.] Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

So we know what He was thinking about, His upcoming crucifixion, and that it was going to be a difficult thing. But, what He says here is that He was doing it to glorify God.

John 12:29-31 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is

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the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.”

That is what I wanted to show you. With the sacrifice of Jesus Christ it accomplished the judgment of the world, and also it cast out Satan as the ruler of this world. He still has the job, and is still holding on to it, but all of the work has been done, and when Christ returns, He will take over without a problem, because Jesus has shown Himself to be superior to Satan, and will easily cast him out completely.

So, we see here that Jesus puts these ideas together.

Turn to John 16 because Jesus returns to this idea during the last Passover with His disciples.

John 16:8 "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

John 16:11 . . . of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

So, with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and Him ascending to heaven, and giving His Holy Spirit to His people it would convict the world that the ruler of this world is judged.

Turn to I John 3 as I continue to show that the New Testament ties these two bits of atonement together fairly frequently—more often than I thought it did.

I John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

So, it is not only in the redemption of us by the blood of Jesus Christ, but His sacrifice also destroys the works of the devil at the same time.

Turn to Revelation 20, which is what will ultimately happen.

Revelation 20:1-3 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him

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for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Revelation 20:7-8a Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth. . .

Revelation 20:10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

So we see the full story of this taking place, and we see that the atonement back in Leviticus 16 covered this entire scenario, not just the death of Jesus Christ for our sins, but also ultimately putting the blame on Satan where it belongs, and casting him out into the wilderness, making him unable to sway mankind for a while, and then put away permanently.

Please turn to I John 4 and let us get back to the idea of sacrifice. I would like to emphasize how much of a sacrifice this was.

I John 4:12-14 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen [this is really the one I wanted] and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

John puts this very simply, here. The Father sent the Son to be the Savior, to be the sacrifice for all mankind. But, this simple way of putting it, that the Father sent the Son into the world to be our Savior, covers a great deal more than is said on the surface. We often dwell on the sacrifice that the Son made. But, what about the sacrifice of the Father? I know that you might have thought about it, but it is time to think about it again.

His sacrifice of sending the Son into the world as Savior, I feel, was just as difficult and poignant as the Son's. Sure the Son had to go through it, but the Father had to go

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through it as His Father. There is a lot to be said for having the gumption to actually take something, to be hurt, and to be killed. But what about the Father who is standing to one side, and not able to do anything about it, but having to watch it take place? This is not an easy thing to do. Any parent would tell you that it would be sheer agony to watch their child go through something as horrific as some simple death, much less a crucifixion. I know that there are people who have experienced the death of their children, and they know what I am talking about.

But, magnify this millions of times to the feelings of God the Father and the sacrifice that He made in sending His Son into the world to be our Savior, and then watching it happen. His only peer, His only companion, was sundered from Himself through death. Those three days and three nights in the tomb must have been the worst days of His life—absolute agony for Him, as far as God can feel agony of that sort. I mean, His emotions must be much greater than ours, and to know that His companion for all those millions of years into eternity past was not there. He had never experienced that before. They had *always* been together.

Now, it was lessened, of course, throughout the human life of Jesus Christ, because He was human. It was not that close bond that two Spirits beings can have, being with each other for all that time. But even so, in those three days and three nights in the tomb, there was nothing. And He had to endure that.

And do not be fooled into thinking that in sending the Son into the world to be our sacrifice that there was no risk. There was a great deal of risk. Think of it this way: If there had been no risk, then the sacrifice is meaningless, and meant nothing.

Now, I am sure that they had made sure that there was absolutely as little risk as possible, and their character made it almost certain that Jesus Christ would not sin, but there was still risk. There had to be, or it would not mean anything. Jesus could have sinned, if He had allowed Himself to. Thank God that He did not! But, there was always that possibility that He could get tripped up. And that is why Satan tried! He was at Him all the time trying to tempt Him to sin. But Jesus was faithful to His Father. He did all things to please Him. And so, He did not sin. But, that was a bit of a risk.

As God, before He became a man, He knew the weakness of the human body as no one does. He had made the human body! He knew that it was fragile, that our minds are weak, that our flesh cries out for us to do certain things that would not be good. But, He had never been human before. He never suffered the weakness of humanity. So, until He lived it, and endured all those temptations as He had as a human being, it was only intellectual knowledge to Him. It is in the experiential knowledge that He gained through

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being a human being where the “rubber met the road.” And He could not be perfectly sure that He would overcome it. They knew that they had a good chance, because of the character of God, but there was still a possibility. That was the risk.

Would the mind of God in the body of a man avoid sinning for 33 years of constant temptation? That was the question. That was the risk that both the Father and the Son took, and thus the sacrifice that they willingly made—both of them—to be separated from one another, and to lose the life of the Creator God. He would be raised again, of course, but there was a lot that went into that.

Turn to I Peter 1. I have two more points on the idea of the Father’s sacrifice, and the Son’s as well.

I Peter 1:17-20 And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear; knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.

There are two points here that I want to highlight. They are both in terms of the sacrifice that they made.

The first one is, how valuable—how precious, how costly—the blood of Christ is, which was shed for us. There is nothing in this world worth more, because He is the Creator of this world, and all that is in it. But, most of all, (I do not want to get absorbed by the material value of it) think of the emotional value of it. Most of all, the blood of Jesus Christ was precious to the Father whose beloved Son had to forfeit His life for our redemption, because the blood of Christ encapsulates all that Christ is—His life.

Here the Father had to volunteer to give up the life of His Son for these miserable creatures down below who do not have the strength to resist temptation. What a huge price to pay for such creatures! We consider our children precious to us, and they have been a part of our lives for only a few years. But the Father willingly gave the life of His Son for us though the two of them had been loving companions for all past eternity. The relationship they had was so close and so long that one was like the other. But the Father willingly sacrificed His only companion for us, the most precious thing that He had in all the universe.

The second thing about this sacrifice is that the Father and the Son had to live in anticipation of this ultimate sacrifice from before the foundation of the world. So, not only was it so poignant in terms of their relationship, but they had to endure this potential loss for years and years and years. How long before the foundation of the world had they made up their minds to do this? We do not know. All we know is this vague reference to from before the foundation of the world.

In another place it says that He was slain from before the foundation of the world. He was as good as dead from the time that they decided to make this sacrifice. And, they felt it, I am sure. All their work was concentrated on it, because that was the key. It was what had to be done to open up everything else in their plan. And so you know that they had to have been thinking of this for millennia. And here was the keystone, as it were. Everything pivoted on that. But the time that they had to live with this . . .

We have something that is going to happen in a couple of days or weeks down the road, some decision we need to make, and we just agonize over it, and we cannot think, and we cannot sleep, and we pace up and down, and we have all this emotion going through our bodies, because it is coming to crunch time. . . but that is just a short while. Yet, the Father and His Son Jesus Christ had to anticipate this and work on this, and think it over, and do all the things they had to do, for thousands of years. Do you think that was not a sacrifice? That they had ordained from before the foundation of the world that this was to happen? So, they knew that the pain of the crucifixion and the pain of separation was coming for millennia before it happened.

How would we have handled that anticipation?

Now, to get an idea of the Father's sacrifice, you may want to go through Genesis 22, and think about the sacrifice of Isaac from Abraham's point of view, and you will get some more insights into how the Father must have felt, and the things that He went through for that to come to pass. But, even in the sacrifice of Isaac, a substitute was found, while in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ there was no substitute. The Father went through with it. This is far, far more poignant.

Turn to Titus 2 to see just why They did this—why they went through this sacrifice.

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and

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purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

We see that, as I have been emphasizing throughout this sermon, they made this sacrifice to pay for our sins, “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed,” but there was an even bigger thing beyond all that, and it was to purify for Himself His own special people. He did it not to just cover our sins, but to make us holy. To make us not only His brothers and sisters, but to make us children of God. That is the reason. They did it for us. It was entirely selfless on their part.

As I John 3:1 says, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” This great sacrifice that they made for us brings that to pass. Despite the horror and the pain of the sacrifice, they did it willingly and lovingly for us. They did it so that we could be separated from the world, so that we could be sanctified, and purified so that we can know the Father and the Son, and have eternal life with them forever.

It was the sacrifice of pure agape love—of pure outgoing concern—for our good, and for our benefit forever. It was a sacrifice that is almost unthinkable in its magnitude. We have a hard time imagining something so great, but they were both willing to do it so that we could be with them forever.

Turn back to Philippians 2. Here we will look at that beautiful section regarding Christ’s sacrifice. Perhaps by what we have gone over today, we can see why this ends the way that it does.

Philippians 2:5-11 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is the attitude that the Word had, and His Father’s was equally loving and sacrificial. They had a “whatever-it-takes” attitude to get this done. Christ did not cling to

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His prerogatives as God's equal, as it says in another place. But, He willingly emptied Himself of His glory, and made Himself like one of us.

Would you even think about emptying yourself of your humanity, and becoming an ant? That is not even a good comparison. I mean that is a comparison between a physical person, and a physical ant.

This was God—Spirit, love—all those great wonderful characteristics; all that He is, and all the glory that He has, and He was not worried about giving all that up, and becoming a servant like us. One who has flesh, one who is able to die; very temporary; very weak; cannot think clearly; can hardly do anything; cannot even run very fast. Just think of the difference. God has the ability with time that we cannot understand. Humanity is bound to now. The sacrifice that He made in leaving what He was and coming down here becoming what he was as a man, and then on top of that, being willing to give His life for 33½ years in sinless service, and then after that being willing to give His life's blood for our sins. It is just almost impossible to really grasp what He did.

Think about His willingness and His humility throughout His entire life on earth as a man. He was willing to reduce Himself to a sperm cell—the smallest cell in the human body—and then be impregnated into a woman. Have you ever thought about that? What did He do? Could He think? What sort of perception did He have as a sperm cell, or as a two-cell, or four-cell organism? Did you ever think about that? That it was God reduced to that? It is just unbelievable, unimaginable! That He was nine months in His mother's womb. And then going through the birth canal! How perceptive was He? We do not know. But He experienced life like no other man.

Not only that, He was a child. He had to go through all that yuck of being a baby. What did He think about bowel movements and stuff like that? About being dirty? What about His circumcision? Was He aware? Think about that, guys!

Think about what He was willing to put Himself through to be the sacrifice for our sins, to be our Savior.

He had to be a teenager! He had to hold Himself back from all those impulse of being a teenager, and He had to be perfect in doing so. He never once sinned. He had to be a young adult. He had to go through myriads of temptations along the way from Satan (obviously). Just think of the temptations of the girl walking down the street. She did not know what she was doing. She was walking down the street. But, this was the Son of God, and He had to pass that temptation. He had to overcome it.

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What about money? Did He have people tempting Him with money, or business opportunities? “Hey, you can grow Joseph’s business if you just invest with me!” He had to think about things like that.

What about the fame? Later on during His ministry, I am sure that He had to resist the impulse to become a “Billy Graham.” I say that in a bit of jest, of course, but Billy Graham is known worldwide, a famous religious man. Now, Jesus became even more famous than that, but there was still temptations to become more than what He was here for.

What about the temptation to power? Satan tempted Him with this too. He had the power of God in His hands—literally. And He had to resist using that power wrongly.

There was probably even the temptation that came often to get away from it all, and leave it behind Him. “All this stuff is just too big of a pain. All these people crowding in on Me. Everybody wants something from Me. These people are trying to kill Me. Maybe if I just stay up the mountain when I pray next time. . .”

Those are all the temptations that He willingly went through in order to make it to the end so that He could be the blood sacrifice for our sins. There was cruel agony and shame in that as well that He had to bear up under. And of course, He had to really be dead for three days and three nights. It was not a sham like the people thought it was. He really had to be dead, separated from the Father who had upheld Him through all those times that we have looked at today—all those temptations. And then, He was totally cut off. Now that is a sacrifice.

He and the Father are prime examples of selfless giving for the benefit of others. You just cannot top it.

And it was not in just in these colossal matters that They made sacrifices. The whole life of Jesus, if we would go through the gospels, we would see that there were many times when He set down an example for us of sacrifice. And it is here that we begin to really see how we can make sacrifices in our relationships, ways that He sacrificed Himself amongst the people.

Let us go through a few of these quickly.

Matthew 8:16-17 When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the

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prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."

The underlying message here is that not only did Jesus cast out demons, and heal the sick, but that He exhausted Himself in doing these things. That is the intent of what Matthew is showing us. Not only did He do them, but that He did them until He was weary, until the last person in line had been dealt with.

You know, there were throngs around Him at times, and He would take the time to see each one of them. Everybody wanted something from Jesus. And, if you let it be known that there is someone who can heal cancer, and heal the blind, the deaf, and all else, you are going to have myriads of people coming to take advantage of that power. Word spread throughout Galilee, or Judea, or wherever He was, and people came to be healed, or to have demons cast out. And He patiently gave of Himself until the last one was served.

And do not think that the miraculous powers that He used just flowed right through Him, and did not take its toll. If you remember the woman who had the flow of blood came and touched the hem of His garment? He said that He felt the power leave Him!

So after long hours of healing people, He was weary. He was probably like a wet dishrag that had been all rung out. He needed to rest. But, He was willing to give His life for these people.

Matthew 8:18-20 And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. [He did, at times, have to leave.] Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Here is another sacrifice: He went without the comforts of home in order to serve others. Now, it is true that He had places to stay among relatives and disciples; He even had a house in Capernaum. But the implication, here, is that He purposely went hither and yon despite the discomforts and rigors of that life on the road to preach the gospel, to heal, to teach, to cast out demons. He did it as a sacrifice giving up those things so that He could serve others.

Not only did He drain Himself, but He also forsook all the comforts that He could have had had He wished for them. So, He was willing to deprive Himself in order to give to

others.

Matthew 9:18 While He spoke these things to them, behold, a ruler came and worshiped Him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay Your hand on her and she will live."

Matthew 9:23-24 When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him.

Here is another sacrifice: He was willing to suffer ridicule and contempt to speak the truth. To all appearances, the girl was dead. But, He knew that He could return her to life. He took the abuse thrown at Him from ignorant, unbelieving, blind people, and went about His business. So, He was willing to take the slings and arrows that were thrown at Him so that He could do the work.

Matthew 9:32-34 As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the ruler of the demons."

He took a great deal of abuse, contradiction, and outright hatred from various groups and peoples there in Judea and Galilee. He contended with them on occasion, but He never retaliated in kind to them. He just simply took it. He did not have to win every argument. He showed the character trait of meekness, that is, He had the appropriate emotion and reaction in every situation whether to His own hurt or not.

Matthew 10:39 "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

This is major principle. We have to be willing to lose our lives for Christ's sake. That is, we have to be willing to sacrifice ourselves all the way up to and beyond the point of death to follow and honor our Savior. This is the gist of Paul's instruction in Romans 12:1-2 about becoming a living sacrifice.

We are supposed to be always giving our lives to follow God's lead, and doing this will

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help us to transform into the character image of the Son. This is a major point of His character—this idea of His willingness to sacrifice.

Now, remember I said we would come back to the idea of going outside the camp. Here we are. This next passage begins with the great place that we have been put into, because of God's calling.

Hebrews 13:10-16 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here [in this world] we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. [Listen!] Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Here we have the whole picture set out for us. We have been accorded a special right, privilege, and place before God, because we have been allowed to come under the blood of Jesus Christ, that great sacrifice for sin. We have been called to follow Him, and to be separate from this world, but this entails sacrifice on our part, too.

This comes in two forms, according to Paul as he set it out above. The first is continual praise and thanksgiving to God for His marvelous works on our behalf. And the second is that we are sacrificing ourselves for others, particularly our brethren; doing good, and sharing as Christ gave us the example. And if we do these things—loving God, and loving neighbor—we will please Him.