

# More Atonement for Sin

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[ 0 : 00 ] I once saw this church sign that says God does not make mistakes. It's one of those slow release ones. Everyone's worked out what's wrong with it. I'm pretty sure it was intentional, at least I think so, to make the point that God doesn't make mistakes.

It's people who do church signs. I thought it was quite appropriate because it had stakes in it and we've been thinking about the fellowship offering from last week as well. But the point is with mistakes is they're unintentional, aren't they?

I mean, that's why we call them mistakes, isn't it? Now, sure, some mistakes don't matter that much. Like if you momentarily mix up your siblings' names, like I've mixed up my kids' names before, call them the wrong name.

I don't know if your parents have ever done that to you before. It's not a huge deal. I mean, they kind of retort back that I'm getting old and think it's hilarious and that sort of thing. But if your mistake was to speed past a speed camera because you're too busy talking to your friend in the car, then that unintentional mistake kind of matters a bit more, doesn't it?

Well, the next sacrifice we're looking at in Leviticus was for unintentional sin, for mistakes that matter. I was actually hoping to do the last two sacrifices because they kind of go together.

[ 1 : 17 ] Let me show you what I mean. So the first three were burnt grain and fellowship. And the way the text is written, it says, you know, if the offering is this, dot, dot, dot, then this is how you do it.

But the last two are slightly different. It says when anyone sins or is unfaithful, then you must do this. So it's kind of a different vibe to it.

But I couldn't fit both sacrifices into one sermon. So we're going to miss the guilt offering. But what I have done is in your orders of service, I've given you a summary of all five sacrifices and what they mean for us.

And I've even included some pictures for you on the back. I'll refer to those pictures a little bit later on. But for tonight, we're just going to focus, as Steph said, on the sin offering or the purification offering.

So we're at point one in your outline, which is a single A5 piece of paper. And verse 1 and 2 in your Bible, which I'll put on the screen for those online as well.

[ 2 : 20 ] And so the Lord said to Moses, say to the Israelites, when anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands.

Do you see there? Unintentionally. That's what we're looking at in this particular section. And so the sins that he mentions later on are predominantly, there's one exception, are unintentional.

They are the mistakes that we make. And the way it works is it starts off with the high priest and then it addresses the whole nation and then a tribal leader, then a community member.

We're not going to work our way through the whole thing because we don't have time. But let's start off by looking at the high priest in verse 3. So it says, If the anointed priest, which is the high priest, sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the Lord a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.

Now just pause here for a moment and notice how much his mistake matters because who gets the guilt? Is it just the high priest?

[ 3 : 32 ] Verse 3. Silence. This is not rhetorical, right? Is it just the high priest bringing guilt on the people?

Yeah, he brings guilt on the people. And so his sin kind of matters, doesn't it? Because he leads the whole nation astray and brings guilt on all the people.

It's kind of like a leader who leads his whole nation astray by invading another country or perhaps a dodgy minister who leads his whole church astray.

One example I think is Joel Osteen, even though I know people listen to him, but he preaches a different gospel and he leads his whole Lakewood church astray. And notice this is true here in the text, even if the sin is unintentional.

The high priest didn't mean to. It was a mistake. And yet it still has serious consequences for the whole people, doesn't it? Because as I said before, even unintentional sins have consequences.

[ 4 : 40 ] You sleep in on the morning of your exams. Didn't mean to. Slept through the alarm. But it kind of has consequences, doesn't it? Or as I said before, you speed past a camera accidentally.

It'll have consequences. You forget someone's birthday or your wedding anniversary, it has consequences, right? And so even unintentional sin matters to God.

And so when they realize they have sinned, atonement needs to be made. How? Well, the following verses tell us. Verse 4 to 7. He, the high priest, is to present the bull at the entrance to the tent of meeting before the Lord.

He's to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it, just like we saw last week. It's acting as his substitute. And slaughter it before the Lord. And then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood, this is different to last week, and carry it into the tent of meeting.

And then on the, yep, verse 6, he is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the Lord in front of the curtain of the sanctuary.

[ 5 : 50 ] The priest then shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the Lord in the tent of meeting. The rest of the bull's blood, he goes outside the tent and pours it out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

Now, I know that's confusing, right? It's hard to picture what's going on because this is so foreign to us. So to help you, here's a real life model that's in Israel you can visit today.

And technically the tabernacle or the tent of meeting is the one inside the courtyard and you've got the altar of burnt offering in the middle of the courtyard there. I don't know if you can make out the people just to give you a size, an idea of the size, but the whole thing fits inside a 50 metre swimming pool.

So that's roughly, think 50 metre swimming pool, that's roughly the whole size of this setup. And so to help you, this is one of your pictures on the back of your sheets now. I've got a diagram with all the different things labelled to try and help you picture what's going on here.

And so you can see in the courtyard the altar of burnt offering and to the left of that is the basin for washing. And then to the left of that you've got the tent of meeting and the first part is the holy place.

[ 7 : 11 ] But just come back with me to the altar of burnt offering that's in the courtyard next to the gate. It had horns on it. And here's a picture on the screen. It's those things that are kind of sticking out on the corners.

So when the text talks about blood being put on the horns that's what it's talking about. This has a little ramp for the priest to come up and kind of put the animals on top of to burn.

That's what was happening there. But come back with me to the holy place. This is what it looks like on the inside. And so on the left hand side is the lamp stand. On the right hand side is the table for the manna, the bread that represented the manna in the wilderness.

And then you've got the curtain. Do you see the curtain there? Beyond that curtain is the most holy place where the Ark of the Covenant was. And in front of that curtain is a second altar.

This one is the altar of fragrant incense. And so what this offering, this sin offering was, they'd first of all bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting, the first curtain there, about near where the basin for washing is.

[ 8 : 23 ] They'd lay their hand on it to show it was their substitute. They'd slaughter it. But then unlike last week, the priest would then take some of the blood inside to this place on the screen.

And he'd go in front of the curtain. He would dip his finger in it and sprinkle some blood on the ground in front of the curtain, seven times actually. And then he put some blood on the horns of this incense altar.

And so here is a kind of closer picture. And they've even painted some red blood just on the tips of the corner. I don't know if you can make it out. But that's what they would do. Why?

I mean, it seems very convoluted and complex, doesn't it? What is going on here? Well, we need to remember that sprinkling blood or putting blood on the horns of altars was about purification.

It was about cleansing. We see this later on on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus chapter 16 where we're told that the priest is to take some bull's blood and with his finger, same idea, sprinkle it.

[ 9 : 32 ] This time on the Day of Atonement, he'd go inside the Most Holy Place, past the curtain and sprinkle it with his finger seven times before the Atonement cover on the Ark of the Covenant.

And notice the next paragraph. In this way, he'll make atonement for the Most Holy Place. Because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites. And later on, we read again that he takes bull's blood and puts it on all the horns of the altar and he sprinkles some blood with his finger seven times.

Why? To cleanse it, to purify it and consecrate it from all the uncleanness of the Israelites.

You see, sprinkling blood or putting it on the horns was about cleansing. It was about purifying. And seven times, well, the number seven in the Bible often means completeness. It was about completely purifying, completely cleansing God's house.

Which is why this sin offering is also actually called a purification offering. You can see that in your footnote at the bottom of page 100 in your Bibles. It's the only footnote there.

[ 10 : 45 ] The thing we need to remember here is that sin not only makes us guilty, which requires a ransom or a payment, like we saw last week, sin also makes us unclean.

It defiles us or contaminates us and not just us, but places as well. I don't know, anyone been to Bali? I know a few people have been to Bali. Here is, I think it's Kuta Beach, I don't know if I'm pronouncing that correctly, but it's a very popular beach in Bali, I'm told.

I've never been there myself, but it looks quite nice, doesn't it? In the distance are some flags where the people swim and go surfing and if we go a bit closer, let's have a look at it.

Here it is. What's happened to the place? It's been polluted, hasn't it? Here the people's sin of littering has not only made them guilty of littering, it's actually contaminated a place, hasn't it?

The beach. We'll take a more serious example, the unintentional sin of the nuclear meltdown in Chernobyl in 1986 contaminated the whole city and now people cannot live there.

[ 12 : 04 ] Unintentional sin of the operators causing a nuclear meltdown, made them not just guilty of messing up, but it also polluted, contaminated the whole place, the whole city.

To this day, as I understand it, people cannot live there. Well, in a similar way, the sin of Israel contaminated the holy place of God's house so that he cannot keep living there.

But as we've said through this series, God wants to live with us, to live with his people. He wants to dwell amongst his people and so he provides a way with this sacrifice that firstly purifies his house from their sin so that he can live there.

That's the sprinkling of the blood and putting it on things. And then secondly, he pays for their sin, which is why the blood is taken outside to this altar and splashed or poured.

One is purifying from sin, one is paying the ransom for sin. And so that's what atonement does in Leviticus, those two things.

[ 13 : 19 ] Purifies people or places from their sin or pays the price, the ransom for their sin. All so that God can keep living with them.

This is the goal of atonement actually. If you write the word atonement like this at one minute, it reminds us that this is the purpose, to be at one with God, that we can live with God and he with us. And the same process is followed for the unintentional sins and not just from the high priest but now the whole nation. Having got those pictures in your head, see if it can make better sense as I read through from verse 13.

So he moves from the high priest to the whole nation. He says, if the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands even though the community is unaware of this matter, when they realize their guilt and the sin they committed becomes known, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering, a purification offering and present it before the tent of meeting.

Same thing. You can't get a whole nation putting their hands on the head of one bull and so the elders are the representatives who do it. The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the Lord and the bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord.

[ 14 : 42 ] Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the tent of meeting. He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the Lord seven times in front of the curtain.

He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of incense that is before the Lord inside the tent of meeting. Here is the purification that's happening.

But then the rest of the blood he goes outside and pours it at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the tent of meeting.

This is how atonement is made. And so it goes on to talk about removing all the fat just like the fellowship offering last week. Remember all the fat was God's and in this way the sin offering makes atonement for the community and they will be forgiven.

Hopefully you can picture a bit better what's going on here. It's a slightly different process for the tribal leader but we don't have time to go through it all. Let me summarise it for you on the screen.

[ 15 : 55 ] So the high priest and the whole nation there's a bull and there's blood being for purification inside the tent. For a tribal leader it's a male goat outside and then for a community member it's a female goat or lamb and again the blood is outside.

Why? Why this difference? Well because there's a difference in consequences. The sin of the high priest puts the whole nation at risk doesn't he?

The sin of the whole nation puts the whole nation at risk and so it requires a more costly sacrifice of bull. It requires more intense purification inside the tabernacle whereas the sin of a tribal leader or community member is still serious but less serious consequences so a less costly sacrifice less intense cleaning it doesn't have to be inside the tent it can be outside the tent so that purification can be made.

I mean we get that don't we? Different sins have different levels of consequence you know take war between two neighbouring nations the consequences are pretty serious aren't they?

People die people starve there's war crimes it's horrific and then take the sin of two neighbouring individuals you know just next door neighbours it's still bad you know throwing neighbours rubbish over each other's fence and you know hiding your bins of your neighbours because they annoy you or whatever I don't know I'm not telling you what to do by the way it's still bad but the consequences are less serious aren't they?

[ 17 : 35 ] The problem is we think then that resenting our neighbours because the consequences are less serious well the sin doesn't really matter then but the whole point of this sacrifice is to remind us firstly that all sin matters to God I mean if even mistakes matter to God unintentional sin matters to God then doesn't all sin matter to God?

Even those sins of omission you know the things we fail or forget to do so if we skip over to chapter 5 over the page in fact let me just summarise it for you on the screen just because of time he lists three examples of sins of omission things that we or as we say in the confession things we left undone that we ought to have done and the first one is when they fail to speak up to protect someone who's being falsely charged or the second one in verses 2 and 3 if they forget to be clean or they've unwittingly touched anything ceremonially unclean and they haven't realised that they're unclean they haven't dealt with their uncleanness yet or thirdly if they forget to keep their word they thoughtlessly took an oath and then forgot to keep it have you ever done that?

said to a friend or someone yeah I promise I'll bring it next week next Sunday and then you forget you can put it in your diary or whatever you do these days and we're all guilty of that sin of omission it's unintentional but it's still sin because we broke our word and so they still need atonement again for the community member it's a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering there because even these sins of omission even these mistakes matter to God but here's the thing atonement matters more God is keen to bring forgiveness even for the poor and so if they can't afford a female lamb or goat verse 7 can't afford it then bring two doves or two pigeons to the Lord as the penalty for sin one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering but what happens if they can't afford two pigeons or two doves well verse 11 if they cannot afford two doves or two pigeons they ought to bring as an offering for their sin a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour for a sin offering and so a tenth of an ephah the footnote says about one and a half kilos here we go some aldi flour it's a pretty fine flour tenth of an ephah this flour cost me \$1.63 about four weeks ago with inflation it's probably what two bucks now so let's call it three dollars for a kilo and a half for three bucks they can have atonement for their sins and forgiveness from God why?

because God is desperate to make atonement available to everyone even the poorest in the community well we don't have time to look at the guilt offering as I mentioned what does all this mean for us and what lessons are there which is point two well firstly if even unintentional sin matters to God then all sin matters to God but the question is does it matter to us?

do we take it that seriously? or do we sometimes act like the world who says it's only illegal if you get caught have you heard that expression before?

[ 21 : 33 ] but God says all sin is illegal and you will be caught or judged by him do we realise this? or do we think that sin only matters if we're caught or only if they've got big consequences or only if they hurt others no no all sin matters to God and so it ought to matter to us that we seek not to do it and seek to do something about it when we realise which we'll come to in a moment firstly do we realise that all sin is serious second though do we also realise that God has graciously provided a way for atonement in fact let me say at this point there are not two gods of the old the Bible you know how some people think there's a grumpy God of the Old Testament that he got out of the wrong side of the bed but when he gets to the New Testament it's a different

God he's the gracious one and so people don't like the Old Testament but they love the New Testament no no there's only one God he's holy and just and so he must punish sin but he's also gracious and kind so he provides a way for atonement for everyone even with three bucks worth of flour so that even the poorest can find forgiveness from him no no even in the Old Testament even in Leviticus of all places we see God acting graciously there's only one God of the Bible but which brings us to the third lesson for us this one God is a God of grace and he's given us even more grace in his son who is the once for all sacrifice in our second reading we heard that it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins that is to take away them completely and permanently which is why they had to keep offering these animals day after day but Christ's blood is of infinite worth his blood both pays for our sin as a ransom like we saw last week remember from 1 Peter we're ransomed with the precious the infinite worth of Christ's blood a land without blemish but 1 John not just pays for our sin but purifies us from all sin which is why our second reading ended with we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus

Christ once for all our church does not need to become an abattoirs that reeks of blood as the tabernacle did because Christ's blood is of infinite worth it pays for and purifies us from all our past sins our present and our future sins when we believe in Jesus and so do you do you believe in Jesus that he really paid for your sins so that you could enjoy life with God life now and for eternity if you don't believe in Jesus then you'll have to pay for your own sins won't you and for us who do believe we are now God's house aren't we God's spirit lives in us to help us to work in our conscience to strengthen us each day that we might live the right way but just like Israel contaminated God's house of the tabernacle with their sin we can contaminate this house ourselves with our sin aren't we

I mean we all still sin don't we it's not just me is it it's all of us even unintentionally but unlike Israel we don't have to offer a new purification offering instead we're to make use of Christ's once for all offering how well by asking for forgiveness that we might be purified afresh as John goes on to say if we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us we all still sin but if we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and what purify us from all unrighteousness this is our purification offering but the question is do we make the most of it do we seek forgiveness during the week I mean how often do you pause during the week to seek forgiveness from God or is it just on Sundays yet if even unintentional sin matters if we still do it then we need to keep seeking forgiveness from God don't we even during the week but we need to do so knowing that

Christ's blood has atoned for all our sins even the unintentional ones once for all such that we have permanent forgiveness forgiveness on tap if you like we just need to ask God to pour it out will we will we keep praying and seeking and making use of that forgiveness Christ has brought us why don't we put it into practice right now let's say this prayer of confession together almighty and most merciful father we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts we have offended against your holy laws we have left undone what we ought to have done and we have done what we ought not to have done yet good Lord have mercy on us restore those who are penitent according to your promises declared in Jesus

[ 27 : 37 ] Christ our Lord grant most merciful father for his sake that we may live godly righteous and sober lives to the glory of your holy name amen and then remember if we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness we've just given our purification offering we can know that we've been purified afresh now that's great news is it not coming after who has done I've had sword rid for Many two water in eight leg in hurricane