

More Atonement for Sin

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[0 : 00] Well, again, Happy Mother's Day. It is nice to recognise mothers today, especially since they are often taken for granted, aren't they? Well, I know I did as a child.

I often took my mum for granted. For example, when I came home from school, the first thing out of my mouth was not, hello, but what's for dinner? And if I didn't like mum's answer, it wasn't thanks for cooking, it was why do we have to have that?

I don't know if this is ringing any bells for other mothers out there. Or if I needed some clean clothes, I'd yell out, where's my clean undies? Very angrily.

And when she'd get them from the laundry, instead of saying thanks for doing all my washing, I would complain further that they weren't in the right place. And so Mother's Day is another, it's not the only, but it's another great provision where I can atone for my sin and enjoy a relationship with my mum.

And that's what our last two sacrifices were about. In fact, most of the four out of the five sacrifices were in part about making atonement for sin.

[1 : 08] They were God's gracious provision for Israel so that they could enjoy life with him, though they had their own distinctives. And I've tried to summarise them for you.

There's a little yellow handout. Some people may have grabbed it already, but it's out near the white box if you're interested, where I've tried to summarise the five sacrifices and what they mean for us. And so what I wanted to do today was to kind of talk about a summary of them and then look at the last two, which are similar, but the sermon was way too long.

And so we're only going to be able to have a time to look at the second last sacrifice, which is the purification or sin offering. And even then we're going to have to skip a bit of text.

So we're at point one in your outline and chapter four, verse one in your Bibles. And I'll put it on the screen for those at home. So chapter four, verse one, And so this offering is particularly focused on unintentional sin.

And what follows is four groups of people, the high priests and the whole nation, and then a tribal leader and a community member.

[2 : 39] And it starts with the high priests and it's quite an involved process. Let me show you in verse three. It starts, it says, If the anointed 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.

And then on it goes, just before we look on at how this happens, I want you to notice how serious his sin is. Do you notice what happens when he sins?

Who gets the guilt? Yeah, the whole people share in the guilt. In other words, he puts the whole nation at risk. It's like a leader today who leads his whole nation astray.

I mean, the obvious example is, of course, Mr. Putin, isn't it? Or a dodgy minister who leads his whole church astray, like Joel Osteen and the Lakewood Church.

And notice this is true, even if he sins unintentionally. Because even unintentional sins have consequences, don't they?

[3 : 48] I mean, if I unintentionally speed past a police car down Longcaster Road, it's going to have a consequence, right? And so even unintentional sins still matters to God, which means when they realise it, atonement still needs to be made.

And so how? Well, verse 4 to 7. He is to present the bull at the entrance to the tent of meeting before the Lord. He is to lay his hand on its head to symbolise a substitution taking place, offering on his behalf, and then slaughter it before the Lord.

Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the tent of meeting. 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.

The priest shall then 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 shall go outside and pour out at the base of the other altar, the altar of burnt offering, at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Now, to help you picture what's happening here, because it's hard for us to get this, isn't it? Here is a life-size model of the tabernacle that you can visit today in Israel.

[5 : 13] And I don't know if you can just make out some people on the right-hand side there. The whole size of the tabernacle is roughly an Olympic 50-metre swimming pool kind of size.

And technically, the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, is the inner tent, which is split into the holy place and the most holy place. And there you can also see the outside altar, the altar of burnt offering.

A closer look at that altar is here. You can just see on its corners these horns that are kind of protruding out. That's where they would place some blood when they were kind of putting it on with their finger, if you like.

And then inside the most holy place, the tent of meeting, on the left-hand side, you can see the lampstand. On the right-hand side, you can see a table, which is where the priest's bread went. And then at the back of the picture, in front of the curtain to the most holy place, where the Ark of the Covenant was, was another altar, a second one, the altar of incense.

[6 : 17] And so I've actually put on the back of your outline this diagram with labels to try and help orientate you so you know what is what. And so then understanding the process was, they'd bring a bull, lay their hand on it, and slaughter it at the tent of meeting, which is really around where the altar of burnt offering is.

And then the priest would take some blood and go into the tent, and in front of the curtain to the Ark of the Covenant, to the most holy place, he would sprinkle some blood on the floor.

And then he would dip his finger, and then put some on the horns of the incense altar. Kind of like this. Can you just see the red paint that they've put on the altar of incense at the top of the picture there?

That's what they would do. And so what is happening here? Why is all this happening? Well, to purify God's house.

That's actually what's happening here. You see, sprinkling or putting blood on horns cleansed or purified things. Later on in Leviticus 16, that's what we see.

[7 : 31] When they put blood on all the horns of the altar and sprinkle some of the blood seven times, it cleanses it. It purifies it.

That's what's happening when blood is sprinkled or put on horns. Things are purified. And why seven times? Well, seven symbolizes completeness or thoroughness.

And so it's being thoroughly cleansed or purified, if you like. But the point is, this offering was firstly about purifying God's house from their sin.

Which is why this sin offering is also called a purification offering. In your Bibles, if you look down at the bottom of page 100, is one footnote that tells you that's the other name for this offering.

A purification offering. You see, sin not only defiles or contaminates us, it also contaminates God's house too, which made it impossible for God to keep living there amongst his people.

[8 : 42] Back during lockdowns, do you remember lockdowns? Or if you buried them deep down? Back during lockdowns, I heard stories where someone in the house contracted COVID. COVID. And so they thought, that's it, the house is contaminated.

And sometimes people would leave and live with other relatives. Or usually what would happen is the person with COVID would be locked in their room. And do you remember how we did that? You know, slide the food under the door like they're in prison or something or other?

Because COVID contaminated not just the person, but the house. Or more seriously, some people at Bible study just came back from Japan where they visited Hiroshima.

And after the atomic bomb was dropped there, it contaminated the whole place with radiation, didn't it? And so people could not keep dwelling there. Well, in a similar way, sin is like COVID or radiation.

It spreads and contaminates not just the person, but God's house. And so he cannot keep dwelling with them, but he wants to.

[9 : 50] He wants to live with his people. And so he provides this sacrifice so that he can keep living there.

And so firstly, this sacrifice purifies God's house from their sins so he can keep living there. But secondly, it also pays for their sin so they can be forgiven.

And so after purifying God's house in verse 7, the rest of the blood is splashed or poured at the base of that outside altar, the altar of burnt offering.

That was the payment of sin being made. And so atonement here involves blood that both purifies God's house from their sin and pays the price for their sin.

So that God can keep living with them, which is the goal of atonement. I've showed you the way to write this word before to help remember the goal, at-one-ment.

[10 : 55] That's the goal of atonement, that we might be at one with God, where God can live with us and we with him. And this same process of purification for unintentional sins occurs for the whole nation in verses 13 to 21.

I'll just read part of it there. So verse 13, and having seen the pictures, I'll see if you can now picture what's happening. If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally this time, it's the nation, and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, when they realize their guilt and the sin they committed becomes known, the assembly must bring a young bull as a purification or sin offering and present it to the Lord before the tent of meeting.

The elders, who represent the community, are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the Lord, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the Lord. Then the anointed priest, it says, take some of the bull's blood again 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. Then he is to put some of the blood on the horns of that inside altar, the altar of incense, that is before the Lord in the tent of meeting.

The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base outside, the base of the altar of burnt offering, at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And so verse 20, halfway through verse 20, in this way, the priest will make atonement for the community and they will be forgiven.

[12 : 33] That was the process. There is a slightly different process if it's a tribal leader. Verse 22, when a leader sins unintentionally, it's a slightly different process.

And it's a slightly different process, it's a different animal if a community member, verse 27, if you look there, if any member of the community sins unintentionally.

We don't have time to unpack those. But I do want us to have a look at something in chapter 5. So just flick over the page to chapter 5. As I said, it's a long one, this purification offering.

Here, the community member sins not so much unintentionally, but by failing to do the right thing. What we often call sins of omission, you know, things we omit to do.

Like what we say in our confession, you know, forgive us for the things we ought to have done. And for Israel, in chapter 5, verse 1, this was a failure to not speak up when they should have, when someone was in trouble.

[13 : 40] Or verses 2 to 3, it was a failure to deal with ceremonially uncleanness. They didn't know they were ceremonially unclean, and so they didn't deal with it. Or verse 4, it was a failure to keep a promise because they made it thoughtlessly and forgot about it.

I mean, have you ever done that before? You've promised someone, yeah, yeah, I promise I'll do that. But you made the promise thoughtlessly or rashly, and then five minutes later, completely forgot all about it.

And then you don't do it. And you unintentionally break your promise, don't you? But these sins, even though they're unintentional or a failure to the right thing, they still matter to God.

Which is why in verse 5 and 6, we're told when they become aware of their guilt, they have to make atonement. As a penalty, verse 6, for their sin they have committed, they must bring to the Lord for a community member a female lamb or goat, something not as expensive as the bull, from the flock as a sin offering, and the priest shall make atonement for them and for their sin.

But here's the thing that I want you to realise here. God provided this way for everyone to find atonement for sin and forgiveness from Him.

[15 : 03] And so if they couldn't afford a female lamb or goat, God then would later say in verse 7, anyone who cannot afford a lamb is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the Lord as a

penalty for their sin.

And if they still couldn't afford two birds, then if you look at verse 11, he says, if however, they cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, they are to bring as an offering for their sin a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour for a sin or purification offering.

A tenth of an ephah of flour is about a kilo and a half of flour, this much, which cost me from Aldi \$1.63.

That's all it would cost them to make atonement for their sins against a holy God. Cheap as chips, isn't it? And the point is, while all sin matters to God, atonement matters more.

And so he graciously provides a way for everyone, even the poorest, to find atonement for sin and forgiveness from him.

[16:19] We don't have time to look at the next sacrifice, as I said, which was the guilt or reparation offering. And so what lessons can we draw from this one today, point two?

Well, first we're seeing that even unintentional sin or failure to do the right thing, it still matters to God. That's why there still needs to be an offering.

After all, God is holy. And so just as a little bit of oil still won't mix with a whole litre of water, so even a little bit of sin still will not mix with a holy God.

All sin, no matter how big or little, matters. Yes, there are different consequences for the different sins. I mean, the sin of murdering has more serious consequences than the sin of cheating on your taxes, doesn't it?

But we then think that the cheating on taxes no longer matters. Different consequences, yes, but it all matters to God. Or the world says, it's only illegal if you get caught.

[17:29] Have you heard that before? But God says, no, no, all sin is illegal and you will get caught by me. And do we realise this? Do we realise that all sin matters or do we think it only matters if we get caught?

Or only if it's a big sin? Or only if it hurts other people? Then all sin matters to God, it doesn't matter to us, such that we try not to do it.

But the second lesson for us, as we've seen, is while all sin matters, atonement matters more to God. God is gracious, he graciously provides a way for atonement with these sacrifices.

And we see God's grace, especially with this sacrifice, where we're explicitly told that he provides a way for everyone, even the poorest, to find forgiveness with just \$1.63 worth of flour.

Some people think that there's two gods of the Bible, have you heard this before? There's the God of the Old Testament who is grumpy, and then there's the God of the New Testament who is gracious. But there's only one God of the Bible, and he is gracious.

[18:46] Yes, he's also holy and just, and so he must punish sin, but even here in Leviticus, the seemingly hardest book of the Old Testament in terms of grumpiness apparently, God is still being gracious, providing a way for everyone to have atonement for sin and forgiveness from him.

And then in the New Testament, he shows even more grace by providing his Son. It's the same God of the Bible. God is gracious.

Which brings us to the third lesson for us. By God's grace, he's provided the once-for-all sacrifice in Christ. Christ. We heard this in our second reading.

We heard firstly that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats or doves and pigeons or even flour to take away sin. That is to take it away permanently, completely.

It only dealt with it in that moment. That's why the sacrifice had to keep going endlessly, being repeated day after day after day. but Christ's blood is of infinite worth.

[20:03] And so his blood both pays for and purifies from all sin once for all. As our second reading ended on, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Once for all time. No more sacrifices are needed. This church does not need to become an abattoir. and reek with blood. Because Christ's blood was enough to atone for everyone's sins, past, present, future.

So we can all be made holy in God's sight. If of course we believe in him. And so do you. Do you trust in Jesus and his blood to make you right with God, to make you at one with God?

His blood is the only thing that can do it. And if we don't trust, then we won't have forgiveness of sins. And for us who do believe, we are now God's house, aren't we?

God now lives in us by his spirit. His spirit who works in our conscience to convict us and strengthen us each day that we might live the right way.

[21 : 18] But like Israel contaminated God's house with their sin so we can still contaminate this house with our sin, can't we? We all still sin, don't we, whether unintentionally or deliberately?

Or is that just me? We all still sin, don't we? And so we still contaminate ourselves as God's house. But unlike Israel, we're to not offer a new purification offering but rather make use of Christ's once-for-all offering.

How? By asking for forgiveness. That we as God's house might be purified afresh. As John says in 1 John 8, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

To confess our sins means to ask for forgiveness that we might be purified afresh. This is our purification offering, if you like. To ask for or rather make use of the forgiveness that Christ has already given us.

It's a bit like that millionaire in Melbourne last week. Did you hear about this? He bought a penthouse suite in the Sapphire Towers on Exhibition Street for \$39 million.

[22 : 46] And then he made headlines by craning up a \$3 million McLaren race car as an art piece in his penthouse. Here he is, the 34-year-old Adrian Portelli with his \$3 million art piece.

Channel 9 actually dubbed the story The Flying Car because it was being craned up. The point is he's already a millionaire. He already has millions, right?

And so whenever he needs to or wants to, he can make use of his millions and enjoy it afresh. Well, we already have forgiveness in Christ, which is actually worth millions because it comes with eternal life.

And so whenever we need to, we can make use of our forgiveness and enjoy it afresh. Be purified afresh. the question is, do we?

How often do we seek forgiveness during the week? How often do we pause to confess our sins, even our unintentional sins once we've realised them?

[23 : 57] Or do we think they don't matter? I remember talking with a Christian man called John and he said he always prayed for forgiveness every time he said grace at dinner as well.

And I asked him why he did that and he said because I know I'm a sinner, I'm sure I've sinned against God somehow or other today, but I also know I have forgiveness in Christ and so why not make the most of it?

Mother's Day may be a way for us to atone for our sins towards our mums or even our wife. I realised this morning I completely forgot to organise something for my wife. but God has provided Christ, the once for all sacrifice and so let's continue to confess our sins and make the most of our forgiveness in him.

We're going to start by doing that now. Why don't we say this prayer of confession? So together all my we have strayed from your ways like a lot of 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.

[25 : 21] Yet good Lord have mercy on us. Restore those who are permitted according to your promises declared in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Grant most merciful Father for his sake that we may live bodily, righteous and sober lives to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

And then remember with joy that if we confess our sins God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.