

The Necessity of the Sacrifice of Christ

*“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”
(Matthew 26:42)*

Ronald Cosby

Introduction

And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, *there must of necessity be the death of him that made it*. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth (Hebrews 9:15-17).

Several things are necessary to sustain human life. Our blood stream must circulate oxygen throughout our bodies because vital organs that lack oxygen will wither and die unless sufficient oxygen is generated. In the spiritual realm, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is just as essential to the spiritual life of the soul as blood and air are to the human body (Hebrews 9:15-17, 24-27; 7:26-27).

Not all agree. The humanist chooses to believe that Christ's death was nothing more than a few people looking for violence. To them, the Lord's flawless life is the important thing; He should have continued living so mankind could have a better example. Wait a minute shouts the millennialist. Jesus came to the earth to set up a physical kingdom so He could rule and reign over the world from a throne in Jerusalem. In their minds, Jews thwarted the afore promised eternal plan of God. The death of Christ is evidence that He simply failed to overcome the sinfulness of His fellow countrymen. Wait a minute says Hollywood. Christ was nothing more than a charlatan, a fake, a phoney, a fraud. His death simply means He got caught in His chicanery. Such baseless theories demonstrate the foolish overactive imaginations of men who will dream up anything and everything to keep from believing the truth.

This lesson looks at five reasons for the necessity of the sacrifice of Christ.

To Fulfill Prophecy

Jesus and Paul said that it “behooved” Christ to suffer or “Christ must needs have suffered” (Luke 24:46, KJV; Acts 17:3, ASV). That means, it is necessary, there is need of. Though Isaiah 53 outlines the life of the coming *Suffering Servant*, details make it clear Isaiah has Jesus' sacrifice in mind. Not only His sacrifice but His life. Since Isaiah depicted the life of the Lord in such details, one commentator refers to the chapter as the “Gospel of Isaiah.”

Every sacrifice commanded in the Old Testament is a prediction of the lamb of God who would die for the sins of the world. Beginning with the very first recorded sacrifice of Abel, the sacrifice of the Lord is perfectly portrayed hundreds of years before He died (Genesis 4; Hebrews 11). When Noah exited the ark, he built an altar and offered a blood (sin) sacrifice. It pointed to Jesus. When Moses commanded the slaves of Egypt to offer the passover lamb, he was pointing to

Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:7). With the commands to the priests of Israel to offer a blood or sin sacrifice (daily), God was pointing to Jesus. The sacrifice of the yearly Day of Atonement was a clear prediction of the cross of Calvary (Hebrews 10:1-4). No wonder John the Baptist called Jesus the "lamb of God" (John 1:29). Peter declares that without His blood no man could be redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19). The Old Testament sacrifices read like a newspaper, detailing the need for Jesus' death on the cross.

Okay, says one, but why did God need to predict the sacrificial lamb?

To Institute the New Covenant

The Old Covenant which was given to Israel on Mt. Sinai could not effect the necessary objective on behalf of sinful man (Romans 8:1-4). It could not remove sin. So God had to establish a new covenant, which necessitated the death of the testator (Hebrews 9:15-17).

Why did God inject the Law of Moses before sending the Messiah? Because of the childish immaturity of mankind, God used the Law of Moses to bring all to the faith (Galatians 3:24).

Okay, but why did God need a new covenant?

To Atone for Sin

The sin of man makes the sacrifice of Christ necessary. Sin has separated us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). An Internet writer gives us an excellent illustration to help us see the dilemma. Imagine a group of people trapped on the roof of a high-rise building engulfed in flames. The only way to safety is to jump to the roof of an adjoining building--30 feet away! In desperation, people begin to attempt the impossible leap. Some jump farther out than others, but all fall to their death (Sper). Though unbelievers want the price for sin to be the cheap cost of a Minnie Pearl hat (\$1.98), wickedness has a steep price. The soul that sinneth, it shall die (Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20; Isaiah 59:1-2; Genesis 2:17).

Furthermore, for those with a conscience, the burning pain of guilt demands forgiveness. Without forgiveness, there is no forgetting. III—"Forgive Me For Taking Your Life."

Richard Lutrell, a Vietnam War veteran, is one who has been punished with guilt. He killed the first enemy soldier he'd ever seen up close. A photo had been shaken loose from the mortally wounded soldier. Lutrell picked it up. It was a picture of the man and a girl, whom Lutrell assumed to be the man's daughter. He kept the photo and carried it in his wallet for 22 years, though he can't explain why. In 1989, he decided to move on, so he made a trip to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington and left the photo there. The night before, he wrote this "Dear Sir" note to the man he had killed: "Forgive me for taking your life. I was reacting just the way I was trained to kill V.C. (Viet Cong). So many times over the years I have stared at your picture and your daughter, I suspect. Each time my heart and guts would burn with the pain of guilt."

That, Lutrell thought, was the end of it. But in the fall of 1996, a friend pointed out to him a picture in a book titled "Offerings at the Wall." It was the photo he had left there seven years earlier, and the past caught up with him once again. "For years I have carried the guilt of taking his life," he said. "It is always with me; like a cancer it eats away at my heart and my mind. ... It's hard to put into words, but deep down, somehow I'm looking for some forgiveness somewhere."

We may not punish ourselves to this degree, but our anguish can be just as real. That we punish ourselves tells us that we understand that sacrifice is necessary. We too are "looking for some forgiveness somewhere."

The writer has established the general necessity of death and the specific necessity of death under the Old Covenant. He has done this to demonstrate the necessity of death under the New Covenant (Grant).

Through the Jewish religion, God demonstrated that without the shedding of blood there is no remission: "And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (Hebrews 9:22-24).

The blood of bulls and goats could not and did not take away sin. "Else would they not have ceased to be offered? because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more consciousness of sins" (Hebrews 10:1-4).

To Manifest God's Love

Since man's thoughts and ways are meager compared to God's thoughts and ways, how could God depict His love to mankind (Isaiah 55:8-9)? Giving one's own life is the supreme demonstration of love (John 15:13). "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16, ASV). "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (KJV). "Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10, 19).

Event after event in the Old Testament was designed to help the unloving perceive God's love even for the unlovable. Abraham's sacrifice of his only begotten son displays the Father's love (Genesis 18; John 3:16; 1 John 4). As a spouse betrayed by his wife, Hosea serves as an analogy of God's love for His people (Hosea 1-3). In addition, we have the analogy of God's love and care as Sovereign (Mark 4:38), as the Good Shepherd (John 10), as our Friend when we were His foe (John 15:13; Romans 5:6-8). Similar to the physicians dedication and love, the Great Physician's care is seen in the healing offered through Jesus (Mark 2:17, 1-9). Jacob's service to Laban

presents a true love's suffering on behalf of one's beloved (Genesis 29:20; Song 8:7). What else must God do to show forth how much He loves you?

We must avoid enticements that take the place of the cross for the cross is the drawing power of God (John 12:32-34; Romans 1:16-17). Do not substitute the cross with so-called "personal testimonies." In denominational evangelism classes they teach you to give your salvation testimony within two minutes. They do this because they say some times that is all the time you have for some people to listen to a testimony. You tell of your past experience and share a present benefit. Such testimony pales in comparison to the great love of God (1 John 4:19). Not only are "personal testimony" of no value, but do not be tempted to substitute the cross with fun and games. Fun, food and fellowship are good for fun, food and fellowship; however, do not be deceived into thinking that they have the power of the cross or the gospel (Romans 1:16). People in sin need to know they are in sin and that they have a great need for a Savior (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

To Motivate Sinful Man unto a Proper Love of God

Some tell us that God's love is not enough. They tell us man needs more than a clear understanding of sin and the price God paid because understanding will not generate the proper love for God. They tell us man needs a divinely-induced injection of spiritual steroids. The doctrine of "spiritual steroids" cheapens, diminishes and trivializes the love of God. How many husbands or wives base their loving relationship upon an artificial "Love Potion #9"? The very idea sickness those who desire genuine love: "[I]f a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned" (Song 8:7). God does not want a chemically induced love, even if that chemical is spiritual (1 Peter 1:22).

The following spiritual nourishment details how God motivates sinners to love Him (Romans 5:3, 6-8; 1 John 4:19, 16; John 17:26). "And we know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him" (1 John 4:16). "I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). We love because God loved us (1 John 4:19).

The most powerful motive for the overcoming of any problem is love. Aleida Huissen had smoked for 50 years and tried often to quit but just could not do it. Then 79 year old Leo Jansen came into her life and proposed. He refused to set the wedding day, however, until she quit her smoking. Will power had failed her for years, but love was stronger and she was able to quit for the sake of love. Love was the passion that gave her the power to do what she could not do without love. A. Z. Conrad said of love, "It furnishes to the world its progress passion. It is storm-defying, energy-conquering, venture-challenging, soul-awakening. It eats up the fires sent to consume it. It swallows the floods sent to drown it" (Pease).

If we love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, sin, not God's commandments, will be burdensome (1 John 5:3-4). "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." If we cannot give up things that hinder our relationship with God, we need to strengthen our love for God, and the cross of Calvary is the place to begin (Romans 2:4-11).

Conclusion

The few short years that Jesus lived gives us a great example of His flawless life, yet His death motives us to be like Him. The dozens of prophecies depicting the *Suffering Servant of God* also demonstrate that He was suppose to die. The Jews did not thwart God's plan; they effected it. Christ's resurrection gives clear evidence that human theorists do not know what they are talking about. Jesus is not a liar, nor is He a lunatic. He is Lord. Without the death of Jesus or His resurrection, we would be lost. Each of us needs Christ's sacrifice for sin.

Works Cited

Grant, Scott "The Necessity of Sacrifice" www.pbc.org/dp/grant/hebrews/heb15.html (22 August 2005).

Pease, Glenn the Celebration of Love" www.shelovesgod.com/library (22 August 2005).

Sper, David "Why Did Christ Have to Die?" www.rbc.org/ds/q0202/q0202.html (22 August 2005).