



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



The Sacrifice

When my son had learned to drive and was about to get his first car, we didn't have enough money saved to purchase a vehicle that we felt provided adequate reliability and safety. As a result, I decided to sell my SUV. The problem was, the dealership offered me a few thousand dollars less than its value. My first thought was, "No way!" But my wife and I would rest better knowing that he was in a vehicle that was safe and reliable. So I made the sacrifice and decided to sell my SUV. While I often think about that SUV, it is with little remorse, because it allowed us to purchase a vehicle for our son that was exactly as we expected!

Every day in Israel, the Levitical priest offered a sacrifice for the sins of the people after first offering a sacrifice for himself. The priest carried one of the most important job functions in the Israelite community. Although there were other parts of his job, this was most significant because it responded to the human condition of sin.

True Sacrifice

Webster defines sacrifice as an act of offering to a deity something precious. When we think of sacrifice today, we don't usually reflect on it in this sense. Instead we think of it in terms of suffering an inconvenience or selling something for less than its value like I did with my SUV.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites offered a precious lamb that had no imperfections as a sacrifice so they could obtain forgiveness for their offenses against God's Law. The idea was that there would be a transfer of suffering and death from the offender to the sacrifice.

A Necessary Sacrifice

This sacrifice was necessary because the penalty for man's sin is death under God's law. The Bible says in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death. . . ." Under God's law, there was no forgiveness for

sin without the shedding of blood. Because of God's love for Israel, He provided a sacrificial offering for them.

God likewise extended His love to us by providing a sacrificial lamb for our sins in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. It was through Jesus' death that all who accepted Him as Savior would receive eternal life! When He died, God transferred our sins to Him. This is how we have redemption and the forgiveness of our sins through the shedding of His blood.

The Perfect Sacrifice

History records many who sacrificed their lives for others. We would call them martyrs or heroes. While their sacrifices cannot be disputed, like Israel's Levitical priest, they were not perfect sacrifices because these people were sinners. On Easter Sunday, we celebrate much more than the deeds of a martyr or hero. We celebrate the One without sin who gave His life so that we would receive eternal life upon accepting Him and His sacrifice on Calvary. What does this have to do with Easter? Unlike other martyrs or heroes, after three days in the grave, JESUS ROSE AGAIN!

If you would like to know how to receive this eternal life through Him, please click on the link below. Accepting Him will allow you to see Easter as you've never seen it before!

- Dr. L.W. Edwards

*To learn how you can have eternal life, please [click here](#).

Why We Need Easter

The past weekend I visited a church friend who had been hospitalized after suffering an asthma-induced cardiac arrest. As I stepped inside his isolated intensive care room, my heart sank. I had heard he was unresponsive after his heart attack, but I guess I didn't really believe it. I had never seen someone fighting for their life in ICU until that moment. What I saw moved me beyond words.

My friend lay in a hospital bed, dressed in a white hospital gown. His eyes were closed as if he were sleeping, only he wasn't. Actually, he couldn't. He was completely unaware of his surroundings. Unable even to breathe on his own, his chest expanded and contracted with the steady rhythm of a breathing machine. Other tubes were attached to his body. It was hard for me to watch him suffer like this after seeing him in seemingly good health at a church meeting a few short weeks earlier. It is a sight I will never forget.

The Villains of Death & Suffering

Two days after my visit, my friend died, leaving his wife, daughter and church family to grieve his loss. I am thankful he is no longer suffering, but it still hurts to know I will never see him alive on Earth again. Suffering and death are a normal part of our existence in an imperfect world. It's easy to overspiritualize them — until they affect us. Like an unexpected hook punch to the stomach, they still leave us stunned, helpless and vulnerable. Only then do we begin to see them for the villains they truly are.

And once we see suffering and death as they truly are, we can understand why we need Easter.

If life were a sentence, the hope of Easter is that death is not a period at the end but a comma in the middle. Death is not the end of our existence. For Christians, it is only the beginning of an eternity with Jesus. You see, we believe Jesus lived and died. But we also believe that, unlike other spiritual leaders, He overcame death. Because He stepped out of His grave, everyone who trusts in Him for salvation has hope of doing the same.

Reframing Death & Suffering

Our understanding of Jesus' resurrection helps us to see suffering and death in a different light. They are not permanent states of being. Even when suffering leads to death as it did for my friend, it is like taking off one set of clothes and changing into another. It is replacing a temporary body with an eternal one. This is why the Apostle Paul could ask, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) Because Jesus experienced the sting of death when He died on the cross, death cannot hold us in the grave. It doesn't have the last laugh. The resurrection of Jesus assures us of ultimate victory over this sworn enemy.

Your heart may be shaken by the recent loss of a friend or loved one. You may be troubled when acts of violence in schools, rumors of war, widespread suffering and natural disasters claiming tens of thousands of lives fill national and international news headlines. Mourn these losses. Pray for those who grieve. Help in whatever way you can. Advocate for those who suffer unjustly. But hold onto your hope in Jesus. Point as many people as you can to Him. Easter is proof that someday suffering will be no more, and death will die. And that's why we need it.

- Cam Edwards

