

GROWING DEEP IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Returning to Our Roots

STUDY FOURTEEN

The Remedy for Our Disease

Leviticus 4:1–7; Isaiah 53:1–6

The cross has served its purpose and it's gone. But the Savior who died on that cross lives on. He is our glory.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

CRUCIFIXION was a terrifying sight in the Roman world, devised as the cruelest and most inhumane form of execution. Victims might languish for days on a cross before finally succumbing to death. The Romans erected crosses with victims nailed to them along busy thoroughfares as a warning to would-be lawbreakers: *This will be your fate if you dare defy Rome.*

The cross epitomized the merciless justice of Rome that crushed all transgressors. And yet, to followers of Christ, the deadly cross came to signify something life-giving—the *merciful justice* of God. Transgressors who put their faith in Jesus weren't punished when they came to His cross, rather, they were set free from the judgment they deserved. At the cross of Christ, they received life!

How did a terrifying instrument of punishment become a beacon of hope to sinners? The answer lies in Israel's ancient sacrificial system which, when applied to Christ's cross, transforms this instrument of punishment into an altar of grace. Let's take a closer look at this symbol of death to find life in its message. It is "the very power of God" for those whom God has saved (1 Corinthians 1:18).



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Regret for sins committed can weigh heavily on a person's heart. As you examine the meaning of Christ's death on the cross in this *Searching the Scriptures* study, ask the Lord to help you embrace your forgiveness and experience true freedom in Christ.

Father, my heart aches sometimes because of my sinful choices, and I need Your grace today to lift my burden. I come to You through Your Word for relief. Speak to me through Your Spirit about the hope I have in Christ. In His name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The search for the meaning of the cross leads us down the hall of history to the period of the exodus. After God delivered the Hebrews from Egypt, He instructed them to build the tabernacle, a sacred tent where God's presence dwelled. At the tabernacle was an altar where priests daily offered sacrifices on behalf of the people.

A person atoned for his or her individual sins by following four steps outlined in *Leviticus 4*.

- 1) The sinner brought an animal without defect to the altar (4:3, 14, 23, 28, 32).
- 2) The sinner laid hands on the animal, symbolizing the transfer of guilt to the blameless animal (4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33).
- 3) The priest killed the animal as a substitute for the person (4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33).
- 4) The priest sprinkled or smeared the blood as required (4:6, 16, 25, 30, 34).

The Lord accepted the sacrifices and mercifully pardoned His people. And yet, God didn't intend animal sacrifices to provide a permanent remedy for sin but to foreshadow the ultimate remedy, the single sacrifice to fulfill them all.



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Observation: Isaiah's Prophecy of the Substitute

Isaiah prophesied the coming of the One who would bear humanity's sins. Carefully observe Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53. Look for key verbs and adjectives that describe the coming Savior and what He would do.

The Person of the Messiah—Isaiah 53:1–3

How did Isaiah describe the Messiah in *Isaiah 53:1–3*?

What was this description prophesying about the person of Jesus?

Nothing in Jesus' appearance caused Him to stand out from anyone else. He had all the marks of humanity, just like us. He was God, but you couldn't tell it from His appearance.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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The Work of the Messiah—Isaiah 53:4–9

Highlight the pronouns “our,” “we,” and “us” in *Isaiah 53:4–6* and write down the words Isaiah used to describe our sinful condition.

Now, find the pronouns “he,” “his,” and “him” in this same passage and record what Isaiah prophesied Jesus would do for sinners as their substitutionary sacrifice.

How was Isaiah’s prophecy in *53:7–9* fulfilled in Jesus?

Jesus was pierced through, crushed, chastened, and scourged. Why? Because “the LORD laid on him the sins of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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The Results of the Messiah’s Work—Isaiah 53:10–12

With whom did this plan originate, according to *Isaiah 53:10*? What does this fact signify?

What would Christ’s atonement accomplish, according to *53:10–12*?

What similarities do you see between the animal sacrifices on the altar in Leviticus and Isaiah’s description of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross? What was unique about Christ’s sacrifice?

When Christ died on that cross and poured out His blood, He said, “It is finished! It’s over! It’s complete! It’s done! No one need ever offer another sacrifice.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: The Meaning of Atonement

The cross represents Christ's atonement for our sin. In his book, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll defines *atonement* in this way:

The term is found only in the Old Testament, where it means “to cover” and carries with it the thought of putting sin out of sight, covering it over by blood.¹

Covering sin doesn't mean that our sins never existed. Rather, it means that God, in His grace, doesn't count our sins against us. Why not? Because a price was paid by the innocent blood of Christ. Atonement releases sinners from judgment.

Why was innocent blood required to cover sin, according to *Leviticus 17:11* and *Hebrews 9:22*?

What does *substitutionary* atonement mean? Reflect on the key phrases that describe Christ's work in Isaiah 53, and for further insight, consult the article, “*What is the substitutionary atonement?*” at gotquestions.org.



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Although we stand guilty before God, Christ shed His blood on the cross to cover our sins, which was an act *only Jesus could perform*. As God, Jesus was sinless—the Lamb of God without defect. As a human, Jesus could die in the place of humans. Only His shed blood, which represented His innocent life poured out on the altar before God, could be sufficient to cover “the sins of all the world” (1 John 2:2). Because of *who* Jesus is, His substitutionary sacrifice was superior to all the animal sacrifices combined. Only Jesus’ death offers complete atonement.

Why all the blood? Why the altar? Because God stated, “The life of the body is in the blood. . . . It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible” (Leviticus 17:11). —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Christ’s Once-for-All Sacrifice

According to [Hebrews 10:1–4](#), what were the limitations of the sacrificial system?

What makes Christ and His atoning sacrifice superior, according to [10:10–14](#)?



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What did Jesus mean when He declared from the cross, “It is finished!” according to *John 19:28–30*?

Jesus’ death on the cross was the once-for-all-time, sufficient atonement for sin. God offers all people a real remedy for sin’s disease through Christ’s death, not a pill to treat the symptoms or a drug to numb the pain. When we put our faith in Jesus, He is our cure.

Application: Life of Gratitude

What do people see when they look at a cross? Some see a religious symbol and don’t feel much connection to it. Others see a fashion statement or maybe a political view.

Has this study enhanced the meaning of the cross for you? What do you see when you look at a cross?

If God etched one word into the cross to communicate His heart for humankind, surely the word would be *love*. God sent “Christ to die for us while we were still sinners” as the ultimate expression of His love (Romans 5:8). The innocent was sacrificed for the guilty. The One who least deserved death died for those who most deserved it so they could have life. Such love moves us to tears!



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Take a moment to express your love for Christ who bore your judgment on the cross, covered your sin, and made a way for you to have a personal relationship with God.

Something remarkable happens inside us when we realize that Jesus took our place and bore the punishment we deserve, leaving us absolutely free and clear. Something inside the heart of the forgiven says, “I will love my Savior forever and ever.”
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, there is no greater love than the love you showed by sending Your Son to die for me. Thank You for finding a way to make me right with You. Atonement through Christ is the most precious gift I could ever receive, and I cling to Him as my Savior and Lord. In His name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep in the Christian Life: Returning to Our Roots* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1986), 413.

