

Sacrifice

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In the early hours of 25 April 1915 men from the Australian Imperial Forces as part of the newly formed Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZACs) stormed the beaches of Gallipoli in an attempt to secure passage for the Allied Naval Fleet. From the outset everything about this campaign was doomed to failure. The timing was wrong, the location was wrong, and the intelligence underestimated their foe. Despite their heroic efforts, by December the same year they were given the order to withdraw from the failed mission. With over 8,700 dead and 17,000 wounded they successfully withdrew and left a legacy that will never be forgotten.

It is for this reason that we stop and pause on this day to remember them. But it is not only them but the sacrifice of all soldiers that have served our nation. We thank them for the sacrifice they made to allow us to live with the comforts and freedoms we so truly enjoy.

But this begs the question what is a sacrifice and why, if it even is, is it still necessary?

PRAY

Interestingly enough when you look up the word sacrifice in the Oxford dictionary, the first definition that comes up is “an act of slaughtering an animal or person, or surrendering a possession as an offering to a deity.” It is only further down that we read about giving things up for the greater good.

The Bible is filled with different sacrifices and schedules and rituals for which these were to be performed. But did you realise that it is only the Judeo-Christian tradition in which these sacrifices are made to directly benefit humans. Other world views try to bribe their gods into giving them stuff or not bringing destruction upon them. However, in the Christian Worldview sacrifices are made, predominately to atone for sin and shame.

God himself got the ball rolling on this and after the first sin He slaughtered an animal to cover their shame. The plants that they thought would suffice but they were not sufficient to cover their shame so He killed an animal and covered them with the skins.

Just in case you didn't get it the first time; the very next story re-emphasises this point. Blood needs to be spilt to adequately atone for sin. That's because there is life in the blood.

If you want to know something about sacrifices Leviticus is your book. It is literally the Israelite National Butchers handbook. In quite some detail you can read all about the hows whens and whys but in particular it tells us in 17:11

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.”

You see it's the old eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth thing. The wages of sin are death (Romans 6:23) and therefore blood that provides life is the only thing that can compensate for this.

All cultures throughout the world have understood that sacrifices must be made. I would suggest that this is a little sliced of evidence that we all have the same ancestral beginnings but I'll leave that for another time. They also understand that there is some form of scalable value to the sacrifice being made. The higher the value of the object the more “pleasing” to the deity. If you want a good harvest you might sacrifice some of your grain, if you want to save your first born you may need to up that to a lamb. What is good to note though is that God is just and understands that not all people can afford a spotless lamb for the redemption of their first born and allowed a substitute. Remember Luke records that Mary and Joseph could afford the lamb for Jesus so they went with the pigeons instead. I have heard a commentator say that is why Jesus was so indignant in the temple, because the money lenders were prying on the poor and vulnerable, and it was not so much about the selling. Food for thought anyway.

Unfortunately most cultures, if not all at some stage in their history, agreed that the greatest sacrifice was a human life.

God detests the act of human sacrifice, especially of infants. At the risk of engaging in political debate, abortion and more and more so lately infanticide, killing of a child that survives the abortion process, could be considered as an example of this. By killing these children you are allowed to continue worshiping the god of self, pleasure and sex and rid yourself of the pesky inconvenience of consequences. Butter it up however you like you are still killing an innocent personal being to be able to fulfil your own “religious” practices of sex. But I digress...

The only human sacrifice God accepts is that of ones own. Giving up what I have so you can have it or something else instead.

John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

But this one act isn’t enough. One persons life could only atone for one others and that means that at least half of us must be doomed then what happens when sin reoccurs. But what if we had a person that was eternal, surely then their sacrifice would be eternal.

John 1 describes such a person starting at verse 1

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was with God in the beginning.³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome^[a] it.”

And then in 14

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

God loves us so much that he decided enough is enough no longer do they need to make atonement for their sin I'll do it for them. So he destroyed the National Israelite Butchery Temple, DESTROYED it and the old system, and gave us himself as his son, the eternal LORD Jesus Christ to die for all our sins and shame. Then in three days He rebuilt it so that who ever believes in him shall have eternal life!

So I guess then there is no need for sacrifices.

WRONG!

Lets read in context what Jesus was saying when he spoke about love:

John 15:12-17

“¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.”

I am not saying that we all need to go and get ourselves killed or crucified but we should be willing to give up everything for those we love and we should love all.

Someone asked Ravi Zacharius why did God set a trap for humans in the beginning? It's a hard question to answer but in short he said that there were only three options. 1 no humans, 2 no choice just robots, 3 free will. If there is no pain and suffering you can not understand what love is. None of us can feel the air on our shoulders but there is a ton on them at any one time. You don't feel it because you have never not had it.

Now is the time to make a change and show the world what real love is.

1 John 3:16-18

¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

In these current times it very easy to lock yourself away and wait for it all to pass. But it is better, and dare I say God's will that we do what we can for our neighbours. If all that is is pray, then pray. If it is make a meal for someone then do that. What ever it is just do it out of the love that he bore for us.

I like so many other diggers didn't travel around the world and risk everthing because of hate or aggression. It wasn't even really for a sense of adventure. We all joined for the same reason, to serve. It was the love of God, love of people (family, friends and those in need) and the love of life that made me willing to give up my own.

Would I do it all again?

Yes in a heartbeat, to secure the freedoms we all enjoy and for the hope of a better tomorrow.

Father we thank you for the sacrifices that have been made so we can be free to worship you. We ask that you will give us the strength to make ourselves a living sacrifice and embodiment of your love passion and grace. Lord if anyone is struggling with these words today I ask that you will fill them with your Spirit and show them that they can be free if they want to. Finally, Lord I ask that you will help us to no longer just go through the motions but to live our lives for you. In your name I pray. AMEN