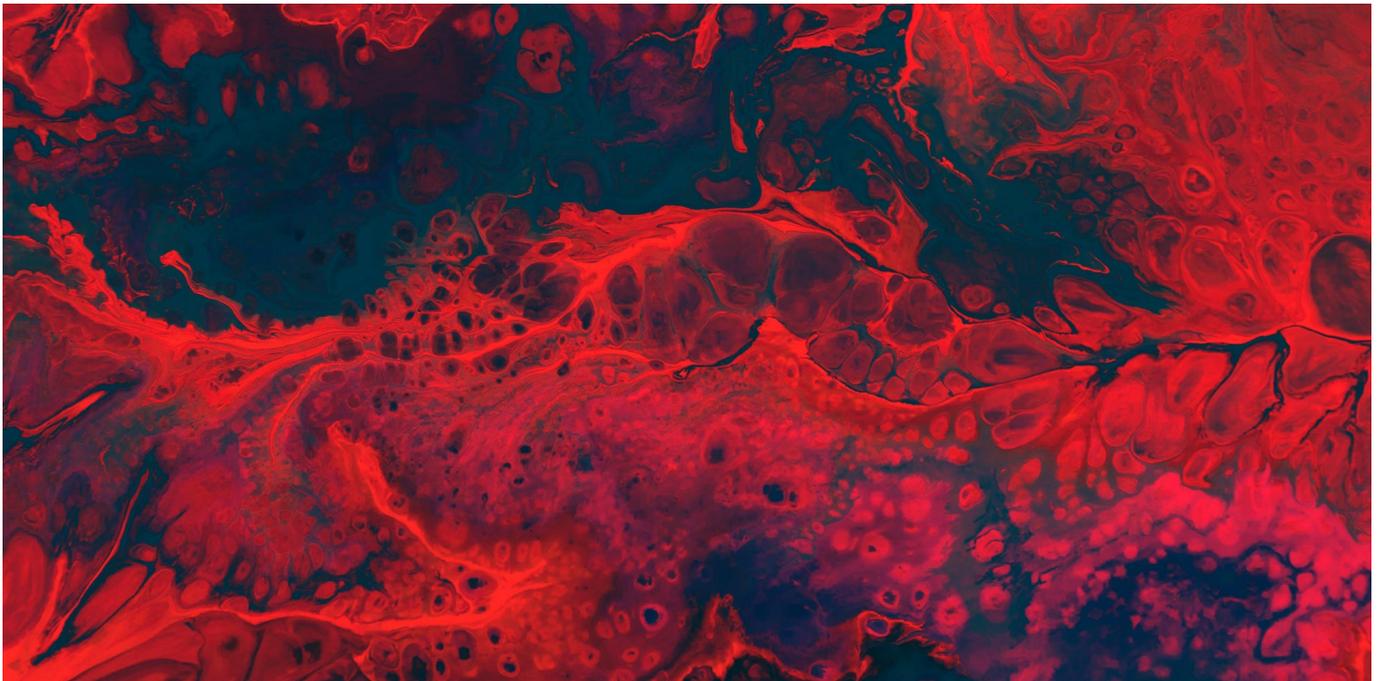


Killing Sin is Messy

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Reading Time: 4 minutes

Blood is precious. Bleeding out will kill a person within minutes. When blood is given in a hospital, certain steps must be taken quickly and accurately every time to ensure the safety of the patient—one careless mistake could prove fatal. The wrong blood type or a bubble of air in the tubing could kill the person instead of save them. Many people today are squeamish around even a few drops of blood so much so that an entire film industry has been built around scaring viewers with gross amounts of blood. Our society may not be familiar with blood, but the Israelites would have been intimately familiar with it.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus contain lengthy descriptions of many of the sacrifices offered by the Israelites, such as the burnt offering, the peace offering, and the sin offering. Most of these sacrifices required the death of either a bull or of a goat or sheep. Five principles are consistently laid out within the Old Law that guided the sacrifice of each animal:

1. The animal must be without blemish; it could not have deformities or scars or a patchy

- coat. God would accept nothing less than the best (cf. Lev. 22:24; Deut. 17:1).
2. It must be offered freely. A sacrifice given out of coercion is a tax, not a gift.
 3. God required attention to detail; He wanted specific sacrifices offered specific ways at specific times, and He would not accept variants (cf. Lev. 1:1-3).
 4. The person offering the sacrifice must have an association with the sacrifice itself.
 5. Finally, if all these principles were followed, God promised that the sacrifice would be a sweet-smelling aroma to Him (cf. Lev. 1:9, et al.). He would accept the individual's sacrifice and be pleased by it. God was faithful and would not change His mind about His requirements.

Although each of the principles are equally important, let's look closer at one in particular. When someone offered a sacrifice, he or she must have a relationship with that sacrifice. In Leviticus 1:4, Moses writes that each person had to place a hand on the head of the animal as it was being slaughtered. The average sheep or goat has 5-6 liters of blood in its body, about the same as a human. Each bull, however, contains about 39 liters of blood. For the sake of comparison, that is about the same volume as 10 gallons of milk. Imagine the pool of milk on the floor from a child spilling one carton. Now imagine each Israelite standing in the temple, touching an animal they had likely raised from infancy, and watching nearly 10 times that amount of blood swirled around their feet, soaked their shoes, and pooled across the floor. The design of this command was to teach that their sins were the reason an innocent animal had to die (cf. Lev. 17:11). When Solomon dedicated the temple to God in 2 Chronicles 7:5, he offered 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep. On just this one occasion alone, almost 42,000 gallons of blood were shed in sacrifice to God. Killing sin is messy.

Over the 1500 years between Moses and Christ, how many hundreds of thousands of gallons of blood were spilled for the sins in just the nation of Israel?

And yet, it was not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin (Heb. 10:16).

It would take something far greater than that to take away sin. It would take the blood of Christ—the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—who was without spot or blemish—who freely laid down His own life for our sins. In doing so, He fulfilled hundreds of prophecies from the Old Testament (cf. Matt. 5:17). Because He was blameless (figuratively without spot), gave Himself willingly, and fulfilled every detail of prophecy about Him, His sacrifice was a sweet-smelling aroma before God (Eph. 5:2). He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, but “it pleased the Lord to bruise Him” (Isa. 53:10). Killing sin truly is messy.

However, if we want any benefit from His sacrifice, we must have an association with Him. Listen to what Romans 6 says about our relationship with Christ:

- “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (v. 3)
- “...our old self was crucified with Him...” (v. 6)
- “Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him.” (v. 8)

Our association with Christ is based on our association with His death, burial, and resurrection. We reenact the gospel when we are baptized into Him (Rom. 6:3-4), but our association continues much longer than that. After all, how can we who died to sin live any longer in it (v. 1-2)?

Do we, like the Israelites who offered animals without blemish, offer God our best?

When we make budgets, does giving back to God come first or second or third or last? When we plan our week, does time for prayer and Bible study come first, or does it only squeeze in when nothing more important, like work or school or family time, is happening

Do we offer ourselves freely to God? Or are we guilt-tripped into going to worship by the expectations of our peers? Do we willingly serve all those in need, or do we only serve the ones that look like us and talk like us and dress like us?

Do we pay attention to the details of God’s law? God is a God who cares about the details! Do we worship Him the way He wants to be worshiped? Or do we think *our* way is better? Are the things we watch and listen to above reproach or do we get as close to sin as we can, claiming it doesn’t bother us?

Do we associate with Christ only when it is convenient? Or do we associate with Him when it is unpopular too? Do we imitate Him as dear children by walking, talking, thinking, and acting like Him? Or do we change our words and our actions based on who we are around?

Killing sin is messy. Even though so many animals died for the sins of the Israelites, that blood could not save them. Sin cost so much more than any corruptible thing; it cost the precious blood of Christ. How calloused—how cold—how unfeeling would we have to be not to put sin to death? We are a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). We do not just sacrifice ourselves for Him once. Instead, we daily pick up our own cross, deny ourselves, and follow Him (Mat. 16:24). Our God is not impossible to please, and sin is not impossible to put to death. When we are living sacrifices, and we associate ourselves with Christ through our actions, we too can be a sweet-smelling aroma to God.

