

# A Believer Must Accept the Sacrifice

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The first article of this series discusses the primary characteristic of God: holiness. Man, though created holy and born without sin, sinned as discussed in the second article of this series. Man is now separated from God because he is no longer holy.

The third installment discusses how under the patriarchal law and the Law of Moses a believer sacrificed an animal to atone (cover) sin. This was a physical action which symbolized a spiritual change performed by God. Nothing in the animal, its blood, the altar, the fire, nor the recitation of the sins over the animal's head could change an unholy sinner into a cleansed believer. God gave the blood on the altar to atone for sins. When the believer offered the sacrifice the death of the sacrificial animal was transferred to the believer and the sins of the believer were transferred to the animal. In this way the sins were removed from the believer and the price of death was paid for the sins.

In the fourth article Jesus is presented as the perfect sacrifice – the Lamb of God. Because He could sin but chose not to sin throughout His life as a man, He did not deserve death nor did He owe death for sin. This allowed Him to give His death for others. Just as the animal had no sin, Jesus had no sin. The primary difference is that an animal cannot choose to sin because God did not give it “free will” but instead made it to react based on instinct and conditioning. Jesus, on the other hand, was tempted in all points like we are but did no sin (Hebrews 4:15). The blood has been spilled, the sacrifice made, the atonement offered but the believer still has the choice to accept the offer or to pay the death himself at the judgement. God does not force salvation on anyone though He wants all to be saved.

How does a believer accept the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ? Remember that a physical action was required of believers under the old laws. Today a physical action is still required. Faith is the key that changes this physical action into a spiritual change. Romans 6:1-11 speaks of dying with Christ, being buried with Him, and rising with Him. This physical action places the believer in contact with the sacrifice that was performed once for all time on the cross. The sinful believer dies with Christ submitting his will to that of Christ. The sins are removed by God because the believer spiritually contacts the blood of Christ while buried with Him. The cleansed believer is now raised to walk in a new life. There is nothing in the physical portions of this action that means anything without faith. The burial in water during baptism is required of a believer but in no way earns salvation. Remember that sacrifice is a free gift of God that man cannot require Him to allow and that man could not force Christ to provide. God's grace and mercy allow the death of Christ to pay the price for a sinner's sin but He still requires acceptance of the gift just as those under the old laws had to sacrifice animals to accept the same gift.

Faith is the key to everything with God. God's measure of success is faithfulness. Hebrews 11 speaks of those who were faithful to God because “they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city”. Each of these faithful persons accomplished something by faith. James 2 speaks about those who say they have faith but have no works. James says to show faith by works. Notice, however, that these works are not works that men dream up or decide are acceptable to God. Only “good works” are acceptable signs of faith and the one who decides what is good is God. Any work prescribed by God is a good work and does not earn anything because everything in our life has been bought with a price.

Allowing oneself to be baptized (immersed) to contact the blood of Christ is not a work one does but an act of another to which one submits. You cannot baptize yourself but you can allow someone to baptize you. Few argue that one must hear and understand the word of God, one must believe in Jesus the Christ, one must confess that He is Lord and the Son of God, and one must have faith in the power of God. Many, however, fight against the single submissive act where a true believer must rely on another to bury them in water. This is the only thing that is not a work but is an act of submission. All of the other things are an active requirement of the one who desires salvation. The problem most have

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is accepting that one must relinquish his own will to that of God and Christ. The submission to baptism is the response of a faithful heart to accept God's free gift of the sacrifice of Christ and declare that from that point forward the person will no longer act selfishly but according to God's will.

The next and final article in this series expands upon this idea of being a new creature.