Dying for a Cause

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."
—Romans 12:1

MUCH IS SAID IN THE Bible concerning the offering of sacrifice. It is first mentioned in Genesis 4:3-7, where we are told of offerings brought to the LORD by Cain and Abel. God accepted Abel's sacrifice, but rejected Cain's. In Hebrews 11:4, we are informed that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." Noah also offered sacrifice.—Gen. 8:20,21

Later, God asked Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. When Abraham proved his obedience to the LORD's will, a ram was provided as a substitute for Isaac. (Gen. 22:1-18) Still later, in connection with the deliverance of the Hebrew children from their Egyptian bondage, there was the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.—Exod. 12:3-10

After the children of Israel had left Egypt, God entered into a covenant with them, Moses serving as mediator. There was the offering of sacrifice in connection with the making *(Continued on page 36)*

(Continued from page 31) of this covenant. Under the arrangements of the Law Covenant, there was a yearly Atonement Day on which sacrifices were offered to the LORD–a bullock and a goat for a sin offering, and two rams for a burnt offering. (Lev. 16:1-28) Paul explains, "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."—Heb. 9:22

But all the sacrificing of the past was merely typical. Paul explains this, saying, "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." (vs. 23) In a prophecy concerning Jesus, in which his attitude of complete loyalty to his Father's will is depicted, the Prophet David wrote, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."—Ps. 40:6-8

In Hebrews 10:5-9, the Apostle Paul quotes this prophecy and explains that when Jesus said, 'Lo, I come: . . . to do thy will, O my God,' he took away "the first, that he may establish the second." That is, in the sacrificial work of Jesus, the typical sacrifices of the past were set aside, so far as recognition of them by God was concerned, and there began the offering of the 'better sacrifices.'

HUMAN SACRIFICES

The typical sacrifices consisted of bulls, goats, and lambs, but in the antitype both Jesus and his followers lay down their lives. A suggestion of this

was given when the LORD asked Abraham to offer his son Isaac in sacrifice, and then substituted a ram in the place of Isaac. Isaac was a type of Jesus, who actually did lay down his life, no ram being provided to take his place in death.

According to the prophecy of Psalm 40:6-8, Jesus came to do all that had been written of him 'in the volume of the book,' that is, in the Old Testament scriptures. The volume of the book had foretold that Jesus would be led "as a lamb to the slaughter," dying for the sin-cursed race. (Isa. 53:7) The twenty-second Psalm also foretold Jesus' sacrificial death. As we have seen, the typical sacrifices under the Law pointed forward to the fact that Jesus would give his life for the sins of the world.

Through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit that came upon Jesus at Jordan when he was baptized, he understood the meaning of the prophecies concerning his sacrificial death. He conducted his ministry in keeping with them. He preached the Gospel of the kingdom, and healed the sick and raised the dead. Intermingled with these activities were his references to his coming death. Jesus was a young man, his disciples thought, to be talking about dying, so they did not discern the meaning of this aspect of his ministry.

On one occasion, Jesus said that he would give his flesh, his humanity, "for the life of the world." (John 6:51) At another time, toward the close of his ministry, he announced to his disciples that he was going to Jerusalem where he expected that his enemies would arrest him and put him to death.—Matt. 16:21

The disciples were impressed with Jesus' teachings concerning the glory of his kingdom, and James and John asked him if they could sit, one on his right hand and one on his left hand in the kingdom. Jesus replied to this by asking if they were able to drink of his cup and be baptized with his baptism. They replied, "We are able." (Matt. 20:22) Jesus assured them that they would be given this opportunity, but they did not then realize that this meant to suffer and die with him.—Mark 10:37-40

SUFFERING, THEN GLORY

Because the disciples did not understand that Jesus must die as the world's Redeemer, they were greatly disturbed when his enemies cruelly wrested him from them and crucified him. After he was raised from the dead, he talked with two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus and explained to them what the Scriptures had foretold—that it was essential first that Christ should suffer, and then "enter into his glory."—Luke 24:13-32

These two disciples grasped the meaning of Jesus' words and their hearts rejoiced. Now they knew that their Master's death was not a miscarriage of the Divine plan. But it was not until they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that they understood they were to have the privilege of suffering and dying with Jesus. Through the revealing power of the Holy Spirit, Peter grasped this point very clearly, and later explained it. In his first epistle, Peter mentions the testimony of the prophets concerning the "sufferings of Christ," and then explains that the disciples of Jesus are partakers of these sufferings.—I Pet. 1:10,11

Peter wrote, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." (chap. 4:12,13) Again, "What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."—chap. 2:20,21

Paul confirms Peter in his teaching that the followers of Jesus have the opportunity of participating with him in the foretold 'sufferings of Christ.' He wrote to Timothy, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."—II Tim. 2:11,12

To the brethren at Rome, Paul wrote, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: . . . if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:16-18) It was the Holy Spirit, through the prophets, that foretold the sufferings of Christ, and if we are suffering with him, Paul writes, it means that the Holy Spirit's testimony, or 'witness,' applies to us.

In Romans 6:3, Paul raises the question in order that they might realize that baptism, or burial, into Christ, is in reality a baptism into his death.

In verse five, he speaks of our being "planted together in the likeness of his death." If we continue faithful in this baptism, faithful even unto death, "we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection"—the promised "glory that should follow."—I Pet. 1:11

John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) The title 'Lamb' identifies Jesus as fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy concerning the lamb that would be led to the slaughter. In Revelation 5:6, reference is made to Jesus as a "slain" lamb. In Revelation 14:1, this same Lamb is shown standing on "mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand." In verse four, these are identified as those who "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They follow him, as lambs, into death.—Rom. 8:36

ANTITYPICAL PRIESTS

In the type, under the arrangements of the Mosaic Law, the work of sacrifice was done by those designated priests—Aaron, the brother of Moses, together with his four sons, comprised the original priestly family, and the priesthood continued in the Aaronic family. In Hebrews 3:1, we read, "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession [or order], Christ Jesus." Verse six reads, "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

In I Peter 2:5, we read, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood,

to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And, again in verse nine of this chapter, Peter writes, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood."

Thus not only do we see that as followers of Jesus we have the privilege of suffering and dying with him, but that this is foreshadowed in the typical sacrifices offered in connection with the services of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Just as the priests in the type offered sacrifices, so, as Peter explains, we also are a priesthood to offer sacrifices. One difference between the type and the antitype is that whereas in the type the priests offered animals in the place of themselves, in the antitype, as our text states, we present our own bodies 'a living sacrifice.'

This, in reality, constitutes the terms of discipleship. As Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24) This is a straightforward invitation to die with Christ—symbolically speaking, to be crucified with him. But this raises a question. Since Jesus died to redeem mankind from sin, and its penalty, death, why is it that those who accept him are invited to die? Why are they not, instead, released from the penalty of death, and restored to perfection of life? The Bible's answer to this question reveals the true meaning of the Christian life, that it is a participation in the better sacrifices of this Gospel Age.

WHY DID JESUS DIE?

Jesus died to redeem the sin-cursed race from death. This feature of the sacrificial aspect of the

Divine plan is described in the Bible by the word 'ransom,' which means 'a price to correspond.' One of the early uses of this word in the Bible reads, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul [life] is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.)"—Ps. 49:7,8

Here the psalmist says that the redemption of human life is too precious, or costly, for any member of the human race to accomplish. It means that if salvation from death depended upon fallen human efforts, the lives of all would cease forever. The reason for this is clear. It was a perfect man who sinned and brought upon himself the penalty of death. This penalty was passed on to all of Adam's progeny, resulting in all being born imperfect and under condemnation to death. None of these, therefore, could be a corresponding price, a ransom to accomplish the redemption of others.

The LORD knew this, and in his love provided One who could be a ransom. One of the Old Testament promises reads, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hos. 13:14) Notice here how definitely the use of the word ransom is associated with the release of man from death.

Our Heavenly Father sent his beloved Son into the world to do this ransoming work. Concerning this Jesus said, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) It was Jesus' perfect human life, voluntarily surrendered, that constituted the ransom. Without this, no member

of the fallen race could have any hope of eternal life.

The Apostle Paul also uses the word ransom in explaining what Jesus has accomplished on behalf of humanity. He wrote, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—I Tim. 2:3-6

Paul's statement, 'To be testified in due time,' is fundamentally important to our understanding of God's plan to give life to mankind—life that was provided by the ransom. John 3:16 reads, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In connection with this, Paul raised the question, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"—Rom. 10:14

Practically the entire human race has gone into death without hearing about the provision of life made for them through the ransom provided by Jesus. But Paul says that it is the will of God that these shall be saved from death, and have the knowledge of the ransom testified to them. Only then will they be in a position to benefit from the fact that Jesus died for them.

From this it is evident that if the plan of God ceased to function when Jesus died, no one would have received life through the ransom. While the ransom makes life available for the human race, it does not give life. It requires the operation of

additional features of the Divine plan in order for the life-giving merit of the ransom to reach and benefit mankind. The disciples of Christ become coworkers with the Heavenly Father and with Jesus in making available to mankind the life provided by the ransom.

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

The Apostle Paul explains the manner in which we, as the disciples of Christ, are privileged to be workers together with him. We quote: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed [put in us, *Marginal Translation*] unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then [that is, because of this] we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin[offering] for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—II Cor. 5:19-21

Let us examine this passage carefully. 'God was in Christ,' Paul says, 'reconciling the world unto himself.' God sent his Son into the world to die as man's Redeemer in order that the world could be reconciled to him, and being reconciled to him, have life. But the sending of Jesus, and his redeeming work, was not the end of God's plan for reconciling the world to himself. Beyond this was the need for the word of reconciliation, or, as Paul stated it in his letter to Timothy, the testimony concerning the ransom.

This 'word of reconciliation,' Paul explains, has been put in us, or committed unto us, and this constitutes us 'ambassadors for Christ.' It is evident,

therefore, that if God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and now we represent Christ, then God is in us also reconciling the world to himself. The total purpose of God is to reconcile the world—all mankind who in due time accept Christ and obey Divine law—but first there is the reconciling of those who become his followers and co-workers, 'We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.'

FOR HIS BODY'S SAKE

Coming back to the scriptural fact that the disciples of Christ suffer and die with him, in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the sufferings of Christ, we now note a further thought that Paul presents in this connection. Of himself he wrote, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) Thus Paul confirms the fact that the 'afflictions,' or sufferings of Christ, were not finished on Calvary, and that it was his privilege and ours to participate in them. He explains that this suffering was for 'his body's sake,' that is, for the benefit of the body members of Christ, his disciples, the church.

This is one of the outstanding privileges of every true Christian. The Apostle John, after reminding us that Christ laid down his life for us, wrote that "we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." (I John 3:16) It is clear from this that John did not believe that, in the Divine plan, the sacrificing of life on behalf of others was finished with the death of Jesus.

In the texts just quoted, Paul and John emphasize that our sacrifice of life is on behalf of fellowmembers in the body of Christ, the brethren. Other texts reveal that it is also on behalf of the world. Our baptism is described by Paul as a death baptism, burial into Jesus' death—that is, in sacrificial death. In I Corinthians 15:29, in an argument to sustain the great truth of the resurrection, Paul says that our baptism for the dead would be in vain if the dead are not to be restored to life.

This could have no other meaning than the fact that our baptism into the death of Christ will accrue to the benefit of the dead world of mankind, a benefit that will reach them when they are awakened from the sleep of death. This should help us further to understand why the New Testament speaks of the disciples of Christ as an order of priests who lay down their lives in sacrifice. Just as the nation of Israel, typically, was blessed by the sacrificial work of the Aaronic priesthood, so the whole world will yet be blessed as a result of the sacrificial work of Christ and his church, the antitypical priesthood.

ON ACCOUNT OF SIN

All sacrifices acceptable to God, which have been offered throughout the ages, beginning with the flesh and blood offering presented by Abel, have been related to the fact that man is a sinner. The offerings made specifically on account of sin are, in the Old Testament, designated sin offerings, this expression being used to describe many of the typical sacrifices presented to the LORD in connection with the services of the Tabernacle.

Prophetically it was written of Jesus that he would make his soul "an offering for sin." (Isa. 53:10) This 'offering for sin [sin offering]' made by Jesus was, as we have seen, an exact corresponding price for Adam—a ransom. The sin offerings presented in the services of the Tabernacle were not a corresponding price, hence were not accepted as an offset for Adamic sin. But they did result in limited and temporary blessing for Israel, and they were acceptable to God for this purpose.

The sacrifice of Jesus was all-sufficient as a corresponding price—a ransom—to provide release from Adamic condemnation. However, the fact that we are invited to be co-sacrificers with him, would indicate that our offering is in some way related to the work of reconciling the sin-cursed world to God; an offering that is made on account of sin, hence a sin offering.

The thought of a sin offering is given to us by the Apostle Paul in Romans 6:9-11, which follows his statement that we are "planted together in the likeness of his [Jesus] death." (vs. 5) Now he explains what that likeness is. We quote, "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The key to the full depth of meaning contained in this passage is in the word 'likewise,' continuing the thought expressed by Paul in his previous statement that we are planted together in the 'likeness' of Jesus' death. To what does the likewise, or

likeness, apply? The true answer is inescapable. Jesus died 'unto sin, . . . likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.' Thus the presenting of our bodies a living sacrifice, as our text urges, is related to the Divine purpose to destroy sin.

The question arises as to how we, who by nature are sinners, could present an acceptable sin offering to the LORD. We indeed are by nature, sinners, yet, in our text, Paul assures us that we can present an offering to the LORD that is holy and acceptable. Even if we did not understand the LORD's reasoning on this, we should be willing to accept the testimony of his inspired apostle on the matter, and rejoice that it is so.

Paul, however, gives further assistance to our weak faith in his statement, Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin. Every true follower of the Master goes into death in seemingly the same manner as the remainder of mankind. Most of us die of sickness, or old age, or perhaps by accident. But Paul explains that despite this we are authorized to reckon ourselves as dying unto sin, just as Jesus died unto sin. Jesus did not die unto sin in the sense that sin died in his body. His dying unto sin was in the sense of making his soul an offering for sin.

The objection may be raised that Jesus gave himself as a ransom, but we cannot do this, which is true. But we should make a distinction between a sin offering and what may be accomplished by it. Jesus' sacrificial death unto sin is related to another aspect of the Divine plan of reconciliation.

THE TABERNACLE SERVICES

The Book of Hebrews presents further proofs that the disciples of Jesus, and their part in the Divine plan, were typified in God's dealings with Israel in connection with the services of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Only the priests, for example, had access to the Most Holy of the Tabernacle; and Paul presents Jesus, the antitypical High Priest as the "forerunner" entering into the antitypical Most Holy, even heaven itself, and explains that our hope is anchored "within the veil"—our hope of joining our 'forerunner' in that exalted position.—Heb. 6:19,20

Paul identifies those who are dying with Christ as foreshadowed in Israel's typical Atonement Day sacrifices. He writes, "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary [Most Holy] by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."—Heb. 13:11-13

In the typical Atonement Day service, two animals were sacrificed, a bullock and a goat, and the blood of each, in turn, was taken into the sanctuary and sprinkled upon the mercy seat. The bodies of both these animals were taken outside the camp to be burned. So Paul explains that just as Jesus suffered without the gate, we are to go forth unto him and share his reproach and suffering. Since the bodies of only the two animals were involved in this picture it is obvious that the bullock was a picture of Jesus, while the goat foreshadowed the church.

The particular part of this service, which revealed God's pleasure, was the offering of incense on the golden altar in the first Holy. Paul refers to the antitype of this as "the sacrifice of praise to God." (vs. 15) But how can we offer a 'sacrifice of praise to God' that will be holy and acceptable? Paul explains that it is "by him," that is, by—or through—Christ.

In verse sixteen of this chapter, Paul gives us the practical application of this revealing typical lesson of the Tabernacle and its services. He says, "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." We read, in Galatians 6:9,10, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." The greatest good we can render to any and all is to communicate to them the glorious Gospel of Christ, the "word of reconciliation." (II Cor. 5:19) Laying down our lives in such a service is a sacrifice of praise that, through Christ, is well-pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

RECONCILIATION

Doing good by communicating the Truth in this present evil world means sacrifice and suffering. But Peter explains that it is better to suffer for well-doing, than for evil doing. Then he makes this revealing observation, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (I Pet. 3:18) The words 'for' and 'also' are the important ones here. 'For Christ also' hath suffered, for well-doing. But Peter

says more than this. It is better for us to suffer for well-doing, 'for Christ also hath once suffered for sins.' Suffering for well-doing in the Christian way is, as Peter explains, suffering for sins, dying unto sin, suffering 'without the camp.'

Peter explains further that Christ's suffering for sin was to bring us to God. His ransom constituted the basis of reconciliation, and this, followed by the word of reconciliation, has brought us to God. Our suffering for well doing is also to bring about the reconciliation of members of the sin-cursed race to God—not to ransom them, but to extend to them the word of reconciliation. We have been given the "ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18) and as Peter explains, in the laying down of our lives in this service, we are suffering for sin that we might bring people to God.

The testimony of the ransom, the 'word of reconciliation,' is to reach all in due time. (I Tim. 2:3-6) During the present age, it effectively reaches only those called to the heavenly reward. Thus our suffering is now for his 'body's sake.' But in laying down our lives for one another, we are being trained to minister the Truth to the whole world during the thousand years of Christ's reign, for the 'ministry of reconciliation' will not be completed until the end of the kingdom period.

Truly, it is a high and holy calling to which we are invited. Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." (Rom. 12:1) Truly, it is only by God's mercy that members of the dying race are made coworkers with him, and this mercy is extended to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

How comforting is the assurance that in presenting our bodies in sacrifice, God counts them as living—alive through Christ and his redeeming blood. We are, by nature, under condemnation to death, but through Christ we live. Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,"—faith in his redeeming blood.—Gal. 2:20

That is why, in Hebrews 9:13,14, the blood of both the typical bullock and the typical goat, slain on Israel's Atonement Day, is shown to represent the blood—the life—of Christ. Our bodies can be offered as a living sacrifice, only because of his blood. Paul writes, "Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus [symbolized by his blood] might be made manifest in our body. For we which live [through the merit of Christ] are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."—II Cor. 4:9-11

We are dying sacrificially—laying down our lives in the greatest cause mankind has ever known. Few, indeed, even yet know about it. It is the cause of reconciling the fallen race to God. Jesus made it possible, giving himself in death as a "ransom for all." (I Tim. 2:6) We have the privilege of dying in the same cause by sacrificing time, strength, and means to publish the word of reconciliation. While only a few in this age are thus brought to God, we rejoice that the testimony will yet reach

all mankind; so that whosoever will, may accept, obey, and thus be reconciled.

Meanwhile, through the present sacrificial ministry of reconciliation we are being prepared for the future service when we appear with Christ in glory. We are also, through toil and sacrifice, proving our faithfulness and loyalty to the LORD, encouraged by the promise that if we are "faithful unto death" we shall receive the "crown of life."—Rev. 2:10

As the worldly minded see us, we are dying just as all die, but God views it differently. God's inspired servant wrote, "I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall [in death] like one of the princes." (Ps. 82:6,7) Prince Jesus died as a sin offering; and we die sacrificially as he did. Let us accept God's viewpoint—and be faithful to our privileges—while we continue to rejoice in the glorious hope that is set before us! ■