



Sabbath Service
Saturday, March 3, 2007
“Examining Our Need for Christ’s Sacrifice”



Sabbath Service — Saturday, March 3, 2007

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(If you are meeting in a small group, select a leader for the day. The leader reads the text printed in regular face. The rest of the group reads the text printed in bold face and wherever it states "In Unison." If you are worshipping as a single individual, read all the parts.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

In the darkness and emptiness of much we call life,
the Spirit moves among us, calling us into new being.
From our separation and bitterness, apathy and hatred,
God calls us to steadfast love and reconciliation.
In the midst of the ordinary, God has come to us.
In our everyday worlds, God continues to visit and redeem.

**We come to seek light amid the shadows,
fulfillment out of hollowness and despair.
We come to find healing and peace,
to experience forgiveness, acceptance, and purpose.
Come among us Father. We await your word
and the power of your benediction.**

INVITATION *(In Unison)*

You who have created us and who sustains us: We come with thanksgiving for these moments when we can ease the pace of our lives and listen for your voice. Create a spirit within us that truly draws us toward you and toward our brothers and sisters: a spirit deep, perceptive, gentle, and bold. Clear our minds, open our hearts, and touch us with your presence and your power. We ask your presence among us in the name of Jesus Christ your son. Amen.

OPENING HYMN #181

"His Mercy Never Fails"

*Psalm 136
Dwight Armstrong*

O give thanks, unto the Lord; Give thanks unto the Lord of Lords;
He performs wonderful works; He stretch'd the earth above the sea!
Give thanks to God for He is good; He who alone doeth great works!
His kindness shall always endure, His mercy never fails!

O give thanks, unto the Lord; For it was He who made great lights;
For the day He made the sun; And for the night the moon and stars!

Give thanks to God for He is good; He who alone doeth great works!
His kindness shall always endure, His mercy never fails!

O give thanks, unto the Lord; He struck at Egypt's stubborn pride;
Their first born He took in wrath; He led His people through the sea!
Give thanks to God for He is good; He who alone doeth great works!
His kindness shall always endure, His mercy never fails!

O give thanks, unto the Lord; For mighty kings of mighty names,
He destroyed and put to shame; Isr'el was saved from all their foes!
Give thanks to God for He is good; He who alone doeth great works!
His kindness shall always endure, His mercy never fails!

OPENING PRAYER *(In Unison)*

O God, in our time of worship, and throughout the hours of our days, remain at the center of our thoughts and actions. When all that we do seems to fly off in scattered bits and pieces as our lives spin on, draw us back to you. Hold us together as individuals and as a community of faith. In our looking outward into time and toward your creation, enable us to focus our hopes and to hit the mark when we aim to do your will. Be for us a home base, a center of gravity, a balance point, a source of loving support through Christ Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen.

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

PERSONAL PRAYER *(In Silence)*

HYMN #210

"Give Ear to My Prayer, O Lord"

Psalm 143
Dwight Armstrong

Give ear to my prayer, O Lord, And my supplications hear;
Answer me in faithfulness; In Thy righteousness.
Into judgment enter not With Thy servant Lord, I pray;
For no living man is just Righteous in Thy sight.

For the enemy, my foe, Persecuted he my soul;
My life hath he smitten down; Down unto the ground;
Made me in the darkness dwell; As those that have long been dead.
My spirit is overwhelmed, My heart desolate.

I remember days of old; Meditate on all Thy ways;
And I muse on all Thy works; All Thy hands have wrought.
After Thee my soul does thirst; As a thirsty land, Selah.
Hear me, Lord, make haste I pray, For my spirit fails.

Lord hear me, I pray of Thee, Hide not Thou Thy face from me;
Lest like unto them I be; Down unto the dust.
Cause Thy servant, Lord, to hear; Show Thy loving kindness, Lord;
For I lift my soul to Thee; I in Thee do trust.

PRESENTATIONS BEFORE GOD *(Not monetary offerings)*

Time for any in attendance to offer a musical or instrumental piece, a reading, comments, or anything they would like to present before God.

If no one is prepared or if you want more, the link below will open a full choral anthem for your listening enjoyment.

“Sing Hosanna”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Time for groups to make any necessary announcements relating to their own group.

From this week all the way through Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, the lessons attached will focus on the upcoming Holy Days.

COLLECT *(Preparing for the lesson. In Unison)*

God of our ancestors, confront us now as you confronted them. We would not hide our face from your truth or turn aside from your call. Renew our spirit so we may know surely whose we are. Straighten our misshapen lives and distorted spirits, that we may rejoice together in the glorious wonder of your world as we look today at our very real need for Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask. Amen.

THE LESSON

(Use the lesson provided here, or conduct a study of your own selection.)

Examining Our Need for Christ's Sacrifice

**Excerpted from a study by
Wayne Bedwell**

April 1, 2006

Church of God Most High, Tucson, Arizona

(The following is the same sermon that Mr. Bedwell gives to his congregation every year at this time. With his delivery last year, he began with a brief look at the difference between Easter and Passover. For our purposes here today, we have cut that material and begin at the top of page 3 from his original manuscript. For any who want to see the full sermon, a link to the original is located at the end of the lesson.)

I just explained why Passover and Easter are different. But because this is such a misunderstood point, let me repeat and summarize what I said. Since the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, most who consider themselves Christian have replaced Passover with Easter. This was part of the early so-called Christian church's drive to rid itself of anything Jewish. In essence, the pagan practice of celebrating the

sex-goddess Ishtar each year in April was selected over the Biblical instruction to observe Passover. The gentile Christians of the early church observed the first Sunday after the 14th day of Nisan (the first month of the Hebrew calendar), which is now Easter Sunday, because it celebrated Christ's resurrection. But this day is not Passover at all. That Sunday was really the time of Christ's ascension to God the Father to be accepted by God as the first of the first-fruits, exactly like the wave-sheaf offering of Leviticus 23:9, which was offered before the spring barley was harvested.

What is the significance of Passover? Originally, Passover was the observance of the sacrifice of the Passover lamb to protect the Israelites in Egypt from the death angel. Paralleling the original Passover lambs, Christ became our Passover Lamb at His crucifixion as He protected all believers from the death penalty which we have incurred by our sins. And so each year on the 14th day of Abib, also called Nisan, ... we observe the Passover in the same manner and at the same time as Jesus (*Yeshua* in Hebrew) observed it on his final night on earth.

Paul, who also kept the Passover, instructed us to examine ourselves each year before we eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Let's read his instruction in 1 Cor 11.

(1 Cor 11:28-30 NIV) — **A man ought to examine himself** first before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. {29} For anyone who eats and drinks unworthily [i.e., taking it lightly or improperly or carelessly — not examining his **need** for Christ's sacrifice,] without recognizing the body of the Lord [Christ's sacrifice for us] eats and drinks judgment on himself. {30} That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep (i.e., died).

In 2 Cor 13:5, Paul again tells us to examine ourselves.

(2 Cor 13:5 NKJV) — **Examine yourselves** as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified [i.e., you fail to pass the test].

Have you begun to examine yourself? Are you in that process now? This is something we all **MUST** do before Passover. We have a very limited amount of time to do so.

Today I want to give you seven major areas of introspection where we can address this question as we prepare ourselves for the Passover.

Usually when talking about sins, we talk about sins of **commission** — murder, lying, committing adultery, breaking the Sabbath, etc. But today I want to include sins of **omission**. In other words, sins caused by **not** doing something we should do. These sins of omission are usually much harder to see. When we take the Passover we must all see our personal need for Christ's sacrifice for our sins of

omission as well as our sins of **comission**. Let's look at these seven areas where we may commit sins of omission.

AREA 1 is: Are we growing in our **love for other people**?

Brotherly love includes many things. **Concern** for others is love. **Giving** is love. Let's look at both:

(1 John 4:8) — Those who do not love do not know God, because God is love.

(verse 21) — And this is the command we have from Him: Whoever loves God must love his brother too.

Let's look at what Christ had to say about our ability to love our brethren:

(Mat 22:36-40) — “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the Law?” {37} And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ {38} “This is the great and foremost commandment. {39} “The second is similar to it, ‘YOU ARE TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ {40} “On these two commands depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

This reply by Christ to the question by the scribe is a direct quotation of the beginning of the Schema, the prayer said by devout Jews three times a day. It is from Deut 6:4.

Deu 6:4-5 (NKJV/CJB) — “Hear, O Israel: The LORD [*Yehovah*] our God [*Elohyim*], the LORD [*Yehovah*] **<is> one!** {5} “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your strength.

The last part of Christ's statement is from Lev. 19:18.

Lev 19:18 (CJB) — ‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against any of your people, but **rather love your neighbor as yourself:** I <am> the LORD.

Many mainline, so-called Christian churches like to stress that love comes only through Christ. That is basically correct but what they do not recognize in their attempt to avoid Old Testament law, in my view an attitude of historical antisemitism, is that He who became Christ is in the Old Testament too and that many, if not most, New Testament so-called “Christian” principles come directly from the Old Testament.

In Matthew 22 we were told to Love the Eternal and Love our neighbor. Both words come from the same Greek word: *Agapao* (*ag-ap-ah'-o*). Doesn't this imply that we are to love our fellow man as strongly as we love God and vice versa?

(James 2:8,10) — If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well..... For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one <point>, he has become guilty of breaking them all.

This is the scripture to remember for those who think one small sin isn't that important.

What is love? It is an **outgoing concern for others — God and people.**

(Rom 13:10) — Love does no harm to a neighbor; love therefore is the fullness of <the> law.

Do we impute motives in order to justify our own position and emotions? That is not love. That borders on hatefulness.

(1 Cor 13 CJB) [Love chapter] — I may speak with the tongues of men, even angels; but if I lack love, I have become merely blaring brass or a clanging cymbal. {2} I may have <the gift of> prophecy, I may fathom all mysteries, know all things, have all faith — enough to move mountains; but if I lack love, I am nothing. {3} I may give away all I own, I may even hand over my body to be burned, if I lack love, I gain nothing. {4} Love is patient and kind, not jealous; not boastful, **not proud**, rude or selfish, not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. {6} Love does not gloat over other people's sins but takes its delight in the truth. {7} **Love** always bears up, always trusts, always hopes, **always endures**. {8} Love never ends; but prophecies will pass, tongues will cease, knowledge will pass. {9} For our knowledge is partial, and our prophecy partial; {10} but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass. {11} When I was a child, I spoke as a child, thought like a child, argued like a child; now that I have become a man, I have finished with childish ways. {12} For now we see obscurely in a mirror, but then [when we can see God] it will be face to face. Now I know partly; then I will know [God] fully just as God has fully known me. {13} But now three things last — trust, hope, love; and the greatest of these is love. Pursue love.

Take an objective look at yourself. Considering what we have just read, do we have love? Do we always endure others' opposing views? Do we need Christ's sacrifice?

Church founder Herbert Armstrong used to say there were two ways of life: the way of **get** and the way of **give**. Please turn to Matt 7. We'll read verses 7-12.

(Mat 7:7-12 NKJV) — “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. {8} “For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. {9} “Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? {10} Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? {11} If you, then, though you are bad, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! {12} So in everything, **do to others what you would have them do to you**, for this sums up the teaching of the Law and the Prophets.

Are we a “look out for old number one” person or do we consider how **we** would like to be treated if we were in the other person’s position? **Are we willing to hold back criticism until we have walked in the other person’s moccasins?** How do we look upon those less fortunate than ourselves — even those who bring misfortune on themselves?

(2 Cor 9:7) — Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

This scripture describes the proper attitude in the giving of offerings, but also describes the correct attitude when giving to others. Do we give because we have to, or because of a sincere desire to help someone?

(Mat 6:1-4) — “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness or charity’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. {2} “So **when you do your acts of righteousness or charity, do not announce it with trumpets to win people’s praise**, as the hypocrites in the synagogues and on the streets. [See what I’ve done!] Yes, I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full already. {3} But when you do your acts of righteousness or charity, don’t even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing {4} so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.

(Prov 11:24) — Some give freely and still get richer; while others are stingy but grow still poorer.

You cannot out-give God. This verse proves that. But it might be beneficial for some to try it.

(Rom 12:1) — Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your selves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.

Does this willingness to offer your living body seem like a lot for God to ask? Notice what God has given:

(John 3:16) — “For God so loved the world that he GAVE his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

When you give, don't give with the idea that God or the receiver of your gift will somehow repay you for it.

(Luke 14:12-14) — Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. {13} But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, {14} and you will be blessed. Although **they** cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Do you have a give or get philosophy? Are you growing in the give way of life? **How much have you grown in love for your fellow man? Do you put others first...**or do you take advantage of everything you can get out of others? If you can not say that you have more love than you had last year at this time, maybe you should take the fact that you have not grown in love to Passover services so that you can more clearly see the need for Christ's sacrifice for you.

AREA 2. Are we growing in **learning God's word**? Are we putting in more time and effort into Bible study? Are we using Bible knowledge gained from all sources as building blocks to gain more knowledge? Do we watch world events for fulfillment of prophecy? Do we even know what prophecies to watch for? We need to **know** our Bible, not just read it.

(2 Tim 2:15) — Be diligent to present yourself **approved to God** as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

In the King James this verse says: “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Although we have been raised to believe that this is a command to **study** God's word, most translations render it “be diligent”. The bottom line is the same, of course. We are to know God's word and the main way we can do that is to study it. To those who believe they can learn God's word from sermons only, let me direct you to:

(Acts 17:10-11) — And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. {11} Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, **<to see> whether these things were so.**

The Bereans listened to the sermons all right, but then **proved** their validity by examining (studying) the scriptures **daily**; proving even Paul's sermons. The same can be said about believing anyone else's opinions. Religious opinions are

everywhere. Do you prove them? Or do you simply trust the message because you like the messenger? Do you prove every point of a sermon or opinion by **daily** Bible study? Remember what we just read in 2 Timothy. Study will gain God's approval.

Do we need Christ's sacrifice for our wasted opportunities to learn God's word?

AREA 3. Have we grown in **prayer** since last Passover? Are we growing in communication with God?

(Isa 55:6) — Seek the LORD while **he may be found**; call on him while he is near.

Are we so close to God that we know when he is near? If we aren't close to God, who has moved?

1 Th 5:17 says: "pray continually;"

Do we?

(Dan 6:13) — Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays **three times a day**."

Daniel risked his life to pray three times a day. Are we even coming close to three times a day?...or do we only make it once a day?...sometimes.

Do we need Christ's sacrifice for our lack of prayer and closeness to God?

AREA 4. Are we growing in **accepting God's correction**?

(Jer 10:23-24) — I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps. {24} Correct me, LORD, but only with justice—not in your anger, lest you reduce me to nothing.

(Heb 12:5-11) — And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, {6} because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." {7} Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? {8} If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. {9} Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to our spiritual Father and live! {10} Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us in a way that provides genuine benefit to us, so that we may share in his holiness. {11} No discipline seems

pleasant at the time, but rather seems painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace **for those who have been trained by it.**

Are we trained by it....or do we just blame someone else or complain about our 'bad luck' or reject correction? Can we even recognize it when God is teaching us by allowing us to bring problems upon ourselves? Do our fruits reflect God's disciplined training?

(Mat 18:15-17) — “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. {16} But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ {17} If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Can we, as Christians, accept constructive criticism? Some time ago, a friend gave a series of sermons on authority. In them he listed what he considered to be four sources of authority: Authority in the church, authority of our employers, family authority, and the authority of civil government. Can we accept constructive criticism from each of these?

(2 Tim 3:16-17) — All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, **correcting and training** in righteousness, {17} so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Do we take God's word literally, or do we translate it to match our own purposes and desires? Do we dismiss correction with the attitude, “It's only a one-time, minor sin that God will forgive?”

Do we need Christ's sacrifice for our wasted opportunities to grow from correction? We must consider that too on Passover.

AREA 5. Are we growing in **allowing our trials to be beneficial?**

All of us have trials. How do we respond to our trials? Do we complain? Do we blame everything on Satan or someone else when the cause of the problem lies within ourselves?

(Rom 5:3-4) — Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; {4} perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Many people — yes even people in the church — suffer day after day with some problem in their life which they can not seem to do anything about. It can be obvious, such as certain health problems, or it can be deeply rooted in the mind

where others are less aware of it. The bottom line is that the individual can not do anything about it. **I am not talking about trials which we bring on ourselves, even though we may try to blame them on others**, including Satan. But as we just read in Romans, suffering is not all bad. It does create tenacity, character and hope for the time the trial is gone. We must **wait** on God to remove that trial. The waiting alone will produce patience and closeness to God. Let's read some more scriptures describing the test of trials.

(1 Pet 1:6-7) — In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief **in all kinds of trials**. {7} These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which is tested for genuineness by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

(Psa 119:67) — **Before I was afflicted** I went astray, but now I obey your word.

Isn't David here associating his affliction with going astray? Isn't he saying that if we obey God we will not be hopelessly afflicted? Disobedience brings trials.

(Psa 34:19) — A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;

Of course this scripture implies that we must first be considered by God as righteous. Do our actions and our faith in Christ's sacrifice label us as righteous in the sight of God?

(1 Pet 5:10) — And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **after you have suffered a little while**, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (Like He did for Job).

(James 1:12) — Blessed is the man who **perseveres under trial**, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

When the trial is the result of mistakes, do you learn from them....or just keep on repeating them?

Do we need Christ's sacrifice for our wasted opportunities to learn from our mistakes?

AREA 6. Are we growing in **repentance**?

How sincerely and deeply do we repent when we have sinned; sinned against God or man? Or do we blame someone else for our failures? Or do we say, "That's just the way I am?" Do we care at all that we have sinned against anyone? Do we even

know what sin is? If not, we need to read 1 John 3:4. We need to take a serious look at ourselves.

(Isa 55:6-8) — Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. {7} Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. {8} “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.

(Isa 1:18) — “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Do we see our sins as crimson...or just a little pink? Do we reason with God or just ignore our sins? God promises forgiveness if we will just turn to Him.

(Acts 20:21) — I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that **they must turn to God in repentance** and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Do we turn to God in repentance? Do we have faith in Christ’s sacrifice?

(2 Cor 7:10-11) — **Godly sorrow** brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. {11} See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what **earnestness**, what **eagerness to clear yourselves**, what **indignation**, what **alarm**, what **longing**, what **concern**, what **readiness to see justice done**.

This then is Godly sorrow. What is worldly sorrow? Isn’t it simply embarrassment because our sins are seen by others or that we regret that we made the wrong decision or that events have not turned out well? If you care more about your reputation before men than before God, you may be looking at worldly sorrow. However, embarrassment can lead to true repentance.

Let’s consider David’s repentance following his sin with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband. When he thought no one knew of the sin, it seemed to be life as usual. But when he knew that others knew of it, he did in fact repent before God. Of course, Nathan opened his eyes to the severity of his sin. So worldly sorrow or embarrassment can lead to Godly repentance if we allow it to. After the prophet Nathan had come to David regarding his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, David prayed:

(Psa 51:1-17 NIV) — Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. {2} Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. {3} For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. {4} Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak, and justified when you

judge. {5} Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. {6} Surely you desire truth in the inner parts ; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. {7} Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. {8} Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones **you have crushed** rejoice (God gave David repentance). {9} Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. {10} Create in me a pure heart, O God, and **renew** a steadfast spirit within me. {11} **Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.** {12} Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. {13} Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. {14} Save me from bloodguilt, O God, the God who saves me, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness. {15} O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. {16} You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. {17} The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

But even though David repented, God required punishment — a lesson to those who say that repentance by a criminal should release him from the penalty of the law. I won't read of it here but you can read of those painful lifelong punishments in 2 Sam 12:10-12.

(Rom 6:1-2) — What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? {2} By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

(skipping to verse 12:) — **Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. {13} Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God,** as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. {14} For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. [Grace being unmerited pardon] {15} What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?

Here is a message to those who know they are sinning but consider themselves under grace and thereby forgiven. And so, with this attitude, their self-righteousness allows them to continue to do what they know is sin. Remember that grace is **unmerited** pardon.

Let's read verse 15 again, then we'll continue with versus 16-23.

{15} What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! {16} Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to **sin**, which leads to death, or to **obedience, which leads to righteousness?** {17} But thanks be to God

that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. {18} You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. {19} I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. {20} When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. {21} What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! {22} But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. {23} **For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Do we need Christ's sacrifice?

But how do we properly repent? Is it just something we drum up in ourselves? Notice where repentance comes from...

(Acts 5:31) — God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that **He might give repentance** and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

God grants us repentance. Repentance is a gift of God through Jesus Christ, our Savior. How do we get God to do that? We ask for it.

Romans 2:4 also tells us that the goodness of God leads us to repentance, but it is referring to another proclivity of people as well: The tendency of some to criticize others for the same sins they commit themselves. Let's read the first four verses of Romans 2 to see it:

(Rom 2:1-4 NKJV) — Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; **for you who judge practice the same things.** {2} But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. {3} And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? {4} Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that **the goodness of God leads you to repentance?** [i.e., is designed and adapted to do so.]

In these four verses, Paul is describing how God's judgment will fall on **people who criticize others for the same wrongs they themselves are guilty of.** Paul was probably originally referring to the Jews' view of gentiles, but the same actions can be seen even in the church today. We see this daily in the world of politics. This does not mean we should not criticize an evil we too have done in the past. It means we should not criticize a person who commits a sin we also commit. In other words, do not practice hypocrisy.

But his statement in verse 4, that God's kindness leads us to **repentance**, repeats the statement we just read in Acts 5:31. Repentance is God's gift to man through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Do we need Christ's sacrifice for our lack of repentance?

AREA 7. Are we growing in the Fruits of God's Spirit?

(2 Pet 1:5-11) — For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; {6} **and to knowledge, self-control**; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; {7} and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, **love**. {8} **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** {9} But if anyone does not have them, **he is nearsighted and blind**, and has **forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.** {10} Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, {11} and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

(James 3:17) — But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then **peace-loving, considerate, submissive**, full of mercy and good fruit, **impartial** and sincere.

Now measure yourself by Gal 5:22-25 and ask yourself if you really need to take the Passover, not because it is commanded and something we always do, but because you have examined yourself and see a personal need for Christ's sacrifice.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace, patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. {24} Those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified the sinful nature** with its passions and desires. {25} Since we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Verses 22 and 23 list the 9 fruits of God's Holy Spirit. Notice that all are emotions. Verse 24 describes those who have put away their sinful nature in order to belong to Christ. Do you belong to Christ? How much have we grown in producing these fruits in the last year? — or for that matter, since conversion and baptism?

Do we need Christ's sacrifice?

In conclusion, let's consider these seven areas of introspection again:

1. Are we growing in our love for other people? How tolerant are we?

2. Are we growing in learning God's word?
3. Have we grown in prayer since last Passover?
4. Are we growing in accepting God's constructive correction from whatever source?
5. Are we growing in allowing our trials to be beneficial?
6. Are we growing in repentance of the sins we commit?
7. Are we growing in the Fruits of God's Spirit?

When we look at ourselves, we probably see only a series of progressions and regressions. As we examine ourselves these next few days [weeks] prior to taking the Passover, we need to be aware of where we have failed or done worse than we should. But in the process, we must not conclude that our ability to overcome is impossible; that we are therefore unworthy to take the Passover. For if we really feel that we are too unworthy to take the Passover, we are thereby, in reality, the most worthy of taking it.

Christ does understand our weaknesses.

Heb 4:15 — For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

For this and other articles by Wayne Bedwell, visit www.studiesintheword.org

CLOSING HYMN #200

“Hallelujah! Praise God!”

Psalm 146
Dwight Armstrong

Sing unto the Eternal, Sing your praises to Him:
Put your trust not in mortals for in them is no help
Hallelujah! Praise God! The Eternal shall reign!
He shall reign for all ages; Our King and our God!

Sing unto the Eternal, give your praises to Him;
He it was who made heaven, earth and sea and all things.
Hallelujah! Praise God! The Eternal shall reign!
He shall reign for all ages; Our King and our God!

Sing unto the Eternal, let your hope be in Him;
He remains true forever He gives justice to all.

Hallelujah! Praise God! The Eternal shall reign!
He shall reign for all ages; Our King and our God!

CLOSING WORDS (*In Unison*)

May your love abound more and more,
with knowledge and all understanding,
so that you may approve what is excellent,
and pure and blameless for the day of the Lord,
filled with the fruits of righteousness for
the glory and praise of God. Amen.