



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 43
Issue 1066

The Beauty of Sacrifice: Moving Beyond Substitution to Union in Christ

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by — Steve Martin and Clyde Pilkington



Key Points:

Christ's death was not a substitutionary appeasement of God's wrath but an act of union, drawing humanity into His life.8949
Instead of humans offering sacrifices to approach God, He offered Jesus as a gift to bring us into union with Him.8951

Jesus did not take our punishment but entered our suffering so we could share in His resurrection.....8952
Christ's sacrifice was not a legal payment but the act that secured immortality for humanity through unity with Him...8955

For centuries, mainstream Christian theology has taught that Christ's death on the cross was a substitutionary sacrifice – that He took our place, suffered the punishment meant for us, and appeased an angry God – but what if that's not the full story? What if the cross wasn't about substitution at all, but about **union**: God entering into our experience so that we could enter into His?

SACRIFICE VS. SUBSTITUTION: A CRUCIAL DISTINCTION

To grasp the depth of Christ's work, we must first differentiate between *sacrifice* and *substitution*. These terms are often used interchangeably, but they carry vastly different meanings.

- **Substitution** implies a transactional replacement. The idea is that Christ was punished in our place so that we wouldn't have to be. This perspective suggests that God required satisfaction for sin – payment in blood – and Jesus stepped in as our substitute to endure divine wrath.
- **Sacrifice**, on the other hand, is something entirely different. Sacrifice is not about punish-

ment, but about **giving** – offering something of great value for something even greater. Parents sacrifice for their children, spouses for each other, soldiers for their countries. In each case, it is not about taking someone's place in suffering but about willingly giving of oneself out of love.

This distinction is vital because the idea of substitution distorts the character of God. It portrays Him as a wrathful judge needing appeasement rather than as a loving Father who gives of Himself for the sake of His children.

THE “APPROACH PRESENT”: SACRIFICE BY ANOTHER NAME

In the Scriptures, the concept of sacrifice is referred to in the *Concordant Version* as an “*approach pres-*

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice,

misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);

- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
 - adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of saints intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

*We are always open for discussion, but
never for disputation. – André Sneidar*

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ent” – a phrase that carries deep meaning. The word *korban* in Hebrew (קֹרְבָן, *qorbân*¹), is commonly translated as “offering,” and means to “draw near or to bring close,” and is defined by E.W. Bullinger as “an admittance-offering.” The idea is not one of punishment or appeasement, but rather of **offering a valuable gift in order to approach God**.

An approach present is, in essence, **a sacrifice given as a gift**. It is not about satisfying *wrath* but about establishing *closeness*. Just as a person might bring a meaningful gift to a loved one to express devotion, the sacrifices in the Old Testament were acts of offering something valuable as a means of **approaching and communing with God**.

But now, **everything has been turned around**. The direction of the approach present has changed. It is no longer humanity offering gifts to draw near to God; **INSTEAD, it is God who is presenting the approach present to us**. He is the One Who made the sacrifice, giving up something of infinite value – not to satisfy His own wrath, but to bring us near to Himself.

The greatest approach present of all is **Jesus Christ Himself**. In Christ, God is not demanding an offering; He **gave the offering**. The sacrifice is no longer about human beings trying to gain access to God through ritualistic offerings – it is about God **having given us His Son** so that He can bring us into full *union* with Him.

Then, what is the ultimate gift wrapped in this approach present? **Immortality**. Through Christ, God is offering us life *beyond the reach of death*. This is

1. SEC, H7133.

not a payment for sin but a gift of love, freely given.

Paul speaks of this in Romans 6:23.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice that it is a **free gift**, not an appeasement, not a penalty paid, but an **approach present** – the very nature of sacrifice turned on its head. In Christ, God has made the final sacrifice, not by demanding blood, but by **giving life**.

Thus, the old concept of sacrifice as something *we* do to approach God is now completely reversed. **God is the Giver. God is the Sacrificer. God is the one drawing us near through His own Approach Present – Jesus and the gift of immortality**.

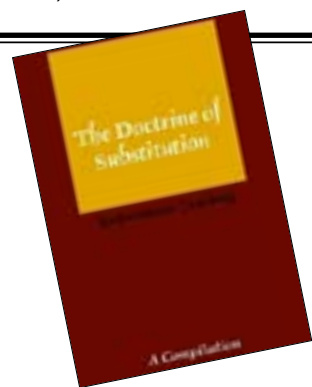
This is not a transaction. It is a relationship. It is a gift. And it is **beautiful**.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM: A SHADOW OF THE TRUE SACRIFICE

Many struggle with how the Old Testament sacrificial system relates to Christ’s work on the cross. If sacrifices involved bloodshed, doesn’t that imply substitution? The answer lies in what those offerings were truly about.

SACRIFICE WAS NEVER ABOUT PUNISHMENT

In the Old Testament, sacrifices were not about transferring guilt onto an innocent victim but about



70 pages

The Doctrine of Substitution: An Erroneous Teaching *A Compilation*

This is an exposé of Christianity’s erroneous doctrine of “Substitution.” Though it is widely accepted, it is not the teaching of Scripture. This is a compilation of authors, including: *A.P. Adams, Vladimir Gelesnoff, Andrew J. Jukes, A.E. Knoch*.

See [order form](#) under “Compilations.” “The best book I’ve read in ten years.” – Richard Kirsch

offering something valuable as an **approach present** to God.

body you have prepared for me (Hebrews 10:5).

Consider how the system worked:

- If a person could afford it, they might offer a **bull** – a costly and valuable gift.
- If they were poorer, they could bring a **lamb or goat**.
- If they had even fewer resources, they could bring **two pigeons or turtledoves**.
- If they had nothing, they could offer a **small portion of flour** (Leviticus 5:11).

Notice that **blood was not always required** – a grain offering was just as acceptable as a bull. This proves that the focus was never on blood, but on **giving something valuable in devotion to God**.

Furthermore, after an animal was sacrificed, it was often eaten. The sacrifice was not about senseless slaughter – it was about sustaining life. The people were already sacrificing animals for food, and God took this natural process and infused it with deeper meaning.

Even God Himself makes it clear in Scripture that He does not desire sacrifice:

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings (Hosea 6:6).

You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings (Psalm 51:16).

Sacrifice and offering you did not desire – but a

If God never *desired* sacrifices in the first place, then the entire system was **not about appeasement** but a teaching tool leading to something greater.

UNION, NOT SUBSTITUTION: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT THE CROSS

When Christ came, He did not step in as a substitute to take our punishment – He **stepped into our experience** to *unite* us with Himself.

Just as we were in Adam – united with him in his fall – we are in Christ, united with Him in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5). The work of Calvary was not a legal exchange but a relational reality.

Rather than Jesus standing in our place as a representative, He **brought us into His Own experience**. He did not suffer instead of us – He suffered *with us*. He did not die to satisfy divine wrath – He died to **overcome death itself!**

The key concept here is *union*:

- **Adam was not our substitute** – we were in him. The entire human race came out of him, which is why we inherited his mortality.
- **Likewise, Christ is not our substitute** – we are in Him. Just as we were joined with Adam in death, we are joined with Christ in life.

Paul writes:

*For if we have been **united** with Him in a death*

(see [SACRIFICE](#), page 8955)



How a Deadly Tornado Revealed God's Perfect Hand in All Things

by — Mike Owens

This work is about how a deadly tornado revealed God's perfect hand in all things, discussing the sovereignty of God and the author's personal journey in understanding this concept.

59 pages

See [order form](#) under "Owens."

The “Wrath” of God

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Bible Student's Courses

Course 1: GOD / Unit 6 - The Passion of God / Lesson 7 - The “Wrath” of God

by — Clyde Pilkington

Key Point:

God's wrath is a manifestation of his love. 8953
The Greek meaning of wrath suggests ravishing love. 8954

What is commonly called “the wrath of God,” is that quality of love that will not let us go. 8954

As we are learning, there are great differences between human and divine passions. “Wrath” is an outstanding example. Our anger is quite subjective and often can be foolish, even destructive (Proverbs 14:29; 15:18; James 1:20). However, divine “wrath” is *always* rooted in His divine love. Human “wrath” can be unpredictable, while divine “wrath” is always perfectly predictable. God is never malicious. He never misses (sins) in His anger.

God's wrath is but the divine qualities of His loving jealousy, the perfection of His passion that will never let us go.

Gustavus Hiller writes aptly concerning God's wrath:

Since God is love, and can never change His nature, His “wrath” must also be a manifestation of

His love, just as a genuine human father shows his love just as much toward his wayward son when he chastises him, or as when he at other times gives him good gifts. God's “wrath” simply manifests the eagerness of His love, which desires the salvation of His human children, and therefore is bent on overcoming and abolishing all obstacles that hinder His gracious purpose. So, His indignation is altogether holy, and His “wrath” is His love in operation, to bring about the salvation of mankind.¹

Interestingly the primary Greek word translated “wrath” is ὀργή (*orgē*),² and it carries the meaning of:

Properly *desire* (as a *reaching forth* or *excitement* of the mind) – Strong's Exhaustive Concordance;

1. *The Great Question* (see [order form](#) under Gustavus Hiller).
2. G3709 (SEC).



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Unit 1, An Introduction

Unit 3, The Love of God

Unit 5, The Attributes of God.

Unit 2, The Sovereignty of God

Unit 4, God as Father

See [order form](#).



Originally any natural impulse or desire, or disposition – *Vine's Expository Dictionary*;

The mind, the spirit that is breathed out, an intense passion of the mind – *Bullinger's Critical Lexicon*;

To teem, denoting an internal motion, especially that of plants and fruits swelling with juice – *Thayer's Lexicon*.

There is nothing *intrinsically* or *naturally* “negative” about this word’s original meaning. Couple this with the fact that God is love and we have an awareness of what has been so commonly translated as “*the wrath of God*.” One author³ has pointedly written:

What is translated as “*wrath*” in conventional translations cannot – as commonly believed – be an essential change of disposition on God’s part toward man. God has only one disposition, one inclination, one divine posture in His relationship with man: that of unconditional love coming to us in unearned grace. He is determined to fully give Himself to us unreservedly. When one sees this, we become His bond slave, bound by such love.

The primary Greek work translated as “*wrath*” is *orgē*, from which we get our English word, “orgy,”⁴ and its various forms. The word itself and its root convey aroused passion, excitement, a reaching

after and overlaps in meaning with *thumos*, translated also as “*wrath*.” Ed Browne translates *orgē* as (God’s) “intrinsic fervor.” I like that. I think Ed has captured the essential meaning. For me, it suggests ravishing love.

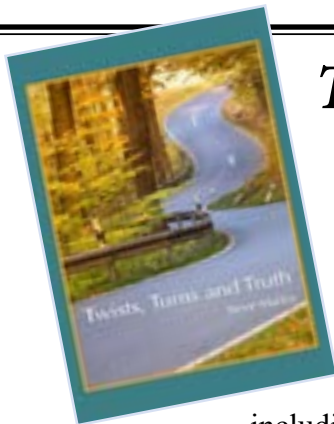
Since God *is* love, then “*wrath*” necessarily is a form of love, for nothing could proceed out from the nature of God that is inconsistent with the love that He *is*. The conclusion is just too obvious once one has been delivered from the dark, demonic imagination that fuels eternal torment dogma; namely, that God, when faced with the ontological contrarianism that seeks to impose on us a false identity, with us being overcome by a false persona, His love is aroused to reclaim us, to lay claim with divine jealousy to that which belongs to Him. With intrinsic fervor He reaches out to possess that which is His, and we are His by creation and by redemption ...

What is commonly called “*the wrath of God*,” is that quality of love that will not let us go, and will not let us miss the glory of His love. It’s an awesome, passionate, jealous, intense, possessive love, that when heated up fills us with awe. Initially it can be terribly frightening to be the object of such fervor. **BSN**

Topics:

Major: Bible Student’s Course; G3709; Love; Passion; Wrath
Minor: Translation

3. John Gavazzoni, *The Cup of God’s Wrath* (2006).
4. As well as “orgasm.”



Twists, Turns and Truth

by — Steve Martin

Steve is an author and host known for his insightful contributions to the Bible Student’s Notebook and his engaging YouTube series, “Freedom Journey” and “Interviews with Steve.”

Raised in a conservative Mennonite community, Steve embarked on a transformative journey of understanding and embracing unconditional love. This revelation led him to question and reject many traditional Christian doctrines, including the hell doctrine.

Steve’s passion lies in sharing the message of freedom through grace, a concept he believes is for everyone. Beyond his writing and online presence, Steve is a devoted husband to Ella Mae, a proud father of three children, a loving grandfather to 11 grandchildren, and a great-grandfather to little River.

59 pages

See [order form](#) under “Other Authors.”





SACRIFICE (*continued from page 8952*)

like His, we will certainly also be **united** with Him in a resurrection like His (Romans 6:5).

Christ did not bear the Father's wrath on our behalf. Instead, He entered into the full human experience of darkness, suffering, alienation and death, so that we could share in *His resurrection life*.

THE ULTIMATE GIFT: IMMORTALITY

The true gift of Christ's sacrifice is not a legal pardon but something far greater – **immortality**.

- Jesus is the only One Who has achieved immortality (I Timothy 6:16).
- His resurrection was the first time death had ever been **completely defeated**.
- Through our *union* with Him, we will follow Him into *that same immortality* (I Corinthians 15:22-23).

Everything in the Old Testament pointed to this reality. The sacrificial system, the offerings, and even the shedding of blood were **shadows** of the greater truth: life comes through death, but *not substitutionary death*. Rather, the giving of life leads to *more life*.

SACRIFICE IS A BEAUTIFUL WORD

The word *sacrifice* has been tainted by notions of punishment and wrath. But in reality, **sacrifice is a word of love**.

- We sacrifice for our families, not because they are guilty and need appeasement, but because we love

them.

- We give up time, energy, and resources – not as a punishment but as an expression of devotion.
- True sacrifice creates value, enhances relationships, and reflects the very heart of God.

God, as the ultimate Giver, delights in sacrifice because it is an expression of love. He gave His Son, not as a wrath-bearer, but as the embodiment of His love – a love so great that He entered into our death so we could enter into His life.

THE GRAND CONCLUSION: A BEAUTIFUL STORY, NOT A BLOOD TRANSACTION

What happened at Calvary was not substitution. It was an envelopment into union. Jesus was not a replacement for us – He was bringing us **with Him** into life.

One day, we will join Him fully in that life. We will wake up in His immortality, as He shakes us and says,

“Good morning! Welcome to immortal life!”

That is the power of the *Approach Present*. That is the beauty of love. **BSN**

Note: For more information see:

- [The Doctrine of Substitution: An Erroneous Teaching \(A Compilation\)](#), Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under “Compilations”).

TOPICS:

Major: Approach Present; God; Immortality; Jesus Christ; Sacrifice; Substitution

Minor: Life; Offering



64 pages

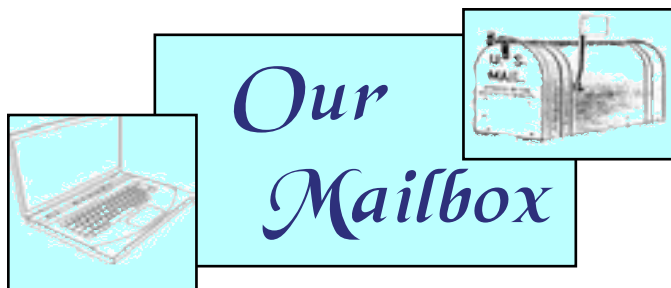
See [order form](#) under “An Evening With.”

An Evening with Mark D. Vogt

Mark and his wife Karyl grew up in Altoona PA, attending a church that placed emphasis on Paul's unique message, under the ministry of Henry Kulp, associated with J.C. O'Hair (1876-1958), Charles F. Baker (1905-1994), and C.R. Stam (1909-2003).

After an extensive military career as a Marine pilot stationed in Pensacola, FL, Mark had a career as a private pilot, as well as pastoring a “Grace Movement” church himself, in Williamsport PA.

Since 2020, Mark has been Associate Editor of the Bible Student's Notebook. He also serves as the Director of Curriculum for Bible Student's Courses.



Knoxville, TN Bible Conference Responses

The conference was a great show of God's sovereignty, Jesus's sacrifice on the cross that guarantees all mankind to be saved, and the unity and love that we are supposed to be striving for in the Body of Christ. I really appreciate how welcoming it felt to be there, and I learned a lot. Also, I just read your book that I got at the conference, *Being OK with Not Being OK*,¹ and sometimes the problem of evil can be tough to deal with; but it's always comforting to read about how glorious the contrast will be and how this is all necessary to be able to fully appreciate God once we're all perfected! – NC

I'm enjoying the conference videos!² – NM

For those of us who were unable to attend we so appreciate these videos.³ Thanks so much and God bless all the speakers and those who attended. – TN

1. [Editor:] *Being OK with Not Being OK*, Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr, Bible Student's Press (on the [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington").
2. [Editor:] Videos from the meeting can be seen on our [Biblical Resources](#) page on YouTube.
3. *Ibid.*

Beautiful talk.⁴ ... You make Father so happy – IN

I love this message!⁵ – Jamaica

Excellent information and teaching. Loved it.⁶ – TN

This is such a comforting teaching, knowing that all is written by God in each and every life.⁷ – CO

So clear and straightforward. So good!⁸ – TN

BSN

4. The video "[With the Tie of Peace](#)," by Clyde Pilkington.
5. *Ibid.*
6. The video "[The Bloody Truth](#) (Part 1) – Refuting "Atonement," by Stephen Hill.
7. The video "[Written – Writing – Righting](#)," by Clyde Pilkington.
8. The video "[How the Realization of Father's Sovereignty Brings Peace of Mind](#)," by John Money Penny.

**THE MORE I STUDY
EPHESIANS AND COLOS-
SIANS, THE MORE I
SEE. IF I WAS BUSY READ-
ING FROM GENESIS TO REV-
ELATION, I WOULD NEVER
SEE THE GREAT TRUTHS
THAT BELONG TO ME!**

CLYDE L. PILKINGTON, JR.



70 pages

The Celestial Realm: Seeing the Unseen (A Study of Our Real Enemy)

by — Stephen Hill

God's creation is infinite and unfathomable, and the grandeur of the universe leaves us in awe and with many questions as we live our lives on earth and seek out answers about our future, celestial home. Are we alone in the universe? Is there any merit to the notion of other gods and religions? Are Hollywood's depictions of Satan and demons accurate? Is there more to the meaning of salvation and Christ's victory than we've been led to believe?

These questions and more are answered in this book, which reveals much about the celestial realm that comprises the vast majority of the Father's creation and awaits us as our true and final habitation. You are likely to be both challenged and enlightened as you read through this short book, and the end result will be a much greater understanding of the cosmos, the "big picture," and your own role as a participant in The Most High's plan.

See [order form](#) under "Hill."