

# Why God sent Jesus

## Part 5 – How does Jesus’ sacrifice translate into our righteousness?

God is all holiness and love, and he created human beings in his image so we could be holy and loving too. But we stumbled at the first gate; just one command in the Garden of Eden, that’s all God gave us, and we couldn’t even obey that. So God was now left with unholy, disobedient, untrusting, unloving, distant, disinterested, self-centred, rebellious creatures instead. Solution? God sent Jesus to do for us (and in us) what we couldn’t do ourselves - summarized in the following verses:

**Romans 5:19** - “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also **through the obedience of the one man** many will be made righteous.”

**Romans 8:3-4** - “For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, **God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering**. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, **in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us.**”

And what are the “righteous requirements of the law”? In **Romans 13:10** they are all contained in just one word - “**LOVE is the fulfillment of the law.**” And in **verse 8 (KJV)** - “Owe no man anything, but to love one another: **for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.**” Love is the great Rule of Law governing the universe and everything beyond it, including God himself. So, as James says in **James 2:8**, “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself,’ **you are doing right.**”

The “Royal Law” James calls it, which Jesus split into two distinct parts earlier on when he was asked in **Matthew 22:36**, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” First, he replied in **verse 37**, it was “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” And second, in **verse 39**, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Jesus then added this all-inclusive statement in **verse 40**: “**All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.**” Everything in God’s Word hinges on love for God and love for neighbour.

The Garden of Eden proved that we humans weren’t capable of such love, however. First of all, Adam and Eve couldn’t love GOD enough to obey him, and secondly, they couldn’t love EACH OTHER enough to stop the harm that would hit both of them if they ate the fruit. So what did God do? **2 Corinthians 5:21** – “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that **IN HIM** we might become the righteousness of God.”

It's in Jesus that God resolved the problem of our inability to love God and love neighbour. How? By sending Jesus "to be sin for us" and "in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering." God sent Jesus to offer his life in place of ours, because in that offering of himself for us it would translate into "the righteous requirements of the law (being) fully met in us."

But how does that work exactly? Well, it has everything to do with the attitude in which that offering was made. As we read back in Romans 5:19 it was "through the obedience of the one man many will be made righteous." Obedience can sound like a cold word, but it really means love. Jesus certainly defined obedience that way, as LOVE for God and neighbour. For Jesus to be obedient, then, everything he did had to be perfectly in tune with the great Law of Love.

And in Part 4 that was Jesus' attitude exactly, because it was Jesus' love for his Father and honouring his Father's will that made him readily accept a life of suffering and death in a human body. It was also his love for the Father that made his sacrifice on our behalf so acceptable to God and fully sufficient for our salvation. It wasn't because God was unleashing all his anger on Jesus instead of us that made our atonement possible, it was Jesus' love for the Father that did it, that hopefully Part 4 made clear.

Jesus died on the cross, for instance, to express his Father's utter condemnation of sin, which Jesus, in perfect harmony with his Father's mind and heart, fully agreed to demonstrate in himself. Jesus also accepted a life of suffering because it too perfectly demonstrated his Father's heart, in how deeply the Father suffers and grieves at what sin has done to us. "See me, you see the Father," Jesus said, because that's what Jesus lived and died for, to help us see his Father as **he** knew his Father to be, so that one day we too would see the Father and love him (1 John 4:19).

So Jesus certainly fulfilled the **first** part of the Royal Law of Love – loving God with all his heart, soul and mind. We also see in Jesus' suffering and sacrifice the **second** part of the Law of Love being lived to perfection too. Because in Jesus coming in our likeness, "the likeness of sinful man," we see him not only loving God but loving US as well, by totally identifying with us, entering our world to experience what we experience, and to feel the huge weight of sin as fully and horribly as we feel it. He not only came as the loving Son of the Father, then, he also came as our Brother.

And as our Brother, Jesus willingly took upon himself all that we'd brought on ourselves. He willingly "**bore our sins in his own body,**" **1 Peter 2:24**, he willingly accepted having "**laid on him the iniquity of us all,**" **Isaiah 53:6**, and he willingly took on a human body "**so that he might taste death for everyone,**" **Hebrews 2:9**. He also tasted rejection, false accusation, lies, hatred and cruelty, all of which were unleashed on him personally, but none of it swayed him from loving us. And why was that? Because it was only by HIS perfect obedience to the Law of Love that "**many will be made righteous.**"

Fortunately, then, for us, Jesus lived both parts of the Royal Law perfectly, so that by HIS obedience “the righteous requirements of the law are fully met in us.” We, by contrast, were dead in the water, as Jesus soon found out, because the contrast between our world and the world he’d come from was massive. He’d come from a world of holiness and love but now he was living in a world of evil and selfishness. It must’ve been a nightmare. But living in our world made one thing abundantly clear: with our nature there was no way we could even get close to fulfilling the Law of Love, so we’d be utterly dependent on him to do every bit of the love we needed for us.

Take **Psalm 51:17**, for instance, where David wrote: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” In our terms today that would be “confession” and “repentance.” And how important are confession and repentance to God? They’re “the sacrifices of God,” meaning THESE are the sacrifices God requires and appreciates most of all - not the blood of bulls and goats, as David himself realized and wrote about in **verse 16**: “You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.”

Our love for God, therefore, isn’t based on anything **we bring** to him, because all those burnt offerings the Israelites brought to him gave him no pleasure at all. He despised them, in fact. What God really wants and loves from us is a broken spirit and a contrite heart. In other words, if we truly love God it pours out from us in confession and repentance, because we understand in the depths of our being how God feels about our sin and how it has affected him.

But who among us is capable of such a thing? Who among us, for instance, confesses and repents because we’re filled with a sense of the Father’s utter condemnation of our sin? Who sees through his eyes, how our sins cry out for judgment because of our total disregard for his purpose, his will, his law and his name? Who among us feels the grief our sins have caused him? Who even attempts to understand?

Did any of us? Not likely, because our confession and repentance don’t have the understanding Jesus has of God, whereas Jesus knows exactly what sin does to his Father. He knows how much his Father hates sin, and how it breaks the Father’s heart seeing what sin does to his children, and how extremely angry it makes him feel.

So imagine how God must also feel at our pathetic sacrifices in response to sin, because who among us cries out as David did in **Psalm 51:1-4** – “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. 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.”

David looked at his sin full in the face and said, “You’re right, God, I’m a mess.” And there was no softening the mess with a “BUT” either, like “Well, yes, I admit I’m not perfect, and I accept much in me needs forgiveness, and I know I’m bad at times and I do a few things wrong - BUT - not all the time, God; I do good things too, you know.”

David, in contrast, simply accepted the charge of “guilty” and made no excuses, because at what point in his life had he loved God with all his heart and loved all his neighbours as himself? He hadn’t. But the way that hit him was not “Oh dear, what’s going to happen to me if I don’t confess and repent?” it was “Father, it’s you I’ve sinned against and you I’ve hurt by my sin.” David’s entire focus was how his sin affected God, not himself. And God did not “despise” that. Quite the opposite: God forgave every one of the awful sins David committed and called him a man after his own heart.

What we see in David’s attitude is what makes atonement for us, just as it did for him. It’s acknowledging and accepting that God is utterly justified in his condemnation of sin; it’s expressing our sorrow to God personally because we deeply feel how he feels about our sin; and, also like David, it’s wanting to rid ourselves of sin completely. That’s the kind of confession and repentance that truly loving God involves. It comes from a broken spirit and a contrite heart, because that’s the sacrifice God loves.

Which, by obvious coincidence, was exactly the sacrifice that Jesus brought to God when he was made a sin offering for us, because Jesus’ response to God’s attitude to sin was precisely the same as David’s. It was “You’re right, God, humanity’s a mess.” To Jesus the Father was absolutely justified in his anger at human sin. His Father had every right to demand a severe punishment for sin too. Jesus totally acknowledged that and agreed with it, demonstrating his understanding and love for God by willingly taking that penalty of sin on himself. But it wasn’t taking the punishment Jesus suffered that atoned for our sins, it was his love for God, because that’s the sacrifice the Father seeks, requires and appreciates the most.

Why? Because that’s the sacrifice that brings about real change. There’s a lovely example of this in **2 Corinthians 7** when it hit the Corinthians how lax they’d been in their attitude to sin. They responded, **verse 10**, with “**Godly sorrow**,” the sacrifice of a broken spirit and contrite heart, and, **verse 11**, “**See what this godly sorrow has produced in you; what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves** (just like David in Psalm 51), **what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.**” Here was true confession followed by true repentance, creating a whole new attitude to God and sin, leading to real change.

But where did such “Godly sorrow” come from? From Jesus. When his Father sent him “**in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering**,” it was a sacrifice of Godly sorrow that Jesus offered. And it was a perfect offering of Godly sorrow too, because it expressed exactly what the Father seeks, the sacrifice of a broken, contrite heart in sympathy with his own at the awfulness of sin.

Jesus' sacrifice of confession and repentance, therefore, was totally in tune with everything his Father felt about sin and sinners – and because Jesus knew his sacrifice was perfect in his Father's eyes, he also knew he could offer it to his Father on our behalf and it would be accepted.

Confession and repentance are not up to us, therefore, because Jesus has already done the necessary sacrifice of confession and repentance for us. But that's what God sent him for, to be a sin offering and a perfect sacrifice of a broken, contrite heart in love to God on our behalf, because we are incapable of such a sacrifice. Unlike Jesus, we are practicing sinners, so we have no idea what our sins mean to God. We simply *can't* see and feel sin to the depths that God sees and feels it, so our confession and repentance are nowhere close to what God requires and loves. So in love to his Father and in love to us, Jesus expressed the sorrow that we can't express on our behalf, knowing that God would totally forgive us because of it.

But that's what God sent Jesus for, **Hebrews 9:26** - **“But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”** God sent Jesus to provide the perfect sacrifice that would do away with our sin.

But isn't this all a bit risky? Won't people think that if Jesus has provided all that we need in **his** sacrifice of perfect confession and repentance for us, that they'll think they don't have to do anything? Well, take into account first of all, that this was God's idea in the first place, to send Jesus to do for us what we couldn't do, but we can still ask, “But is God justified in doing it this way, in forgiving us, doing away with our sin and making us righteous totally through his Son and expecting nothing from us?”

Well, this is what the angels are watching out for too. How on earth is this going to work? How does what Jesus did translate into righteousness for us if there's nothing we contribute to it? But we've already seen how it works in **2 Corinthians 7**. Faced with their sin in Corinth and the reaction it created in Paul they actually **“became sorrowful as God intended,”** **verse 9**. They were feeling exactly the kind of sorrow God is totally pleased by. It was just like the sorrow David wrote about in Psalm 51, complete with broken spirit and contrite heart

And look what that Godly sorrow produced, **verse 10: “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation.”** Their sorrow had translated into salvation, into genuine concern and heartfelt enthusiasm for doing the right thing (verse 11). In other words, sorrow had turned into righteousness. **So what Jesus had done for them in his own sacrifice was now creating the same attitude in them.** Did it work, then, having Jesus do for us what we couldn't do ourselves? Yes, because in Corinth we see what the fruits of it were. People were now able to confess and repent themselves, in ways they had never been able to do before. Jesus' sacrifice, therefore, had literally turned into obedience, love and righteousness in these people, and they'd done nothing to make it happen!

That's why Paul preached the cross and nothing but because he knew the power of Christ's sacrifice. He'd seen it happen so many times already, that when he preached the reason why God had sent Jesus - to be a sin offering for us, providing everything we need to make us perfectly acceptable to God and utterly forgiven - it stirred amazing things in people's consciences. They felt a deep, genuine sorrow, which in turn produced love for God and neighbour.

What totally vindicates God, then, in sending Jesus as a sin offering and accepting **his** confession and repentance for doing away with our sins, is what it leads to in us. Because what happens is, we now confess our sins in the same spirit of confession and repentance Jesus had. We want our sins completely done away with, just like David did in Psalm 51. In other words, the huge "risk" God took in loving us by providing everything we needed in the sacrifice of his Son, is not a risk at all, because his love for us begets our love for him in return, just as John said it would in **1 John 4:19** - ["We love because he first loved us."](#)

In other words, it works! By God sending Jesus to fulfill the Law of Love for us, including even confession and repentance, it eventually translates into real love and obedience - including real confession and repentance - in us. It's a remarkable method God uses, but we are the proof that it works, right?!