

Looking back to the innocent lamb in the garden, and to the sacrificial system established in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 16:1-34), we see the foreshadowing of the promised Redeemer, Jesus Christ—the perfect sacrifice, the pure lamb of God without blemish or spot (Gen. 3:15; Exod. 12:5; Lev 22:19-21; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Heb. 9:14).

The blood of animals, however, could never take away our sins (Heb. 10:4). Only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can take sin away. The blood of animals served to provide a covering for sin until the time of the sacrificial death of the Redeemer. This is when the shed blood of Christ could be applied backward to all who had demonstrated faith in what God said to them by acting in accordance (Rom. 4:3).

FREE GIFT

How ridiculous of Adam and Eve to think they could erase their guilt through efforts of their own (Gen. 3:7; Eph 2:9). The same goes for us today. The ugly truth is, we are dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1; 1 Peter 2:24). Roadkill, if you will. And no amount of works on our part—from acts of kindness to church attendance to religious rituals—can make us acceptable in the eyes of a Holy God (Isa. 64:6a).

The good news is, all the work required to make us right with God has already been done—by Jesus Christ. He served as our perfect sacrifice. He took our punishment. He died for our sins in our place. All we have to do is accept His gracious act on our behalf. We accept His sacrifice by transferring our trust from our own attempts to be acceptable to God and placing our trust instead onto the shed blood of Jesus Christ, believing that it paid the penalty for our personal sins in full (John 6:29). It is when we believe and trust in the sacrifice of Christ that we can stand accepted before God, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ. **For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him** (2 Cor. 5:21).

I paid \$24.99 to redeem my mom's roadkill coat. The Lord paid a much higher price for our coats of righteousness with the life of His own Son (2 Cor. 5:21, Isa. 61:10), yet it cost us nothing. It is a free gift. (Eph. 2:8-9). And even more precious than a vintage suede coat.

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GOD BUYS US BACK

By Candy Davis

My mom really let me have it when she discovered that, in the process of downsizing for her move into a senior residence, I had donated her suede coat from the 1960s. It cost me \$24.99 to buy back the coat from the thrift store. We kids call it her “roadkill coat,” but to Mom it is a precious treasure.

Our Heavenly Father had to buy back something precious to Him, namely us—mankind. He had to redeem us from our bondage to sin and death.

We have Adam and Eve, our original parents (Acts 17:26), to thank for the presence of sin and death in the world. God created Adam and Eve in His own perfect image (Gen.1:26-27). He created them to commune and dwell with Him (Gen. 3:8; Lev. 26:12), and to govern His perfect world (Gen.1:26-28). Every comfort and need was provided by the Lord (Gen. 1:29-30; Isa. 51:3). This was heaven on earth.

But there was an enemy in the garden, one who already rebelled against God and now was hatching a plan to corrupt and usurp God's perfect work of creation (Gen. 3:1-6; Isa.14:12-14). The enemy was Satan, allegorized as a serpent. The original snake oil salesman, he wasted no time enticing Eve to taste the only fruit in the entire garden that God had forbidden (Gen. 3:1-6; Gen. 2:17). Eve fell for it, but Adam did not; yet he chose to take a forbidden bite anyway (1 Tim. 2:14). As federal head of humanity, Adam thus infected all of mankind with the poison of sin (Rom. 5:12; Rom 3:23; 1 Cor. 15:22a; Isa. 64:6a).

With that first bite—taken freely of their own volition (Gen. 2:16)—the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened wide (Gen. 3:7), not to any magical knowledge promised by the serpent (Gen. 3:5), but to their own shame for having rebelled against their loving and generous Lord. Afraid, they

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grabbed the nearest fig leaves and sewed them into clothing (Gen. 3:7), foolishly attempting to hide their guilt from the Creator of the universe.

The fear of Adam and Eve was justified, for they had been forewarned: **But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die** (Gen. 2:17). God, whose Justice cannot condone sin (Deut. 32:4), had determined that the penalty for violating His perfect standard of righteousness would be death (Rom. 6:23; Ezek. 18:4). Given this, we would expect to see the two sinners drop dead on the spot.

But the Lord apparently does an about-face by making a startling promise to mankind: God will rescue man from his bondage to sin by sending a Redeemer through the Seed of Eve to defeat the serpent (Gen. 3:15). This single verse in Genesis presents in a nutshell how God buys us back from the clutches of Satan.

Adam may have tuned out God's words up to this point, but he is listening now. Listening and believing. We know this is so because Adam gives his wife the name Eve ("life"), displaying faith in God's promise that she will live to bear children through Whom will come the promised Redeemer (Gen. 3:20).

God acts in response to Adam's faith: He replaces the clothing of fig leaves with coats of skins. **Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them** (Gen. 3:21). It is easy to breeze over this verse and miss its significance, which is...in order to make coats from skins, you have to kill an animal. The blood of an animal needs to be shed.

Our original parents did not die on the spot. Their death was delayed (Gen. 3:19), and was only temporary, with resurrection in view (1 Cor. 15:20-23; Rom. 6:23b). Something did die, however. An animal, most likely a lamb, shed its innocent blood to provide coverings for Adam and Eve. Far beyond supplying mere physical coverings for the bodies of the pair, God here is illustrating his means for buying us back from sin and death.

BLOOD COVERS SIN

Whereas I paid dollars and cents to redeem my mom's suede coat, the currency chosen by the Lord was blood. **And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission** (Heb. 9:22). But why blood, of all things?

First off, blood is associated with life. The very life of a creature is found in its blood (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11a, 14; Deut. 12:23). Shed blood provides forgiveness of sins and thus replaces the penalty of everlasting death with the gift of everlasting life (Rom. 6:23).

On the flip side, blood is associated with death. Without blood a creature cannot live. Think in terms of a crime scene with a big splotch of blood pooled on the pavement—evidence that a death has occurred. Or in terms of God's redemptive economy, blood is evidence that the payment for sin has been satisfied (Rom. 6:23). So in God's plan of redemption, the penalty for sin—which is shed blood—also serves as the remedy. **For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul** (Lev. 17:11).

DEATH OF AN INNOCENT SUBSTITUTE

That the Lord did not kill Adam and Eve on the spot does not mean He is a pushover. God in fact did require a blood payment for their sins (Rom. 6:23)—just not blood of their own. The Lord, in His grace and mercy, provided a substitute to die in their place. An innocent lamb took the punishment that Adam and Eve deserved. And here is the crux of God's plan of redemption: Substitutes. By casting His punishment on a substitute, God can forgive the sins of a man and rescue him from the penalty of everlasting destruction (2 Thes. 1:9), while still issuing forth His wrath upon the sin, thereby satisfying His Justice (Rom. 5:9).

JESUS CHRIST IS OUR SUBSTITUTE

Just as He provided a substitute for our original parents, so God provided a substitute for us, but not just any substitute: God Himself stepped in and served as our substitute. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ—God in human form (John 1:1,14,18)—the Lord suffered the penalty of death in our place.

God took all of our sins—yours and mine; past, present, and future—and placed the blame for them upon Jesus Christ, as if Christ had committed each and every sin Himself. As He hung on the cross, Christ suffered the death penalty that we in our sins had been sentenced to (1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:8-9; Col. 1:14).