

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Ye who profess the Lord to love,
Let all your lives and actions prove,
With pure desires and ardent zeal,
Attach'd to Christ to do his will.

2 Walk ye in love as Christians ought,
Remember ye are dearly bought,
And ransom'd with the greatest price,
When Jesus died our sacrifice.

3 A sacrifice of sweetest smell
As pleas'd the righteous father well,
When his dear precious blood was spilt,
It then atton'd for all our guilt.

4 Amazing love beyond degree!
No great love could ever be,
O Christians take this love in view!
And learn what sovereign love can do.

5 This love renews the soul within,
And makes the mind avers'd to sin;
All works of darkness are denied
Reprov'd, condemn'd and mortified.

Paul Henkel (1754-1825)

Christ a Sweet-Smelling Savor

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

Ephesians 5:2

Christ has loved us and became a sacrifice offering to God the Father to save us from sin; this was considered by our God as a sweet-smelling savor. God the Father must be satisfied with the way sin is handled. Our sinful state can only be remedied by divine atonement. As a sweet savor to the Father Christ gave His life a ransom to satisfy for the sins of His people. God's wrath against the sinner can only be pacified or propitiated through the offering and sacrifice of His son on behalf of sinners for a sweet-smelling savor. We need to reckon the following is a sweet savor to God:

[1] What is propitiation? [2] What is an offering? [3] What is a sacrifice? [4] What is meant a sweet-smelling savor?

[1] What is propitiation? This is a very important question although the word would seem strange to most folks today, even most church goers. “Propitiation” is an act which turns away God’s wrath from one who deserves to receive it. When someone is really angry with you, what will appease their anger—this is “propitiation.” God the Father must be propitiated or pacified because we have incurred His anger and wrath by sin. “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). The Bible teaches that “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Ps. 7:11). Many either ignore this or try to explain it away by saying such things as “My idea of God is not like that, for He is never angry, but always loving.” No matter what one may say God is sovereign and He said He was angry with sin so it is true no matter what one might say. Sinfulness brings out God’s wrath. The word “propitiation” presupposes God’s wrath, anger or displeasure. The very purpose for “propitiation” is to remove God’s wrath. Simply stated the teaching of propitiation means that God’s wrath has been propitiated in order to be propitious to His people. “Very simply stated the doctrine of propitiation means that Christ propitiated the wrath of God and rendered God propitious to his people” [John Murray]. The OT mentions God’s wrath over 500 times. The Psalmist explained, “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing (or lies): the LORD will abhor (or detest or hate) the bloody and deceitful man” (Ps. 5:5-6). The NT deals with God’s wrath as well. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold (or suppress) the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18 see 24-28). The impenitent will say, “to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand” (Rev. 6:16-17)! Can God’s wrath be pacified? Yes! God through the sacrifice of His Son can be propitiated. “Christ Jesus ... God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (Rom. 3:24-25). “Jesus Christ the righteous ... is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1-2). Propitiation is not the turning of God’s wrath into love but is the pacifying of God’s wrath by the sacrifice of Christ which is the provision of God’s eternal and unchangeable love. Our text tells of this propitiation of God—“Christ ... hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

[2] What is a pacifying offering? “Christ ... hath given himself for us ... to God.” Christ was our substitute. He took our place receiving our condemnation and gave us His righteousness. God both loved men and was angry with them discharging His anger by sending Christ to die. But Christ was not forced to die for sinners. It was an act of love on His part. Paul said, “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering ... to God.” Christ “hath given himself” meaning he had delivered himself into another’s custody to be judged, condemned, punished, scourged,

tormented and put to death in their stead for “an offering ... to God.” “An offering” actually and simply means that which is offered up to God. It is a general expression of His presenting Himself to the Father, as the Representative undertaking the cause of those the Father gave Him this included His impeccable life and death.

[3] What is a pacifying sacrifice? “Christ” gave Himself as our substitute to be “a sacrifice to God.” He was the offering “to God” or He was “a slain offering” on the cross where He died to satisfy God’s justice. In the OT the high priest as the representative of God’s people would put his hands on the head of the sacrifice and symbolically transfer those sins of the people to that animal. He then slew the animal catching its blood into a bowl. The reason the animal was slain was because it was symbolic of receiving punishment due to the sin of the people it represented. Then the high priest took the blood and presented it to God in the innermost sanctuary of the temple before the ark where it was sprinkled. Then the body of the animal was placed on the altar in the temple’s outer court where it was burned and the smoke and smell ascended to the presence of God. This was a “sacrifice of sweet-smelling savour.”

[4] What is meant by a sweet-smelling savor? Christ’s offering and sacrifice was “to God” was “a sweetsmelling savour.” When Noah left the ark after the flood had subsided the Scripture records, “And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD *smelled a sweet savour*; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake” (Gen. 8:20-21). Why? Justice had been served. The sweet smell to God meant He was propitiated, pacified or pleased to receive the sacrifice. The phrase “I am well pleased” is a verbal expression of the same thing (Matt. 3:17). Through the atoning work of Christ on the cross the wrath of God for sin is placated. To deny propitiation is to deny the substitutionary atonement.

Dr. Roger Nicole (1915-2010) defined propitiation, “Propitiation is the gracious act of God by which He Himself has made the provision that is necessary for the outpouring of His blessing, by which He Himself has taken care that all the demands of the law and of justice be met, so the sinners might be received in grace. Propitiation involves recognition of the objective character of the demands of God; and the Scripture teaches that those demands are met by the work of Jesus Christ.”