

Eph 5:2 Loving Sacrifice

2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Agape love has the good of the person in mind, and is given regardless of worthiness. It is not a love that desires to possess, but to set free. Agape is a love given despite the lack of merit in the person loved, and it is a love that seeks to give. Agape is self-sacrificial love. God's love is extended to the undeserving and unloving sinner and the wayward believer, so that they will change their ways. This Love is seeking the highest good in the one loved. The love of Christ expresses His willingness to act in our best interest, especially in meeting our greatest need, even though it cost Him everything and even though we were the least worthy of such love.

Christ's love is shown in His leaving His home in heaven, where He was worshiped and honored as He deserved, to come to earth as a man where He would be mocked, betrayed, beaten, and crucified on a cross to pay the penalty for our sin, rising again from the dead on the third day. He considered our need of a Savior. Phil 2:5-8 **5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, as He already existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself by taking the form of a bond-servant and being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.**

Sometimes people may give their lives willingly for ones they deem as worthy—a friend, a relative, other “good” people—but Christ's love goes beyond that, and shows Agape love for sinners, the unworthy!

Romans 5:6-8 **7 For one will hardly die for a righteous person; though perhaps for the good person someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.** He gave the most He could give for those who deserved it the least! This is self-sacrificial love, Godly Love, agape love. And it is this model that we follow. Jesus commands us to love each other just as He has loved us. John 13:34 **34 I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.”**

The supreme example of love is that Christ gave himself for us. He took His own initiative in heaven, giving Himself over to become a human for us, live a sinless life, and die on the cross for us. This shows how much Christ loved us. And, it is from this perspective that He calls us to give of ourselves for the sake of our brothers and sisters. Gal 2:20 **20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.** This echoes Jesus' own words where he states that he is the good shepherd and he will lay down his life for the sheep (John 10:11 **11 “I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.** He did it “for us.” He was willing to leave heaven's glory and die on the cross to become sin that sinners might become the righteousness of God. “as an offering and sacrifice to God.”

Jesus was our offering to God. Christ is the beginning of the First fruits offering to God, and we are the rest. Rom 15:16 **16 to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.** So, Paul in His priestly duties as a Christian gets to present part of the first-fruit offering, and we're part of that offering too, as Christians, a sacrificial offering to the Lord. As we express the love that Christ showed us, and walk it out in our lives, we are showing agape love toward God: Romans 12:1 **Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.** Paul called himself a s a libation sacrifice joyfully pouring out himself for his brothers and sisters. Phil 2:17 **17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.**

18 You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me. So, Paul urges us to do the same thing. But he never refers to himself, or anyone else except Christ as an atoning sacrifice. Christ as the sacrifice to end all sacrifices He is our once-for-all atoning sacrifice Heb 9:23-26 **23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these things, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made by hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Holy Place year by year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been revealed to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.** One supreme offering and sacrifice of Christ met all the sacrificial requirements. Jesus' sacrifice was the atoning sacrifice. Atonement refers to the needed reconciliation between sinful mankind and the holy God. This reconciliation is possible through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins, no peace with God, no atonement—and Jesus was the only one qualified to make this ultimate sacrifice for sin. He was our wrath-absorbing substitute, so that we didn't have to die under the wrath of God. The father poured out his anger towards sin on Christ, and his wrath is fully satisfied. And because of that, the guilty sinner who trusts in Christ gets to go free. The propitiation, the payment is made, and we are declared justified, innocent, and we have peace with God— reconciliation, atonement. What a cause for celebration! Which is exactly what Rom 5:9-11 says **9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also celebrate in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.** To accept Christ's atonement for sin is to acknowledge our own sin, and need for His sacrifice. Upon accepting, we have been reconciled to God. So we understand that Christ made an atonement. He paid a price, His own life, that God accepted for us on our behalf. So we are now brought back to God **a fragrant aroma to God"**

Over and over again, the sacrifices and worship and incense were described as a sweet-smelling aroma to God (see Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18, 25; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; 2:9, 12; 3:5). Paul states that the gift that the Philippian church sent to him was a fragrant offering, a sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God, because He knew that it had been given out of love for God and for him. Phil 4:18 **18 But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.** Jesus handed himself over as an offering and sacrifice for the purpose of being a fragrant aroma to God, an acceptable sacrifice, to give Him pleasure in us. This is the self-sacrificing kind of love that we should have for all people, even for our enemies. It is a selfless kind of love that we have as Christians, because Christ has given us this kind of love. Matt 5:44 **But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;".** And, we are to have this self-sacrificing love toward other believers. 2 Cor 2:15-16 **15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved, and among those who are perishing: 16 to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.** That's why they don't want us around, as believers, we remind them of death and judgement. God gave us the ultimate example to follow in Christ. Christ's love is the model to follow. As we learn how to live through His example, it is a practical example of how to live a life; how to walk through life on this earth. **"And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"** As we look to Christ, we learn we are to walk in love, giving sacrificially to others and offering ourselves fully as a sacrifice to God.