

Set apart to serve

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- [0 : 00] Well, today we're going to look at this Exodus 29 passage, and it's about being set apart to serve. Set apart to serve. You know, it's a very cool feeling, a very special feeling to belong to a team, a special team.
- But it's one thing to belong to a team, and it's another thing to be an active member of that team to make it a success. Who would like to be in the Springbok rugby team at the moment? Yeah, it would be a very cool team to be part of.
- As long as you can play rugby really well. My stepmom tells a story about her dad, Um Yapi, who was a smoker his whole life and had emphysema, and he was just a thin little guy towards the end of his life.
- Lost all of his weight, and he had his dream one evening, and he told us about it. But he had big eyes. He was shocked. It was a terrible, terrible dream.
- And we asked him what happened. He said, no, he thought he dreamed he was part of the Springbok team. And we said, oh, but that's Laka. Who wouldn't want to be part of the Springbok team? He says, yes, but not young Yapi, old Um Yapi. And you can imagine playing in the Springbok team and not being able to fend off those big boykies coming at you.
- [1 : 18] It's one thing to belong to a special team. It's another thing to feel like you belong and that you're able to live up to that calling. That you're able to do what you're set apart to do.
- My experience of Christians is that we often feel inadequate to be the people that God has called us to be. On the other hand, there's many in this world that have an overconfidence. They don't think they need anything that God can offer.
- They're fine and can either do life on their own. When it comes to dealing with God, they think they'll manage just, they're fine. They don't think they need to be especially made part of God's team.
- Why wouldn't God want them on his side anyway? But both those positions need to hear what today's passage says to them. About how we are in total need of God's way of making us acceptable to him and fit for purpose.
- And to serve him well. To live life well. Once he's made us acceptable. So we can fit him. We can be made fit for purpose.
- [2 : 29] And that we can serve him well. So let's see how today's passage can help us solve the problem of feeling that you're part of God's team, but not feeling like you belong there. And the other problem of, well, you don't need God.
- He needs you. And we're going to see that the first thing that God requires to have, to essentially meet with people on earth, is to have a people that represent him.
- But they've got to go through this ceremony that's going to set them apart. That's going to make them holy. That's going to make them clean.
- And the thing that makes them the cleanest is the blood of all these sacrifices. Now, in our passages, we'd normally go through a whole chapter at a time. We only read half the chapter.

So I'm going to take us through this ceremony that ordains Aaron and his sons as priests of God. We've seen in the story of Exodus so far how God is wanting to meet with people, but everything has to be set in place.

[3 : 34] You can't just walk into his presence. There's very structured things that have to be in place. The tabernacle, the furnishings of the tabernacle. We saw last week Aaron, the high priest, and his clothes.

And this chapter now, 29, is explaining what must happen to Aaron and the priest in order to make them acceptable to God, fit for purpose, so that God can meet with his people.

So in the first few verses, verses 1 to 9 is this one chunk where Aaron, God says, okay, we'll just read from verse 1. This is what you're to do to consecrate them, that's Aaron and his sons, as priests, so that they may serve me as priests.

They take a bull, they mix it with food, and then Aaron comes to the temple. Aaron and his sons comes to the tabernacle, not the temple, the tabernacle, and then they start putting all these high priestly clothes on him.

All that stuff we saw last week, the robes, the sashes, the ephod, that breast piece, that head piece. Before that, they've got to wash them clean.

[4 : 49] Then verse 7, they take anointing oil, and they anoint them. And in this way, verse 9, you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

There's a whole ceremony that's got to take place. There can't just be a high priest. There's a whole thing that has to happen. Everyone has to see it. But that's not all. They put all their robes on.

They wash them clean. They put their clothes on. They're standing there, and then they start these sacrifices. They've got to take a bull and two rams.

They slaughter the bull. They take some of the blood. They put it on the altar. Then they burn the rest of it. But the dirty parts of the bull can't even be in the tabernacle area.

The dirty parts of the bull have to be cleaned and then taken out of the tabernacle area. Or totally, totally burnt up. Then they take a ram. They slaughter the ram.

[5 : 52] Verse 15, Take one of the rams. And Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. So ceremony, Aaron and all the priests put their hands, identifying themselves with this ram.

It gets cut, slaughtered. The blood comes out. And they take the blood and they stick some of that blood on the altar as well. Then they wash that ram.

And they have a whole burnt offering, get burnt up. Then there's another ram. And this ram also gets slaughtered.

And in the blood of this ram gets put on Aaron and his sons, the other priests, and their clothes. Just see what happens to this blood of this second ram from verse 19.

Take the other ram. And Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. Slaughter it. Take some of its blood and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons.

[6 : 56] And on the thumbs of their right hands. And on the big toes of their right feet. Then sprinkle the blood against the altar. And then take some of that blood on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and his sons and their garments.

What's going to happen once they've got all this blood on them? The first thing you've got to understand is the amount of blood that's happening here in this tabernacle. In order so that God and his priests can meet together.

There's blood everywhere. We don't often see this kind of blood in our day and age. You know when you go buy meat at the market? It's already slugged.

Unless you go to little butchers these days. But no one does really. And so you buy a little chunk of meat from wherever. And I don't know about you. But every now and then there's a little bit more blood than you want.

And you take it out. And there's just a few drops of blood. But you, I mean, if you're like me, if you're like most people, you're like, oh, that's gross. I really don't want that blood.

[8 : 05] And you toss it away. Maybe you get queasy at the sight of blood. You've had an accident. And, you know, it's quite a thing to see quite a flow of blood.

You know how much blood, how many liters of blood there are in an animal that weighs six, seven, eight hundred kilograms? That's just the bull. And then you take these rams. So the first thing you'll see is blood everywhere on the altar.

Dripping down over the altar. And then the next thing, you've got these blood-spattered priests. You know, when it says, you know, take and touch their lobe. It's not like it's smeared on them.

It's smeared on their hands. It's smeared on their feet. And then they take it and then they splash it all over you. We think of blood as making us dirty.

If there's blood everywhere, it's dirty. Especially if it's there for a few days. You know, quickly blood begins to smell. But this blood, although the blood isn't different, God has a different purpose for this blood.

[9 : 14] Look what the result is of all this blood on the people of God, on his priests. Verse 21. After you've taken all this blood and you've splattered it on Aaron and his garments, then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated.

That word is holy. We think of consecrated as being set apart. We call it set apart. But it's also clean.

This blood splashed on their garments, splashed on them, splashed everywhere, makes them clean. Everything had to be cleaned.

Cleaned by blood. If it was done a certain way, the way that God says this blood doesn't make people dirty, it makes them clean, acceptable to him, and fit for purpose, to be a place where God can meet with people.

The ceremony doesn't stop there. They take the ram, the leftover of this, there's a second ram, and eventually they're going to eat it.

[10 : 27] They're going to make a few sin offerings, a number of sin offerings, wave offerings, burnt offerings, fellowship offerings. But in the end, they're going to eat it.

Have a look at verse 32. Or 31. It says, take the ram for the ordination and cook the meat in its sacred place.

At the entrance to the tent of meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket. So there's a sacred meal.

But this sacrifice doesn't just happen once off and then, God is happy with his people. This is an ordination ceremony. But every time there's a new high priest, they're going to go through the ceremony again.

And that ceremony lasts seven days. And every single day, they take a bull and two rams. And at the end of those seven days, the next high priest is able to be installed.

[11 : 36] What are they supposed to do once they've been installed as high priests? What is their job? Their job is to slaughter more rams and shed more blood.

Have a look at verse 38. This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day.

Two lambs a year old. Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight. With the first lamb, offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hint of oil from pressed olives and a quarter of a hint of wine as a drink offering.

Never mind about that. I'm just reading from the NIV. Yours might have different wording there. And sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning.

And when you do this, these things will become a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the Lord by fire. You're supposed to do this continuously.

[12 : 42] What is the end result of all of these sacrifices? One result is it makes God's people clean. The other result is that God says, okay, when you do this, I'm going to come and live with you.

And that's really the high point of this whole section of Exodus. Ever since we've met God on Mount Sinai, like in Exodus chapter 20, God is saying, well, I'm going to come down to you, but this is what you've got to do to prepare to have me with you.

And so the end of that chapter, God is ready to live with his people. Verse 44. What a cool thing to have God's presence with you.

What is the point of having God living with his people? Well, he's the source of blessing and life and goodness. So to have him there is to have the source of your very existence living right there with you.

Also, he's your protector. He's the one that gets him out of Egypt. So this person who gets him out of Egypt and gets rid of their enemies is now living right there with him. So he's got security. You've got security when God is living with you.

[14 : 10] But you've also got this holy God living with you. And so you're constantly wondering, is this a safe space? Well, it is a safe space if you're covered by the blood of these animals.

The problem with these Old Testament sacrifices is it had an inbuilt failure mechanism. They were always a temporary measure because the fulfillment was still coming in the future.

We know that these sacrifices didn't really work. There's the failure of the priests in Leviticus chapter 8, 9, and 10.

Over here in Exodus, God is saying, this is what you must do when Aaron becomes my high priest, when we set him aside. The recording of what actually happened is recorded in Leviticus 8, 9, and 10.

And it just repeats what it says here. And they do this. They take the rams. And then in Leviticus 10, Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, the very first time that they go into the tabernacle to make a sacrifice, they do something wrong.

[15 : 25] In their own arrogance, they mix their own little fire. They make their own fire and decide on their own way, on their own terms, to go into the tabernacle. God, I'm sure it will be fine if we do this with God. And then fire comes out from inside the tabernacle and burns them dead.

So at the very first time that the priests were set up to do this thing, to make this safe space between God and people, they mess it up. And the whole Old Testament shows you that the priestly sacrificial system just didn't work.

That's why eventually in the 500s, God got rid of Jerusalem. Your sacrifices don't work, guys. Your hearts are far from me. It's meant to make you holy, and you're just living like the rest of the world.

And he wipes it out. And for centuries, well, for 70 years, while they're in exile, there's no sacrifice in the temple. And there's no word from God for centuries until Jesus comes.

These sacrifices seem to have an inbuilt failure mechanism, showing God, showing his people and us, that there was always going to be a time when the fulfillment of these things was going to come.

[16 : 42] We know that that fulfillment is in Christ. Just have a look at Hebrews chapter 10, that explains why these things don't really work.

The law, I'm reading from verse 1, the law is only a shadow of the good things that are to come, not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated, endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, because it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. That's why when Christ came into the world, God speaks about how his sacrifice is going to change everything.

Just drop down to verse 11, still in chapter 10 of Hebrews. Day after day, every priest stands and performs his religious duties again and again. He offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

[17 : 52] But when this priest, meaning Christ, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Since that time, he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. Because by one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

So I just want to look now at the two types of people that we need to think through how God has taken a people and set them apart to be holy.

There's a reason why he's doing that. He's not just holy in and of themselves. They've got something they're going to do. But there's two types of people in this world when it comes to relating to God and being made holy.

One type doesn't think they need Jesus to make them clean. They don't think that they're dirty. They think they're fine. The problem is they don't realize that they stink, that they're actually really dirty and that they need to be made clean.

[19 : 08] How can blood make us clean? We look at ourselves and we think we're fine. We're not dirty.

We're okay. We're okay. God looks at us and thinks of us as really dirty. And it's the blood that makes us clean.

We need to see ourselves in light of how God looks at us. I remember once going to school many years ago and we used to take a bus and we're sitting on the bus.

And you know you get that, you're sitting there and there's that funny smell. You don't know where to place it, but it's a really rotten, bad, stinky smell.

And it was all boys, this bus. But it smelled of dog mess. And then eventually you're like, what is it?

[20 : 06] And then you do that thing with, oh no. And I realized I'd walk through dog mess on the way to the bus. But you can't place it smell. I thought I was fine.

It was not me. It was someone else. And we're often like that in life. We think we're okay. We think the stink is somewhere else. Someone else is the problem. Meanwhile, we're the cause of the most messy part of whatever happens in our lives and the lives of people we know.

So if that's you, if you don't think you need God because you're clean enough, you need to know that in and of yourself, you're not fit to be part of God's kingdom.

You can't be part of his team. Life revolves around you, your comfort, your selfishness, always having to be right, saying hurtful things or being hurtful, never worrying about the hurt that it causes others.

You think you're okay. But actually, God looks at that and he sees a bunch of really dirty people making his whole creation dirty.

[21 : 21] And he doesn't, yes, he wants to have a relationship with them, but they're dirty. And they've got to be clean. If you're clean in and of yourself, yeah.

Why did God have to send Jesus to die to make you clean? I mean, if there's any other way to make us clean, he would have done that. Just to show you how much potential danger you're in if you think you're clean in and of yourself and you don't need the blood of Christ.

Have a look at Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 27. We're destined to die once and then to face judgment.

Even as a Christian, I read those words and I go, that makes me just go, Jesus has borne sin.

He's taken it away. But he's not coming back to do that again. He's coming back to bring salvation to the ones who have been cleaned. And the ones who aren't clean are going to face the judgment of God.

[22 : 52] What does that sound like? What does that feel like? Hebrews spells it out for us. We've got to spend time in Hebrews because it's the culmination of all of these Old Testament pictures of who Jesus is and what he's done for us.

Turn over to Hebrews chapter 10. It's probably some of the scariest words in all of Scripture. It is addressed to Christians. But it can be applied to anyone who doesn't care for the blood of Christ and who thinks that we're clean enough in and of ourselves.

I'm just going to read from verse 26. If we deliberately keep on sinning after we've received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

For we know him who said, It is mine to avenge, I will repay. And again the Lord will judge his people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

[24 : 27] You need to know you can't face God by yourself and survive that encounter. It's not possible. You need to have the blood of Christ covered for you so that you're clean enough and holy enough to meet God and survive that encounter.

Don't think you can keep making a mess of your life and a mess of God's world and a mockery of Jesus being sacrificed for you and then think God will let you continue to live like that without facing the consequences.

You're going to face the consequences. You're going to die. God is going to call you to account. Now I'm not saying this to be nasty or to give you a downer for the weekend.

I'm just telling you because it's true. So that you can take action and avoid that. Come to Christ.

Let him clean you out. Jesus says, Whom the Son sets free from their sins is free indeed.

[25 : 36] The Apostle John says, If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth isn't in us. The truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, if we confess our sins. He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

That's the first type of person who doesn't think they need the blood of Christ. But the second type could be potentially more of a Christian problem. You see, Jesus has made us clean.

Yet, for some reason, Christians, we still tend to hold on to our dirt. Our yucky stuff. The stuff that smells. Our guilt.

Our shame. Our past. Our past. Our past. And we kind of feel and act as if Jesus hasn't actually made us clean. I've had so many conversations with Christians over the years that they're not really sure that they're fully forgiven.

That they're fully clean. That they're fully considered holy. But we need to deal with God for... If He says that we are, then we've got to say, well, we are.

[26 : 50] If God says something is true, then it's true. God says in Exodus to Aaron and the priest, When you do these things, you will be made holy.

In and of themselves, those things can't do the stuff that they need to. But because God says they will, then they do. I mean, if that's true of cows and bulls and rams and goats, that that blood can make them holy, or consider them holy, how much more true is it of the blood of the Son of God?

We know that Jesus died and His blood was shed. But do we live as Christians day by day, knowing that His blood was shed for me? And let that chase away your fears and your doubts, and your holding on to the things that you feel makes you unclean.

This is why we need the Word of God, to remind us of these things. If you're still in Hebrews, just turn back to Hebrews chapter 9 again.

In verse 12, Jesus didn't enter the heavenly tabernacle now, not just the earthly tabernacle, by means of the blood of goats and calves, but He entered the most holy place, the throne room of the kingdom of God in heaven, the most holy place, once for all, by His own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

[28 : 39] If you're in Christ, His blood has set you free. It has redeemed you, and it hasn't redeemed little bits of you. It hasn't left anything unclean.

It has made you totally clean, inside and outside, past, present, and future. It is an amazing sacrifice.

It has obtained eternal redemption, eternal release, not just for now, so that your past is still hanging around, making you feel bad. Let it go.

It's gone. It's done. It's washed away. It's not there anymore. You don't need to hang on to it. But remind yourself of that fact, so that you can feel clean, and you can feel part of God's team, so that you can serve Him well.

Have a look at verse 14. Well, I'll read from verse 13. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean, sanctify them, so that they are outwardly clean.

[29 : 56] So all the stuff in the Old Testament was just to make them really outwardly clean. It didn't really touch them on the inside. That's because it's the blood of goats and heifers and rams, what does the blood of Christ do?

Yeah, look at this. How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God?

How is it that Jesus' blood has this effect? But think whose blood it is. The Son of the living God.

The eternal Son of the Father. The one who now sits enthroned in heaven, but He was there at the beginning of time, before the beginning of time, choosing whom He will save and serve.

If you read through Ephesians 1. But He was there with God, creating the heavens and the earth. Then He comes down as a man, humbles Himself to be one of us, but His blood has this power of divinity behind it, so that when it's shed, there's this cosmic tear between our world and the next.

[31 : 22] and it has this cleansing effect, because it's got this power behind it, because He's the Son of God.

And it cleans our consciences. Think of it like a, I think of it like an atom bomb, like a cosmic spiritual atom bomb. You've seen the pictures of those atom bombs, like this.

And that moment in time, 30 AD, with Christ on the cross outside Jerusalem, we don't see it. We see the blood dripping down. If you're standing there, you would have seen the blood come out of His hands, His wrists, His feet.

They stuck that spear into His side, that gush of water and blood. That's what you would have seen behind that. What you would have felt, you would have, there would have been these cosmic consequences, earthquakes, the whole place turned dark, the temple curtain was torn in two, dead people came out of their graves.

And this cosmic effect, this spiritual effect, like an atom bomb, explodes and expands through time and space, so that us over here, 2,000 years later, we can feel that cleansing effect, of Christ's blood being shed.

[32 : 47] What about the past? Yes, all the saints in the past, those sacrifices, that God did through those bulls, they have an effect, because of Christ's sacrifice, there in time and space.

You can't see this effect, but it's there. The atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki, and Hiroshima, well you saw the effect immediately, but it disappeared, but you can't go back to those places.

They've been, those X-rays, and gamma rays, and whatever bad rays, they're actually cleaning rays, by the way, they make the place, not clean in a good way.

But you can't see that effect, but it's there. And Christ's shedding of his blood, has a similar effect, you can't see it, but it's there. We need to trust, in what God has done for us in Jesus.

So take your, whatever you've got, that's bugging you, your past. It could be past abuse, it could be a divorce, you've gone through, it could be broken relationships.

[33 : 50] Maybe you're not sure, you're doing a great job, raising your kids. Maybe it's your anxiety, for the future, you don't know what's coming next, and it's hindering you. Take all of that, and let Christ's blood, redeem it, and sanctify it, and make it clean, and wash it away, so it doesn't bother you, so that you can serve God, because you've made fit for purpose, so that you can serve him well.

Just to end up, talking about service for a little bit.

So the one part is, God takes his people, and he sets them apart, he makes them holy. What are they supposed to do, once they're holy? Just to be holy? Is the whole point just to be holy? Well, no.

It's to be of service, that's what priests do. They serve God, and they serve people. They're the go-between. Between God and the world. That place is now the church.

It's us. We're the holy ones, and we're the go-between God, and the rest of the world. The Christian life, is about being set apart for service.

[35 : 01] Oh, you might just want to go, just, here we go, thanks. Thanks, Anton. Set apart for service. And we see, the strange place that we look at, how we set apart for service, is in these aromas, these sacrifices, that make these lovely smells.

But just to make the point, we are saved to serve, and it's a difficult thing for us to grab hold of. It's easy to understand, set apart to serve. But so much Christianity is about being saved, so that you've got this deep personal relationship with God, that's great, it's lovely for you, but there's no sense where, where God wants to use you, to get stuff done in this world.

Yes, salvation gives us promises of God, but it's not for my own private, personal use and benefit.

It is that. It is that, but it's not meant to stay there. Once you've been saved, the question is, what have you been saved for? Well, we've been saved as priests.

We're a kingdom of priests now. God always wanted a kingdom of priests. Now in Exodus 29, he's like, well, listen, you guys didn't, they were on the mountain, they were all going to be a kingdom of priests. It didn't quite work, because they didn't go up to the mountain, they were too scared, then God said, okay, well then I'll come down, but I'll just call out my own priests.

[36 : 30] Those priests failed, but God always wanted a nation of priests. We're going to dig that further into that in our evening services, so come along to those. But the New Testament tells us that we are this kingdom of priests that God wants us to be.

We see it.

This thing that we're meant to serve, how we serve, is being this aroma, this lovely smelling aroma. Now you, I'm just, maybe stay in the New Testament, don't come back with me, back into the Old Testament, it's going to be too many, too many goings backwards and forwards.

I'm going to go back to the Old Testament for us, so Exodus 29. There's three places in Exodus 29, where every time those sacrifices are, there's these burnt offerings, and it says, and every time there's, it makes this lovely aroma to the Lord, so it occurs three times.

I'll just read it for us. Verse 18, they take the entire ram and put it on the altar. It's a burnt offering to the Lord, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the Lord by fire.

[37 : 48] So there's this lovely aroma. I'll get into that in a second. And then in verse 25, take them from their hands. This is the other sacrifices.

And put them on the altar with the burnt offerings for a pleasing aroma to the Lord, an offering made to the Lord by fire. And then these rams, that they're supposed to continually sacrifice day by day.

Verse 41, back in Exodus 29, sacrifice the other lambs at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offerings as in the morning, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the Lord.

Well, we've all braied on the weekends. We all know what a lack of braie smells like. That's so delicious. Oh, you take your lamb, you put the salt, you put pepper, bit of garlic, bit of rosemary, stick it there.

Mmm. And it's just, oh, that lovely, lovely, lovely smell. Well, what's interesting is that the New Testament takes these aroma images, these lovely, fragrant smells, and says, you're like that now.

[38 : 59] You're the sacrifice. So instead of being dirty and ugly, Jesus' blood cleans us and makes us smell amazing.

You know when you walk to your place and you've just got that lovely, mmm, that fresh-break smell, you just put a smile on your face? Yeah.

That's, that's how we are. And there's two things in particular that we do that make God like us more, like the way we smell.

It's if we talk about Jesus and when we, when we give sacrificially to his cause. I think I've got those verses up. So the first is 2 Corinthians 5, so you don't have to turn there. We are to God the sweet aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

To the one, we are an odor of death and demise, but to the other, a fragrance that brings life. That's the Christians. That's us. When we speak to others about Jesus or when we testify that we've got Jesus in our life and others know that you're a Christian, there's a smell that goes up.

[40 : 09] You can't smell it. God can smell it. And it's like he just gets that smile on his face. That's such a, I really like what they're doing when they do that. The other one is when, in Philippians 4, verse 18, where these gifts have been given to Paul for his ministry.

And he says this, I have all I need and more now that I've received your gifts from Epaphroditus, these gifts that you've given, they're a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.

Now he's talking about money there. But here's the thing, how do we serve? We give God the best of what we've got. They took the best bulls of their herd, the best rams, the best sacrifices.

It's expensive, but they offered it to God. And Christians, we're supposed to do the same. Talking about Christ and doing the things that we can, everything that we do, whether we give gifts of money or gifts of time, gifts of ourselves, everything you've got, you make the sacrifice to God, you offer it up to God as him being willing to use it through you.

And there's this lovely smell that goes up. Instead of being stinky, smitting like death, and yuck, you smell really good.

[41 : 38] So think about that next time you make a braai or some delicious food at home. Take a long inhale, that smell. Magnify that by infinity.

And that's how nice you smell to God if you trust in the cleaning, cleansing blood of Christ. And if you're serving him and doing stuff for his people and his kingdom. Well, let's pray and ask God to help us hold on to these truths.

we have any father. Thank you for this reminder of Christ's sacrifice for us and what it does.

Makes us clean, makes us holy, makes us acceptable to him. Not just for our own selves, but so that we can then spread this cleanness, this delicious smelling aroma of goodness through the world by speaking about Christ and by offering our lives as sacrifices to him.

Lord, we struggle with knowing that Jesus has fully paid for our sins. We hold on to it. We hold on to our sins too easily. We don't hold on to Christ's forgiveness.

[43 : 00] Help us, Lord, to hold on to the cleaning power of the blood of Christ and let it wash all our sins away. And Lord, for those who don't yet trust Christ and think that they can stand before you by themselves, will you speak to those people, Lord, and let them see their need for the blood of Christ to make them clean and change them and be merciful and give them that truth in their lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.