



MT. ROSE REFORMED
ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Living Sacrifice

Reverend Scott Johnson | June 14, 2026 | Exodus 27

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 27

Old Testament reading is Exodus chapter 27. Exodus 27. And this is God's inerrant and infallible word. So let's give attention to the reading of God's word this morning.

You shall make an altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad. The altar shall be square and its height shall be three cubits. And you shall make horns for it on its four corners. Its horns shall be of one piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze. You shall make pots for it to receive its ashes, and shovels and basins and forks, fire pans. You shall make all its utensils of bronze. You shall also make for it a grating, a network of bronze, and on the net you shall make four bronze rings, four bronze rings at its four corners. And you shall set it under the ledge of the altar so that the net extends halfway down the altar.

And you shall make poles for the altar, poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with bronze. And the poles shall be put through the rings, so that the poles are on the two sides of the altar when it is carried. You shall make it hollow with boards. As it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made.

You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side, the court shall have hangings of fine twine linen, 100 cubits long for one side. Its 20 pillars and their 20 bases shall be of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver. And likewise for its length on the north side there shall be hangings 100 cubits long, its pillars 20, and their bases 20 of bronze, but the hooks of the pillars and their fillets shall be of silver.

And for the breath of the court on the west side there shall be hangings for 50 cubits with 10 pillars and 10 bases. The breath of the court on the front to the east shall be 50 cubits. The hangings for the one side of the gate shall be 15 cubits with their three pillars and three bases. On the other side the hanging shall be 15 cubits with their three pillars and three bases. For the gate of the court there shall be a screen 20 cubits long of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twine linen embroidered with needle work. It shall have four pillars and with them four bases. All the pillars around the court shall be filleted with silver. Their hooks shall be of silver and their bases of bronze. The length of the court shall be 100 cubits, the breadth 50, and the height five cubits with hangings of fine twine linen and bases of bronze.

All the utensils of the tabernacle for every use, and all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court shall be of bronze.

You shall command the people of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light that a lamp may be regularly set up to burn in the tent of meeting outside the veil that is before the testimony. Aaron and his son shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout the generations by the people of Israel.

New Testament Reading: Romans 12:1-2

Our New Testament reading is Romans 12:es 1 and two. Romans 12 1 and two.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

The Most Important Thing About a Christian

What is the most important thing about you as a Christian? Well, it could be that your sins are forgiven. Of course, that is a wonderful thing, but that's not the most important thing about you as a Christian. It's thought that you are going to go to heaven when you die. That too is a great thing, great reality. But that is not the most important thing about you as a Christian.

The thing that is most important about you as a believer in Christ, as a Christian, is this. By the grace of God, you are now a worshiper of the true God. That is why God saved you. That is why God has forgiven your sins. That is why he will bring you into his heaven to be there forever and ever. It is so that you might worship him. So that you would be his worshipper beginning in this life but extending into eternity.

Jesus said that these are the people that the Lord is seeking those who will worship him. The father is seeking such people to worship him. Jesus said, "And it was for the same reason that the Lord delivered the people of Israel from Egypt from the bondage and the misery that they were experiencing under the cruel hand of Pharaoh. It wasn't just so that they might experience the freedom, the joy of being liberated. That was a wonderful blessing. Of course, it was good for the people of Israel. But there was a greater reason even for that. So often when Moses would go to Pharaoh and say to him, let my people go or thus says the Lord, let my people go, he would follow it up by saying that they may serve me that they may serve me in the wilderness. So even then, even then the father was seeking such people to worship him.

The Purpose of the Tabernacle

And this is what the tabernacle is all about. Tabernacle, of course, we've been studying it now for several weeks. It was the place in which the Lord made his dwelling among the people of Israel in the wilderness. But it was that place. The Lord was there so that they could worship him, praise him, glorify him.

In our passage this morning, there are three parts of the tabernacle that are described for us here. The bronze altar, the courtyard, which was surrounded by the walls that are described for us, and the oil that was to be used for the golden lampstand. Today we'll look at some of the details uh in this passage. We'll focus a little bit on the altar and the wall of curtains that surrounded the courtyard. Uh but I want us to step back and consider the tabernacle in its entirety. The tabernacle uh as a whole, what it was, what it was for. And we'll do that because there are lessons for us today as believers on how we are to worship God. How we are to think about the worship of God.

Lessons that this tabernacle and not only what this passage says about it, but what other scripture says about the tabernacle. It was the place where the Israelites worshiped the Lord.

And so, what can we learn about our worship as Christians today from it? So, that will be our concern this morning.

Details of the Bronze Altar

But before we begin to draw some of those lessons, let's take a look at some of the details of this passage. It is this passage that does describe for us different parts of the tabernacle. The Lord says in verse one, he says to Moses, "You shall make the altar of acacia wood 5 cubits long and 5 cubits broad. The altar shall be square and its height shall be three cubits."

The altar was the largest piece of furniture or the largest item that was connected with the tabernacle. Dimensions are given to us in cubits. Translate that into feet. Picture a square about 7 and 1/2 ft wide and long. It was about four and a half feet tall. Like the ark and the table for showbread, the altar was made of wood. But unlike those other things, it was covered with bronze. And there was a practical reason for that. The bronze would not have melted when it was exposed to the heat of the fire that was continually burning in the altar. So, it was covered with bronze but made of wood.

Uh there were four horns on the altar, one on each corner. And we know from the scriptures that a horn often symbolizes uh strength or power, but it's not exactly clear why there are horns on the altar or what they meant in connection with the altar. There's no explanation given us uh for that. But the horns do play an interesting part in the history of Israel. When we read on in the New Testament or the Old Testament rather, the altar came to be seen and and the horns of the altar came to be seen as something that would protect somebody who was under the judgment of execution.

And so in First Kings, for example, when Solomon was carrying out judgment against the men who had sinned either against him or against his father David, two of those men at different times, Adonijah and Joab, uh they fled into the tabernacle and they grabbed the horns of the altar hoping that that would save them from the justice from the judgment that was coming to them from Solomon. Um, as it turned out, it did work for Adonijah. He was spared death at that point, but it didn't work for Joab. He was put to death even though he sought refuge by grabbing hold of the horns of the altar. And so, it plays that role uh in the history of Israel.

One way we might describe the altar is to say that it was essentially a large grill because this is where all the animal sacrifices would be burnt or roasted. The sacrifices that are described for

us in the book of Leviticus, the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the peace offering. These would be offered up. The ones that were to be burnt or roasted, these would be offered up on this altar. They would be grilled there. And so the altar was the place where these sacrifices were burnt. And the fire of the altar was to be burning continually night and day.

In order for the priest to carry out this continual burning of sacrificial meat, they needed tools for the work. And so Moses is also instructed by the Lord to make pots for the ashes. He used to make shovels and basins and forks pans. And these also are all made out of bronze. And just like a grill today, the altar had a grading on it. And that grading would be the place where the sacrificed animals would be laid to be burnt. And like the other items of the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, the golden lampstand, the table for the showbread, the altar was to be carried with poles. And so Moses was to make poles to be inserted into the rings so that the altar could be carried that way.

The Courtyard Walls and Dimensions

After Moses is told how to make the altar, the Lord tells him how to uh make the walls that would surround the tabernacle, which created a large courtyard um or large space immediately around the tabernacle itself. And so there was to be four walls. They would be made uh pillars and curtains, curtains made of fine twine linen. Uh the pillars would be about seven and a half feet tall. So unless an Israelite was going into the tabernacle, normally he would not be able to see what was in it beyond the walls. He might see the top of the tabernacle. He would see the smoke rising from the altar, but normally he would not see what was happening inside the courtyard or inside the tabernacle area.

The eastern wall was different from the other three walls because it contained a gate. This was the area or the gate through which the Israelites and the priests would go in and out of. It was made of fine twine linen as well, but the gate would be embroidered with needle work out of blue and purple and scarlet yarns. So, it was decorative.

Moses was also instructed to make tents out of or 10 pegs out of bronze. We don't know for sure, but it's a safe guess that the 10 pegs were used to secure ropes which would stabilize the pillars and the curtains. Um and so usually uh when you see pictures of the tabernacle in the

courtyard, you'll see uh ropes coming out from the pillars and secured into the ground by these pegs.

Uh the dimensions of the court were 150 ft by 75 ft. So imagine a large rectangular uh area enclosed with these pillars and and white curtains and Inside the tabernacle itself is the bronze altar and between the tabernacle and the bronze altar there would also be a basin uh for ceremonial washing. Um the entire size of it just to picture in your mind how big the whole courtyard would have been would be about four tennis courts lined up side by side. So that gives you a picture of how big the tabernacle area was.

Lesson 1: The Beauty of God Beautifies Worship

Now, one noteworthy thing about the entire tabernacle structure was the relative simplicity of it and and we've mentioned this before although it was made out of the finest materials, gold, silver, bronze, fine twine linen, these very expensive uh yarn dyed with scarlet blue and purple and so on. Despite that, despite the fact it was elegant and It wasn't overly imposing. It wasn't overly ornate. It wasn't garish or goddy or ostentatious. It was relatively simple and elegant.

However, the most beautiful thing about the tabernacle, what made it truly a thing of beauty was that the Lord himself dwelt there. It was God himself that beautified the tabernacle that made it something that was truly beautiful.

And this is the first lesson that we can take from the tabernacle for our worship of God today. What makes our worship when we gather together as we are now? What makes our worship service truly a thing of beauty is the beauty and the glory of God himself who meets with us. The God whom we worship. It is his beauty. It is his glory that makes our worship something beautiful.

Now, this is not to say that we ought not to have beautiful things associated with our worship. If it's possible to have a beautiful sanctuary, then that is good. There's certainly nothing wrong with it. And it is proper fitting that we would have one if possible. It's good to have beautiful music and worship. But what's most important by far is that our hearts are filled with the beauty of God himself. Again, that's what makes a truly beautiful worship service. It's the invisible beauty, the invisible glory of God, the beauty of his truth, the beauty of his gospel, his love, his mercy, the the glory of his son, Jesus Christ.

And for that reason then as Christians if we do we don't have a church building to worship in as many Christians do not have in the world today like Christians in Uganda for example some before they had a little building they worshiped under a tree. As Christians we can worship God under a tree. We can worship God in a plain jane cinder block building and still our worship service can be beautiful because it would be filled with the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ the one whom we worship. So that's the first lesson for our worship service or our understanding of worship today is that it is the Lord himself that makes a worship beautiful not all the trappings of it but God himself that beautifies his worship.

Lesson 2: Worship is a Corporate Affair

The second lesson about worship that we can take from the tabernacle is that we must worship God together. The tabernacle was the one and only place where the Lord would dwell among his people and it was the one and only place where the Lord commanded the Israelites to bring their sacrifices to worship him. Later in the Old Testament, the Lord will explicitly command his people that they are not to offer their sacrifices anywhere except at the place where he appoints, which was the tabernacle. And so with the tabernacle, the Lord was focusing his worship in one place.

And for that reason, worship was a communal or a corporate affair. It was something that the people of God, the Israelites, that they did together. Of course, individual Israelites or groups of Israelites would bring their sacrifices uh to the temple at different times and yet the tabernacle but there would be other Israelites doing the same thing at the same time. So they would worship together. In other words, under this arrangement, this arrangement that was commanded by God, worship was not an individual, a private matter. It was not even primarily something that was done by families separated from other families, but rather God's intent for worship, the worship of his people is that they would worship him together as his people corporately as a body.

And you see the same communal worship in the New Testament among the first Christians. Just as the Holy Spirit by his power brought individual people and families to faith in Jesus Christ to belong to Christ, so he also brought them together that they would belong to one another as the body of Christ.

And so Acts tells us about how Christians worship together regularly. Acts 2:44 and all who believed were together and had all things in common. And what did they do together? Verse 42, they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers. uh very consistent with that. The New Testament tells us that as the gospel was preached, as people came to faith in Jesus Christ, as they were saved by the grace of God, they were naturally united to a local congregation or they formed a congregation, a church.

And so the New Testament has no category. There is no um New Testament teaching uh or possibility of a Christian who is separated from who is not meaningfully involved with a local congregation, a local church, a body of believing Christians. And so from the tabernacle to today, God's will has always been that his people should worship him together as a body.

And so Hebrews 10 says, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another. and all the more as you see the day drawing near. And so for you as a believer in Christ, this is God's will for you. Not only that you should believe in Christ and follow him and serve him, but that you should worship God with other believers, with the people of God, with the church. It is God's will for you that you are meaningfully involved and active in a local congregation of the people of God. It has always been the will of God that his people should worship him together. And the tabernacle points us to that.

Lesson 3: Worship Should Be Joyful

A third lesson that the tabernacle teaches us about worship is that worship should be joyful. Now, here we're bringing in other scripture passages, not directly from Exodus chapter 27, certainly implied in everything that is said in Exodus about the tabernacle, but we'll look at some other passages. But the point is that worship, worshiping God should be a joyful affair.

Just as the design of the tabernacle was relatively simple, the worship that took place there was also relatively simple. It was not overly elaborate or complicated, it consisted mainly of the sacrifices that the people of Israel brought to the temple or to the tabernacle to be worshiped. Later when the temple is built and perhaps sometime even before that music would be added to the worship of God. But for now, for this time of wilderness wandering, at least the worship that took place at the tabernacle was focused on the sacrifices.

The Israelites and the priests slaughtered the animals that uh that they brought into the tabernacle. The priests would offer them up on the altar. At least for some of the sacrifices, the Israelites would eat them uh there. uh at the temple or at the tabernacle rather. So the worship was simple but we can say that it was supposed to be a time of rejoicing.

Moses speaks of the worship that would be first at the tabernacle then later at the temple in Deuteronomy. He says this, "And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice you and your households in all that you undertake in which the Lord your God has blessed you."

When we read the Psalms, we read how the psalmist described the worship of God at the temple as intensely joyful. Psalm 43:4. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, oh God, my God. Psalm 84:es 1 and two. How lovely is your dwelling place, oh Lord of hosts. My soul longs, yes faints, for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

What was true for the temple then that the psalmist sang about was true for the tabernacle uh here in Exodus that as the Israelites would go there to worship it would be a time of rejoicing rejoicing before the Lord.

We have spent some time now as we've been going through these chapters in Exodus looking at all the various details of the tabernacle and the stress that we have the stress has been on on the holiness of the tabernacle. It is a sanctuary. It is a place where an infinitely holy God met with his people. So it was holy. And we might get the impression that for that reason, it was an austere and joyless place. We might get the impression it was a place where the priests ministered with grave, unsmiling faces, that the people brought their sacrifices with fearful hearts or heavy hearts.

But in reality, it was supposed to be a place of joy, celebration. This was the Lord who redeemed them, the Lord who chose them, who brought them out of Egypt, who loved them. We might put it this way. The tabernacle was a serious place. But as CS Lewis described, heaven, it was serious about the business of joy.

That should characterize our own mindset, our own understanding or attitude when we come into the presence of God to worship him together. We should come both with awe and rejoicing. We should come with a sense of reverence because we are coming into the presence of

almighty God and we have seen how he is a holy God. But at the same time our hearts should rejoice. We should exalt in the Lord in the salvation that God has accomplished for us in his son Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. And so our worship should be reverent, yes, but also joyful.

Lesson 4: We Must Approach God With a Sacrifice

Our fourth and final lesson that the tabernacle teaches us about the worship of God is this. We must worship God with a sacrifice. And we'll spend a few minutes on this.

Ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God in the garden, ever since that time, ever since they were then alienated us from God because of their sin and guilt. Since then, the only way that man can approach God is with a sacrifice. A sacrifice with blood. Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve, they offered sacrifices to God. Uh the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when they worshiped the Lord, they made an altar, they offered sacrifices to God. We saw in Exodus how after God gave his law to the Israelites, Moses and the Israelites, they constructed an altar and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on it.

And now here through Moses, the Lord is instituting a permanent well till the coming of Christ, a permanent institution of an altar of a priesthood of worship that would be centered upon sacrifices, bringing sacrifices, blood, the blood of animals shed to the Lord. And this cements this truth that After the fall, you and I or any man cannot come into the presence of God without a sacrifice.

At the church where I served as an intern for one year on this pulpit they had at the front of the church, there was a gigantic Bible uh laid on top of the pulpit. I mean, it was huge. It was probably about that big. It probably weighed like 10 or 15 pounds. Um, and it was right there on top of the pulpit for everyone to see. And the reason why or the point of having that pulpit Bible so prominent, it wasn't because the pastor needed to read the Bible without glasses. That wasn't the reason. But the point of this oversized Bible was to communicate the truth of the centrality, the premacy of the word of God and the worship of God's people. That the Bible is central. This is the God's word and therefore that communicated that to everyone who came there for worship.

And in a similar way, the altar was conspicuously large and present in front of the tabernacle of God. And it would have communicated to the people of Israel the centrality, the necessity of

sacrifices, that they could only come into God's presence with the blood of a sacrifice. That the tabernacle in the sense or the altar stood between the Israelites and the tabernacle itself. In other words, there had to be bloodshed for the Israelite for the priest to go into the presence of the Lord.

And so the altar and the sacrifices taught the Israelites that if they were to come into the presence of God, they needed the blood. They needed sacrificial blood to cover their sins. The New Testament puts it this way. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. If there is no forgiveness of sins, we cannot worship God. So if we are to worship God, we must come with the sacrifice, with the blood of a sacrifice.

Christ, the Ultimate Sacrifice

A couple of weeks ago, I said as we were looking at the uh at the Ark of the Covenant that the best thing, or rather, I think we're looking at the tabernacle as a whole. But the best thing about the tabernacle is that it no longer exists. That's the greatest thing about it. And that's because we have Christ. We have Jesus, the one to whom the tabernacle pointed.

And it's the same truth with this bronze altar. There's no more need for an altar on which to sacrifice animals to the Lord. And that's because the son of God, Jesus Christ, has come in order to be the one perfect sacrifice uh that all those animal sacrifices were only types of and pointed to. Jesus Christ came to be the one who would shed the blood that would forever truly remove our sin and guilt before the Lord forever.

The book of Hebrews explains how the altar and the tabernacle and the priesthood, it says in verse 101, they were but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities. So the true form of all of these realities was Jesus Christ in the fullness of time. He came to fulfill everything that the tabernacle, the altar, the sacrifices, everything that they represented to the people of Israel.

But until Jesus came, there could be no end to the sacrifices. And so every day, every week, every year, the Israelites had to spill the blood of animals in order to worship God, in order to come into his presence. Think of that for a thousand years or so. Think of how many animals were sacrificed, how much blood was shed. And these sacrifices never came to never came to an end. They were repeated over and over and over. And the fact that they were repeated over

and over and over uh taught the Israelites that they were insufficient to truly take away sin. They could never completely atone for the sin and the guilt of the people of God.

But Hebrews says in 9:26, Hebrews 9:26 that Jesus has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. There was only one shedding of blood that could atone for your sin, for my sin. There was only one sacrifice that could forever take away the guilt of your sin. It wasn't the blood of a bull or a goat, but it was the blood of the sinless son of God. Only his blood can atone for your sins, can cover your sins. And if your faith is in Jesus Christ, if your hope is in the son of God as your savior, then know that his once for all sacrifice on the cross, his once offering up of himself on that heavenly altar, that that was one and done, a sacrifice that forever takes away your sin.

Living Sacrifices

However, it's still true that we must come to God with a sacrifice. Only now it's a different kind of sacrifice. It's not the blood of an animal because we have been justified. We have been forgiven by the blood of Christ. But we come to the Lord with the sacrifice of our lives. We consecrate ourselves to God.

The New Testament uses the language of sacrifice to describe the devotion, the consecration that we are called to to give to God as his people whom he has redeemed. Romans 12:1 says, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." 1 Peter 2:5, you yourselves are like living stones, are being built up as a spiritual to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So as a believer in Jesus Christ, this is what you are called to. You are called to devote yourself wholly entirely to the service of the worship of God through Jesus Christ as a sacrifice. You are a sacrifice. But that raises the question for us. Good to examine our lives and to ask this question. Am I giving myself to the Lord service and worship and obedience?

We should ask ourselves, would I be willing to die for Christ? Is my devotion to him so complete that I would be willing to die for him? Think about that. It's perhaps for us to answer that abstractly, to say yes, of course I would be. But think about what if that situation never came up. Would you be willing to lay down your life for the sake and only for the sake of Jesus?

But perhaps an even harder question, and I've heard it put this way, this something that another preacher has said that it may be even a harder question to ask ourselves. Are you willing to live for him? Are you willing to live a life of self denial, self-sacrifice, service, dying to yourself for the sake of Christ. That's what it means to bear the cross of Christ. It means to die to yourself that you might live to him. And so, just like the sacrifices of the burnt offerings that were completely consumed on the altar, so you and I as Christians are called to be completely consecrated, consumed in a life that serves Christ, that honors him, that is given to him.

And this is what God has always demanded of his people. Wholehearted, whole soul devotion to him. One of the primary complaints that the prophets had against the people of Israel is that they went through all the motions of offering sacrifices to God and worshiping him and yet their hearts were far from him. It was simply a religious ritual. It was just external obedience to the letter of the law. There was no heart there. Their heart was far from God. And this kind of heartless, faithless, hypocritical, going through the motions, this was the kind of worship that God condemned. It wasn't truly worshiping God.

And so Samuel will tell Saul in 1st Samuel 15:22, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey better than sacrifice and to listen than the fat of rams. What God wants from his people is obedience from the heart. Not just going through the motions of the Christian life, but from the heart, giving ourselves to the Lord. David says in Psalm 51, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, oh God, you will not despise."

Worship From the Heart

We no longer bring to God animal sacrifices. We no longer offer up goats and bulls on the altar. However, we can be as guilty as the Israelites were of a kind of formalism, superficialism, hypocrisy in our worship. I mean, who among us has not been guilty of this? Who among us has not come to church? Simply going through the motions, singing the words of a hymn, but maybe not even thinking about it, hearing a sermon, but maybe not even listening or really taking it to heart. We've all been guilty of this kind of hypocritical, formalistic worship that the Lord condemns.

Part of the good news of the gospel is that God has not only given us his Jesus Christ to forgive us of that sin and many other sins. But with Christ, God also gives us his Holy Spirit. He gives

us a spirit to create in us a new heart to give us a true zeal, a true love, a true desire for Christ, for God. And by the grace of God, by the work of the Holy Spirit in you, you can worship in a way that pleases him, that honors him.

And as you come to the father to worship him, as you come in the name of Christ by the grace of God, as he gives you a heart that is filled with gratitude for him and for his sacrifice of himself to save you, as you worship God in this way from the heart, giving him thanks, rejoicing in him, you are bringing to God the best sacrifice. You are bringing to him a far greater sacrifice than all the goats and the bulls that were slain upon the altar. But you are bringing from the heart a sacrifice of praise, of worship, of thanksgiving to God. And that is the worship that pleases the father. Let's Pray.