

Bible Devotions: Lock Stock & Barrel
Devotional Reading for Outdoorsmen
(Old Testament)

Exodus 29:10-11

Killing Bulls

You shall also have a bull brought before the tabernacle of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands on the head of the bull. Then you shall kill the bull before the Lord, by the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

Many hunters, including myself, butcher their own game. Small creatures aren't that difficult once you get the hang of it, but larger animals require more space and effort. Still, it all starts with killing the animal.

I know this sounds morbid but it is the truth. Most folks wander through the meat department of the local grocery store and never consider how the animals were terminated. Unless one watches his butcher handle the meat, few people contemplate all the killing, gutting, skinning, cutting, sawing, grinding, preparing, and packing.

This is quite an ordeal for the animal. Not that it matters since it's dead. Yet it's not an easy task getting a living, breathing, furry animal to agree to die to satisfy our tastes for meat and clothing. It's ugly, no matter which way you cut it.

Let's think for a moment what the Old Testament scene might have looked like. Jewish wranglers select a bull and lead him to the door of the tabernacle. He's a grand beast with no blemishes or physical deficiencies. He weighs over half a ton, and can run hard and fast. His sense of smell is keen, locking in on the scent of previously spilt blood. Instinctively he knows that death is near. Do you really think he is led passively to the altar?

At the killing site, he is secured by ropes and stakes. The priests place their hands upon his head, coming dangerously close to those menacing horns. The killing implement is reverently placed against the swollen veins of his throat. He flinches uneasily. Suddenly, the slayer severs hide, meat, and blood vessels. The wound is mortal but not immediately lethal. He thrashes against the ropes. Men dodge his violent kicks. Blood squirts everywhere. Mucus blows from his nostrils. Finally, the fight for his own life ends and he piles into a bloody heap that must be reckoned with according to God's precise instructions.

Now the hard part begins. One of them splits the bull's belly, releasing a hundred pounds of gut and an invisible cloud of rank odor. Another gathers all of the bull's blood and soaks the sacrificial furnishings. Another man sorts through the entrails, making a pile of delights to burn on the altar and a pile of offal to burn outside the camp.

The rite goes on and on until every piece of the bull is offered to the Lord or banished from sight. It is a sin offering, after all, and that's how sin must be dealt with: in its entirety. *And you shall offer a bull every day as a sin offering for atonement* (Exodus 29:36). Did you catch that? This was done every single day.

Perhaps on some days the event was a lot more serene. The fact that this was performed innumerable times offers the possibility for at least one stubborn bull to be a little disagreeable with his opponents.

Ancient people didn't have big guns to drive heavy bullets into a bull's vitals. Even that doesn't work very well. Consider the grisly experiments in 1904 performed by Major Louis LaGarde and Captain John Thompson. Somewhere in the Chicago Stockyards, the researchers used handgun calibers of their era to shoot live steers. Nothing, not even a .45 Colt, dropped the beasts in their tracks. In fact, most cows had to be felled with a hammer blow to the head. Others dropped but only after sustaining multiple hits. All of them wanted to live after the first shot (Day, 1982).

Also to be considered are those horrible matches between bulls and bears in the old west days of frontier America. Bears were obviously eager to kill. Bulls just wanted to live. In the end, the bull was often the victor (*Contra Costa County*, 1882).

We now see that atonement for sin was a difficult thing to do in the Old Testament days. Really, it was the most difficult of all the sacrificial rituals. Day in and day out this unsightly scene was repeated. Men got tired of doing it and bulls got tired of providing it, at least until the pages of God's redemptive

history finally turned to John 19:30. There, Jesus cried, "*It is finished!*" and the ultimate sacrifice for sins was paid in full, nailed to an old rugged cross.

In the grip of men's hands, He was slapped, whipped, abused, stripped, bound, staked, stabbed, mocked, and rent apart on the inside – without so much as a whimper, without so much as a retaliatory gesture of any kind. Tormented in the shadow of the temple and crucified to death outside the camp, the perfect Son of God provided the only way sin could be dealt with: in its entirety, one final time.

Now that I think about it, killing bulls is a lot more prettier than I thought.

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Bible Devotions: Hook Line & Sinker (study guide)

Exodus 29:10-11

Killing Bulls

HOOK

1. In your view, what is the hardest animal to dress or butcher? What's the hardest to skin?

2. Describe how you would kill a cow before butchering it. How would you kill a large catfish?

3. Explain how you field dress a deer. If you have not done so, tell how you think it is done.

LINE

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Put yourself in the sandals of an Old Testament Israelite. Explain how you'd feel after watching 100 bulls sacrificed over a period of 100 days. What hits home for you?

Why is the blood of Jesus so important for you? Consider the death of Jesus and tell what it means to you? What is there about His death that makes you glad?

SINKER

Take a few minutes to write your thoughts on this devotional. Reflect on your own experiences.

Key words: killing sin life

