

The Problem of Sin

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we come to your word, Lord. It's a word about sin. It's a word about uncleanness. But it's also, Lord, a word about forgiveness and atonement and payment.

Included in that, Lord, is a word about blood and what is required to pay for sin. So, Lord, as we spend time in your word, would you speak to us about your holiness, our unholiness, and the redemption and salvation that is only available to us in Christ.

Amen. How clean are you this morning? I'm assuming most of you showered before coming to church.

Did you manage to brush your teeth? Put on some deodorant? Hopefully. You know, we work hard to keep ourselves clean because dirt in our lives builds up really fast.

In fact, our bodies are constantly producing waste. We don't normally think about this, but in just one year, we shed about four kilograms of dead skin, mostly in your bed.

[1 : 17] We produce about 220 liters of sweat, some obviously much more than others. About 370 liters of saliva.

That reminds me. Let's take a drink while we talk. 500 liters of urine. 500 liters of urine.

And one last fact. 300 kilograms of solid waste.

We are pretty stinky beings. But you normally come to church. In the olden days, they would put on their church best, wouldn't they?

The outfit, make sure the hair is done. And some of us don't have to worry too much about that kind of thing. But if you knew that God himself was going to meet you today, how much more effort would you have put in to be clean?

[2 : 25] Not just on the outside, but on the inside. We've seen throughout our service how the living God is holy and pure and majestic and powerful.

And how can his people, who are impure, unclean, and unholy, enjoy his presence without instant annihilation?

One commentator writes about the problems that the Israelites face in Leviticus. He says this. Imagine if the sun, that giant ball of flaming gas in the sky, wanted to come and live in your neighborhood.

There is no atmosphere to protect you. No sunscreen strong enough. No covering to shield you. Just the blazing inferno of the sun and your weak, frail human self.

The living God is holy, but we are a sinful people in a world of death. The living God, the living and holy God desires to dwell with his sinful people.

[3 : 36] How is that possible? Well, that's exactly the problem that the sin and guilt offerings in Leviticus addresses. And today, we're looking at the last two of the five main sacrifices or offerings in Leviticus.

We've had the burnt offering, the fellowship offering, there's a food offering, and then the sin and guilt offering. So they run from chapter 4 all the way to chapter 7.

That's what we read, but of chapter 4 and then into chapter 6. These sacrifices show us the true nature of sin.

And that sin doesn't just make us dirty, but it's also deadly. And it requires death to deal with it. And the only way to be made clean is through the shedding of blood.

But just as the blood of the sacrifices points us to the deadly nature of sin, it also shows us the absolute grace of God. It points us forward to the ultimate sacrifice, the blood of Jesus, the true Lamb of God, who alone can make us clean enough to enjoy God's presence safely.

[4 : 45] So we're going to spend a bit of time looking at the problem of sin. The problem of sin. We don't often take time to look at the problem of sin. That's understandable. It's like putting your

fingernails under a microscope.

You're going to see some really ugly stuff there. But like any medical condition that's causing you a problem, you want to get a proper diagnosis to make sure you've got the correct remedy and therefore the best chance of getting better.

To understand why we need sacrifice and blood and cleanness, we need to understand just how bad sin is. People tend to downplay the problem of sin.

You hear things like, Oh, it was just a small little blubsy. I didn't mean it. It was just a mistake. But Leviticus teaches us that it's so bad, that our sins are so bad, that it requires blood to fix not just intentional sin, but even unintentional sins.

And so the two big divisions in the sin and the guilt offerings is between unintentional sin and intentional sin. So reading Leviticus 4 verse 27, it says this, If any member of the community sins unintentionally, by mistake, not on purpose, and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord's commands, when they realize their guilt, and the sin they have committed becomes known, they didn't know about it, someone must have told them, they must bring, as they're offering for the sin they've committed, a female goat without defect.

[6 : 18] They can also bring a lamb. That's just for the common people. Well friends, God takes our sins deadly seriously.

If it takes blood to fix it, it's not a small thing. It's a big thing. But what is it about sin that causes us so much damage, and requires such a radical remedy?

And so we just want to spend a bit of time unpacking the problem of sin. And so I just want to highlight three things. There's much more to be said about the problem of sin, but we're just going to rest on these three things to get a bit of a handle on it in our lives.

The first thing is that sin is like a deadly infection. It's found deep inside of us. The word used for when people sin is the same word that's used for your soul.

You could easily translate it as when the soul sins. When your soul sins. And that points to where sin is located.

[7 : 26] It's inside us. We generate sin from within us. It's somehow infected our very souls. We cannot ultimately blame outside factors.

We're very quick to do that, aren't we? It's someone else's fault. It's my upbringing. It's the economics of the country. It's a race. It's a gender. It's a multitude of things where we blame others. We very rarely want, we don't want the problem to rest inside of us. We cannot ultimately blame outside factors. They can contribute, but no one forces us to sin.

And so we find that we've got this broken internal mechanism. We, when you read the scriptures, it tells you that we've got a damaged and a sick soul that doesn't respond properly to God or to the brokenness of the world around us.

You sin because you're a sinner. There's something wrong with us. We weren't made that way originally, but you've got to go all the way back to Adam and Eve to get people that were created without this problem of sin.

[8 : 37] But it quickly found them. And it finds every single one of us that has been born ever since then. You sin because you're a sinner.

Jesus said, it's the things that come from the heart, from inside us, that make us unclean. In Matthew chapter 15, he says this, For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

These are what defile a person. Like a really bad internal infection, sin is not something you can operate on by yourself.

You can't fix it by yourself. You need outside help. You need Jesus. So that's the first thing, is that sin is a deadly infection.

It's found deep inside of us. Secondly, sin is pervasive. We all have this sickness in our souls. In Leviticus 4, the sin offerings are, first of all, the people who come to give the sin offerings are first of all the high priest.

[9 : 50] You'll see that in chapter 4, verse 3. Then the entire nation of Israel have got to come and make amends and bring a sacrifice.

That's in verse 13. Then the leaders have to bring their sacrifice. That's verse 22. All in chapter 4. And then finally, the sacrifice for the common man, the one that we read. It's a ubiquitous problem. Sin infects all of us.

People are very quick to see the problem in someone else. We're quicker to self-justify and quicker to blame. But the truth is, each one of us has a sin problem. When the apostle Paul takes a look at the problem of sin in human hearts, he says in Romans 3, there is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They've together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one.

[11:06] And he concludes in Romans 3, 23, for all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Sin and guilt are inescapable realities in our lives.

If we don't take account of them, if we try and ignore them, if we try and downplay it in our own way and try and deal with it by ourselves, they're just going to keep on polluting our lives and keep on making us spiritually sicker and sicker.

We need to look for the remedy that the Bible offers. So sin is inside us. Sin is pervasive.

Everyone's got this problem.

How do we know that everyone's got this problem, whether they acknowledge it or not? Well, the wages of sin is death. Everyone is dying.

And people naturally do bad things. None of us have to teach our kid how to be naughty. It's just a natural thing that they do. You've got to teach them how to be good. So we see it at work in the world around us.

[12:22] We can't escape it. And then the third thing is that sin is powerful. Sin is powerful. It's more powerful than anything we have in and of ourselves to deal with it. We see this in the sacrifice for nearly every area of life in Leviticus and the sheer number of times the word sin is used.

The word sin is used more in Leviticus than any other book in the Bible, over 50 times. Sin is so powerful that people can't escape it.

God knows this though. That's why he's made a way out for our problem of sin. But unless people bring their sin to God, it's going to overwhelm them. Jesus, talking about how sin is more powerful than we are, says this, John chapter 8, Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.

And he says a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. And so if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

The point he's making is that we don't have the power to escape the problem of sin in our lives by ourself. We need an outside savior. Just like slaves in the Old Testament times in the ancient Near East.

[13:48] We like to think that there's big slave uprisings and they free themselves and they throw their shackles off. You couldn't do that in the ancient world. If you did that, you were dead. Instead, what you needed is someone to come and either pay the slave price for you to set you free, or to take care of the owner who owns you.

Kill them, but then you belong to them. But you didn't have the power to set yourself free unless someone freed you. The Bible knows of only one being powerful enough to break you out of the stranglehold of sin.

And that person is Jesus. And so Leviticus shows us the problem of sin, but it shows us that there's a payment that can be made that's going to set you free.

So at the end of each section in Leviticus 4 and 5 and 6, in all the different sin and guilt offerings, at the end of each section is this little phrase that when the fellowship offering is brought to the altar, in this way the priest will make atonement for the man's sin and he will be forgiven.

I'm reading in verse 26. At the very end of chapter 4, when the people bring their sacrifices to God, they give it over to the priest, they burn it in the fire, they sacrifice it, the blood is spilt, and depending on who is bringing the animal to be slaughtered, it's either just splattered out on the altar that's in the courtyard of the temple, and sometimes it's taken into the temple building itself, into the tent, that's the tabernacle at this time.

[15:36] Not into the Holy of Holies, that only happens once a year on the Day of Atonement. But they'd take the blood, throw it on the altar, and then sometimes they'd take it inside the tent and splatter it, there's another altar there before the curtain that separates the Holy of Holies and the rest of the tent complex.

And they'd spread the blood there. But at the end of every time that there's a sacrifice brought, it says this, I'm reading at the end of chapter 4, last verse, when the offering is made to fire in this way, the priest will make atonement for him, for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

So there's a payment that can be made for the sin that you've either unintentionally committed or intentionally committed, it covers all kinds of sins, but it's a payment in blood.

That's how hectic sin is, in front of God's eyes. Only blood cleans it for him. Now that sounds strange to us, but that's how God has designed how his world works and how it gets clean.

It tells us how bad sin is, doesn't it? Well, we need to look at, that's the problem of sin, but we need to look at the payment that Jesus makes, the payment that Jesus makes.

[17:00] And so Leviticus tells us that sin is so bad, it needs blood to deal with it. But you've got two choices. Either your blood is forfeit, or you have the blood of someone else pay for it.

The New Testament tells us that the blood of goats and cattle can never really pay for the sin.

They're always pointing forward to the spilt blood of Christ.

Either your blood is forfeit, or you have the blood of Jesus pay for you. You can make the payment.

For your sins. But you're not going to survive the payment. Your blood is forfeit.

But here's the good news. God doesn't want you to make the payment. God has already made the payment in Jesus Christ.

And so that's that 1 John reading. There's many places in the New Testament we can go to, but that

1 John chapter 1 says this, it should be up on the screen. If we walk in the light as He's in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

[18:14] I wonder if we really get that.

Do we really believe that all our sins have been paid for? Not just the little ones. Not just some of them.

All of them. The big ones. The ones you can't remember. The ones in the past. Yes, even the ones that you're going to commit in the future.

Jesus' blood doesn't just forgive us and wipe the slate clean. He cleans us. He purifies us.

In fact, He makes us holy. All the New Testament letters are written to the saints who are in Corinth or the saints who are in Ephesus. That little word saint means holy.

[19:15] The New Testament considers you holy because of the blood of Christ. You're cleaned up, made holy from the inside out. Your mind, your heart, your soul, your past.

It's all cleaned away by Jesus' blood. So many Christians are struggling under a weight of shame and guilt from their sin for no good reason.

We often carry our sin with us. We don't really trust that Jesus can forgive all our sin. It's difficult to say, but a lot of the problems that we hear about in our counseling is from people who are feeling guilty about something that they've done recently or something has popped up from their past that's normally the bigger stuff.

They've convinced themselves that Jesus hasn't dealt with it. But throughout the New Testament, time and time again, the promise is that the blood of Christ cleans us, purifies us from all our sin.

The eternal, the blood of the eternal Son of God is more powerful than your collective sins. It's more powerful than the collective sins of the entire human race for the entirety of history because He is the eternal Son of God.

[20:58] His blood is worth an infinite amount. And just tell yourself or ask yourself, it says, the blood of Jesus cleans us from all sin.

And then we're dealing, we're holding on to our sin. So, is God lying? Does it say He cleans us from some of our sin, from most of our sin, but not the really big ones, not the really hurtful ones?

No. It cleans you from all your sin. That's what it says. Is God lying? No. Can He lie? He can't lie.

And so, if you're struggling under a weight of shame and guilt, don't continue condemning yourself if Jesus has condemned your sin already.

But like the sacrifices in the Old Testament, you must bring your sin and guilt to Jesus. If you're not bringing it to Jesus, you're going to try and deal with it on your own. For many, it looks like covering it up with lots of work, lots of busyness.

For others, it's going to look like some kind of addiction, smoking, drinking, gambling, etc., etc., etc., all the stuff that we do to cover up our problems.

[22:22] But they never work. They never take away your guilt, and they never make you feel any better. That's how you know you've swapped the real thing for a fake. It doesn't actually work.

Just talking about drinking, that's one that people often turn to when they're trying to deal with the problems they've caused in their life. But I mean, just compare Jesus Christ with Johnny Walker for a second.

One of them actually takes guilt away. The other one makes you feel more guilty. One of them heals the hurts of your soul. The other one causes more hurt. One of them fills your life and gives you a better way of relating, fills you with life, I should say, and gives you a better way of relating to your past and relating to others.

One of them doesn't cost you. The other one will take everything from you. And it's not Jesus Christ. He will give you life. It's alcohol.

[23 : 31] And all the substitutes that we make in our lives or do in our lives that will cause problems for us. So, if you're feeling guilty and you're not yet a Christian, what you need to do is what the Apostle John says to do.

Confess your sins. It means bring them to Jesus. Do business with Jesus. Take your sins to Him. Talk to Him about them. And John says, He is faithful and just and will forgive you.

So, don't wait. Go ahead and do that. If you're struggling as a Christian with your sin, do the same thing. Remind yourself, the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleans me from all of my sin.

The thing is, God wants you to have a life that enjoys having Him as your Father, not as your judge. And He also wants you to have a life that is lived in good relation with others.

And so, we've looked at the problem of sin, we've looked at the payment that Jesus makes, but there's one last thing we need to look at and that is the payment that we make. The payment that we make.

[24 : 44] The thing is, once you've received the payment that Jesus made for your sins to give you forgiveness and cleansing, He wants you to start paying that back. Not to Him. Not to pay for your sins.

Not to earn salvation. But pay it back to others. God wants you to be a part of the process of reconciliation and restoration to fellowship.

So, Leviticus 6, verse 4 says this. Chapter 6, I think that's starting with the guilt offerings.

They're slightly different sacrifices. It says this, If someone has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.

So, that starts in verse 4, chapter 6, verse 4. I've just contracted it a bit. But just notice, if someone has sinned, and that's not unintentional sin, it's if he's sinned and he's realized his guilt and he knows he's done something wrong, what he needs to do is restore what he took.

[25 : 55] Talks about stealing and false promises and things like that. he will restore it in full and he's going to add a fifth. He's going to pay back extra and he's going to give it to the one it belongs to when he realizes that he's guilty.

The principle here is that if you've wronged someone in some way, you need to make amends. That will look most often to us like going to people and saying sorry, confessing you're wrong, and asking for forgiveness.

forgiveness. It could also mean making some form of payment to right the wrong. I did this with my brother when we were kids. We got into a big argument and I dinged his brand new mountain bike. It was the worst thing I could have done. Saying sorry wasn't enough. And so I bought him a five liter tub of ice cream. And that made us instant friends again.

And so sometimes money can buy you love. But in all truth, if you can make amends, if there's something you've done wrong and you can go beyond just saying sorry, what can you do to fix that relationship?

[27 : 10] You can use what God has given you to do that. Of course, it's not about throwing money at the problem. It's about fixing the relationship with the person. So some people who've got lots of money just throw more money at it as if that's going to fix it.

That's not enough. You've got to fix the relationship. But sometimes just saying sorry is not enough. You need to put your money where your mouth is. Sometimes the payment you must make is forgiving the wrong that you've received to let go of the hurt and the harm that you've received from someone else.

So Ephesians chapter 4 says this, Paul writing to the church, he says this, okay everyone, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you.

When last did you say sorry to someone in your life? When last did you pay someone or give something back to someone for saying sorry?

I would say if it's been more than three months, you probably owe someone an apology. In fact, as we're talking right now, just see if there isn't someone that pops into your mind that you know you need to go and apologize to or someone that you need to go and make amends with.

[28 : 35] Most of us will have someone that just like that, you can quickly think about someone that you need to say sorry to. Maybe it was a harsh word.

Maybe you were rude. Maybe you ignored them. Maybe you belittled them. Maybe you raised your voice. Maybe you showed them a cold shoulder. Maybe it's a really big thing in the past that haunts you that you know you need to sort out.

Go and do it. Don't wait. God has freed you from your guilt. You can say sorry and even if they don't forgive you, that's okay. You know that God has forgiven you.

So just friends, in conclusion, sin is really bad. It messes everything up. Don't underestimate its power. Don't underestimate its deceitfulness. But don't wallow in your guilt and shame.

The power of the blood of Jesus is unsurpassed and it cleans us from all our sin. His blood has set you free. To be part of his reconciliation, his restoring project, just go and make amends as best you can.

[29 : 51] Be quick to say sorry. Be quicker to forgive. Just as Jesus has forgiven every single one of your sins, past, present, and future, there's no reason you can't do the same for others.

God that requires a lot of prayers. I'm going to pray for us. Lord Jesus, we see Lord, how this amazing sacrifice of your blood can clean us and make us holy and make us acceptable to God that it cleans all our sins.

Jesus, we are just so thankful there's nothing we could have done to pay for all the wrong that we've done. But Lord, help us to grab onto that truth that all our sins have been paid by the shedding of your blood.

Help us to trust that, to honour that, and to live like that's true Lord, and because of that, to easily forgive and easily make amends to the people in life that have wronged us or to the wrongs that we have done.

We ask this in your name. Amen.