

THE SAVIOR IS OUR SACRIFICE

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Jesus came to be the ultimate sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world and bring people into relationship with God.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

John 2; 1 Corinthians 5; Hebrews 10

+ **SETTING:**

Easter week is a vivid reminder of Jesus's purpose and work, the reason why He was born into this world as a human being. We focus on the cross and resurrection at Easter since this week commemorates these key events in Jesus's life. However, all the way back at His birth, the descriptions used of Jesus pointed forward to the way His life would lead to His sacrificial death. These descriptions also point back to the Old Testament as many of the images that foreshadowed His death were woven into the story of God from long ago—such as the temple and the sacrificial system.

DAY 1

READ:

John 2:13-17

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 2:15-16

NOTES

Many in the temple were using God's house for their own selfish pursuits. While we may not be guilty of robbing people by charging outrageous prices for worship offerings or raising the exchange rate for currency, we can be tempted to use God for our own selfish pursuits in other ways.

Many times Christians can be guilty of approaching church attendance or morality as a means of looking good in the eyes of the watching world. We're not so much in it to worship God for His character and worth, but we want to be seen as a good, upstanding person or be perceived as having a happy marriage or family. Some even approach God thinking that if they do a bit of good, like go to church or care for the needy, then God owes them something in return. In this way, people use God and attempt to manipulate Him with their actions so that He does for them what they want.

This type of selfishness is unfit for the people of God. It drew the ire of Jesus in the temple and continues to draw scorn from Him today. He's not interested in fake worshipers who are merely playing a game for what they can get in return. He wants genuine worshipers, those who worship and serve Him simply because He is worthy. Jesus's anger in the temple should alarm us to consider our ways any time we take advantage of God or use Him for our own selfish pursuits.

How are you tempted to use God for your selfish desires?

DAY 2

READ:

John 2:13-22

FOCAL PASSAGE:

John 2:22

NOTES

What does it take for you to believe?

Jesus's disciples were given unique insight into who Jesus is and what He came to do. Yet it would take time for the truth of these claims to make sense. After all, the reality of Jesus's mission was hard to fathom, even for those who were looking for the Messiah. Years later, they would be able to look back and see how God's faithfulness was on display through Jesus's promises and His faithful fulfillment of the work God had given Him. It's as if they had spiritual light bulbs come on that clued them in to the reality to which Jesus had been pointing all along.

Have you ever had an experience like that? Someone—maybe a pastor or trusted friend—pointed you to a truth about God from the Bible that you did not want to hear or did not fully understand at the time. Later, when you returned to that conversation in memory, however, you saw and understood the truth about God. In the intervening time, you may have experienced something painful that jarred you to consider what God was saying. Or it may have been that your heart was uniquely poised to hear the truth and respond in a way that it had not been before.

Over time, we want to become the kind of people who hear God and believe His promises quickly. Every time we sit down and read our Bibles, God is speaking to us and He has truth that He wants us to understand and apply. We now have the benefit of seeing the fullness of Jesus's work through His death and resurrection, so our perspective is clearer than that of the first disciples. We should seek to understand now rather than wait until later.

What truth is God trying to communicate to you right now?

DAY 3

READ:

1 Corinthians 5:6-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Corinthians 5:8

NOTES

The immediate context of Paul's words regarding Jesus as the Passover sacrifice was a matter of church discipline. Sexual sin has invaded the Corinthian church, and Paul exhorted the church members and leaders to expel the offending members for the purity and health of the body. He used the picture of leaven, or yeast, to show how a seemingly small amount of sin can have a massive negative influence on the church.

The application does not stop there, however. The same truth applies to our individual lives as well. We are often tempted to indulge certain sins and think that they will not destroy our lives. After all, if we keep them hidden and seemingly in check, then how much harm can they really do? We rationalize our sinful habits with the fact that we are doing so many other good things in the world. We go to church, read our Bible, love our family, and avoid much of the heinous sin that we see play out in those around us. All that good stacks the scales in our favor, so we think.

We forget that a little leaven leavens the whole lump in our lives as well. A little sin, left unchecked, contaminates the whole person. Unfortunately, we see testimony of this reality on a near-daily basis as public figures and pastors fall into heinous sin seemingly overnight. The reality is that it didn't happen overnight. Sin infested the person's life, perhaps in a way that seemed small and insignificant, and it festered for a long time before becoming public.

Our churches are also filled with people who coddle sin for too long and get exposed. As with the church as a whole, each of us should fight to repent of known sin and kill our sinful flesh so that we live a life worthy of the sacrifice of Christ, our Passover Lamb.

From what sins do you need to repent?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"A man is first startled by sin; then it becomes pleasing, then easy, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then confirmed. The man is impenitent, then obstinate, and then he is damned."¹

—Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667)

DAY 4

READ:

Hebrews 10:1-4

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Hebrews 10:2-3

NOTES



KEY DOCTRINE #58: CHRIST AS SACRIFICE

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the cross was able to permanently, "once and for all," take away sins.

It is good for us to be reminded of our sin. The ongoing process of offering animal sacrifices served a valuable purpose for the nation of Israel. All those who approached God in this way were reminded that they were not holy. They needed something, or someone, to die in order to appease God's wrath and make it possible for them to approach Him. The gory scene of blood and death in the temple would have been a stark reminder of the cost of sin.

If we are honest, for many of us, sin can be out of sight, out of mind. We grow accustomed to the aspects of our lives that have become normative, even our sin. Many times we don't even notice our sin anymore. And many of us don't live in contexts where we have rituals like animal sacrifices that call our sin to mind.

This is one good reason for church membership and active involvement. As we participate in the regular rhythms of the church's life, we should be confronted with our sin and God's holy standard. A steady diet of biblical sermons should hold up a mirror to our lives and force us to consider how far we fall short. We should live in community with others in such a way that their lives challenge us to pursue holiness and in which these friends can push us to repent.

However, this isn't all the church does. Through the active ministry of the church, we are also encouraged by the truth of Jesus's work. We do not have to sit in our sin and live with perpetual shame and regret. We can turn to Jesus and find help and hope that forgiveness can be found through faith in Christ. We should find joy in the fact that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

How is your church community helping you see your sin and turn to Jesus for help and hope?

DAY 5

READ:

Hebrews 10:5-10

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Hebrews 10:10

NOTES

Christians can make progress in fighting sin and pursuing holiness. This may seem like a common-sense claim, but we may be tempted to live like it's actually impossible for us to grow in Christ. We subtly assume that we've hit our ceiling and just can't go any further.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that Jesus died to sanctify His people. The term sanctify refers to something that is set apart for holy use. Like items for worship in the temple, God takes common sinners and makes them holy. He does this, first, by imputing Jesus's righteousness to God's people as a gift. We are sanctified by faith. Then, as the Spirit indwells believers, we are conformed to God's image. We are made in practice what God has made us as a gift. Certainly this work will not be realized fully until the second coming of Christ and we enter heaven, when God's people are resurrected, fully glorified, and sin is done away with for good. But we can make progress in this life. We can kill sin and overcome those habits that have plagued us in the past.

It's important for us to have hope around sanctification. Often the work is slow and the progress is unnoticed in the moment. Only long after the fact can you truly see the progress you've made. Like a weight-loss journey, it's little changes to your diet and a commitment to exercise that brings lasting change when a person commits to it for a long period of time. Christians have to commit to the process in order to make progress. Praise God that He is committed to transforming us to look like His Son.

What habits do you need to develop to continue to grow in your walk with God?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Such was the holy, heavenly zeal of our Great Exemplar! His were no transient outbursts of ardor, which time cooled and difficulties impeded. His life was one indignant protest against sin;—one ceaseless current of undying love for souls, which all the malignity of foes, and unkindness of friends, could not for one moment divert from its course. Even when He rises from the dead, and we imagine His work at an end, His zeal only meditates fresh deeds of love."²

—John R. Macduff (1818-1895)

POINT 1: Jesus came to be the greater temple (John 2:13-22).

Jesus was passionate that God's temple be used for _____ alone, not self-serving _____ .



What do you think of when you hear the word temple?

Jesus came to be greater than the temple and to _____ its true _____ .



How is the temple of Jesus's body better than the temple building?

POINT 2: Jesus came to be the greater Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

As the _____ , because of Christ's saving work and sacrifice, we are to pursue _____ , not letting sin continue to take hold.



How should the church treat sin and sinful people?

KEY DOCTRINE #58: CHRIST AS SACRIFICE

There are several signs, symbols, and pointers in the Old Testament that foreshadowed Christ as being the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the _____ of the _____ . However, unlike the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, whose sacrifices were unable to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), Christ's sacrifice on the _____ was able to permanently, "once and for all," take away sins.

POINT 3: Jesus came to be the greater sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-10).

The Old Testament sacrificial system was _____ because sacrifices had to be offered _____, not being able to take away sins forever.

? How would you feel if you had to offer sacrifices for sin year after year?

Jesus’s death for the once-and-for-all forgiveness of sins both _____ (makes us right with God) and _____ (makes us holy like God).

MY RESPONSE

Because Jesus’s sacrifice provides us with complete forgiveness and acceptance by God, we live with assurance and gratitude, obeying God’s commands so we reflect our new identity in Christ.

- **HEAD:** How do the Old Testament shadows of the temple and the sacrificial system help you understand what Jesus did?
- **HEART:** What distractions and offenses against God’s holiness do you need to repent of to honor Christ?
- **HANDS:** With whom will you share the good news of Jesus’s perfect sacrifice and not having to achieve perfection ourselves for salvation?



Scan this QR code to access this session’s Scripture passages.

VOICES from THE CHURCH

“True love will motivate us to make sacrifices that might even cost us our lives. Such sacrificial love makes God’s heart glad. This kind of love is worth it.”³

–Africa Study Bible