

Because God is Love, He chooses to Redeem Us

Colossians 1:22 NLT - 22 Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

1 John 4:10 NLT - 10 This is real love--not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

God's choice was this; allow us to die in our sins and be eternally separated from Him or send Jesus to the cross in our place so that we are no longer subject to the power of sin and death. In place of death we have fellowship with God and eternal life. Why? Because God is love, Jesus took the punishment we deserved, to cover the debt we could not pay.

We have been offered a great gift but too often we still allow sin to come between us and God. What are some things that might indicate that sin is separating you from God's presence? What might keep us from accepting God's offer of reconciliation at those times?

Symbols of Atonement

It is important that we continue to remember Christ's atoning sacrifice and the great love God has for us. To do this God has given us two symbols of atonement: Baptism and Communion.

Romans 6:4 NLT - 4 For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.

1 Corinthians 11:24-25 NLT - 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." 25 In the same way, he took the cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people--an agreement confirmed with my blood. Do this to remember me as often as you drink it."

Share with your group what your baptism was like. If you have been part of a particularly unique or powerful communion service describe that to the group as well.

"Atonement"

Deeply Rooted week #4

INTRODUCTION

Last week, in our series exploring the foundational truths into which our lives are deeply rooted, we confronted the problem of sin. It is our choice to either remain separated from God in sin and darkness or to confess our sins and receive His forgiveness. When we do confess, we are invited out of darkness and into the light. But why would God choose to reconcile us to Himself? What is the basis of our atonement? We know God is just and that the penalty of sin is death, so how is it we are forgiven that debt? The answer is love.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTH – ATONEMENT

We believe that Jesus Christ, by His sufferings, by the shedding of His own blood, and by His death on the Cross, made a full atonement for all human sin, and that this Atonement is the only ground of salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of those incapable of moral responsibility and for the children in innocence but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.

MEMORY VERSES

John 3:16-17 NLT - 16 "For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

MEDITATE ON GOD'S WORD

We read the bible to be formed and transformed, not merely to gather information. Reading of the scripture in this way requires unhurried time and an open heart. Only God's Spirit can fully interpret God's Word, and as you meditate on His Word in *1 John 1:5-8*, the Spirit has the opportunity to give you personal insight. We can break it down into four parts:

- reading - This is a reflective, gently paced, one-bite-at-a-time kind of reading. As you read, ask God, "What are you saying to me just now?"
- meditate- Let's be clear, this is not an Eastern religious practice, it is our taking time to reflect on the passage and repeat it in our minds, and throughout our day. Speak it out loud, find ways to incorporate it into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of your life
- pray – a natural product of meditating on God's Word will be to communicate with God. As we find God addressing us directly through His Word, our hearts cry out to Him. Perhaps we feel joy and gratitude, or repentance and pain. But as God's Word penetrates our lives, our response will be heartfelt prayer.
- Rest – as a result of spending time reading, meditating and praying through God's Word, you can come to a place of sabbath-time rest in God's presence. Simply receive from Him by being with and near to Him.

Share with the group what God has shown you in this week's passage.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS –

The Cost of Sin

Hebrews 9:22 NLT - 22 In fact, according to the law of Moses, nearly everything was purified with blood. For without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.

Romans 6:23 NLT - 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Is sin really that bad? Yes, it's worse than you thought. Maybe we prefer fooling ourselves into thinking our sins aren't so bad, that it's just a little mistake that God can overlook. But from both of the verses above we see that sin is actually quite serious. Sin cannot be overlooked by a just God. Sin has a cost. In fact, from the beginning, God has provided a way for man to cover his sins.

When the first sin was committed, how did Adam and Eve attempt to cover themselves? What blood was shed so that God could provide a covering for them (Gen 3:21)? In what ways do we still apply inadequate "fig leaves" to cover our sins rather than the blood of Jesus?

The Old Testament tells the story of God's plan to bring us back into the relationship we once had with Him. He chose Abraham and through him promised to bring blessing to all nations. When God's people were enslaved in Egypt, God demonstrated how he would free his people and it was the sacrifice of the Passover lamb that kept them safe from death. And on Mount Sinai God established a covenant when He gave them the Ten Commandments and established a place to meet with them in the Tabernacle.

In what ways does God's story in the Old Testament story point us to Jesus?

Animal sacrifices were not adequate to remove sin, but they reminded the Israelites of the cost of sin and were symbolic of the price that would ultimately be paid by Jesus. Our own efforts to cover our sins are about as effective as fig leaves, but the blood of Jesus paid the full price for our sins. From the cross Jesus declared "Teteo" which can be translated as "it is finished" or "paid in full". And He did even more than pay the price for our sin, He also restored the damaged relationship between us and God.