

The S word

The Remedy for Sin

Outrageous Remedies

Cures for acne! - Wash your face with a wet diaper.

Baldness/Thinning Hair - Smear your head with fresh cow manure.

Cure for sore throats!

This was actually used widely until the 20th century—it involved wrapping your dirty socks around your throat. The rationale? Since sore throats are so contagious, and back then a signal of a potentially lethal disease, the dirty socks were used to keep loved ones as far away as possible from the patient. But that's just a guess.

Colds – Curing - Catching leaves in your hand, which fall from the trees in the fall, will cure a head cold.

Cures for earaches!

The trick was to stuff the painful ear with a moist wad of chewing tobacco — or even just to blow tobacco smoke into the ear.

Another calls for putting drops of urine in the affected ear. Apparently Elvis Presley's mother relied on this remedy whenever The King had a childhood earache.

Cure for cold sores! - "To heal a cold sore quickly, put earwax on it." I do wonder what prompted its inventor to try it.

Headache - Sleep with a pair of scissors under your pillow. The next morning the headache will be gone.

This morning we continue our series called *The "S" Word* . We started out last week where we looked at "What is Sin?" and we tried to define it and describe it as best we could. We said that sin is the like the elephant in the room. We all know it's there, but no one wants to talk about it....

We said that we will never be able to fully appreciate God's amazing grace, expressed to us in the gift of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, until we understand the significance of our own sin.

- Sin is a condition we have from birth.
- Sin is like a global pandemic, a terminal disease that we all carry in our body. We're all broken and infected by it.
- We sin because we're sinners. But we're also sinners because sin.
- Sin is anything we think, do, or say that displeases a holy God - that's sin of commission.
- But sin is also anything that we don't think, don't do, or don't say that displeases a holy God. That's sin of omission.

The consequences

The reason that Sin is a problem is that there are consequences of sin. I don't want to spend too much time on this as I want to concentrate on the remedy. We could say whole lot about the consequences but it can be summarized with one word ... Death. Sin always brings death, physical death and spiritual death.

Paul puts it this way in Romans 6:23, *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

You work all week and what do you earn for your work? You earn a wage, a pay cheque. That's what you deserve for your work. Well, death is the wage we earn for our sin. It's the pay cheque we all get at the end of our lives. And everybody gets it. Despite the wonders of modern medicine and all our technology, the mortality rate is still 100%.

The wages of sin is death, which is all really depressing, but the gift that Jesus gives us is life. Life is a gift from Jesus. It's not a wage. It's not something we earn or deserve. Eternal life is a gift of God's grace available to all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God who died for them on the cross.

And what is death? The word "death" really just means separation. Physical death is the separation of our soul from our body and spiritual death is the separation of our soul from God. And that's not a pleasant thought. No one likes to think about death, the death of a loved one, the death of a friend, or even our own death someday. Death is a depressing thought.

The remedy

But fortunately, here is the good news, there is a remedy for death because there's a remedy for sin, a remedy that can save us, a remedy that can rescue us, a remedy that offers us life instead of death. And that's what we want to talk about this morning. The Remedy for Sin.

And for us to understand the remedy properly we have to go all the way back to the garden, back to the beginning of the story. Remember there is only one

story in the bible, and for the story to make sense you have to start at the beginning. So if you have a Bible please turn with me to Genesis 2:15-17.

Genesis 2:15-17,

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden, ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

That's the first use of the word "die" or "death" in Scripture. *When you eat from it you will certainly die.* Sounds horrible, doesn't it? How can a loving God say that?

And what's up with the tree? Why would God designate a tree of temptation in the middle of the garden in the first place? Was he teasing Adam and Eve? Was he tempting them to sin?

No! God places a tree in the middle of the garden to honour their freedom of choice. *You are free*, he tells them, free to obey or free to disobey.

One of the wonderful ways we are all made in the image of God is that we have freedom of choice. We are not robots. We are not pawns for the gods to play with as many other religions of the day would have had us believe. We have not been programmed to obey God automatically. God created a good thing called freedom. Freedom is something we all cherish. Freedom is something that men and women have fought and died for. And God gave freedom to each one of us. We have the freedom to obey or disobey God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6et2ZSodS0g> Bruce Almighty free will

So with that freedom we can choose life or we can choose death. It's always been that way. God will never force himself on you. So the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was absolutely necessary in the middle of the garden for Adam and Eve to express their freedom.

So God tells Adam and Eve, "Here's the deal. Eat anything on the menu. Anything your little heart desires, and there are a lot of good entrees to choose from, but don't eat this one dish. It'll make your life miserable.... in fact, it will kill you."

So what do they do? They 'freely' eat the one entree that's not on the menu. And immediately they die. Not physically, that will come later. They die spiritually, they are separated spiritually. Their harmonious relationship with God is severed and immediately they run and hide in the bushes.

Look at Genesis 3:8-10,

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" ¹⁰And he answered, "I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

So they play this game of hide and seek because they're ashamed of what they did. But God comes looking for them. God pursues them because he loves them, just like God pursues you and me because he loves us and he doesn't want us to hide from his love.

The First Sacrifice

And after God describes the consequences of their sin he does something extremely gracious. He covers the shame of their nakedness, not with fig leaves like they attempted to do, but with garments of skin.

Genesis 3:21 says, Then the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

God upgrades their wardrobe from fig leaves to animal skins, but to do that an animal had to be sacrificed, an innocent animal had to die.

The significance of what God does here for Adam and Eve is huge. "All God's dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this one act of disobedience by Adam and Eve. God is a saving God, and the fact that he clothed Adam and Eve testifies to that. This is all part of God's big story, of bringing restoration, justice and forgiveness.

An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin, and later all Israel's animal sacrifices would be part of God's provision to remedy the curse - a life for a life. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God's provision. Similarly, a few thousand years later, God allowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and on the basis of that provision He clothes believers in righteousness."

More sacrifices

The wages of sin is death. And from that day until this day a payment for sin has had to be made.

The next sacrifice we see in Scripture is found in Genesis 4 when Abel brings the firstborn of his flock to the Lord and we read in Genesis 4:4, *The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering.*

Then in Genesis 8, after the waters recede from the flood, we read that Noah sacrificed burnt offerings and as we move through Genesis we see Abraham building altars and making sacrifices, Isaac building altars and making sacrifices, and Jacob building altars and making sacrifices to cover their sin which is why the writer to the Hebrews says in Hebrews 9:22, *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness for sin.*

While we today might all be a bit squeamish about this but all throughout the Old Testament God required animal sacrifices to provide a temporary covering for sin.

The Old Testament book of Leviticus outlines how those sacrifices were to be made. There were burnt offerings and grain offerings and drink offerings and fellowship offerings and sin offerings and guilt offerings. And they all had a different purpose.

- If you wanted to thank God for a specific answer to prayer, you would bring a fellowship offering to the Temple.
- If you just wanted to worship God for who he is, you would bring a burnt offering.
- If you had sinned and needed forgiveness, you would bring a sin offering.

And in every case, except for the grain offerings, the life of an animal was required.

And it wasn't just any animal that could be sacrificed. The animal needed to be spotless and without blemish.

- If you were a priest making a sin offering you brought a spotless bull.
- If you were a tribal leader you brought a male goat.
- If you were a member of the middle class you brought a female goat or a lamb.
- If you were poor you brought a dove or a young pigeon.

Everybody brought something.

And you would take that spotless animal to the Temple and press your hand down on its head symbolically transferring your sin to that innocent animal and then you, as the worshiper, would slay the animal in the presence of the priest.

And the priest would take the blood from the sacrifice and sprinkle it on the altar and then the intestines of the animal would be extracted and burned up

and the carcass would be given to the priest for food. And if you offered your sacrifice in faith, your sin would be covered, until you sinned the next time, and then you went through the process all over again.

Aren't you glad you didn't live back then!?

What was the point?

You may ask, what was the point of all that blood and procedure? The point was there was a price to pay for sin, and blood sacrifice was a graphic reminder of that.

Then once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the most sacred day on the Jewish calendar, the High Priest would make a sacrifice for the sin of the entire nation. The word "atonement" means 'to be at one with'. This was the day that Israel would get a fresh start and become one with God again. You can read it in Leviticus 16.

This was the only day that the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the Temple. In fact, a rope was tied around his ankle just in case he messed up and was struck down dead he could be dragged out.

He would go behind the curtain of the Most Holy Place first with the blood of a bull to make atonement for himself. And he would put some of that blood on his fingers and sprinkle it seven times on the Ark of the Covenant, the gold box that contained the Ten Commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded.

And then he would take two male goats and cast lots to determine which one would be sacrificed and which one would be the scapegoat. And he would take the blood of the goat that was sacrificed and go behind the curtain again and sprinkle it with his fingers on the Ark of Covenant just like he had sprinkled the bull's blood for himself.

And when he came out he would take the live goat, the scapegoat, and this is what we read in Leviticus 16:21-22,

He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites - all their sins - and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. ²²The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place, and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

That was the scapegoat and that's where we get the term. A scapegoat is a person or thing who takes the blame for others.

And so every year Israel had to go through the Day of Atonement to get right with God as a nation. But again, it was only a temporary covering for sin that had a shelf life of one year. It had to be repeated annually, over and over and over again.

Day of Atonement and Passover/Easter

These are not the same and are at different times of the year

The Day of Atonement occurs around September each year and Passover/Easter occurs in March/April. Unlike the Day of Atonement, Passover was a party! It was the annual celebration of the Exodus, the liberation of God's people from slavery in Egypt. And in commemoration of that event a lamb would be sacrificed, the Passover lamb.

Scholars estimate that on the day Jesus died, over 250,000 Passover lambs would have been slaughtered at the Temple at the same time Jesus was being slain on the cross less than a mile away. He was the true Passover Lamb. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

And what he did on the cross was not temporary. It was the final payment for all sin for all time for all people which is why he cried out, "It is finished!" which means paid in full. No more lambs. No more goats. No more bulls. No more doves. No more pigeons. No more blood sacrifices. It is finished! What I've done is enough! My death is the remedy for sin."

The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way in Hebrews 10:10-12,

We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when this priest, Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

That's why you didn't bring an animal to church today! No more blood sacrifices are necessary to cover up our sins. Our sins have been taken away once and for all by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. He is the remedy. Every sacrifice that was ever made pointed to Jesus. And the benefits of his death, the forgiveness of sin and the eternal life he offers are available to all who believe.

Jesus says in John 3:, from the message

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the

trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

¹⁹⁻²¹ "This is the crisis we're in: God-light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness. They went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. Everyone who makes a practice of doing evil, addicted to denial and illusion, hates God-light and won't come near it, fearing a painful exposure. But anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God-light so the work can be seen for the God-work it is."

Have you believed in Jesus? Have you trusted that what he did on the cross was enough to pay the price for your sins past, present, and future? If you have then God sees you as one of his righteous children.

If you are not sure then I would love to have a chat with you.