

BIBLICAL TRUTH ABOUT MAN, SIN, AND SALVATION

Lesson 16: Sacrifice

This is the third of seventeen lessons on the biblical doctrine of salvation (soteriology, from Greek *soteria*, salvation). This lesson focuses on sacrifice for the salvation of sinners, ultimately the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was foreshadowed and prophesied in the Old Testament, and it was actually provided near the end of His earthly ministry and recorded in the New Testament.

Lesson 16 – Central Truth Q and A

Question: Why is Christ's death called a sacrifice?

Answer: Jesus died as a sacrifice to be God's perfect substitute for elect sinners.

Lesson 16 – Memory Verses

Isaiah 53:5 *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.*

1 Peter 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

Lesson 16 – Introduction and Outline

Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on a cross as a sacrifice for sin. Far more important than knowing the basic fact that Jesus died is knowing why He died and what His death accomplished. Personal belief (trust) in the sacrifice of Christ results in salvation for the one who believes (trusts) in Him. Salvation depends on the belief that when Jesus died on the cross, He satisfied the wrath of God as the perfect substitute and sacrifice for sinners. Years ago, a popular Christian campaign focused on four letters, "WWJD," which stood for the question, What Would Jesus Do? This was used as a reminder for believers to pattern their lives after Christ's example. Before making decisions Christians should think about this question, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" There is another way to use these same letters, "WWJD," and that is to ask the all-important question: Why would Jesus die? That is the subject of this lesson on the doctrine of salvation. The simple answer is that Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all believers.

1. The Biblical Theme of Sacrifice

John the Baptist was the herald or prophet who officially introduced Jesus as the Christ at the outset of His earthly ministry. It was a unique introduction for the Son of God: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29, 36). John's introduction highlighted Christ's primary role as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of mankind. All other sacrifices since the dawn of history pointed to this ultimate sacrifice of Christ when He died on the cross. The theme of blood sacrifice runs through the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It has been called "the scarlet thread of blood redemption." All of the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the greater, perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. The four Gospels (Matthew – John) emphasize the death of Christ as the long-awaited sacrifice for sin. The

Acts and Epistles also refer to the significance and finality of Christ's sacrifice, and Revelation concludes with a powerful focus on Christ the Lamb and His one perfect sacrifice.

2. God Demands a Substitute

Christ's death on the cross was the only way to overcome and Satan. It was God's chosen plan, entirely His idea and uninfluenced by anyone or anything else. This was God's prescribed plan to accomplish the salvation of sinners through His substitutionary sacrifice. God cannot overlook sin or pretend it does not exist. All sin is offensive to Him because He is absolutely perfect and holy. God must deal with sin in His righteous wrath and this wrath must be satisfied. Sin cannot be erased by man's so-called "good works" because they are not good enough. God's holiness demands the punishment of all sin. God made a way for people to avoid His wrath and enjoy His forgiveness and mercy. God demonstrated, from the first occurrence of sin, that His way to accomplish this was through the sacrifice of a substitute, a sacrifice that would take the place and punishment of another. When Adam and Eve sinned, God sacrificed an animal to provide a covering for their shame (Gen. 3:21). Abel offered a sacrifice to God by faith, and this alone was a satisfactory way to approach and worship God (Gen. 4:3-5; Heb. 11:4). Abraham offered sacrifices to God (Gen. 12:7), and later, God established an entire system of sacrifices for Abraham's descendants, the Israelites. That system was not able to cancel sin or remove it entirely, but it pointed forward to a coming, final and perfect substitute—Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:1-14). God had definite requirements for sacrifices: they had to be perfect. They could not be sick, injured, or defective in any way (Ex. 12:1-14; Lev. 22:17-24; Deut. 15:21). When God's people ignored His instructions, He sent prophets to rebuke them for their worthless offerings (Mal. 1:8).

3. God Provided a Perfect Sacrifice

The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament system could never satisfy God's wrath toward sin. Only a perfect human substitute who faithfully and fully obeyed God's commands was acceptable to die in the place of guilty sinners. The only perfect human life was Jesus Christ, and He is the perfect substitute and sacrifice. Isaiah prophesied that Christ would bear all of His people's griefs and sorrows (Isa. 53:4) as well as the pain and punishment they deserved for breaking God's law (Isa. 53:5). Christ offered Himself as God's only acceptable substitute and was wounded for the transgressions of those who believe in Him. Christ died to save His sheep (Jn. 10:14-15). God's wrath was satisfied when Christ bore our sins in His own body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). The Father regarded Christ as sin, in our place, so that we might be made righteous in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus suffered for sinners and their sins were imputed (charged) against Him. His death paid the full penalty they owed. His righteousness is imputed (credited) to those who believe (trust) in Him. The penalty that sinners owe for their sin will be paid for, either by the sinner himself being eternally punished or by Christ's sacrifice on his behalf.

4. Lesson Summary

Every person's sin makes him guilty before God and deserving of His wrath. Justice demands that the guilty be punished for their sin, and perfect justice would include eternal punishment in the lake of fire. But God demonstrated His mercy and grace by sending His Son to endure the full divine wrath against sin in the place of sinners He has chosen for Himself. Christ obeyed the will of His Father and died on the cross to fully satisfy God's justice and wrath for all who believe (trust) in Him.