

April Week 1

Sunday, 3 April 2011

St Mark's Sunday School – Years 7 & 8

Jesus' Authority to Forgive Sins

Introduction

- Sandy's drama team to present short skit about God's forgiveness
- Aim is to cover the following 3 points about Christ's forgiveness of our sins.
 1. Why did Christ require animal sacrifices for forgiveness in the Old Testament?
 2. What is forgiveness?
 3. How do I obtain forgiveness from God?

1. Why did God require animal sacrifices for forgiveness in the Old Testament?

- Sin brought death, and because man sinned, as a consequence he must die.
- *The soul who sins shall die* (Ezekiel 18:4)
- God required animal sacrifices to provide temporary forgiveness of sins and to foreshadow the perfect and complete sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ (Leviticus 4:35, 5:10).
- Animal sacrifice is an important theme found throughout Scripture because *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness* (Hebrews 9:22).
- When Adam and Eve sinned, animals were killed by God to provide clothing for them (Genesis 3:21). Cain and Abel brought sacrifices to the Lord. Cain's was unacceptable because he brought fruit, while Abel's was acceptable because it was the "firstborn of his flock" (Genesis 4:4-5).
- God has always required blood, symbolical of death as payment for sin.
- After the flood receded, Noah sacrificed animals to God (Genesis 8:20-21).
- God commanded the nation of Israel to perform numerous sacrifices according to certain procedures prescribed by God.
- First, the animal had to be spotless. Second, the person offering the sacrifice had to identify with the animal. Third, the person offering the animal had to inflict death upon it. When done in faith, this sacrifice provided forgiveness of sins.
- Another sacrifice called for on the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, demonstrates forgiveness and the removal of sin. The high priest was to take two male goats for a sin offering. One of the goats was sacrificed as a sin offering for the people of Israel (Leviticus 16:15), while the other goat was released into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:20-22). The sin offering provided forgiveness, while the other goat provided the removal of sin.

- Animal sacrifices have ended because Jesus Christ was the ultimate and perfect sacrifice.
- St John the Baptist recognised this when he saw Jesus coming to be baptised and said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).
- You may be asking yourself, why animals? What did they do wrong? That is the point—since the animals did no wrong, they died in place of the one performing the sacrifice.
- The Lord Jesus Christ also did no wrong but willingly gave Himself to die for the sins of mankind (1 Timothy 2:6). The Lord Jesus Christ took our sin upon Himself and died in our place.
- As 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*
- Forgiveness is bestowed on the basis of the Blood of Christ.
- *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace* (Eph 1:7). By blood is meant the propitiatory work of Christ. On the cross He shed His blood as a ransom and complete payment for our eternal redemption.
- As God, Jesus' death provided forgiveness for the sins of the entire world.
- *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world* (1 John 2:2)
- In summary, animal sacrifices were commanded by God so that the individual could experience forgiveness of sin.
- The animal served as a substitute—that is, the animal died in place of the sinner, but only temporarily, which is why the sacrifices needed to be offered over and over.
- Animal sacrifices have stopped with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Lord Jesus Christ was the ultimate sacrificial substitute once for all time (Hebrews 7:27) and is now the only mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5).

2. What is forgiveness?

- In the Old Testament there are three words for forgiveness: one means "to cover"; another means "to lift away" and the third means, "to send away".
- In the New Testament forgiveness is the separation of the sinner from his sins through the sacrifice of Christ. Since the sinner has broken the law of God, only God can forgive him that sin.
- When you break the law of God no man can forgive; only God can forgive you.
- *And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”* (Luke 7:49) and *Why does this Man speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?* (Mark 2:7)
- The Jews in both these verses were correct for only God can forgive sin.
- Because the Lord Jesus Christ is both God and the Son of God, He has been appointed to forgive sin.
- *Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.* (Acts 5:31)

- *Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:38)*
- This is the wonderful message of salvation to sin-burdened souls.
- Read Luke 7:47-50 with your class.
- In Luke 7:48, the Savior personally forgave the woman: *Your sins are forgiven.*
- Forgiveness is bestowed on the ground of the Lord's compassion.
- *But He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not. (Psalm 78:38)*

3. How do I obtain forgiveness from God?

- Thankfully, God is loving and merciful – eager to forgive us of our sins.
- *The Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9)*
- So what do I need to do to obtain God’s forgiveness? Confess them.
- *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:19)*
- Unconfessed sin cannot be forgiven; let us pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal sins to us and give us grace to confess every one of them.
- *I said “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin (Psalm 32:5)*
- 2 types of confession = sacramental confession (to a priest) and private confession (to God)
- Pope Shenouda III says in his book, “Spiritual Means” that confession is like a virtue. - "We slowly grow in the sincerity and depth of our confession."
- Confession is an offering – an offering of our sinfulness to God.
- True repentance and confession consists of:
 1. **Contrite heart** and remorse for previous sins
 2. **Steadfast intention** to improve
 3. **Strong faith** in Christ and powerful hope in His love to forgive
 4. **Verbal confession** of sins before a priest.
- *Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’. (Luke 3:8)*
- Repentance and confession opens a way for a relationship with God. It has two sides – turning *away* from sins and turning *towards* the Lord. To be truly repentant we must do both – there cannot be one without the other.
- We can’t just say that we believe and then live in any way we choose; neither can we simply live a morally correct life without a personal relationship with God, because that cannot bring forgiveness of sin.
- Determine to rid your life of any sins God points out and put your trust in Him alone to guide you.