

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-29 Atonement: No Condemnation

Relationships can be very difficult. Everyone battles with their human nature and the powerful instincts of self. Because of this, we all make mistakes and sometimes offend the people we love most. In order to maintain healthy relationships, we need to be able to humble ourselves and apologize for our behavior. We then need to ask our loved ones to forgive us. This can be very hard.

Estevan was an auto mechanic and worked hard to provide for his wife and children. He also helped to care for his mother-in-law. One day he had to drive his mother-in-law and wife into the city for an appointment with a new doctor. The traffic was terrible and they were behind schedule. Suddenly, a car driven by a woman cut through traffic and almost hit Estevan's car. He stomped on his car's brakes and barely avoided an accident. He was so angry he stuck his head out the window and started yelling and cursing at the woman driver. His wife and mother-in-law were shocked at his profanity.

"Estevan, you should not speak that way," his mother-in-law rebuked him.

"That woman driver is an idiot. She obviously is a stupid woman and should not be allowed out of her house. She should stay at home cooking and cleaning," Estevan growled.

They arrived late at the doctor's office. They patiently sat and waited. Finally, the door opened to the exam room and the doctor stepped out, wearing a white lab coat. Estevan was shocked. The doctor was a woman. And not just any woman. She was the woman in the car that had almost caused the accident. His mother-in-law looked over at him with one eyebrow raised, "A stupid idiot who should stay home and cook?" She muttered under her breath as Estevan's face quickly turned bright red in embarrassment. The ride home was very quiet. It was obvious that both his wife and mother-in-law were offended by his arrogant remarks about women. But he was still embarrassed and did not want to admit that he was wrong. To do so would be a blow to his pride.

What would you do in this situation? (Pause and allow student to ponder this for a few seconds.)

Pride can be a terrible thing; it can build barriers to relationships. But pride is not from God. It is from our most base instincts. Pride is not an attribute of God, but rather of Satan. Jesus humbled himself to accept the shame of being crucified as a common thief. His clothes had been ripped from his body, so he hung naked upon the cross. Since Jesus has borne our shame, we should be willing to humble ourselves. We should ask God and others to forgive us when we cause offense.

It was Passover week. Jesus knew that before the week was over, he would be dead. He sent Peter and John ahead of him into Jerusalem to prepare a place for the disciples to celebrate

the Passover together. Peter and John prepared an upstairs room for the meal and had the owners of the house make ready all that was necessary for Passover.

The Jewish laws required that the only bread that was allowed to be at the Passover was unleavened bread. That is flat bread that has no rising agent added. Traditions were so strict that everyone attending Passover would wash their clothing beforehand. They didn't want any leavened bread crumbs to fall into the food while eating Passover. Also, everyone would bathe so that they were free from anything that might make them ritually unclean.

Jesus and the disciples would have bathed prior to celebrating the Passover. But they walked the long dusty road into Jerusalem. Although their bodies and clothing had been washed, their feet would have picked up dirt along the way. As the disciples entered the room, they removed their sandals. Normally there would have been a servant waiting at the door to wash their feet. But this had been overlooked. So the disciples entered the room with their feet unwashed.

Now during this time in history, people ate their meals in a much different way than most do today. A low U-shaped table was surrounded by raised platforms. Cushions covered the platforms upon which the guests would recline. Since the left hand was considered unclean, they would recline on their left side, bracing themselves with their left arm. This left the right hand free to eat from common bowls and plates on the table in front of them. This arrangement had everyone facing the table with their feet toward the back of the raised platforms. While the disciples ate and chatted among themselves, Jesus stood up and walked to the back of the room. There he removed his outer garments and wrapped a towel around his waist. He took a basin and a pitcher of water. Then he began to move quietly along the back of the raised platforms, washing the feet of his disciples. As he began to wash Peter's feet, Peter spun around in surprise. Upon recognizing that it was Jesus and not some servant girl, he got embarrassed. He asked, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean."

In a similar manner, all who believe in Christ are made clean of their sins by Jesus' atoning death on the Cross. But life is a journey and no one is perfect. We all battle with our human instincts and desires, which can lead to sin. Just as the disciples' feet needed washing from their journey, even so we must continue to repent of our sins daily. We must ask for Jesus' atoning blood to cleanse us.

The apostle John wrote three letters to the churches. In his first letter, he wrote:

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:5-9).

We have been cleansed from our sins upon our first acceptance of Jesus. However, we need more cleansing from sin along life's journey. This repeated cleansing of sin is made possible, because Jesus paid the debt of all sin—past, present, and future. Because of this we can have a guilt-free relationship with God our Father. Indeed, as the apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Satan would like for us to feel guilty of sin. But we know that as long as we are in Christ, there is no condemnation. We are free from guilt and shame. Satan tries to use our sins to create a barrier between us and God. But our sins, all of them, are covered under the atoning blood of Jesus' sacrifice.

Does this then give believers permission to sin, knowing that God will forgive them? The apostle Paul answered this question in his letter to the church in Rome when he wrote, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means!" (Rom 6:15). And thus, we should not use God's grace and gift of atonement as an excuse to sin. But, if we do sin, we can humble ourselves, repent, and be made clean.

This lesson is **important** because it explains that even though we may commit a sin after salvation, the blood of Jesus has paid for all sins—past, present and future.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Thus there is no condemnation. Satan would like to remind you of past sins. You have to rebuke him in Jesus' name and remind him that those sins are under the atoning blood.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. Does the atonement of Jesus' blood apply to all sin—past, present, and future? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said, "Yes, the atonement of Jesus' blood applies to all sins—past, present and future," you are correct.

2. What should believers do when they sin? [Pause]

A. If you said, "Believers should confess their sins and repent," you are right.

3. Does the atonement of Jesus' blood give believers permission to sin? [Pause]

A. If you said, "No, Jesus' death on the Cross which makes 'atonement' for our sin does not give believers permission to sin," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to watch this lesson at least three more times until you understand the concept that Jesus' atonement for sin covers all sins—past, present and future. Memorize the Bible verse that says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (First John 1:9). Then present this teaching to your home church or Bible study.