

GOD'S GRACE

SESSION 6



SMALL GROUP SERIES

FOUNDATIONS

THE SALVATION ARMY - USA EAST

“WE HAVE SINNED FOR NO REASON BUT AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE LACK OF LOVE, AND HE SAVED US FOR NO REASON BUT AN INCOMPREHENSIBLE EXCESS OF LOVE.” ~ PETER KREEFT

GOD'S GRACE

God's story is not a short one; from the foundations of creation to present day it was, is, and will be present. As you begin this Foundations study pray for God to give you the ability to see His big picture. In spending time together talking about God's desire to be involved in our lives, may He move among your group, blessing your discussion and your study of His Word.

Opening Questions

- What is grace?
- Discuss a few examples of God's grace intervening in your own life.

Watch the DVD

Hymn of Christ

Philippians 2:6-11

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death---even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every other name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Atonement

1. The sixth doctrine of The Salvation Army states,

“We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.”

2. The definition of the term Atonement is to _____.
3. You may be familiar with the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, in the practice of the Jewish faith. This was a day set aside for Jews to seek a covering through _____ for their sins during the past year in order for them to remain acceptable to God.

Although we still use the term, atonement, in our Christian faith, the New Testament and our present day understanding of this term has changed from the Old Testament view. Hebrews 10:1-4 give us a brief recap of it all:

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Hebrews 10:1-4

¹ The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

² Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. ⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:5-10

⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; ⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God.’”[a] ⁸ First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law. ⁹ Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Questions

What image of Jesus does the text give us in his role in the atonement?

What aspect of the atonement is being focused on with Jesus taking upon himself our individual sins?

Group 1: **Metaphors from a court of law**

Your answers should be official terms in a legal setting!

Focus: Jesus as the fulfillment of Justice

- a. Mark 10:38, Romans 5:6 _____
- b. Ephesians 1:13, 2:8 _____
- c. Isaiah 53, Romans 5:25, Galatians 5:6 _____
- d. Romans 4:25 _____
- e. Romans 8:23, 9:4, Ephesians 1:5, Rom. 8:17 _____

Group 2: **Metaphors from a battlefield or imprisonment**

Your answers should be terms used in war!

Focus: Jesus as King

- a. 1 Corinthians 15:57, Romans 8:39 _____
- b. Romans 8:2, Galatians 5:1-2 _____
- c. Revelation 5:9 _____

Group 3: Metaphors from the Temple or Hospital

Your answers should be religious terms or those used in a hospital!

Focus: Jesus as High Priest

- a. Hebrews 4:14-10:22
- b. 2 Corinthians 5:19
- c. Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14
- d. Isaiah 53:4-5, Mark 2:17
- e. John 3:3

Jesus the High Priest

Compare the High Priests role to Jesus' role

High Priest

1. The High Priest's role is to identify with the people and to represent them to God.
2. During the Day of Atonement he would wash 5 times.
A bull would be sacrificed for his own sins and those of the priests.
A goat would later be sacrificed for the sin covering of the people.
In this way the high priest was consecrated to perform his functions.
3. An open, honest, and specific confession for the people was made and a goat was vicariously sacrificed.
The animal was killed as a symbol for the people's guilt and of divine judgment.
A prayer of forgiveness would then be offered
4. The high priest would ascend into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the lamb, not to placate God, but to offer the blood in order for God's grace to provide a way of reconciliation with His people.
5. Once the high priest comes out of the Holy of Holies, the blessing of Aaron, a blessing of peace, is offered for the people.

Jesus

1. Jesus did come in our flesh and bone. He was fully human so that he could identify completely with us.
2. In John 17:19 (NLT) "And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth." We find that Jesus sanctifies himself.
3. In John 18 & 19, we find that Jesus did not offer a goat but offered himself in death to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Again, this death was not to placate an angry God, but a means to take upon himself our condemnation along with God's wrath towards sin.
4. In John 20:17, Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and you God.'" We find Jesus ascends in the 'Holy of Holies' (during the time of Christ, the Holy of Holies was vacant of the Ark of the Covenant - God residing place - as the Ark disappeared with the Babylonian captivity) - heaven, the actual location of where God the Father resides.
While with the Father, Jesus intercedes on our behalf.
5. When reappearing to his people, Jesus pronounces/states the Aaronic prayer 'Peace be unto you' in both John 20:19 and John 20:21

Atonement = At-one-ment: being at one, in union with the Father! Salvation provided us with forgiveness, freedom from guilt as well as making us whole, new creatures in Christ, reborn into the people God wants and created to reflect His Spirit.

The Whosoever

Predestination:

God has pre-selected those who will be saved and also determined who would be separated from him eternally.

Doctrine 6: We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

Calvinistic Principles

v.

Arminian Teaching

taken from Salvation Story; c. 1999 by The General of The Salvation Army; London, England

Calvinism

Total depravity: “original sin is seen to be an hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused into all parts of the soul... For our nature is not merely bereft of good, but is also productive of every kind of evil that it cannot be inactive.” (John Calvin)

Arminianism

Arminianism agreed with Calvinism in denying the ability of humanity to do anything really good of themselves. Humankind is totally depraved in that no part of personality has escaped the power of sin. All good is therefore of divine grace. The later followers of Arminianism however, particularly John Wesley, indicated that the natural state of humanity is itself in some sense a state of grace so that all can make a response to the gift of Atonement. It was this teaching which rendered distinctiveness to the Wesleyan concept of “prevenient grace,” the grace that comes before conversion.

Unconditional election and predestination: “No one who wishes to be thought religious dares outright to deny predestination, by which God chooses some for the hope of life, and condemns others to eternal death... By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he has decided in his own mind what he wishes to happen in the case of each individual.” (John Calvin)

In contrast to the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election and absolute predestination, the Arminians taught a predestination based on the divine foreknowledge of the use which would be made by each individual of the means of grace. God’s grace is available to all, but it is up to human free will as to whether that grace is accepted or rejected. Election is therefore conditional on freely made human choice.

Limited atonement: The implication of the doctrine of unconditional election and predestination for Calvinists was that the personal benefits of the Atonement of Christ on the cross were limited to the elect only.

Against the doctrine that the benefits of the Atonement of Christ on the cross were limited to the elect only, the Arminians asserted that he died for all, though none receive the personal benefits of his death except those who believe.

Irresistible grace: A further implication of the doctrine of unconditional election and predestination for Calvinists was that for the elect, divine grace is irresistible. It is the eternal decree of God that those destined to be saved should receive his grace.

In opposition to the doctrine of irresistible grace, Arminians taught that grace may be rejected. God would not resist the free will of humans to refuse to accept his grace.

Perseverance of the saints: Also following from the doctrine of unconditional election and predestination was the doctrine that those saved would persevere to the end as children of God - once saved, always saved.

Arminians taught that it is possible that those saved may lose grace once received, so that the eternal security or perseverance of the saints is dependent on free will.

Final Activity

In your groups talk and come up with explanations for three terms using contemporary everyday language and images to explain to a non-Christian the meaning of:

1. Washed in the blood of the Lamb
2. Atonement which involves explaining "sin"
3. God's grace - the title of this session

Application

1. In the teaching about the high priest's role in the Jewish tradition, did you learn anything new? Was there any part that you found interesting or raised a question in your mind?
2. An open, honest, and specific confession for the people was made by the high priest. How is it different for us today? How is it the same?

3. Each of us has experienced God's grace in our lives. How can we share this gift of grace with others? What practical ways can we live this out? Are there other ways we can share grace?

Jesus The High Priest (Answers)

Metaphors from a court of law

Answer

Focus: Jesus as the fulfillment of Justice

- a. Mark 10:38, Romans 5:6
- b. Ephesians 1:13, 2:8
- c. Isaiah 53, Romans 5:25, Galatians 5:6
- d. Romans 4:25
- e. Romans 8:23, 9:4, Eph. 1:5, Rom. 8:17

Representation
Participation
Substitution
Justification
Adoption

Group 2:

Metaphors from a battlefield or imprisonment

Focus: Jesus as King

- a. 1 Corinthians 15:57, Romans 8:39
- b. Romans 8:2, Galatians 5:1-2
- c. Revelation 5:9

Triumph
Liberation
Ransom

Group 3:

Metaphors from the Temple or Hospital

Focus: Jesus as High Priest

- a. Hebrews 4:14-10:22
- b. 2 Corinthians 5:19
- c. Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14
- d. Isaiah 53:4-5, Mark 2:17
- e. John 3:3

High Priest
Reconciliation
Forgiveness
Healing, Wholeness
Rebirth