

Building Blocks of Faith

Episode #3 - SIN AND SALVATION

1. What is sin? Does God see different levels of sin? Do humans often set different levels of severity of sin?
 2. Have you ever felt that a wall has been built by your sinful acts and even mistakes, where you feel far away from God? What is the only thing that ultimately knocks down the blocks of the wall of separation and reconciles us to God?
 3. What does the German word “Heilsgeschichte” mean? What stories from scripture show God trying to change the course of humanity back to a place of safety and salvation?
 4. Genesis 9, vs. 17 is God’s covenant to humanity, but vs. 25 is Noah cursing one of his sons for his sin (the best interpretation of the passage is that Noah was old and perhaps getting senile - Ham allowed his father to be humiliated on purpose, rather than helping him). How do you think God felt, after this colossal attempt to change the course of humanity went sideways in eight verses?
 5. How would you respond to the statement, “Humanity left to its own devices always tends toward sinfulness, arrogance, pride and ultimately self-destruction.” What examples have you observed?
 6. Read these two passages from Hebrews - the first describing Jesus as the perfect high priest, and the second describing Jesus as the perfect sacrifice.
 - Hebrews 7: 26 For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. 27 Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever. NRSV
 - Hebrews 10: 8 When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), 9 then he added, “See, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. 10 And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. NRSV
- a. Though the sacrificial system is foreign to us, how does Jesus willing, self-sacrificial death on the cross, in the mind of the Jewish author of Hebrews, eliminate the need for further sacrifice?
 - b. How does John’s words in John 1: 29 - The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! - contribute to the same understanding of the writer of the Hebrews?

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7. Ephesians 2: 8 says - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
 - a. Since we do not have the power to save ourselves, and it is a gift, how do we gain access to that gift of grace (hint - by asking)?
 - b. Has there been a moment in life when you realized that you were trying to save yourself by doing good, and then failing again (I have fallen and I can’t get up!), when you gave up and simply asked God to save and help you?
 - c. Do you think that God knows that we are likely to sin again? Why does he keep forgiving and believing in us?
8. In your own life, what tricks or resources do you utilize to keep yourself from drifting to the places of greatest temptation?
9. Have you had a moment when you felt the wall of separation had been broken down, and you found a deeper, more intimate relationship with God?