

The Greatest... (Week Three)

March 24th, 2024

“Sacrifice”

Death is everywhere - so much so that we have gotten used to it. We've had to! But many of us feel as if that is not the way it was supposed to be. People die and we grieve the loss because it does not feel right. It is not good.

- **Romans 3:23 (HCSB)**
- **Romans 6:23 (HCSB)**

The Greek word that Paul used in **Romans 6:23** for death is the word Thanatos - **θάνατος**.

2288 *thánatos* (derived from 2348 /*thnḗskō*, “to die”) – physical or spiritual death; separation from the life of God. A base meaning of this word for death is separation. In other words, ancients observed that when the soul (*life*) was separated from the body (*flesh*) the person was pronounced DEAD.

In **Romans**, Paul is referring to an even greater death or separation. When we sin, we have stepped away from God's perfection, therefore, we fall short of the life that comes only from God, and death is the payment that we receive from our sin.

World Philosophies and religions offer several choices for how to deal with DEATH:

- **Reincarnation**—Some believe that death is a stage in a repeating cycle of life, and when we die, depending on how we lived our life, we get to come back in a higher or lower form.
 - Lion King—“*The Circle of Life*”
- **Nihilism**—Another option is that death is the end. How you got here is kind of a mystery. How you live is only history, and where you go after you die...NOWHERE!
 - The Beatles—“*Nowhere Man*”
- **Buddhism**—“*The Matrix*” movies popularized this next alternative. Don't worry about death because none of this is real anyway. So...
 - “*Row, row, row your boat. Gently down the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily. Life is but a dream!*”

But we choose, especially during the season of Easter, to trust in the words and actions of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God who lived 2,000 years ago, and who conquered death. According to the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (**Hebrews 9:22; Romans 6:23 HCSB**).

Every believer should accept and be encouraged by “*The Greatest Sacrifice*” of Jesus for these reasons.

I. Imperfect vs. Perfect.

A. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were imperfect and earthly. The sacrifice of Jesus was perfect and Heavenly (**Hebrews 9:11, 24 HCSB**).

II. Continual Sacrifice vs. Completed Sacrifice (**Hebrews 9:26 HCSB**).

III. The sacrifices of the Old Testament could never take our sins away.

- A. The blood of animals did not grant access to the actual throne room of God (**Hebrews 10:4 HCSB**).
- B. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, takes away sin (**Hebrews 9:26 HCSB**).

IV. Limited Access vs. Limitless Access.

A. The old sacrifice limited access to God (*One Man, Once per year, Year after Year, the blood of animals*).

Hebrews 9:7 (HCSB) “*But the High Priest alone enters the second room, and he does that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offers for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.*”

B. The Sacrifice of Jesus offers you unlimited access to the throne room of God (**Hebrews 10:19-22 HCSB**)!

V. It is “*The Greatest Sacrifice*” because Jesus even gave His life for people who did not appreciate it.

A. Here is what the second crowd did as Jesus was being tortured (**Mark 15:29-32 HCSB**).

This is *The Greatest Sacrifice* of all time. It can change the course of our lives, and it sets in place an assurance that we will not live in death or with death forever. What are you doing with the gift of *The Greatest Sacrifice*?

Here are some ideas to be used to prepare our hearts for next Sunday’s Resurrection Celebration. They don’t require a lot of preparation. Please take some time to be blessed by remembering what this season is all about.

Monday	Find someone to tell your version of “ <i>Why you appreciate Jesus’ Greatest Sacrifice.</i> ”
Tuesday	Read in one of the Gospels (<i>Matthew, Mark, Luke, John</i>) about Jesus’ <i>Greatest Sacrifice</i> .
Wednesday	Take 5 minutes to be silent for Jesus’ sake. After you’ve been silent, then spend some time in conversation with Jesus about what is important to you.
Thursday	Share the Lord’s Supper with other believers (<i>1 Corinthians 25-28</i>). Sign up for the “ <i>Journey to the Cross.</i> ”
Friday	Read <i>Isaiah 52:13-53:12</i> and see if you can find things that Jesus fulfilled from this prophecy that was written 700 years before He arrived as a baby in Bethlehem. Plan on attending Good Friday Service at 7:00pm.
Saturday	Spend 5 or 10 minutes focusing your thoughts on gratitude toward God.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Ice Breaker: What’s one of the most difficult things you’ve ever had to do? Have you ever had to make a sacrifice for something or someone? What was it?

Main Point: God sacrificed for us, and He expects us to have a sacrificial love for Him and others.

Primary Scripture: **Genesis 22:1-19**

1. Why do you think God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son?
2. What does Abraham’s obedience tell you about his faith?
3. Abraham loved his son Issac more than anything. What has the potential to be first in your life instead of God?
4. What does sacrificial love look like practically today?
5. Is there anything in your life right now that God is asking you to sacrifice or give up in order to put Him first?
6. What is one thing you can do this week to show someone sacrificial love?

Additional Scripture to Consider: **Romans 5:6-8; Colossians 3:12-14; Hebrews 10:10; 1 John 4:10-11.**