

Leviticus 13-16 • The Day of Atonement

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Leviticus chapter 13. I don't know how many of you read ahead in your Bible in anticipation of the things we're going to be going through tonight a little bit, but chapter 13, I'll just tell you ahead of time, it's all about identifying what is leprosy and what isn't.

Living in this day and age with clean running water and just walk in medical clinics whenever we have a boo boo, we forget what it would be like for a whole nation of people who are sharing communicable diseases, to be going through the wilderness with really no clean, fresh running water, at least not always available. And no walk in medical clinics and a lot of things to have to deal with.

And it's really easy to forget how challenging it must have been for those people to move through the entire wilderness area with people getting sick and how challenging that was. And particularly leprosy, which we're going to be dealing with in the first couple of chapters here. Not in depth. I'll tell you that though.

But leprosy was a very dangerous disease of the skin back in Old Testament times. It was always fatal. It took a long time to take its victim, but it eventually would. But before it killed you, you would be disfigured. You would be shunned from the general community and ultimately you would be doomed to live out the remainder of your life with others who were afflicted. Doesn't that sound delightful? It was a real challenge. It was a very difficult sort of a thing and we're going to be looking a little bit at this.

Chapter 13 begins by saying that, *“The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ² “When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests,” (ESV)*

Now stop there for just a moment. Here's what you need to know. The Hebrew word that is rendered, leprosy here in your Bible comes from a root word that simply means, to become diseased in the skin. It's a very general term. It's a

rather broad sort of a term and it can cover many different issues of the skin, not just leprosy.

Now, today we refer to leprosy as Hansen's disease. It's still around in mostly in third world countries. When Sue went to India here back in boy, I think it was around 2013 or something like that. It's a long time ago. They actually went to a leper colony. They still have those in third world nations where people have to huddle together and they don't have the ways of just staying safe physically that we do here in the United States.

But anyway, what we're going to learn from the next couple of chapters is that God was very concerned about the contracting of the diseases of the skin. And so in these chapters, He gives very detailed descriptions of what is and what isn't dangerous related to these things. In fact, you've probably read through these chapters before and it almost reads a little like a medical journal. I mean, a little less than your Bible, and a lot more like a medical journal, and that sort of thing.

And not only is this chapter challenging from the standpoint of its detailed information, which isn't necessarily fun to read but it's gross. I mean, there's a lot of gross sounding things that, that He describes here. And not only that, but the chapter is long. It's 59 verses. Some of you are going to be relatively happy with the fact that I'm going to summarize some of these next here couple of chapters, and I'm going to spare you a lot of the detailed descriptions that are contained herein. You're welcome.

But let me just say a couple of things. First of all, I want you to see as we go through this chapter, and the next actually, that first of all, God is concerned. I want you to see that. I want you to see that God is concerned for the physical wellbeing of His people.

Now that might cause some of you to say, well then why didn't He just get rid of it? If He's so concerned for his people, why did He have to go through all these detailed descriptions of what is and isn't leprosy so they could identify it? Why didn't He just get rid of it?

Well, the answer to that is fairly simple. To get rid of leprosy and all that it contained is to get rid of the results of the fall of man. And to get rid of the fall of man, you've got to get rid of the reason for the fall of man. And that's sin. We've talked about this before. And to get rid of sin, you've got to get rid of man. Okay. So it's not an easy solution. You can't, it's not, you can't just wave your hand and make it all go away.

Let me say something though. God has a plan to make it all go away, but it's a fairly involved and a fairly complex plan. And it really got kicked off mostly when Jesus Christ came to this earth. When God became a man and lived among us on this earth, lived a sinless life, so that He might bear, first of all, the punishment of our sin.

And once the punishment had been borne and taken care of, then there was, there's now a path forward to turn back all of the results of the fall. We're not there yet. And the reason we're not there yet is because God has been patient. Because like I said before, if He were to say, okay, well now the penalty for sin has been paid. Now we're going to get rid of the results of the fall. Again, you got to get rid of people. You got to get rid of sin and then you got to get rid of sinners. And He's being patient, not wanting any to be lost but all to come to repentance. That's what the Bible says.

And some people might think it's, well, He's moving a little slowly. But Peter is the one who reminds us, He's not moving slowly as we understand slowness. He's just patient. He's patient and loving and caring, and He wants people to be saved. So that's the reason things don't just magically go away.

But that is also why the Lord gave, had to give them instructions in these chapters for both identifying infectious diseases as well as instructions for minimizing the spread. And one of the things, again, we're not going to read through all these verses, but I'm just telling you ahead of time. He spends a lot of time, not only explaining how to identify these things, but how to keep it from spreading. That was a big concern. And that was primarily done through the instruction that was given to the priests, which is why this book is called Leviticus, because they descend from Levi.

Notice in verse 3, it begins by saying, “*and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body.*” And there was a what follows in the next verses, is a complex and thorough examination that required, whenever somebody suspected that they might have a disease of the skin that they had to make sure, they had to confirm it. In other words, you know, they're not sure. So the priest was given all these instructions to isolate the affected person for a period of time. It was usually seven days and then to further examine them. If you thought you had a skin disease, you were probably going to be away from home for a while. And they'd have to set you apart.

And this is the, this idea of isolating, it's interesting in the Bible. Here you have people being isolated so that there's not the spread of infectious disease. Do you know, man didn't figure this out for a lot of years later. Mankind, here, the

Bible's talking about it way back in the old Testament. Man, didn't figure it out till much, much later, to think, maybe we shouldn't have these people coughing on each other. Maybe we should move them off into these other isolated areas and so forth. Well, the Lord showed it here much earlier.

And so the Lord is going to go on in these verses and tell them if it appears that this thing hasn't spread, then they were to isolate the person for another seven days just to be certain. You can see how careful they were being. And then after another seven days, if the affected area seems to be fading, the person was just simply told to wash thoroughly and they could return to the community. And that's what is contained through essentially verses 1 through 6 of this chapter.

Now skip down to verse 7. And I'm just going to tell you here that this is where the Lord goes into incredible detail concerning the identification of genuine infections. What those are going to look like, and responding to them.

And then skip all the way down to verse 38. We don't do this very often, by the way. This is a very rare sort of a case where we skip over verses, but down in verse 38 and following the Lord gave instructions about situations where there was something suspected, but it wasn't a disease, even though it may have been assumed to be.

Verse 38 in fact, says, *“When a man or a woman has spots on the skin of the body, white spots, ³⁹ the priest shall look, and if the spots on the skin of the body are of a dull white, it is leukoderma that has broken out in the skin; he is clean.”* Meaning the person is ceremonially clean.

And leukoderma, if you look it up, it's just really simply a lack of pigment in a specific area on the body that causes the pigmentation to be less there. And so a white spot crops up. You've probably seen people who have white blotches on their face, or arms, or something like that. And it's Leukoderma. It's not an infectious disease.

And then in verse 40 through 44, the Lord gives insights to help the priest know how to differentiate between men who are losing their hair. Which we refer to as male baldness, common male baldness, and the abnormal loss of hair coming from an infection of some kind on the scalp. And so that's what is covered in those verses.

Now skip down to verse 45. And this is where the Lord gives instructions on how an infected person is to present themselves around those who are uninfected.

Now check this out. Look at verse 45 and 46 says, *“The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes (they needed to wear clothes in such a way that they were easily recognized) and (they were also to) let the hair of (their) ...head hang loose, and (they were also to) ...cover (their) ...upper lip and (they were then to) cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’”* In other words, warning. Warning people, if they have to pass through an area that's semi populated, they've got to warn people. They were required to warn people.

And it says, *“⁴⁶ He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. (and) He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.”* Now you might read a couple of verses like that and you might think to yourself, yeah, that sounds cruel. That doesn't sound very nice at all.

Well, remember here, the goal is to keep others safe. It's not to be cruel, but it is to be careful. And that was the point, because this is a highly contagious sort of a situation. Skin diseases are very, very, contagious. Even when a person so infected touches something, if someone else is to touch that something, they could contract the disease. And so it was just a sort of a deal.

But at the same time, for somebody who was infected with a skin disease, it was a terrible stigma for them to have that as well because nobody wanted to come near that person. They'd stay away. And the last thing they would do is touch a person who had a skin disease. You don't go near them, to say nothing of the fact that you never ever touch that person. Imagine you're that person who has that disease and you don't have the blessing any longer of simple physical touch, which for some people, that's their love language. And you can't do that anymore. You're not receiving that.

And even if somebody were to touch you, like another leper, there's a good chance you wouldn't feel it because your body, your nerve endings have begun to just decay, and shut down, and become numb. Terrible sort of a thing. But that's one of the reasons why what Jesus did, when He encountered a leper is so incredible. Let me show you this on the screen. It's from Matthew chapter 8 and it goes like this.

Matthew 8:2-4 (ESV)

And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.” And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I will; be clean.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”

And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand (and did the unthinkable, look at this) and (we read that today and we just go and He) touched him, (well, of course He touched him. No, no, no, no, you don't do that, you don't touch lepers. But Jesus touched him) saying, "I will; (in other words, I'm willing) be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a proof to them."

Isn't that beautiful? What's cool of course about that passage is that as typical, sinful human beings, if we encounter somebody with an infectious skin disease, you're going to put on the rubber gloves. And you're going to make sure that you don't pass along that infection to yourself or to anyone else. Jesus didn't care. And when Jesus touches somebody, He doesn't get leprosy, they get healed. And that's the cool part about the power of the Son of God.

The final verses of the chapter, which are verses 47 through 59, essentially explain what to do in cases where the disease or something is put upon a garment or anything that's made from animal skin. Because again, you touch things like that and the disease can live on that for a period of time and they had to be very careful again. And so in situations such as those, when a garment or article of animal hide was infected or touched by someone who had an infectious skin disease, they had to burn it. And that's what those verses talk about. Again, the goal being to stop the spread of these life ending skin diseases, mostly life ending, if it was genuine leprosy.

All right, chapter 14. Basically this chapter is all about the instructions that were given when someone had an infectious skin disease, but was cured or healed. And the instructions cover essentially the cleansing of the person and then all of the sacrifices that were required to introduce the person back into the life of the community, so that they could once again operate within the community, and also joined the worshiping community of Israel.

And it was a fairly lengthy and detailed process with all the things that had to be done. And there were very specific sacrifices and so forth. It just goes through a lot of complex information, and this is all covered in verses 1 through 32.

I'm going to have you skip down to verse 33. And in verse 33 through the end of the chapter, we receive instructions for a different time. They're in the wilderness now when they're receiving these instructions, but He's going to give them instructions in these final verses for when they come into the promised

land. And when something, some sort of damaging growth occurs on the walls of their houses. Right now they don't have houses. They're living in tents.

And what you're going to see, we're actually going to read some of these verses. And you're going to notice here, that what the Lord calls them. Look at verse 33. *“The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, ³⁴ “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵ then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, ‘There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.’”*

Now, even though this is referred to as a disease here in the ESV, if you have a New King James Bible, your Bible, instead of a disease, refers to it as, a leprous plague. Now that's interesting, but most likely it was mold or mildew. And in fact, if you have an NIV, it actually says, a spreading mildew. Isn't that funny? We still deal with this stuff today. You live in an old home.

Sue and I enjoy, during lunch, we watch channels that do all these reconstruction thing on houses and stuff. I loved it. I can't drive a nail in straight, but I enjoy watching those kinds of programs. And you see somewhere somebody will buy a hundred year old house and they're all excited about it. And then they start doing the deconstruction and they, what do they? They often find mold. Somewhere in a wall, they got to deal with it. And it's a... You can imagine what kind of an issue it was back in biblical times to find mold. And again, they referred to it as an infectious disease of the walls.

So it says in verse 33, *“The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, (again) ³⁴ “When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, (He says) and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession, ³⁵ then he who owns the house shall come and tell the priest, ‘There seems to me to be some case of disease in my house.’”*

And then what follows are instructions to the priest in the case, what to do about it. Verse 36 says, *“Then the priest shall command that they empty the house before the priest goes to examine the disease, (again, it's probably mildew) lest all that is in the house be declared unclean. And afterward the priest shall go in to see the house. ³⁷ And he shall examine the disease. And if the disease is in the walls of the house with greenish or reddish spots, and if it appears to be deeper than the surface, (checkout the fun they had to go through) ³⁸ then the priest shall go out of the house to the door of the house and shut up the house seven days. ³⁹ And the priest shall come again on the seventh day, and (check it out) look. (and) If the disease has spread in the walls of the house, ⁴⁰ then the priest*

shall command that they take out the stones in which is the disease (or the mildew or mold or whatever) and throw them into an unclean place outside the city. ⁴¹ And he shall have the inside of the house scraped all around, and the plaster that they scrape off (which of course, obviously contains some issues) they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city.” And when it says unclean, it basically means the dump.

“⁴² Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other plaster and plaster the house.” Or re-plaster the house. How fun is that, huh?

And the rest of the chapter basically covers what to do in the event that the mold and the mildew returns. And even after what they've done, it comes back, and how are you going to handle that? And that's basically verses 43 through the end of the chapter. There you go. We're skipping a lot. We normally don't do this.

Chapter 15. This is where it really gets fun because here we cover bodily discharges. You guys excited? We all love talking about this. Obviously the instructions are given here about cleanliness and what was required. And the law that went along with it for cleansing both the person and whatever the person may have come into contact with. And these instructions cover discharges for both men and women. The information goes through the end of the chapter. Skip down to verse 16, no, I'm sorry. How far am I? Oh no, I actually, you know what? That's chapter 15. It's all about discharges and what to do about it.

We're going to go all the way down to chapter 16. We're going to read chapter 16 because this is good stuff. Chapter 16 is all about instructions for the day of atonement. I don't know if you were aware, but even today among practicing Jews, the Day of Atonement is the most important day of the Jewish calendar. This is the biggie to this day. It fell on the 10th day of the seventh month. It was 5 days before the Feast of Tabernacles and the Day of Atonement also referred to as Yom Kippur, was a day of fasting and solemn self-examination. It is still that today.

The one thing that's missing from the Day of Atonement, well, the one thing, I mean, there's no temple, there's no Ark, there are no sacrifices. So all of that is missing. And the instructions are given here related to that and there's no high priest. But the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, is still observed today, again by practicing Jews. There are many Jews who do not practice anything related to Judaism. But for those that do practice, this is still a huge day.

But this was the day when the tabernacle or the temple was still standing. This was the day that the high priest would go in to the Holy of Holies. This was the one day. The one day of the entire year when the priest would go in to the Holy of Holies and bring with him the sacrificial blood.

Verse 1 says, *“The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they drew near before the LORD and died,² and the Lord said to Moses, “Tell Aaron your brother not to come at any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, (which apparently his sons had done) before the mercy seat that is on the ark, so that he may not die. For I will appear in the cloud over the mercy seat.”*

After the death of Aaron's sons, the Lord gave this instruction to Aaron saying, you can't just come in here whenever you want. There's going to be one day where you go into the Holy of Holies, and that's all the only day.

But He says in verse 3, *“But in this way Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: (first of all, He says) with a bull from the herd for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.⁴ He shall put on the holy linen coat and shall have the linen undergarment on his body, and he shall tie the linen sash around his waist, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy garments. (and by the way, before any of that gets put on) He (is to) ...bathe his body in water and then put them on.⁵ And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.*

⁶ *“Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering (first of all,) for himself and shall make atonement for himself and for his house.”*

This was, because the high priest was also a man of sin, just like everybody else, before he went in to make a sacrifice on behalf of the people for their atonement, he had to make an atonement for himself, because he himself was a sinful man.

Now, this is the one place where the ministry of the high priest departs from the picture that we have of Jesus, who didn't have any of His own sin to deal with. He came and was without sin. So this is a departure.

And then it says in verse 7, *“Then he shall take the two goats and set them before the LORD at the entrance of the tent of meeting.⁸ And Aaron shall cast lots over the two goats, one lot for the LORD (and we're going to find out later that that's the one, the goat that gets sacrificed. In other words, the blood is*

shed) *and the other lot for Azazel.*” Now, stop there. Because if you're reading an ESV like I am, then we need to explain what this Azazel thing is all about.

You'll notice that the ESV simply puts in the word, Azazel and you're thinking, what's an Azazel? It sounds like something in a Dr. Seuss book. But Azazel is actually the transliteration of the Hebrew word. In other words, they simply took the Hebrew letters of this word and they gave you the English corresponding letter. And that's what it comes to: Azazel.

Well, that doesn't mean a thing to you and me. And the reason that the ESV translators just simply put Azazel in here is because smart people who look into all these sorts of things, aren't sure what as Azazel really means. They think it is a place. But you'll notice here that He refers to one of the goats as Azazel. He says one of the goats is set apart for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel.

Now, here's the deal though. If you happen to have a New American Standard Bible, you'll notice that in your Bible it ends by saying, one lot is for the Lord and the other lot is for the scapegoat. And that's how they translate Azazel. In fact, the NIV and the New King James do the same thing. It says the scapegoat.

And the reason they put that there is because we believe that even though Azazel originally probably referred to a place, it eventually over time became synonymous with this scapegoat that was sent away.

And first of all, the reason the word scapegoat is in there, I mean, I think you know what a scapegoat is. It's a person who takes the blame when they're not at fault, but they take the blame for whoever is at fault and so forth. Keep that in mind as we keep reading here.

Verse 9, it says, *“And Aaron shall present the goat on which the lot fell for the LORD and use it as a sin offering,¹⁰ but the goat on which the lot fell for Azazel (which is the scapegoat) shall be presented alive before the LORD to make atonement over it, (look at this) that it may be sent away into the wilderness to Azazel.”*

And there you get that idea of Azazel as a place, okay, that eventually became synonymous with the scapegoat, or the place the scapegoat goes. Now we're going to learn what they're to do with the scapegoat in just a bit. That's coming in the next few verses, but just bear with me.

It says, ¹¹ *“Aaron shall present the bull as a sin offering for himself, and shall make atonement for himself and for his house. He shall kill the bull as a sin*

offering for himself. ¹² And he shall take a censer full of coals of fire from the altar before the Lord, and two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small, (or fine) and he shall bring it inside the veil”

He's going into the Holy of Holies and it says he's to ¹³ *...put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is over the testimony, so that he does not die.*” Because why? The glory of the Lord was there.

And so, even the high priest. He's already gone through the sacrifice for himself and his family to be able to simply go into the Holy of Holies. But even so, he has to slink in there and start burning some incense on the fire so that it would produce this cloud of smoke in this really relatively small room, so that it would cloud his visual perception of the Ark and particularly the mercy seat above the Ark because there the Lord said, I will dwell among the people. And so God is basically saying here, so that he can't see me, is, this what the incense was there for? So he doesn't die.

Verse 14. *“And he shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the front of the mercy seat on the east side, and in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.*

¹⁵ *“Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering...”* Now, obviously he's not going to do that in the Holy of Holies, so he has to leave the Holy of Holies. They have to slaughter the goat and then he has to bring that blood in.

Notice what this is for. *“...he shall kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the veil and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it over the mercy seat and in front of the mercy seat.”*

Verse 16 is important. *“Thus he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, (why? Why does the Holy Place need to be atoned for?) because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. And so he shall do for the tent of meeting, (and eventually, that will include the temple) which dwells with them in the midst of their uncleannesses. ¹⁷ No one may be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters to make atonement in the Holy Place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel.”* So nobody's supposed to be in the tent area at all while he's doing this.

Verse 18. *“Then he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around. ¹⁹ And he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it and consecrate it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel.*

²⁰ *“And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat. ²¹ And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, (remember, this is the scapegoat) and (it says, he shall) confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins. And he shall put them on the head of the goat and (look at this, and) send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness.”* In other words, a man who's prepared to take the goat and lead it out toward this wilderness area.

And it says in verse 22, this is interesting. *“The goat shall bear all their iniquities on itself to a remote area, and he shall let the goat go free in the wilderness.”* All right. Let's stop there for a minute.

This is pretty interesting. What you're seeing here is this on this Day of Atonement, it's to be illustrated for the people in these interesting two pictures that are found in these two goats. In other words, these goats symbolize two different aspects of the process of forgiveness.

And the first goat, the one that was sacrificed, depicts how atonement is extended or how it is given. In other words sins are forgiven because the substitute was punished. And so the first goat is sacrificed and his blood is brought into the Holy of Holies. And so we see this picture, this first picture of atonement in this substitute and the shedding of blood.

But God wanted to communicate another picture related to atonement. And the picture that He wanted to show the people of Israel was not one of substitute. Well, it is one of substitution, but it's a different sort of situation with this scapegoat that is sent away. That is completely sent away.

This scapegoat, which upon its head has been spoken, all of the sins of Israel is sent off never to be seen from again, he's gone. And now remember, these are just pictures. These are just pictures that are important for the people to see, because sins were not forgiven by goats being slain. They slew goats, but that's not how people were forgiven back in the Old Testament. Don't think that, well, they had to kill animals back in the Old Testament. No, that's not how people were forgiven.

People were forgiven the same way they're forgiven now, by faith. It was their faith in God's promise that affected the forgiveness. The slaying of the goats, the slaying of the bulls, the slaying of the animals was a picture that God was communicating of the process that would be fulfilled by His Son, Jesus Christ. That was the important thing.

I want to remind you of a passage that we've been referring to a lot in our study of Leviticus, but I'm going to keep referring to it because it's so important to get it through our hearts. It's in Hebrews 10:4, up on the screen.

Hebrews 10:4 (ESV)

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Okay. It's impossible. That's not what that's not how the people were forgiven. They were forgiven. If anybody ever asked you that, well, I know that we're forgiven because Jesus died on the cross. How are people forgiven before, people... Died on the cross? Same way as us. You're either looking toward the cross or you're looking backward at the cross. Either way, it's all about the cross. It's all about the sacrifice of the Son of God.

These people in the Old Testament had a picture to show them that a substitutionary sacrifice had to be made. They knew that it would require the shedding of blood. But that's really all they knew. The rest, they just had to put their faith in God. I just, God, I just believe. I believe that I'm forgiven. Right? Killing a goat isn't going to do it. Right? It always comes down to believing and trusting that God is going to be true to His word.

Guys, that is such an important thing I just said. It always comes down to believing that God is going to be true to His word. Pastor, how do I know if I'm saved? Well, do you believe God's true to His word? But I don't feel saved. I don't care. Do you believe God is true to His word? I don't. Yeah, but what if I don't feel saved? That has nothing to do with it. Do you believe that God is true to His word?

Because here's what He says. That those who trust and put their faith in Jesus Christ will be saved. That's what it says. For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him. In other words, puts their trust in Him. Their confidence in Him, and what He did on the cross, will not perish, but forever have everlasting life. (John 3:16) Do you believe it. Well, yeah, I believe it. That's it then. Tell your feelings to go take a hike.

See that's a very difficult message for the people of today because they're used to depending on their feelings.

In fact, they use their feelings as a barometer of truth. If it feels good, it's right. If it doesn't feel good, it's not right. Good luck with that roller coaster ride. Because you're going to be up one day and down the next. You're going to believe you're forgiven one day, and you're going to believe you're condemned the next. Why? Because it's based on your feelings. It has nothing to do with your feelings.

The pictures are given here in the Old Testament and they're still important pictures because again, they communicate a deeper, future fulfillment of this whole idea that God was communicating to His people about atonement. What is atonement? What does it mean? What does it involve?

Well, it involves sacrifice. It involves the shedding of blood. And here's the other cool thing. It involves your sin going away. Don't you like that? Don't you love that? God promised that in the Book of Jeremiah, and their sins He will remember no more. Jeremiah 31. What a wonderful passage. And their sins He will remember no more. That's the picture of the scapegoat. All the sins sent into the wilderness. They're gone. Goodbye.

Here's the deal. If your sins have been sent into the wilderness. I used to love, Corrie Ten Boom used to have a thing she'd like to say. She said, God has thrown our sins into the deepest ocean and he posted a no fishing sign. I've always liked that because He basically says, that's it. I'm not going to, I'm not going to remember your sins because they're forgiven. They're forgiven through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

What do we do? We remember them and then once we even begin to play that game and we start to recall our sins, oh, then that's when the enemy jumps into the game. Oh, he loves it. The enemy loves it when you think about your sins He just thinks that's the coolest thing in the world because he can start to get you to doubt whether or not you are really forgiven. And once he can start that process going where you begin that idea of doubt, then he can bring you ultimately. And believe me, this is his goal, to get you to the place of doubting your very salvation. I don't even know if I'm saved.

When somebody writes me a note and says, pastor Paul, I'm beginning, I doubt that I'm even saved. I know the process they've gone through to get to that sorry place. And I, and sometimes I'll even say, well, I tell you, the enemy's had you on a journey, hasn't he? And it started with you thinking about your sins, and

going back, and revisiting, and remembering, and rehearsing. And pretty soon it just, it's like a snowball that rolls down a hill. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger. The more you focus on it, the more you fixate on it, the bigger it becomes. And pretty soon the enemy's like, boom, gotcha, gotcha.

Verse 23, look with me in your Bible. It says, *“Then Aaron shall come into the tent of meeting and shall take off the linen garments that he put on when he went into the Holy Place and shall leave them there. ²⁴ And he shall bathe his body in water in a holy place and put on his garments and come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering of the people and make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ And the fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar. ²⁶ And he who lets the goat go to Azazel shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ And the bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. Their skin and their flesh and their dung shall be burned up with fire. ²⁸ And he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.*

²⁹ *“And it shall be a statute to you forever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you. ³⁰ For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins. ³¹ It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever.”* And usually afflicting yourself, refers to fasting.

“³² And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement, wearing the holy linen garments. ³³ He shall make atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. ³⁴ And this shall be a statute forever for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins.” And Aaron did as the Lord commanded Moses.”

As I've already mentioned, the Day of Atonement is still being practiced. Again, it's Yom Kippur. And because there is no temple, there's no sacrificial system, it is still a day of fasting. It is still a day of self-denial. It is still a day filled with prayer services and confessing of sins by practicing Jews. So then the question naturally arises, so are they forgiven?

I actually put this into a Google search and I fielded from that Google search the biggest ball of confusion that you can possibly imagine. People did not quote any Scripture, but went on to give their opinion as if it was law. And the reason, they said what they said is because they want to believe it.

And do you guys know that's what's behind most people's beliefs that are not biblical? Why do people believe things that aren't biblical? Because they want to. It comforts them. Right? That's why people believe unbiblical things. It comforts them. Usually they don't want to embrace things that don't comfort them.

Well, anyway, so the question arises... Here the Jews are going through all these contortions, fasting, praying, denying themselves, and calling out to the Lord for forgiveness. So are they forgiven?

Well, here's the deal. I've learned a few things in my 67 years. I've learned when to talk and when to keep my mouth shut. At least I'm learning. I still mess up from time to time.

But if somebody asks me that question, I'm not going to answer because you see it's not my job. What I'm going to say is, what I do know. And what I do know is what is given to me in the Book of John chapter 14, verse 6 up on the screen.

John 14:6 (ESV)

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. (and) No one comes to the Father except through me.

That's what I do know. You see, if I answer that question, I'm saying, pastor Paul, so tell me, those people are sincere. They even love God. They're Jews. They don't believe in Jesus, but they're going to God and they're saying, please, God, forgive us. Are you going to sit there and tell me they're not forgiven? No, no, I'm not going to tell you anything of the sort.

Here's what I'll tell you. Jesus said, "*No (man) ...comes to the Father except through me.*" You do with that as you will. I'm only going to say what I know for sure. Otherwise, you know what I've done? I've given my opinion and that doesn't do anybody any good, because they're going to come back in and go, well, I don't happen to believe that, my opinion is. And now what do you got? You got two opinions sitting there doing nothing, not convincing anybody.

You say, well, Jesus said this, “*No one comes to the Father but through me.*” What do you think that means? What do you think that means? Well, how can Jesus make that kind of a statement? “*No one...*,” that's terribly narrow of Him.

“*No one comes to the Father except through me.*” How can He say that? I'll show you how. Hebrews chapter 9.

Hebrews 9:11-12 (ESV)

...when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

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How can Jesus dare to say, “*No one comes to the Father except through me.*” Because He paid the price to say that with His own blood. That's how He can say that, amen? We'll stop there. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much for Your Word. And even though the first few chapters we went through here tonight, we skipped over a lot of verses. We know there's a lot of detail there, but we know, Lord, that You were just so caring for Your people and wanting them to be safe. And free from these kinds of things that can so be difficult in life. And Lord, we know that there's coming a day when You will make all things new. And we look forward to that day.

Meanwhile, we put our hope in the God of the atonement, who gave these beautiful pictures to the Jews of the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lamb of God sacrificed. The priest of God who took that sacrificial blood, His own blood and poured it out for us in the Holy of Holies of heaven itself.

Lord, I thank You that You have secured our eternal redemption and we trust in You. Our hope is in You. And we thank You and praise You through Jesus Christ, our Savior, amen.