

Kill or Be Killed

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[0 : 00] But we gather principally to open God's Word. We're going to do that now and I invite you to open your Bibles in the Old Testament in the book of Leviticus. Stephen has been opening up the beginning of this book to us a few weeks back and we're coming back now to Leviticus chapter 4 and part of chapter 5.

So we have a long reading this evening, quite involved, so I shall do my best. But if you follow along in the Bible, that'll help. If you don't have a Bible, there are some at the back.

The stewards will be glad to put one in your hand if you'd like to have one, either now or just before the sermon. But follow along with me at Leviticus chapter 4 at the beginning.

And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, speak to the people of Israel, saying, if anyone sins unintentionally, in any one of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done, and does any one of them, if it's the anointed priest who sins, thus bringing guilt on the people, then he shall offer for the sin that he's committed a bull from the herd without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering.

He shall bring the bull to the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord and lay his hand on the head of the bull and kill the bull before the Lord. And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it to the tent of meeting.

[1 : 28] He shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the Lord that's in the tent of meeting.

And all the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering that is at the entrance to the tent of meeting. And all the fat of the bull of the sin offering he shall remove from it, the fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that's in the entrails, and the two kidneys with the fat that's on them at the loins of the long lobe of the liver.

He shall remove with the kidneys, just as these are taken from the ox of sacrifice of the peace offerings. And the priest shall burn them in the altar of burnt offering.

But the skin of the bull, all its flesh, with its head, its legs, its entrails and its dung, all the rest of the bull he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place to the ash heap and shall burn it on a fire of wood.

On the ash heap it shall be burned up. If the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the things hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they do any one of the things that by the Lord's commandment ought not to be done, then they realize their guilt.

[2 : 46] When the sin which they've committed becomes known, the assembly shall offer a bull from the herd for a sin offering, bring it to the front of the tent of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the Lord, and the bull shall be killed before the Lord.

Then the anointed priest shall bring some of the blood of the bull into the tent of meeting, and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord in front of the veil. He shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that's in the tent of meeting before the Lord, and the rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

And all its fat he shall take from it and burn on the altar. Thus shall he do with the bull. As he did with the bull of the sin offering, so shall he do with this.

And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven. And he shall carry the bull outside the camp and burn it up as he burned the first bull.

It's a sin offering for the assembly. When a leader sins, doing unintentionally any one of the things that the Lord commands his people should not be done, and he realizes his guilt, while the sin which he's committed is made known to him, he shall bring as his offering a goat, a male without blemish.

[4 : 09] He shall lay his hand on the head of the goat and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the Lord. It is a sin offering. And then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of the burnt offering, and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar of the burnt offering.

All its fat shall burn on the altar like the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings. So the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

If any one of the common people sins unintentionally, in doing any one of the things that the Lord's commandments ought not to be done, and he realizes his guilt or the sin which he's committed is made known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat, a female without blemish, for his sin which he's committed.

And he shall lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering in the place of burnt offering. And the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour out all the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

All its fat he shall remove as the fat's removed from the peace offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar for a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And so the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

[5 : 26] If he brings a lamb as his offering for a sin offering, he shall bring a female without blemish, lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill it for a sin offering in the place where they kill the burnt offering. Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger, and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, pour out all the rest of its blood at the base of the altar.

All its fat he shall remove as the fat of the lamb is removed from the sacrifice of peace offerings, and the priest shall burn it on the altar on top of the Lord's food offerings. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he's committed, and he shall be forgiven.

If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he's a witness, whether he's seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity.

Or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal, or a carcass of an unclean livestock, or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it's hidden from him, and he's become unclean, and he realizes his guilt, or if he touches human uncleanness of whatever sort the uncleanness may be, with which one becomes unclean, and it's hidden from him.

And when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt, or, indeed, if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil, or to do good, or any sort of rash oath that people might swear, and it's hidden from him.

[6 : 53] When he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt of any of these, when he realizes his guilt in any of these, and confesses the sin he's committed, he shall bring to the Lord, as his compensation for the sin that he's committed, a female from the flock, a lamb, or a goat for a sin offering.

And the priest shall make atonement for his sin. If he can't afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the Lord, as his compensation for the sin he's committed, two turtle doves, or two pigeons.

One for the sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering. He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering, shall wring its head from its neck, shall not sever it completely, and sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering, on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out, at the base of the altar.

It's a sin offering. And then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering, according to that rule. And the priest shall make atonement for him, for the sin that he's committed, and he shall be forgiven.

If he cannot afford even two turtle doves, or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering, for the sin that he has committed, a tenth of an ephah of fine flour, for a sin offering.

[8 : 12] He shall put no oil on it, put no frankincense on it, for it's a sin offering. He shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful of it, as its memorial portion, and burn it on the altar, for the Lord's food offering.

It will be a sin offering. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him, in the sin which he's committed, in any one of these things. And he shall be forgiven.

And the remainder shall be for the priest, as in the grain offering. Amen. May God bless us his word.

I think the writer there believes in dinning it in repeatedly, doesn't he? So we really do get the message. Well, hopefully we will. And Stephen will help us with that, I'm sure. Good evening all.

Please do have your Bibles open at Leviticus chapter 4, as we consider the sin offering together this evening. And friends, welcome to the Lord's operating room.

[9 : 18] Tonight, as we consider the sin offering in Leviticus, we are invited in for some invasive, critical, life-saving surgery.

The Lord is operating on his people like a skilled surgeon, who with absolute finesse and care, opens us up, and cuts out our sin like it is a cancerous growth.

Like it's a tumour that will one day kill us. And every one of us, with no exception, receives the same invitation and command to lie on that table, be utterly exposed, and have our malignant, deadly sin dealt with.

But to receive this life-giving surgery, we need to be honest with ourselves. We need to be humble. Admit that we need help. That we are culpable.

And we need to be ready to take drastic action to remove even the faintest hint of this deadly disease in our hearts. That is the message of the sin offering in miniature.

[10 : 32] And we need to hear it. Because in this platform, and in this room tonight, are a group of sinners who each desperately need the blood of another to wash away the stain of sin that we have polluted ourselves with.

We, the temple of the holy God, where the Lord makes his presence known, we have tarnished ourselves with sin. We have stained the Lord's house with sin.

And he cannot abide that. The Lord will not dwell in the presence of what he hates, of sin. Back in the summer, we spent a few weeks studying through the early chapters of Leviticus.

But I'm aware that there are many among us who are new to the Tron, particularly our new students. And for you, this might be the first time that you've really considered this book at all. It's a book which is unfamiliar to most Christians for a variety of reasons.

So if it is unfamiliar to you, then here is a short 90-second intro on the big point of Leviticus just to get the gears moving, to get the juices flowing. Leviticus, as you'll have seen from our reading, is full of rituals.

[11 : 46] It has offerings, blood, clean and unclean laws, festivals, celebrations, and directions for how to live and how to worship as part of God's people, amongst many other things.

And all of those rules serve one purpose, which is maintaining relationship between a holy God and his sinful people.

We are a sinful people. And for God to meet with us, we need to be taught how to approach him. We need to learn how to approach and how to appreciate the Lord who has brought us to himself.

And in Leviticus, that is exactly what we have. This book is all about relationship with the Lord. As he taught Israel through these rituals how they were to approach him, how to be reconciled to him, and how to enjoy life in his presence.

And Israel had that presence right on their doorstep. Because the Lord himself came to be present in the midst of his people, in the form of a tent called the tabernacle.

[12 : 52] We don't have time to get into the specifics of this, but it functioned as like God's embassy on earth amongst his people. He gave his people real and meaningful access to himself.

They could come right up to his doorstep and knock on the door. And that's where all of the drama of Leviticus unfolds. Everything is in relation to this tent, in relation to the Lord living among them as their God and they as his people.

And tonight's offering, the sin offering, is right at the heart of that. Because if we, a sinful people, are going to keep living with and meeting with our holy God, then our sin needs to be dealt with.

It needs to be cleansed, purified, done. And it would be tempting for us to come away from this offering feeling very discouraged.

Maybe you're already feeling the beginning tones of that in your own heart, thinking, a whole sermon about sin, we're going to be in for a rough ride. But the very existence of this offering, and the one we'll see next week also, they are testaments to the fact that the Lord knows what we're like.

[14 : 13] The Lord deals in reality and knows that we are sinners who need his mercy. So we'll look at this offering in three sections.

Firstly, we'll look at the pattern of the offering, what actually happens. Then we'll look at the purpose about what the Israelites learned of the Lord through this offering. And then finally, we'll consider the practice of the offering, how we should apply this offering to our lives as Christians today.

So the pattern of the sin offering. Now so far in Leviticus, the tone has been one of really quite joyful devotion to the Lord. The first three offerings were all free will offerings given voluntarily by the people to proclaim their devotion to and love for the Lord.

Whereas the tone takes a turn here. The sin offering is the first situationally driven offering. It's the first offering that's not given proactively out of love for the offerer, love from the offerer, but it's given reactively from committing sin.

You'll notice that in verse two starts with, if anyone sins unintentionally. And I think it would be helpful if we clarified exactly what is meant by this idea of unintentional sins.

[15 : 37] We'll have to get off the main road of the text here and slip into a layby to get our bearings, but we'll be back on the main road of the text in just a few minutes. This term, unintentional sin, it only comes up in Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and then once in Hebrews when it's referring back to these specific practices.

And what this means is a huge area of disagreement for most commentators in the text. They're completely split on whether this is only speaking of sin done by mistake with good intention, you know, taking it really literally that meaning, where the person's unaware of what they've done, a genuine mistake or breaking a law they didn't know existed.

Or on the other side, commentators ask whether this is a broader category of sin that this is speaking of. And I'm convinced that this is a broader category of sin than first appears because of the way that the rest of the Bible speaks of it.

If you were to skip forward to the next book of the Bible, I'd recommend doing that now, Numbers chapter 15, skip forward there. You'll see that unintentional sins are held up in contrast to something else.

They're not just spoken about in isolation, but they're compared to other sins. So Numbers 15 and verse 27 starts, if one person sins unintentionally, and then goes on to describe the process of repentance and restoration for that person.

[17 : 09] And then verse 30, held in contrast to unintentional sins, verse 30 says, but the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is a native or a foreigner, a sojourner, they revile the Lord and that person shall be cut off from among his people because he has despised the word of the Lord and has broken his commandment.

That person shall be utterly cut off. His iniquity shall be on him. The Numbers account is quite binary about those two categories.

There is unintentional sin and then high-handed sin. That's the literal translation, sinning with a high hand. The NIV translates that as a defiant sin.

Maybe you've got that in the Bible in front of you. And this is like defiantly sticking up two fingers to God while you're sinning and refusing to repent after it's pointed out to you with no desire to seek forgiveness.

You know that what you're doing is wrong, that it offends God, but you do it anyway without regret, without remorse or repentance. That's why the person has to be cut off at the end of verse 31 like a cancerous, malignant growth that will ruin everything else.

[18 : 37] And that's what's held up as the contrast to unintentional sin. So the Lord describes our sin as blatant and as shocking as it may be, as unintentional or ignorant if we repent and seek his forgiveness for it.

For he sees that as a stumble along the path of obedience rather than careering off course. And I think we see an example of that in the Apostle Paul.

Before his conversion, as you know, he was the persecutor of the church. He was there at the stoning of Stephen. He was a murderer of Christians. Yet, in 1 Timothy, he says, formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.

But, I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly. And this is the Apostle Paul who, before his conversion, was a Pharisee of Pharisees and knew his Bible back to front.

And yet, he says that he sinned in ignorance. And where we want to land on this is that all sin we seek forgiveness for may be deemed unintentional in that way.

[19 : 50] So, when we read of unintentional sin in this offering, it's speaking of sins that we are repentant of, that we wish to confess and seek forgiveness for.

That's what unintentional sins is talking about. Sins that we want to repent from and seek forgiveness for. It's a broad category of sins. Right, we're done in the lay-by, so let's now get back on the main road of the text.

And the pattern for these offerings is quite straightforward. I'm sure you'll have picked that up from the repetitiveness in the readings we went through it. And we'll try to distill this into five dramatic movements as the action would unfold.

So, step one, sin is committed. So, firstly, a party is named, whether it's the high priest or the whole congregation, leaders of the community who might function as elders, or one of the Israelites.

And we'll take that portion at the end of one of the common people, Israelites, from verses 27 to 31, as our example of the steps involved, as it's similar for each party. That party has sinned by verse 27 doing any one of the things that by the Lord's commandment ought not to be done.

[21 : 05] And that is a very objective, clear category and is the basic definition of sin, breaking God's law that he's revealed in his word.

step two, that sin is revealed. End of verse 27, he either realizes his guilt or the sin which he has committed is made known to him.

So, this man realizes his sin. It could be, as is first suggested by some personal reflection, he could have heard a sermon or read the scriptures for himself and realized that what he was doing was wrong. or, verse 28, someone else points out his sin to him.

It's just a short phrase in the text but you can imagine the amount of relational tension going on there. Revealing sin and pointing it out in a brother or sister is dangerous work which needs to be done delicately with all faithfulness and humility.

And thankfully, our Israelite doesn't try to excuse himself. He doesn't try to turn his brother or sister into an accuser. But he accepts that by God's law what he has done is sin and that that sin is between him and God.

[22 : 22] So, at this point, the person guilty of sin realizes that their relationship with the Lord is fractured because they've sinned against him and they know how much the Lord values holiness and hates sin.

So, he wants to take it to the Lord quickly to get it dealt with. Step three, that sin is confessed. In the middle of verse 28, he purchases a female goat that is without blemish, that's flawless, the best of the law.

He then stands at the entrance of the tabernacle and would say something like this, confessing to the priest, I have sinned against the Lord. I have broken his law and I wish to repent.

He then, verse 29, and this is really key, he lays his hand on the head of the goat, identifying with it and symbolically placing his sin on the animal itself.

By doing that, he's saying, this animal represents me and my sin. Step four, sin is put to death.

[23 : 30] once he has said that, he takes a knife and he slits the throat of the goat and watches as the consequences of his sin against a holy God trickle out from this goat's neck.

The Israelites would have been left in no doubt as to just how serious their sin was. the priest then, verse 30, catches the blood in a bowl and he sprinkles it on the horns on the four corners of the altar, pouring out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar.

And this seems to be cleansing the place where the goat representing sin was about to be burned because it had come into contact with sin. It needed to be cleansed from it. Then, verse 31, the fat of the goat is burned in the altar just as in the peace offering so that the choicest part of the animal goes to the Lord.

And finally, step five, sin is forgiven. At the end of verse 31, the priest then announces that he has been forgiven and that this man can leave with a clean conscience, certain that he is in right relationship with the Lord.

His sin has been put to death and his communion with the Lord is restored, it's repaired. And I should say we're meant to understand that this man was a believer through the whole process.

- [24 : 53] His union with the Lord remained intact. He wasn't dipping in and out of salvation through this. But his communion, the Lord's enjoyment of their relationship and vice versa, was impacted by this sin.

The Lord was grieved by it. I hope that's helped make clear the general pattern for the sin offering. The Lord knows what we're like.

He knows that we will sin against him, that it's inevitable. Yet he, in a show of grace, provides a way for his people to have assurance, tangible assurance, that their sins were forgiven.

Let's now consider the purpose purpose of the sin offering. And here we're really asking, what was God teaching Israel through this as he operated on them like the master surgeon that he is? And the first key foundational lesson that they learned was that the Lord decides what sin is.

Did you notice the repetition in the reading of how God defines sin? Look at verse 2 with me. If anyone sins unintentionally in any of the Lord's commandments about things not to be done and does any one of them.

- [26 : 12] It's law-breaking. There is an objective standard of sin that God has set, that he alone gets to set. And that may seem like a very basic truth to state, but the Lord wanted his people to be clear about it.

That's why it's mentioned all the way throughout this passage. Sin is breaking God's law. It's not based on our feelings, on what we perceive to be good and kind and lovely, but it's based on what the Lord knows to be right and wrong.

The Israelite wasn't to be challenged about their sin and then go away and say, well I've prayed about it and I've asked the Lord for guidance and I actually feel really at peace with my behaviour.

I think he's okay with this. I don't think it's sinful. And in that situation they could be right if they have been faithful to the revealed word and their friend did make a mistake in pointing that out.

But what they were to be clear about was that the standard for deciding righteousness and sin is not your own thoughts or feelings. It's not subjective or changeable from person to person.

- [27 : 29] Instead it comes from God alone. There is one morality that comes from God alone. There isn't one truth for one person over here and another truth for another person over here.

It is fixed, set in stone and printed in black and white in his law and the Lord certainly won't encourage us towards actions that are contrary to his word.

That's not how he works. He's not inconsistent and changeable like that. And Israel also learned that who sins matters.

I'm sure you'll have seen that through the reading as it went through the list of various parties. In each of those sections there are slight variations within the offerings particularly to do with the cost of the animal involved.

If it was a high priest, verse 3, it's a bull. If it's the whole congregation, all the Israelite people, the hundreds of thousands of them, a bull again. If it was a community leader, end of verse 23, a male goat without blemish.

- [28 : 35] If it was a common person, verse 28, a female goat without blemish. And that all follows the values of animals in ancient Israel. Male bulls as the prized, costly animal, the top dollar one, and female goats as the smaller, cheaper animal.

The Lord seems to consider the sins of particular people in particular roles as more weighty than others.

That the high priest or the elder sin carried more weight than that of the common man. And that strand of thought continues for us in the New Testament when the Apostle James wrote that not many of you should become teachers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

And the Lord Jesus said, to whom much is given, much is required. There's a pattern through Scripture that makes clear that God cares about the person who sins, not just the act itself.

Those who lead God's people should be very wary of falling into sin, as it can have a great impact on the whole community. And don't we see that when pastors fall?

[29 : 51] Every minister is a miserable sinner, every last one of them. But should he continue in that sin defiantly and unrepentantly, it will impact the flock he's been entrusted with.

The cancer will spread. The fallout from church leaders' sin is often a very difficult web to untangle. So it's right that they are wary of stumbling into sin themselves.

And I would say the same, maybe to a slightly lesser degree, for a growth group leader or a Sunday school teacher. Your sin, should it become a defiant, deliberate rejection of the Lord, will harm the lives that the Lord has entrusted to your care.

And most importantly for Israel, what did they learn about the Lord through this? All God's laws reveal the heart of the lawgiver, so what did they learn of God through this?

Well, they learned that the Lord hates sin, but has a heart for sinners. Your sin genuinely harms your relationship with the Lord.

[31 : 05] You might have heard it said that there's nothing you could do that would make God love you more or less than he does right now. And that's true in the sense that we are in a right standing with the Lord, that we are justified before him in Christ, and he still loves us despite our sin.

But we can and do offend him with our sin. Israel were taught that well, particularly as they had the drama of these offerings played out before their very eyes. Because sin isn't outside of you.

You can't detach it from yourself. Sin isn't something that happens to you, that circumstances or institutions or others plant in you.

Sin comes from the heart. It is part of us. We can't fall into the trap our culture sets where our poor behavior, well, it's just the result of your upbringing or of systems forcing you to go outside the law to do what you wouldn't want to do yourself.

And it needs to be put to death, cut out like a cancer. Because the Lord's feelings of our sin is made clear in just how comprehensive his will for this substitute animal is.

[32 : 25] That it is killed. Its blood is drained. It's burned to a crisp. And if it grows and infects the congregation or the high priest, it is verses 12 and then verse 21.

It's taken outside the camp and burned all the way out there. So not even the ashes, not even the slightest hint or faintest whiff of sin remains.

Israel had daily demonstrations of the Lord's hatred for sin in these sacrifices. But within them lay a deeper truth in the Lord's heart for sinners.

Because he is a God who loves to show mercy. And Israel saw that in particular in just how low the bar was for this offering.

Even within that grading of value of the offering depending on who sins, starting with the prized fattened calf, there is no one priced out of this. Verse 7. Chapter 5 verses 7.13 in particular make that clear.

[33 : 29] As it says that if the common person can't afford a lamb, verse 7, bring a couple of birds. And if you can't afford that, verse 11, just bring a bag of flour.

Under two kilograms of flour. So the Israelite could bring to the tabernacle in exchange for their eternal soul, in exchange for their sin against a holy God who cannot dwell in the presence of sin, a bag of flour.

Which is nothing really. It's not equal to their sin. But none of these offerings were. All of these offerings, as much as they may have seemed to have had in their hands, they were given with the empty hands of faith.

Hands that knew just how badly they needed the Lord's mercy. Because the Lord loves to show mercy and patience to his people.

This sin offering is not here in Leviticus to crush the spirit of the people, to make them feel awful, shame-filled, and lead them on a lifelong guilt trip for the way they are, always feeling like they've done something wrong and they need to do something about it.

[34 : 48] Every day of their lives, every moment, in a crippling way. Instead, this is the gracious provision of a God who knows what his people are like. Who knows that they sin.

Who knows that that sin grows. That it pollutes. It stains. It twists. And it distorts. Everything it touches. So he provides a way.

And now we know looking back that this sacrifice itself didn't pay for their sins. The book of Hebrews is emphatic about that. But this offering, amongst others, these were the effective means of people expressing the obedience of faith.

These offerings were like a check that people wrote that was only cashed in upon Christ's once for all atoning death on the cross. His blood is the only currency that matters when it comes to paying for sins.

They were always looking forward to him and being saved by him. Just as we are today. Well let's move on to consider finally the practice of the sin offering.

[36 : 02] And here we're asking how do we put the sin offering of Leviticus into practice today? And as we said the specific rituals of the sin offering itself have been fulfilled but the pattern remains.

And that is to recognize sin, be humble, confess and repent.

Recognize sin, be humble, confess and repent. So recognize sin. Because Israel was not to learn what sin was from the culture around them, always becoming more like the nations they were surrounded by.

God made it abundantly clear that sin is what he says it is. That sin is breaking his commands. And the culture we live in today has a variety of different things it believes are wrong.

Things that people should lose their jobs for or be cancelled for, be no platformed for, be rejected for, almost be hounded out of society for, outside the camp. And it can very subtly get into our thinking.

[37 : 13] Because we have breathed in just enough of that air that we start to judge as the world does. Getting our morality from the world rather than from the word.

One significant takeaway we need to take from this passage is that God defines what sin is. If we are to recognize what sin is and put it to death as God commands, then we need to be able to recognize it in the first place.

So know the word. Read the Old Testament law. Speak to your brothers and sisters. Keep coming to church. And challenge the narrative that you hear in the world.

It's always worth us looking at things from a Christian perspective like cultural appropriation. Or things that the world calls hate speech.

Or the idea that every day of your life you need to carry a calculator counting your carbon footprint. And ask, is that actually sin? Does God actually hate that?

[38 : 23] We need to use God's word alone as our barometer for what sin is. He alone decides what sin is.

Because he alone is the one truly offended by sin. Then, be humble when sin is revealed. When sin is revealed to us, how do we react?

When someone highlights our behavior, what do we do? It's a really uncomfortable, vulnerable thing to have sin pointed out, don't you find? It's not an enjoyable process.

When a friend who's carefully thought and prayed about it and spoken to us gently about our sin, when they highlight it, what do we do?

Do we turn on them? You can't tell me I'm sinful. I know what you're like. Do we see them as a brother or sister?

[39 : 26] Or do we turn them into an accuser? Do we think they're the ones who are less mature than I am? How can they tell me that I've sinned?

I'd appreciate you thinking of that. When's the last time someone said to you, I think you may have done wrong there. I think you may have sinned. How did you react?

Did you see that person as a brother, as a sister, or as an accuser? Sin being revealed hurts. It unavoidably stings.

It's like the first cut of the surgeon's blade as they seek to expose our gruesome disease. It's humbling and wounding. And the book of Proverbs reminds us that faithful are the wounds of a friend.

If sin is as serious as God says it is, and it is, then we should be thanking the Lord for our friends who help us to grow in holiness to him. So be humble.

[40 : 39] And next, confess. Just as the Israelites had to go and confess their sins to the Lord, we are to confess our sin to him also. And often we will do that by confessing our sins to one another as we grow in holiness together.

We don't need to go to a priest or a tabernacle. We can speak to one another. We're a kingdom of priests. And now that can seem terrifying. It's a vulnerable thing to admit to someone that you've done something that you are completely ashamed of.

That God is ashamed of. That you really thought those thoughts. You said those words. That you really were that unspeakably arrogant.

But we are to confess and then receive cleansing. That's what the apostle John writes in his letter when he says that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So is confession part of the structure of your walk with God? I wonder when the last time you confessed sin was. I think that all too often it's actually quite absent from our thinking.

[42 : 01] The idea that we are to be a continually confessing people. Admitting the ways in which we fail the Lord. I'm not saying that you need to confess every gory detail to your prayer square or your growth group.

There are some things we are so ashamed of that sometimes we can only trust the Lord with them. That sometimes we can only speak of in very veiled language.

But those who know just how keenly they need help in their sin will be glad to offer up confession to the Lord so that they may be forgiven.

So that they no longer offend Him. And finally, repent by putting your sin to death.

And that death is a daily practice. Our sin was indeed nailed to the cross with Christ. Those who trust in Him are dead to sin and they are to keep on killing it day by day.

[43 : 06] In the words of John Owen, be killing sin or it will be killing you. Think of the lung cancer patient who after years of smoking cigarettes has surgery to remove a huge tumour on their lung.

if they were to get discharged from hospital after surgery, walk down to the news agents and get a packet of cigarettes with the huge smoking kills label on the front, they'd be mad.

They should never want to look at a cigarette again. Never mind smoke it. And that is to be our attitude to sin. To put it to death.

To never want to look at it again. Never mind do it. Because we're given a hint into what happens if sin is not put to death. You may have spotted one of the details of what happens when the high priest or whole congregation sins, which is different from any of the other sections of the offering.

If you look at verse 6 and then look at verse 17 of chapter 4, you'll see a unique thing in these two verses. Genesis. The priest is to take the blood of the offering and not only sprinkle it at the altar, but also to sprinkle it inside the tent of meeting.

[44 : 29] On the very curtain that was there to separate God's presence from his people. To stop him breaking out of their sin. They needed to cleanse the tabernacle of their sin because the Lord's house was dirtied by their sin.

So the implication is that if sin grows, the Lord will leave. He will not live among them.

His glory will depart and he will no longer be their redeemer and their savior and therefore their malignant sin will grow and kill them for they will have no salvation in the Lord.

And very sadly, that is the case in many church buildings today. They have embraced sin, refused to repent, defiantly said that breaking God's law is actually good, that God's law was outdated, that God's law has changed, that God didn't really mean what he revealed in his law.

One person starts by saying, but I love them. How could God hate the way he's made me to be? I've prayed about this night and day, I have agonized over this and I really feel that God is with me on this, that we can serve him better together.

[46 : 03] And their family was slowly convinced that it was right when they saw how happy they were. Then a few elders in the church saw them at church together and they started to question God's command.

Then eventually the whole congregation embraces sin, refuses to repent, instead celebrating it, preaching it, encouraging it.

They sin with a high hand, defiantly, without remorse. And therefore, God has left the building.

that group of people who were formerly counted as part of the Lord's church are now just a group of people who like church things that meet in a church building. They can't say that they are a temple of the Lord's presence, that they are where the Lord meets with his people and makes his presence known.

And what a warning that is to us as a church family. will we allow sin to fester? Will we allow sin to master us?

[47 : 16] Will we stop listening to the words of our brothers and sisters when they reveal our sin? Will we stop listening to the words of preachers as they reveal God's word to us?

Or will we be a church that puts sin to death? not unkindly, not lacking in grace, not seeking to destroy and belittle when sin is revealed, not desperately seeking out sin so that we may humble our brother in some strange act of revenge, but in humility ourselves, knowing that we are those who need to get on the operating table and receive the blood of Christ just as much as anyone.

And friends, I find the presence of offerings like this that outline in great detail just how sinful I am and just how awful my sin is, deeply reassuring because I am deeply sinful.

I know my heart, I know my actions, I know my thoughts, I know that every day I need to confess my sins and the full knowledge that tomorrow, the day after that, and the day after that I'm going to need to pray the same prayer until one day I'll be on my deathbed, saying it for the last time.

we are alongside our brothers and sisters in ancient Israel to know that we need something outside ourselves to make us clean, and we always will.

[49 : 06] How good is it that the Lord provides a way for us to be in relationship with him through the blood of his son, that on Calvary's hill the Lord Jesus took our sins as his very own.

As his blood was shed, his life was taken, and he took the punishment for sin on himself. How marvelous, and how wonderful he is.

Let's pray together. Father God, we confess that we have not loved you as we ought, that we have not loved you with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we have not loved our neighbor as ourself.

Please give us humble hearts that do not reject your wise words, or the brothers and sisters you have given us to help us to follow you. Help us to confess to you our sin, to trust you with our sin.

And Father, would you graciously sow the seeds of repentance in our hearts, that would bear fruit in lives full of righteousness, devoted entirely to you. We praise you, Lord, that while you hate sin, you have a heart for sinners, that you love mercy, and that you would grant that even to a people like us.

[50 : 47] And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.