

Substitution

Though God must always respond to sin justly, God's people are spared His wrath because of the perfect substitutionary work of Jesus.



GOD'S STORY
THE TRANSFORMATION FOR ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Exodus 32:30-35

April 19, 2020

(Exodus 32:30-35) ³⁰ The next day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin." ³¹ So Moses went back to the Lord and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. ³² But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." ³³ The Lord replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ³⁴ Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin." ³⁵ And the Lord struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.

COMMUNITY – CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

- **A substitute is someone or something that takes the place of the original. What are some everyday situations in which people use a substitute?**
- **What are some examples of a substitute not being as good as the original?**
- **What are some examples of a substitute being better than the original?**

If you want to have some fun here, make a list on the board of originals and substitutes. You write the originals and ask for your group to come up with substitutes, then ask which are worse than the original and which are better.

Examples:

Dairy Milk (Almond Milk); Butter (Margarine); Whopper (Impossible Whopper); Coke (Coke Zero); Nick Foles (Gardner Minshew); Full House (Fuller House); The Lion King Animated (The Lion King Live Action)

God pronounced judgment on the nation of Israel because the Israelites substituted their worship of the golden calf for their worship of God. God used Moses to tear down the altar to the calf and carry out the death sentence of 3,000 people for their sin. In our own lives, we sometimes substitute the things of this world for God's plans and purposes—and a price must be paid for our sin. This event in the history of Israel demonstrates the high cost of sin in God's eyes. Jesus came to pay the ultimate price for our sin by going to the cross to be the substitute for our sin.

CONTENT – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Have a volunteer read Exodus 32:30-32

- **What do you know about the word "atone"?**

Atonement literally means "to cover." In the Old Testament sacrificial system, sacrifices were offered to cover the sins that had been committed. The sacrifices were made in place of (i.e. substitution) the sinner. The sacrificial animals had to be spotless and without blemish. The one for whom atonement was being made had to present the animal and lay his hands on it, symbolizing a transfer of the guilt from the sinner to the sacrifice.

- **How does verse 32 provide context for Moses' goal in returning to God?**
- **What similarities are there between Moses' role and the work of Jesus in this action?**

Moses realized the severity of the people's sin when he saw how they disobeyed the law of God and committed idolatry by worshiping the golden calf. Moses understood that a penalty must be paid for the sins of the people. Several thousand were killed due to their direct rejection of God, but this did not account for the sins of many others who worshiped the calf but remained alive. In this act, Moses served as a picture of Jesus, who would ultimately atone for the sin of Israel. Just as Moses was willing to give up his life for the sake of Israel, Jesus would willingly give up His life for the sake of the whole world.

Have a volunteer read Exodus 32:33

- **Why was Moses' offer of atonement insufficient for the sins of Israel?**
- **How was Jesus different—and better—than Moses as a substitute for sin?**

Though Moses' actions are admirable, they could not fully atone for the sins of the people. Full atonement for sin could only be made by someone who lived perfectly before God. Moses was unable to live up to this standard, so he was not a fitting substitute for the Israelites. Throughout the entire Bible, people repeatedly failed to live up to the perfect standard of God. Only Jesus could meet this standard as the Lamb of God, who could take away the sins of the world (cf. John 1:29).

Have a volunteer read Exodus 32:34-35

- **What does God's response and direction to Moses tell us about His commitment to His people?**
- **God punished Israel for their sin, but not by death, like those who rejected Him directly. How was God able to withhold full punishment without compromising His holy standard?**

Romans 3:25 says that Jesus was the perfect atonement for God's people, covering even the sins of the past that God passed over. God did not compromise His holy standard in passing over the sins of Israel, because He poured out His full wrath against sin on Jesus. Sin always has consequences, but God's people have been shielded from the final consequences of their sin due to Jesus' perfect sacrifice in their place. This should remind us not only of the seriousness of sin, but also the graciousness of God toward His people in Jesus.

COMMISSION – ENGAGING IN GOD'S STORY

- **Think of times in your past when you didn't receive the full punishment deserved by your actions, from God or from others. Have you acknowledged these times and thanked God for the grace you received?**
- **How does the contrast of the severity of sin and the grace of God in this story compel you to tell others about the gospel?**
- **How does knowing and trusting that Christ is our substitute change how we treat others?**
- **Who could you share the good news of Christ with this week?**

We are all like Israel, in that we have put our hope and trust in the things of this world over God. Just like Israel, we deserve the full weight of God's wrath for our sin against Him. But instead of receiving wrath, those in Christ have received mercy and grace in the person of Jesus Christ. As we remember the work of Christ in our place, we should be compelled to share this good news with others. In reflecting on our sin that has been forgiven by God because of Jesus, we are reminded that no one is too far from the grace of God. Though all have fallen short of God's glory, God has provided a perfect substitute in Jesus.

PRAYER: Pray and thank God for sending Jesus as the perfect substitute in your place. Thank God that you have not received the full consequences of your sin because of Jesus. Ask for a heart of thankfulness for the gospel, and a desire to share this good news with others.

CONTINUE TO JOURNEY THROUGH GOD'S STORY

Bible Reading Plan:

DAY 1 – Leviticus 23

DAY 2 – Leviticus 26

DAY 3 – Numbers 11-12

DAY 4 – Numbers 13-14

DAY 5 – Numbers 16-17

KEY VERSE: Leviticus 26:13

H.E.A.R. Method:

Highlight a verse or two.

Explain what the text means.

Apply the verse to your life.

Respond to God.

Our team has put together Bible study resources to encourage and inspire you as you engage in God's Story. Visit chetscreek.com/gods-story for videos, study guides, and more.

OUR VISION

To be a church
for the unchurched,
here and around the world.

ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Gospel-centered communities that aim to KNOW
GOD together and BE CHANGED by Him in a
way that will CHANGE THE WORLD.

32:30-33. Throughout Scripture, it is clear that consequences for sin in general come in stages and with varying degrees of severity, giving people an opportunity to repent (cp. 2Pe 2:9). Moses knew that although the Israelites as a nation had not been destroyed (Ex 32:9-14), the matter of consequences from their sin with the golden calf was not yet settled. Perhaps Moses intended to offer himself as a substitute for the people since sacrifices were normally offered when people sought atonement (Lv 16:6,11,17,24; Ezek 45:17). In any case, by requesting to die if the people died, Moses identified himself with them and refused to be the start of a “great nation” to replace them (Ex 32:10). His reference to erasure from the book You have written, that lists those who were alive on earth, implies a comparison between God’s actions and that of a person who kept and consulted written records, such as census lists used for collecting taxes or for military conscriptions (cp. Ezr 2:62; Ps 69:28; Jer 22:30; Ezek 13:9).

32:32. Nothing more strongly marked the love of Moses for his people than his sincere willingness to offer up his own life rather than see them disinherited and destroyed. The book to which Moses referred, the psalmist entitled “the book of the living” (Ps. 69:28). Untimely or premature death would constitute being blotted out of the book. The apostle Paul displayed a similar, passionate devotion for his kinsmen (Rom. 9:1-3).

32:34. The angel was first mentioned in 3:2 and would be a topic of further discussion between the Lord and Moses (23:20,23; 32:34; 33:2).