

September 21, 2014 by Steve Brandon



The Burnt Offering

Leviticus 1

1. The Burnt Offering

2. Some Thoughts

As most of you know, we began a series on the book of Leviticus last week. And one of my goals (as crazy as it sounds) is that you would come to love the book of Leviticus. That goal not unreachable. In fact, in Psalm 119:97, we read, "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day."

We often apply this verse to mean something like, "Oh, how I love your word! It is my meditation all the day." Or, "Oh, how I love Your Bible! It is my meditation all the day." Meaning, that the entirety of the Bible is my delight! I read every word and think of it often.

Now, this application is not wrong in any way. This attitude is true of any believer in Jesus Christ. We love His whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation! We think of its truths often. But, I want for you to think of what the writer of Psalm 119 was saying for Himself. He said, "Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day." What was he referring to? He was referring to the law of the Old Testament. The New Testament wasn't even written when these words were penned. And, he wasn't referring to the prophets or to the historical books of the Old Testament. He was referring to the law. He was referring to the first five books of the Bible. He was referring to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

He said that he loved these books! He loved the book of Genesis. He loved the book of Exodus. He loved the book of Leviticus. And I want you to come to love the book of Leviticus as well. May we say, "Oh, how I love Leviticus!"

Now, I know that won't happen apart from the Spirit of God working in our hearts to make this happen. So, may we pray to the Lord for His grace in our lives. We can pray the words of Psalm 119:18, "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."

Well, this morning, we are diving into Leviticus, chapter 1, The Burnt Offering.

Each of the first five chapters of Leviticus detail for us one of the offerings that they were to offer before the LORD. Chapter 1 is about the burnt offering. Chapter 2 is about the grain offering. Chapter 3 is about the peace offering. Chapter 4 is about the sin offering. Chapter 5 is about the guilt offering. (Now, this isn't quite right, because some of the chapter breaks don't exactly correspond with the offerings. But, for the sake of simplicity, though, you can think of it in this way: five chapters; five sacrifices.)

If you work a little bit, you can memorize these sacrifices. Here's a story that I remember making up years ago. It goes like this.

There once was a farmer, named "Burney Grains." He was a good and caring farmer. He had a daughter, whose name was Cindy, Cindy Grains. Now, as any good farmer would do for his daughter, he gave his daughter some of the farm animals to take care of. She fed them and cleaned their barns.

One day, Cindy was having a particular problem with one of her young, female pigs. Young, female pigs are often called, "gilts." For some reason or another, this gilt was spooked and was going crazy. It was running all around the pen and Cindy could not catch the gilt. So, she called her father, to come and help her with her young pig.

Sure enough, when Burney came, he was able to catch Cindy's pig and wrestle it to the ground. After a few moments, the gilt was peacefully sitting in Burney's lap.

You can summarize this story in five words: Burney Grains Pacifies Cindy's Gilt.

And these five words correspond to the first five sacrifices of the book of Leviticus: Burney Grains Pacifies Cindy's Gilt.

Burney - Burnt Offering (chapter 1)
Grains - Grain Offering (chapter 2)
Pacifies - Peace Offering (chapter 3)
Cindy's - Sin Offering (chapter 4)
Gilt - Guilt Offering (chapter 5)

I know that it's a crazy story. But, it's one way that you can memorize things. Create a crazy image of this farmer calming down his daughter's pig, and you have, "Burney Grains Pacifies Cindy's Gilt." And you have memorized the outline to the first five chapters of Leviticus: Burnt, Grain, Peace, Sin, and Guilt. It's worked for me. Perhaps it will work for you.

Anyway, let's read chapter 1 of Leviticus. It's not too difficult to understand.

Leviticus 1

The LORD called Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock.

"If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer a male without blemish. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Then he shall kill the bull before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and throw the blood against the sides of the altar that is at the entrance of the tent of meeting. Then he shall flay the burnt offering and cut it into pieces, and the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. And Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, the head, and the fat, on the wood that is on the fire on the altar; but its entrails and its legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

"If his gift for a burnt offering is from the flock, from the sheep or goats, he shall bring a male without blemish, and he shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall throw its blood against the sides of the altar. And he shall cut it into pieces, with its head and its fat, and the priest shall arrange them on the wood that is on the fire on the altar, but the entrails and the legs he shall wash with water. And the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

"If his offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves or pigeons. And the priest shall bring it to the altar and wring off its head and burn it on the altar. Its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. He shall remove its crop with its contents and cast it beside the altar on the east side, in the place for ashes. He shall tear it open by its wings, but shall not sever it completely. And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

Let's dig into my first point. I'm simply calling it ...

1. The Burnt Offering

I want for us to spend a few moments looking at the details of the burnt offering. I'm not expecting you to be an expert on this. Because, quite frankly, you don't need to be an expert on this. Because Jesus has come, we no longer have the need to offer up sacrifices. And to become an expert on the burnt offering is like teaching someone how to use an IBM Selectric typewriter.

I learned typing on an IBM Selectric typewriter. As a freshman in high school, I was in class with 25 other students. Each of us had this fancy typewriter in front of us at our desks. We would put a paper in it. As we pressed the key, the machinery would cause this ball to rotate and strike the paper in such a way as to cause a letter to appear on the paper, right where it was aimed. It was incredible. Now, if I typed a wrong letter, I had to back space, take out a special little paper and insert it between the paper and the ribbon, and type the same letter, so that it would print white instead of black. The net effect was a white letter over a black letter, and it was effectively erased. How thankful I was when I was able to use a self-correcting typewriter in college!

But, today, it's different. We don't need our IBM Selectric typewriter, because we now have computers and printers. Since the advent of the computer, we really have no use for our old typewriters, except in museums. A computer and a printer can do exactly the function of an old typewriter, only much better.

And so, likewise, Christ has come and has done away with the sacrifices. We have no need to be experts on the Old Testament sacrificial ritual, because Christ has come! Now, that's not to exclude the details of the ritual. Because there are things that are helpful for us to understand. Just like with the typewriter, some of the details can prove helpful for us now. Some of them are foundational to how we use our modern day technology. We use the term, "carriage return" to refer to the "enter" button. It has reference back to the old typewriters when the entire printing carriage would "return" to the original position on the left side of the paper. The "shift" key literally shifted the printing mechanism to allow it to print letters in upper case, rather than the default lower case.

Although these things are not important for the use of modern-day computers, they help to give us some further understanding in why they work the way that they do. Likewise, the burnt offering is not important to understand for the application of Christ's blood in our salvation, it is helpful to understand the function of Christ's blood in our salvation. Furthermore, it will help us to understand our salvation in deeper ways.

So, let's spend some time looking at the burnt offering, which is foundational to understanding many of the sacrifices. For, in explaining the sacrifices, they are often compared to the burnt offering.

Anyway, there are three types of burnt offering, each of them detailed in this chapter. The first comes from the herd, that is, from cows (verses 3-9). The second comes from the flock, that is, from the sheep or goats (verses 10-13). The third comes from the birds, that is, from the turtledoves or pigeons (verses 14-17). Now, for each of these sacrifices, the protocol is much the same, though there are some variations.

First of all, if an animal comes from the herd or from the flock, it must be a male without defect. That is, it must not be blind or lame or sick. It would have had to be the sort of specimen that you would show off at the state fair.

The worshiper is to bring this animal to the tent of meeting. The worshiper is to lay his hand on the bull or the sheep or the goat, and then kill it, himself.

He then will hand the carcass over to the priest. The priest will then take the blood of the slain animal and throw it upon the side of the altar. He then will skin the burnt offering (if it's a bull) and cut it into pieces. He will then place the head and all the fat on the altar to burn. Then, he will wash the entrails and the legs, and then burn them upon the altar.

Now, there are some differences if the offering is a bird. The priest kills the bird; the worshiper doesn't. He doesn't skin the bird. Rather, he tears it by its wings. The wings and the crop are discarded, but everything else is burned. Nothing is saved. No matter the animal, the idea is the same. The animal comes to the priest. The animal is killed. Its blood is poured out near the altar. And all of it is burned upon the altar. None of it is left. It's totally consumed. That's the burnt offering.

This is all fine and well to say. But, can you imagine it? Can you really imagine?

I love what I read in Gordon Wenham's commentary on this passage. He wrote, ...

Using a little imagination every reader of the Old Testament soon realizes that these ancient sacrifices were very moving occasions. They make modern church services seem tame and dull by comparison. The ancient worshiper did not just listen to the minister and sing a few hymns. He was actively involved in the worship. He had to choose an unblemished animal from his own flock, bring it to the sanctuary, kill it and dismember it with his own hands, then watch it go up in smoke before his very eyes." [\[1\]](#)

I heard him say in a lecture that when teaching a seminary class on this passage, he will often bring a teddy bear and demonstrate what happens to the sacrificed animals, just to get the passion of this passage. Now, I'm not going to do that this morning. But, I'm just trying to say that this is a gruesome scene. And we simply need to work hard to catch the reality of what God required of Israel.

First of all, let's begin with the tabernacle. This is the "tent of meeting" that is spoken about in Leviticus 1. In Exodus 25-40, you can read of how God gave Moses the instructions of how to build this tabernacle. This is where the people would bring their sacrifices. They would bring them right to the curtain, where they would meet the priest and present their offering. The first thing that you would see after you came into the tent was the altar used for burnt offerings.

To give you an idea of the dimensions of this, it was 75 feet wide and 150 feet long. That's about a fifth the size of a football field. It's really not that big at all. The altar was 7½ by 7½ feet. It was to stand 4½ feet off the ground. It would have a bronze grating on the bottom side of the altar to let the ashes fall below the altar.

At Timna Park in Israel, they have created a life-size replica of the tabernacle. Everything is built to scale. But, they didn't use the actual materials (i.e. gold, silver and bronze). To give you some perspective, the curtains surrounding the camp were 7½ feet tall. [\[2\]](#)

This altar is where the animal would be burned. The priest would have a burning fire inside the altar and the carcass would be thrown over the sides to burn up completely. God required a blameless animal which would be killed and burned upon an altar. The smell of burnt flesh would fill the air.

We are so distant from this. We live in a society where we purchase our meat in a store. Only a select few of us have ever seen an animal butchered before. We simply don't see this today.

A simple Google search for "animal sacrifice" will turn up a bunch of gruesome images of bulls and lambs being slaughtered. Such was the reality of Israel. This is what Israel was to see every day. And it's not far off from where we get all of our meat today. I hope that a picture like this will put some realism into your mind regarding these sacrifices in Leviticus 1. Because, we need to realize what Leviticus 1 is talking about.

Now, for Israel, the slaughtering of animals was a daily thing (Numbers 28:1-8). They were to offer up a male lamb every morning at sunrise. They were to offer up a male lamb every evening at twilight. For Israel, it was a weekly thing (Numbers 28:9-10). Every Sabbath day, they were to offer up two male lambs as a burnt offering. For Israel, it was a monthly thing (Numbers 28:11-15). At the beginning of every month, Israel was to offer up a burnt offering to the LORD. That offering included two bulls, one ram, and seven male lambs. For Israel, it was a yearly thing. Every Passover (Numbers 28:19), every Feast of Weeks (Numbers 28:27), every Feast of Trumpets (Numbers 29:2), every Day of Atonement (Numbers 29:8), every Feast of Booths (Numbers 29:12-35), burnt offerings were offered to the LORD. The exact offering depended upon the feast, but often it was two bulls, one ram and seven male lambs.

And for us? We offer no sacrifices. Not because we don't need a sacrifice. Oh, we need a sacrifice! If the LORD is teaching us anything in the first five chapters of Leviticus, it is this: we need a sacrifice. Israel needed a sacrifice. We need a sacrifice. Jesus has become our sacrifice.

Do you remember when John the Baptist saw Jesus walking toward him? He said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). And in the fifth chapter of Revelation, John describes what he sees. He said, "Between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain" (Revelation 5:6). When you read the surrounding context, it is obvious, that the living lamb was Jesus Christ, who was slaughtered for our sins. It is true that Jesus wasn't burned upon the altar as these animals were. But, He was entirely consumed. He was put to death as an atonement for our sins.

Now, I want to direct you back to Leviticus, chapter 1. Because, here we have a hint as to the significance of this sacrifice. Most of chapter 1

is silent regarding the purpose of the burnt offering. It simply tells the procedure of the sacrifice. But, we have a hint in verse 4.

Leviticus 1:4

He shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

Now, when we get to chapter 4 and the sin offering, we will talk about sin. And, when we get to chapter 5 and the guilt offering, we will talk about guilt. But, here in chapter 1, there is no mention of sin. Nor is their mention of guilt.

It's because sin and guilt are assumed at this point. Verse 4 simply mentions the cleansing and forgiveness and restoration that is found in this sacrifice. It is all summed up in this word, "atonement." Verse 4, "... it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."

In fact, on three other occasions in this chapter, we have a hint of God's satisfaction in the sacrifice. Look at the end of verse 9, "And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD." Look at the end of verse 13, "And the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD." Look at the end of verse 17, "And the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt offering, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD."

The LORD loved the sacrifices of the burnt offerings. They were "pleasing" to Him.

Now, of course, it's not that the smell of burning flesh is so pleasant. In fact, it's downright awful. Whenever we have burning flesh in our home (because our meal was burnt), we turn on the fans and open the windows, trying to get that smoke and smell out of our house. Not so with the LORD. He loves the smell.

He loves it not for the smell itself, but for what the smell represents. It represents the people of Israel coming to Him in worship. It represents the people coming as He instructed. It represents the people learning a bit about His ways.

Galatians 3:24 says that the law was our tutor to lead us to Christ. And the burnt offerings over and over and over again demonstrated the need for Christ. The New Testament calls these sacrifices, "shadows." They are "shadows" of Christ, leading us to Him!

Let's transition to my second point this morning, ...

2. Some Thoughts

These are some thoughts on the burnt offering. First of all, ...

a. Worship is costly.

Let's not underestimate how much all of this costs. Leviticus, chapter 1, speaks primarily of an individual coming to the LORD for worship. Sure, there were many times when animals were brought on behalf of the nation (every morning and evening, every Sabbath, every month, and every festival day). But Leviticus, chapter 1, is dealing primarily with an individual's worship.

Verse 2 says, "When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of livestock from the herd or from the flock." How easy it is to pass this by. But, an offering of a bull was costly to an Israelite in those days. A bull was a real help on the farm. He would pull the plow. He would drag the cart. He would carry the burden.

The best equivalent that I can think of today would be a pick-up truck. Just think of what this can do. It can pull the trailer. It can carry the lumber. It can transport the family. And God says, "When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your [truck]."

Now, listen, I know that such a translation totally misses the mark of needing a living sacrifice. But, it catches the flavor of the cost of the sacrifice. And God wasn't asking for a run-down truck that has travelled 150,000 miles that's on its last leg. No. Continuing in Verse 3, "He shall offer [this year's model, ... without any dents or scratches of any kind]. He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that it may be accepted before the LORD. Verse 4, "He shall lay his hand on the [hood] of the [truck], and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. Verse 5, "Then he shall [destroy the truck] before the LORD."

Truly, we wouldn't do such a silly thing. But this is exactly what the LORD was asking of Israel. Come with something costly. Come with something dear to you.

When David bought the threshing floor from Araunah as a place for the temple to be built, Araunah was willing to give it to him. But, David refused, saying, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24).

And it's similar for us today. As we come to the LORD, it should cost us something. Worship is costly.

There are many people across this land who claim to be followers of Christ. And yet, their following of Christ is only when it's "convenient." Church services are missed, because it's not "convenient." Other serving opportunities are missed, because it's not convenient. Opportunities for equipping are missed, because it's not convenient. They don't give to the LORD, because they don't have a surplus to give to the LORD right now. In other words, people often wait to give until it becomes easy to give. Next week, in Leviticus 2, we will see how God wants our first-fruits, not whatever might be conveniently left-over.

True worship is costly. Isn't this what Jesus demands of all of His followers? "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). There's cost in these words. We aren't simply to follow Christ when it's convenient.

We have been bought with a price, so glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:20). "He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:15). The LORD demands much of us. No, the Lord demands all of us.

Are you giving your all? I think of the words to some songs we sing here.

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

I surrender all,
I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all. [\[3\]](#)

Earlier in our service, we sang, ...

Take all I am, Lord and all that I cling to
You are my Savior I owe everything to
Take all the treasures that lie in my storehouse
They cannot follow when I enter Your house

So I surrender all to You
I surrender all

Take all my cravings for vain recognition
fleshly indulgence and worldly ambition
I want so much Lord, to make you my focus
To serve You in secret, and never be noticed

So I surrender all to You
I surrender all

Take all my hunger, for all that's forbidden
Every desire, and sin I keep hidden
Search me and know me, I want to bring to You
a life that is holy, and sanctified through You [\[4\]](#)

Here's my second observation.

b. Worship is wasteful.

What's taking place in Leviticus, chapter 1, isn't the model of efficiency. You are taking away the animals that could be of use to you, and burning them up. At least you could eat them. As we shall see in future weeks, that's done with the other offerings. The grain offering isn't entirely consumed, the priests eat that which isn't burned. The same with the peace offering, the sin offering and the guilt offering. Only a portion is burned. The rest is eaten by the priests. That's a more like our American way. We want to recycle. We want to use it all up. But not so with the burnt offering.

With the burnt offering, everything is burned. Verse 8 says, "the priest shall burn all of it on the altar, as a burnt offering." And verse 13 again says, "the priest shall offer all of it and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt offering." The idea of this is that worship is wasteful.

God isn't always looking for efficiency. Men, flowers are wasteful. Sure, they are pretty for a week or two, but then they wither away. So, why do you purchase them for your wives? Because you love your wife. Because you want to brighten her day. Because being wasteful is an expression of affection. The happiness of your wife is more important than the wasted finances on the flowers. And so it is with God.

People outside of the church may look at us as being crazy. Why would you get up early every Sunday morning and go to that place of worship? What a waste of a Sunday morning! Why would you give money to that organization, which has a building that sits empty for six days each week? What a waste! Why would you support an organization that is going to give a portion of that money overseas? Why would you spend time serving other people, helping them with their needs? What a waste of your time! Don't you have better things to do? But, isn't this the essence of worship to God.

We give of ourselves to Him! Even when it doesn't all make sense.

When Noah finally left the ark, God had given him the command to "Bring out with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh--birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth--that they may swarm on the earth and be fruitful and multiply on the earth" (Genesis 8:17). And soon afterwards, "Noah built an altar to the LORD and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird

and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Genesis 8:20).

If the animals are supposed to be fruitful and multiply, then why are you sacrificing many of them upon the altar? It doesn't make sense. It appears to be wasteful. And yet, we read that, "when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, 'I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:21-22).

In other words, God was pleased with Noah's wasteful sacrifice. His wrath upon the world was appeased. And God's promise continues in effect until today. Worship is wasteful, but there is something about God that delights when we devote ourselves to Him.

Here's my third observation, ...

c. Worship is repetitive.

In the life of a typical Israelite, not a day would pass that the smoke of the burnt offering wouldn't rise up to God. And in the wilderness, they all might not see every sacrifice being burned on the altar -- the tabernacle was too small for the multitudes. But, they all could see the smoke. And the smoke was a daily reminder of what God requires of us. He requires blood to be shed.

And let us never forget it. God is holy. We are sinful. And to come to Him, we must first deal with our sin. We must have our sins atoned. They must be forgiven. The price must be paid. The ransom must be bought. And the burnt offering tells us that there is atonement in the blood (verse 4).

Now, ultimately, we know that it is the blood of Jesus that cleanses us. "Know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Peter 1:18-19). Now, His blood was spilt once. But, it comes fresh to us every day.

And there's not a day when you ought not to look back to the cross of Christ, to realize where your redemption was accomplished. We may not have the smoke rising up in the camp. But, we have something more precious. We have God's word which tells us of the blood that can thoroughly cleanse us of our sin.

So, come to Christ often. Think much of what He has done for your soul. See the smoke!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on September 21, 2014 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Gordon J. Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, p. 55.

[2] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle> is a good place to start.

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