Rock Valley Bible Church (www.rvbc.cc)

2014-046

November 16, 2014 by Steve Brandon

We Need A Priest

Leviticus 6:8-30

1. The fire is burning.
2. Thank you for your support.
3. The blood is sacred.

Over the years, I have had countless discussions with Roman Catholics about their faith and mine. In these discussions, I have sought to persuade them to come to Christ and trust in Him alone for salvation. Over the course of the conversation, typical subjects arise: Peter and the Pope; Mary and the Mass; the Sacraments and Tradition; Purgatory and Penance and the Priesthood.

Now, each of these topics can take a course of their own. But, as I have spoken to them about the priesthood, I have often made the comment to them, "We don't need a priest, because Jesus has become our priest." I tell them that nowhere in the New Testament do we see any church leader identified as being a "priest." We see pastors and elders and overseers and deacons. But, it's never "priest."

Furthermore, there are verses in the Bible that address those who advocate the priesthood, as we know it in the Roman Catholic Church. Paul tells Timothy (in 1 Timothy 4:1-3), that in the later times, some will depart from the faith, by forbidding marriage and requiring abstinence from foods, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Certainly, these verses are speaking about a severe ascetic rigor, forbidding marriage and foods from all as a means of disciplining their bodies. And yet, the modern-day priests are forbidden to marry in the Roman Catholic Church. Which, by the way, is certainly the major reason why the church has had so many sexual scandals (and cover-ups), because the way out of sexual immorality is sexual activity (within the confines of marriage, of course).

Furthermore, Jesus said, "Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9). This is in the context of religious

teachers receiving for themselves special titles, like "rabbi" or "instructor" (Matthew 23:8, 10). And what are Roman Catholic priests, the world over, called? They are called, "Father," in direct violation to the words of Jesus to the Pharisees.

And I tell my Roman Catholic friends that, in one sense, we are all priests. Peter calls us, "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). That is, we can all come to God on our own without a mediator. In fact, the role of a priest is the role of a mediator. The prophet speaks to the people for God. The priest speaks to God for the people. The priest prays for us. The priest brings our sacrifices to God on our behalf. And the Bible clearly says, "There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:4). We don't need a priest to bring us to God, because Jesus is our mediator. We don't need to come and confess our sins to a certain man, who can grant us forgiveness (for some penance that we do). We don't need someone special. We have each other. James 5:16 says that we should confess our sins to one another. We don't need a priest, because Jesus has become our priest.

And, nowhere are the leaders of churches called, "priests." Now, all of that to say this: in my discussions with Roman Catholics, I have found myself constantly repeating my mantra: "We don't need a priest, because Jesus has become our priest." "We don't need a priest, because Jesus has become our priest."

Now, in many ways, this is absolutely true. The New Testament (and particularly the book of Hebrews) speaks of how Jesus is our high priest. And we can come to God through Him, alone.

And yet, thinking about our text this morning, I want to begin modifying my statement and say it in a differing way. "We need a priest! And Jesus is our priest!" The title of my message this morning is this: We need a priest. My text is the latter portion of Leviticus 6, beginning in verse 8.

Two months ago, we began our study of this wonderful Old Testament book. But, with my trip to Nepal and India over the last few weeks, our exposition of this book has been interrupted. Now, is a good time for review: My opening message was entitled, "You Shall Be Holy," because, in fact, that is the theme of this book. We serve a holy God! And, we must serve Him as a holy people. The call of the book of Leviticus is a call to holiness, purity, righteousness, separateness.

The first theme of the book is the theme of sacrifice, which is put forth in the first five chapters. Chapter 1 is about The Burnt Offering. Chapter 2 covers The Grain

Offering. Chapter 3 addresses The Peace Offering. The theme of Chapter 4 is The Sin Offering. And Chapter 5, The Guilt Offering. Over the course of our five weeks in these chapters, we went through a lot of details of each of these sacrifices. But, I hope that we didn't miss the main picture. We need a sacrifice! In order to approach God, we need to atone for our sins!

That's the point of Leviticus 1-5. We need a sacrifice! We need to bring an animal, such as a bull, a ram, a goat, perhaps a turtledove or a pigeon. This animal needs to lose its life to pay for our sin. It matters not whether we sin intentionally or unintentionally. If we break the law in any way, we need a sacrifice to pay for our sins.

Now, last time I checked, we aren't bringing bulls and goats to and altar and having them burned up as a pleasing aroma to the LORD. Why? It's not because we don't need a sacrifice. We do. In order to approach God, we need a sacrifice. Here's the good news: Jesus Christ has become that sacrifice.

It's not that we no longer need a sacrifice. We do need a sacrifice! But, Jesus is that sacrifice.

Now, for us who believe in Jesus Christ, He has become paid the penalty for our sin. He died in our place. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Paul calls Jesus "our Passover lamb" that "has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7). And in Revelation 5, Jesus is exalted as the lamb who was slain, who, by his blood ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (Revelation 5:6, 9).

And the first five chapters of Leviticus help to build a framework of how Jesus could be our sacrifice. Had Jesus simply shown up and died on the cross, we would not have understood, unless the LORD had given us some categories in which to understand His sacrifice. But, with Leviticus 1-5 (and other passages, I'm sure), we can grasp the significance of His death on the cross. He was dying in our place as our sacrificial animal. Far more abundant in worth. Far more abundant in efficacy. And that's what was done in Leviticus 1-5.

In many ways, Leviticus 6-10 is much the same. But, rather than teaching in the area of sacrifice, we have teaching in area of priesthood. Without Leviticus 6-10, Jesus may have appeared on the scene without a picture to prepare the way. In other words, we may have heard about Jesus being our priest, but we may not fully

know what that means. But, as we look at the role of the priests in chapter 6-10, we will catch a glimpse into the role of Jesus in our lives today. "We need a priest! And Jesus is our priest!"

Now, as one looks at Leviticus 6-7, you might think that we simply have a repeat of chapters 1-5. Because, we see these same five offerings repeated. In chapter 6, we see the burnt offering, the grain offering and the sin offering. In chapter 7, we see the guilt offering and the peace offering. But, this isn't simply a repeat of chapters 1-5. This gives us a different perspective of the offerings.

In chapters 1-5, the perspective has been of the worshiper. It details what the worshiper should bring when bringing an offering. But, now, in chapters 6-7, the focus is upon what the priest should do with the offering that comes. It's as if we see both sides of the task.

There are all sorts of analogies that you might use to understand the difference. Take Wal-mart. As a consumer, you go into the store, choose the items that you want to purchase and bring them to the checkout lane, where you soon pay for your merchandise. But, the one at the counter has a different job. He or she takes your goods, scans them, bags them and receives your payment. A transaction is being made, but each person involved has a bit of a different perspective.

To use a sports analogy, you might think of this as the difference between the quarterback and the wide receiver. Each have their tasks to do. The quarterback takes the snap from center, drops back, avoids the rush, and throws the ball. The receiver, on the other hand, is split out wide. At the snap, he's concerned about how to beat the cornerback and get open. When the ball comes he does all that he can to catch it and run like crazy afterwards. The same game is being played, but each position has a different position to play.

How about a restaurant. As a patron, you enter the store, where you are promptly seated. You receive your menus, order your food and wait. When you receive your meal, you eat, and pay as you leave. But, as a waiter (or waitress), you have a different perspective. You bring the water. You take the order. You bring the order to the kitchen. When everything is ready, you bring it out to your customers. A bit later, you ask if everything's OK. And you do this with a handful of other tables as well. A meal is being eaten, but there are different experiences, depending upon whether you are sitting down or standing up.

So also with chapters 1-5 and chapters 6-7. The LORD is giving instructions for sacrifices, but from two different perspectives. Chapters 1-5 are from the perspective of the worshiper. Chapters 6 and 7 are from the perspective of the priest.

You can see this right at the beginning of our text, how it is directed to the priests, not to the worshipers. Leviticus 6:8, ...

> Leviticus 6:8-9
> The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying, ...

These words are for Moses to tell the priests. At this point, the order of the sacrifices makes sense. Their order has been changed, because they are presented in chapters 6-7 with administration in mind. They begin with those offerings that occur most often: the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the sin offering (i.e. chapter 6). They end with those that don't occur very often: the guilt offering and the peace offering (i.e. chapter 7).

> Leviticus 6:9-13
> Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. The burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night until the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment and put his linen undergarment on his body, and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has reduced the burnt offering on the altar and put them beside the altar. Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place. The fire on the altar shall be kept burning on it; it shall not go out. The priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and he shall arrange the burnt offering on it and shall burn on it the fat of the peace offerings. Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out.

Did you notice how concerned Moses was in this section about what the role of the priests? Nothing was mentioned about the particular animals that were to be brought. Nothing was mentioned about how the animal was to be slaughtered. Nothing was mentioned about what should be done with the blood. These were all the concern of chapter 1. These were addressed in chapter 1. But not here.

When dealing with the burnt offering here, the concern is all about caring for the ashes of the burnt offerings. It is all about the priests and their clothing that they should wear. It's all about keeping the fire burning continually. And it's here that I get the idea of the text: "We need a priest."

When we come to God, we don't come on our own terms. We don't come to God in any self-styled way that we want. Chapters 1-5 were very clear about this. But equally clear is this: "we need a priest" to administrate our sacrifices.

Do you remember when the Philistines were threatening to attack the Israelites in the days of Saul and Samuel? Samuel, the priest, told Saul, the king, "Go down before me to Gilgal. And behold, I am coming down to you to offer burnt offerings and to sacrifice peace offerings. Seven days you shall wait, until I come to you and show you what you shall do" (1 Samuel 10:8). So, Saul went down to Gilgal.

> 1 Samuel 13:8-14
> He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the Lord.' So I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the Lord your God, with which he commanded you. For then the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

This is how serious God takes our worship of Him. He doesn't want us to come to Him in any way that we want. Even the king can't get away with bringing the sacrifice to the LORD! We need a priest. We need a priest to administrate our sacrifices.

Now, here in Leviticus 6, in the case of the burnt offering, the priest was to make sure that the fire on the altar kept burning. You wouldn't bring your sacrifice to the LORD and only then begin to build your fire. It's not like the backyard bar-b-que. We fire the grill up when we are ready to cook our meat. No, this is like the wood-burning pizza oven, which is always hot. When the ingredients of the pizza are put together, the pizza is placed into the fire for cooking.

When you brought your sacrifice to the priest, you would bring it to a burning fire. And it was the role of the priests to keep the fire burning. Verse 13 is the key, "Fire shall be kept burning on the altar continually; it shall not go out." Here is my first point, ...

1. The Fire Is Burning.

It was like the Olympic flame that burns continually throughout the duration of the Olympic Games. Once lit, it never goes out until the games are over. And so, likewise, the priests here were to keep the flame burning at all times. In our days, it's not so difficult to do. You simply need to bring in a gas pipe and let the flame roll!

In the days of Moses and Aaron, things weren't so easy. They had to gather the wood. They had to deal with the ashes. They had to fan the flame whenever it got low. I would suspect that they had some priests assigned to the night watches to make sure that the flame kept burning.

And the point is this: the priests were always ready to receive your sacrifice. They were like Super Wal-mart: Open 24 hours a day. Now, I don't think that the sacrifices were offered at night. Without street lights, their days simply ended when it got dark and began when it was light. But, I wouldn't be surprised if there was a day when a worshiper came by night to offer a sacrifice. Some special circumstances dictated it. He was leaving the next day, and had troubles gathering his sacrifice. He had travelled a long distance, and was leaving on the morrow. The only window of time to offer the sacrifice was late at night. And if something like this ever happened, the flame was burning and the priests were ready. Like Motel 6: "We'll keep the light on for you."

At this point, I can't help, but to think of our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is seated at the right hand of God. He is always open for business. He always stands ready to bring us to God. Hebrews 7:25 says, "He is able to save

forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

Now, we don't bring sacrifices to God anymore, other than the sacrifices of praise, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name (Hebrews 13:15). But, we have one who will bring us to God. And Jesus is able to do this forever. In fact, this is what consumes every day of Jesus, making intercession for His people as their high priest.

Now, Jesus doesn't bring a sacrifice to present upon the altar each time that we come to Him in prayer and praise. But, He does remind the father constantly of the sacrifice that He made upon the cross for us. In this way, Jesus is actually our "Advocate." That's the language used in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Jesus is like our lawyer, arguing our case before the LORD. Now, of course, Jesus doesn't argue our merits before the LORD. Instead, He looks at our faith and argues the merits of His atoning sacrifice that actually merited forgiveness.

So, do you come to Him? Do you bring your requests to the LORD? He is always ready. He is waiting for us to come to Him. The fire is always burning.

Let's look at our next section. Verses 14-18. This deals with the grain offering.

> Leviticus 6:14-18
> And this is the law of the grain offering. The sons of Aaron shall offer it before the Lord in front of the altar. And one shall take from it a handful of the fine flour of the grain offering and its oil and all the frankincense that is on the grain offering and burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a pleasing aroma to the Lord. And the rest of it Aaron and his sons shall eat. It shall be eaten unleavened in a holy place. In the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of my food offerings. It is a thing most holy, like the sin offering and the guilt offering. Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the Lord's food offerings. Whatever touches them shall become holy.

I trust that you remember that the grain offering was brought to the priests as a thank-offering. Its ingredients were few: Fine flour, Oil, and Salt. No leaven. No

honey. A small portion of it was frankincense, which was burned. The offering could be cooked or uncooked.

Remember when I preached on chapter 2? My wife made some of this, and I shared it freely with you all. It's pretty good stuff (at least that which was baked). You know, while I was in Nepal and India a few weeks ago, I had a lot of rice. But, there were some occasions when I had some bread. They call it "Roti." And it tasted just like the grain offering.

And so, I asked those who made it, "What are the ingredients? Are they just flour and oil and salt?" Yep. In fact, it was really oily, because they actually fried it in oil. They didn't bake it in an oven. I was pretty excited, because it was just what the Jews would serve the priests: "Roti." It was simple and cheap. It tasted very good.

Anyway, we see here in verses 14-18 that the focus is upon the priests: What they can do with the food. And we find out in verse 18 that this food would provide for Aaron and his entire family, whether or not they were functioning in a priestly role. Verse 18 says, "Every male among the children of Aaron may eat of it, as decreed forever throughout your generations, from the LORD's food offerings."

Of anything here, it shows that the LORD was careful to preserve the priesthood by providing them with their needed food through the hands of those offering sacrifices. If the LORD hadn't provided for them, but left it up to the priests to earn their own living, the propagation of the temple and the sacrifices may not have continued. But, the LORDdesired His worship to continue, and so He provided food for His priests.

And let me add here that the same principle applies to us at Rock Valley Bible Church. This past Friday, I mentioned in the my weekly email to the church that things are running a bit tight for us right now financially. Now, we aren't in any dire financial difficulty at the moment. But, if the trend continues as it has this past year, we will be stretched as a church. We will look for areas to cut our budget. I say that simply to prompt your heart of gratitude to give to the LORD's work here at Rock Valley Bible Church.

2. Thank you for your support.

In my email I mentioned a few scripture passages that apply to our situation. First was Galatians 6:6: "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with

the one who teaches. " And then, from 1 Corinthians: "If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?" (1 Corinthians 9:11). "The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Now, here in verses 19-23, we see a special grain offering that was to be offered, whenever a new priest was anointed.

> Leviticus 6:19-23
> The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "This is the offering that Aaron and his sons shall offer to the Lord on the day when he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. It shall be made with oil on a griddle. You shall bring it well mixed, in baked pieces like a grain offering, and offer it for a pleasing aroma to the Lord. The priest from among Aaron's sons, who is anointed to succeed him, shall offer it to the Lord as decreed forever. The whole of it shall be burned. Every grain offering of a priest shall be wholly burned. It shall not be eaten."

Now, unlike the regular grain offerings, these were to be wholly burned because a priest was not to benefit from his own offerings. The anointing of a new priest takes place in chapter 8, where we shall see the anointing of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. We'll pick up on these words then.

Let's continue on to the sin offering (verses 24-30).

> Leviticus 6:24-30
> The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the sin offering. In the place where the burnt offering is killed shall the sin offering be killed before the Lord; it is most holy. The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it. In a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting. Whatever touches its flesh shall be holy, and when any of its blood is splashed on a garment, you shall wash that on which it was splashed in a holy place. And the earthenware vessel in which it is boiled shall be broken. But if it is boiled in a bronze vessel, that shall be scoured and rinsed in water. Every male among the priests may eat of it; it is most holy. But no sin offering shall be eaten from which any blood is brought into the tent of meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place; it shall be burned up with fire.

The focus of these words is upon the blood and the manner of eating. If the blood is splashed on a garment, it must be washed. So sacred is this blood. If the boiled flesh is taken from an earthenware vessel, it must be destroyed. Only bronze vessels are allowed.

The focus of these verses is upon the blood. As Gordon Wenham says, "Since it is the blood that purifies the altar and other sacred objects, it must not be spilled on other objects. If it is, it must be washed off. If that is impossible, the thing must be destroyed." [1] You can wash your clothes, but you must destroy your earthenware pot. We take great care with blood spills because they are dangerous. We can catch diseases from the blood of others, even serious, life threatening diseases.

Those of Moses' day were to take great care of the blood because, ...

3. The blood is sacred.

Leviticus 17:11 has the key: "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life." Life is in the blood. And when this blood is being offered, it is to be treated with the utmost care. And when it comes to the blood of Jesus, His blood is precious to us.

Peter called it, "precious blood." "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). When we think of Jesus upon the cross, we can think of His blood dripping down upon the ground. It was precious blood, like any lamb sacrificed in the sin offering, but worth far more.

And it is His blood that ransomed us. It was His blood that paid for our sin, better than any spotless lamb. For, His sacrifice was once for all, never needing to be repeated again.

Now, without passages like this in the Old Testament, we might easily miss how sacred and special the blood of Christ is. Oh, church family, let us know and love the blood of Christ!

Can you sing of the blood of Christ? The song, "O the blood of Jesus"?

O the blood of Jesus.
O the blood of Jesus.
O the blood of Jesus.
It washes white as snow.

Can you sing about the fountain?

There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains:
Lose all their guilty stains, lose all their guilty stains.
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Can you answer this question?

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
O precious is the flow that makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Now, the amazing thing about Jesus is that He is both priest and sacrifice! And as much as we need the sacrifice, we also need the priest. Jesus is our priest.

Let's close by looking at the end of Hebrews 7. Here, we have these two ideas coming together. Jesus is our sacrifice. Jesus is our priest.

> Hebrews 7:26-28
> For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 16, 2014 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Gordon Wenham, The New International Commentary of the Old Testament: The Book of Leviticus. P. 122.