

November 23, 2014 by Steve Brandon



We Need A Priest, Part 2

Leviticus 7

1. Embrace Atonement.
2. Be Thankful.
3. Bring Your Offering.

Over the course of one's life, there are various times in which each of you are compelled to do some things that you aren't exactly thrilled about. But you know these things are good for you. It may be a little thing, like eating your vegetables. You may not like vegetables, but you know that they are good for you. They give you the nutrients that you need for your body to be healthy, and so you eat them.

It may be something a big bigger, like exercising. You may not like your hours on the treadmill. Your muscles ache. Your chest starts pounding. You get out of breath. But, afterwards, you know of the satisfaction of feeling worn out. And even feeling better because of the time you spent exercising. And, you know that your time spent there is good for your body.

You can go even bigger yet. People will spend years in school, not because they are particularly fond of the reading, the study, the work, or the late hours involved. Not because they love paying high prices to the educational institution. In fact, I have heard it said that "Education is the only thing you pay for that you don't really want." And yet, people go to college. Why? Because they believe, that their years in school will be rewarded with better job opportunities for the rest of their lives.

The Proverbs speak of this concept as well. Proverbs 6:26 says, "A worker's appetite works for him; his mouth urges him on." In other words, we go to work, not so much because we find it always enjoyable, but, because it pays the bills and puts food on the table (which is enjoyable).

Now, over the past few months, we have been in the book of Leviticus. And I can't help but to think of the comparison. Let's admit it. Leviticus is a difficult book. It's not the sort of book that you will naturally read, as it contains the law code for the nation of Israel. These are laws that never apply to us today.

And my guess is this: if you had a choice of which book we would be working through on Sunday mornings, you would probably not select Leviticus. And yet, I would argue this simple fact: Leviticus is good for you. like vegetables, like exercise, like school, like work. It is good for you.

It has been good for us. It has been good for me. In fact, last week in my sermon prep, I was rummaging through some old sermons that I preached on Hebrews, and ran across this statement that I wrote. I said, ...

Just imagine with me the experience that an Old Testament saint would have in bringing his sacrifice to the priest. He sins in some way. So, he goes to the temple with his lamb in hand. He brings the animal to the priest and explains the situation. "I have sinned. Here is my lamb. Please offer up my sacrifice for me."

The priest says, "Sure, no problem." Soon, he departs and takes a lamb of his own and walks toward the altar. He slits the lamb's throat and offers up the lamb upon the altar as a sacrifice." [\[1\]](#)

Now, you may hear that and say, "What's wrong with that?" Well, that's not how Leviticus tells us how to offer a sacrifice. Leviticus tells us that when we bring an animal to be sacrificed, we, as worshipers, are to kill the animal ourselves. This wasn't the job of the priest. This was the job of the worshiper. [\[2\]](#) When I preached through Hebrews a few years back, I never realized this, nor did any of you come and ask me about it. It either showed our ignorance of Leviticus. Or, your thinking that my misunderstanding wasn't such a big deal and the overall point I was making in Hebrews was still correct.

And in many ways, my mistake wasn't such a big deal. But, in another regard, it changes the entire experience of the worshiper. You aren't just giving up the lamb for slaughter, so that the priest can be the butcher. No, you are intimately involved, yourself. You take the knife in your hand. You slit the throat. Your hand gets bloody.

I can't help but to think of the words of Stuart Townend from one of my favorite hymns of all time.

How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure [\[3\]](#)

The words of this song puts in plain picture how, in some regards, God loved me more than He loved His Son. His love for me sent His Son to die on the cross for my sins. That is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, that whoever believes in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life." In other words, His love for the world compelled Him to send His Son on a death-mission on our behalf. But, I digress. My point this morning is the second stanza. The second stanza goes like this, ...

Behold the Man upon a cross,
My sin upon His shoulders
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice,
Call out among the scoffers

It was my sin that held Him there
Until it was accomplished
His dying breath has brought me life
I know that it is finished [\[4\]](#)

As I have sung this song over the years, it has always struck me of my part in the death of Jesus. And this picture of Leviticus of the worshiper actually killing the animal himself gets us closer to this reality. That we are intimately involved in the payment of our sins. We don't simply ship off our animal to a priest. We are the ones doing the killing! And with respect to Jesus, it is my sin that nailed Him to the cross. He died for my sins!

This simple fact of Leviticus, to which I was oblivious before has come to light in my recent study of Leviticus. Leviticus has been good for me. It has drawn me to Christ in greater ways than before. And I'm sure that Leviticus has been good for you as well.

In fact, I asked several people this week what they thought of my messages in Leviticus. I was trying to put my ear to the ground to see what it's like from the pew. And I was looking for a negative response, such as, "I'm finding them wearisome" or, "I wish we were doing something else." However, I received several of the same, mostly positive, responses. "It has been rough. It has been difficult. But, it has been good for us. It is part of God's Scripture. It is worthy of being taught. So, let's learn its lessons in this season of our church. Soon, we will be on to other portions of the Scripture, but we will be better off for having worked our way through the book."

Now, the last thing that I want for us is to have this martyr complex, like this is terrible stuff. But, let's grin and bear it! I want for you to think back to my illustration of vegetables, exercise, school, and work. These things can be painful. Just watch a child trying to choke down a tiny portion of broccoli. You would think that you just asked your child to swallow a poison pill. But, we can learn to enjoy them. You can learn to like your vegetables. You can enjoy your exercise. You can enjoy school. You can enjoy your work.

Part of that is by seeing the purpose. Part of that is by seeing the fruit. And if done rightly, you can get to the point where you crave your vegetables and exercise. You can get to the point where you enjoy your school or work. Really, you can. I would encourage you to work hard to enjoy Leviticus. There are treasures to mine. There are lessons to learn. So, I encourage you to work to find joy in these things.

I guarantee you that in coming months, if you are reading through your Bible consistently, you will read about the various sacrifices that are offered. And you will be in a better position to know what's going on because we have taken these weeks in Leviticus. Because, in many ways, Leviticus has been teaching us of the most elementary principles of religion--what God requires of us. And as we learn these principles, I can't help but to think that they will draw us closer to the LORD.

The first five chapters have taught us that "we need a sacrifice." In order to worship the LORD, as He requires, we need to come with an offering. And, of course, the Lord Jesus has become our perfect sacrifice, fulfilling God's standard of obedience for us. We simply need to believe in Him, and we can come to God, cleansed of our sins. Romans 5:1 tells us, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Last week, we began to think about priests. The priesthood is the topic of chapters 6-10. And the simple reality is this: we need a priest. We can't come to God in our own self-styled way. We need a priest to stand between us and the LORD. And, of course, the Lord Jesus, has become our perfect priest. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

And these two themes come together in the book of Hebrews. "Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22). In other words, though the sacrifice of Jesus, we have confidence to approach God. Because His blood has made a way (Leviticus 1-5). Because Jesus is our great priest to lead the way (Leviticus 6-7). So, let us draw near to Him!

Anyway, let's get to our text this morning: Leviticus, chapter 7. My introduction has been long, because there isn't much new in chapter 7, and I thought that it was a good time for a pep talk to urge you to work hard at Leviticus. My message this morning is entitled, "We Need a Priest (part 2)." Remember from last week, chapters 6 and 7 cover much the same material as chapter 1-5 does. Every single one of the sacrifices are mentioned, but from a different perspective.

Chapters 1-5 mention the five sacrifices (Burnt, Grain, Peace, Sin, Guilt) from the perspective of the worshiper. They covers what animals to bring, for what sorts of sins, how to make the grain offering, Chapters 6-7 mention these same sacrifices, but from the perspective of the priest. They include how to deal with the ashes and the altar, how the fire must always be burning on the altar, how to distribute the grain offering -- to the priests and their families of Aaron, how to take care of the precious blood of the sacrifice.

In chapter 7, we will see much of the same. And, like last week, I want to read of the sacrifice, and seek to make some application to our lives. Let's begin reading in verse 1, which addresses the guilt offering (with a bit of grain offering at the end).

Leviticus 7:1-10

"This is the law of the guilt offering. It is most holy. In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill the guilt offering, and its blood shall be thrown against the sides of the altar. And all its fat shall be offered, the fat tail, the fat that covers the entrails, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them at the loins, and the long lobe of the liver that he shall remove with the kidneys. The priest shall burn them on the altar as a food offering to the Lord; it is a guilt offering. Every male among the priests may eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy. The guilt offering is just like the sin offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with it shall have it. And the priest who offers any man's burnt offering shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering that he has offered. And every grain offering baked in the oven and all that is prepared on a pan or a griddle shall belong to the priest who offers it. And every grain offering, mixed with oil or dry, shall be shared equally among all the sons of Aaron.

We see much the same thing here that we have seen in other sacrifices. You kill the guilt offering in the same place as the burnt offering. You throw the blood against the sides of the altar. You burn the fat. The priests are able to have the rest. They eat the meat. They take home the skins.

By way of application, however, I want to focus upon one little phrase. It's found in verse 7, ...

Leviticus 7:7

The guilt offering is just like the sin offering; there is one law for them. The priest who makes atonement with it shall have it.

I want to focus upon one word, "atonement." This is the key for the sacrifices. They aren't offered to God for nothing. They are offered to God to "make atonement." That is, they are offered to smooth the way between us as God, to break down the barrier between us and Him.

1. Embrace Atonement.

And we have seen this time and time and time again.

Leviticus 1:4

it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him.

Leviticus 4:20

and the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.

Leviticus 4:26

so the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin, and he shall be forgiven.

Leviticus 4:31

and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.

Leviticus 4:35

And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.

It continues in chapters 5 and 6. [\[5\]](#)

This is the mantra of the sin offering and the guilt offering, which are essentially the same. We see how similar the two offerings are in verse 7, "The guilt offering is just like the sin offering; there is one law for them. The priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven." And when the atonement is made, and when the sins are forgiven, then the worshiper may come to God clean and holy and pure.

In fact, look at the guilt offering. On two occasions, we see the offering described as being, "holy." Verse 1, "It is most holy." Verse 6, "It is most holy." In other words, the guilt offering is such that it will bring us into the presence of a holy God. It comes through the priest, offering up your sacrifice on your behalf. Now, we read in Hebrews 10:4 that, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." That is, to remove them from God's sight. That was only done through Jesus, as the perfect lamb to which all other bulls and goats pointed. Hebrews 10:1 called them "shadows" "of the good things to come." And through Jesus is the only way for us to be "made perfect" (Hebrews 10:1).

And yet, the worshipers of the Old Testament were able to experience genuine forgiveness through these sacrifices. For God said, "it shall be forgiven him."

The big problem for the Jews of the Old Testament was that the sacrifices were short-lived. They atoned for one sin at a time. But, as soon as another sin was committed, the worshiper would be defiled once more. We read in Leviticus 4:35, "And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven." But, atonement would need to be made for the next sin. That's the point of Hebrews 10:1, "The law ... can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near." But, here's the good news for us. Through faith in Jesus, we can be "made perfect."

That is what Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." Now, it's not that we are perfect, never to sin again. Hebrews 10:14 makes that clear -- we are "being sanctified." But, the point is this: the sacrifice of Christ was so complete that all of our sins are wiped away. Because all of them have been nailed to the cross. Colossians 2:13 says, "[He has forgiven] us all our trespasses." They were "nailed to the cross" (Col. 2:14). And before God, we stand as "perfect."

If you are a believer in Jesus, believe the promise! Believe that through faith in Jesus, you are forgiven. You are completely forgiven, clean and perfect in the sight of God.

Believe the promise that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Don't fret away your days in guilt. Live your days in the joys of forgiveness. Embrace Atonement.

Let's continue on with the peace offerings, which come in verses 11-18.

Leviticus 7:11-21

"And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings that one may offer to the Lord. If he offers it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the thanksgiving sacrifice unleavened loaves mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and loaves of fine flour well mixed with oil. With the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving he shall bring his offering with loaves of leavened bread. And from it he shall offer one loaf from each offering, as a gift to the Lord. It shall belong to the priest who throws the blood of the peace offerings. And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten. But what remains of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burned up with fire. If any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering is eaten on the third day, he who offers it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be credited to him. It is tainted, and he who eats of it shall bear his iniquity.

"Flesh that touches any unclean thing shall not be eaten. It shall be burned up with fire. All who are clean may eat flesh, but the person who eats of the flesh of the sacrifice of the Lord's peace offerings while an uncleanness is on him, that person shall be cut off from his people. And if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether human uncleanness or an unclean beast or any unclean detestable creature, and then eats some flesh from the sacrifice of the Lord's peace offerings, that person shall be cut off from his people."

The peace offering could take several forms. It could come in the form of thanksgiving (verse 12). It could come in the form of a vow offering (verse 16). It could come in the form of a freewill offering (verse 16). All of these are expressions of having peace with God. Thanks to God for the forgiveness that he has granted. A pledge to the LORD to walk in his ways. A gift to the LORD for the kindness that He has bestowed on us. And of course, this morning, it would be appropriate for us to think a bit about "thanksgiving," as we are a few days away from our family celebrations.

Thanksgiving is "the giving of thanks." In this case in Leviticus, it is giving an offering to God, motivated by gratitude. And I would say this: of all people, Christians have most reason to be thankful people. God has opened our eyes to see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. He has transferred us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. He has taken us from being dead in our sins to being alive in God. We are "New Creatures" in Christ. He has caused us to be born again. He has taken away all of our sins. He has given us the hope of eternal life.

And for all of this, we ought to ...

2. Be Thankful.

This week, Ryan sent me a brief quote by Jon Bloom. He said, "We've learned to say thank you without feeling thankful and to think it's okay." It's not OK. Jon Bloom continues, "When we hear the Bible tell us to 'be thankful' (Colossians 3:15), we can ... turn it into an obligatory expression of spiritual courtesy toward God rather than an expression of an astounded, overwhelmed realization that we have received mind-blowing grace from him." [\[6\]](#)

And so, this Thanksgiving season, I would encourage you to "Be Thankful." Don't merely say, "thank you" to God. If you are looking to stir your heart of gratitude, why not write out your testimony, and think deep and hard about what the Lord has done for your soul through faith in Jesus. Think of the darkness in which you lived. Think of God's kindness to give you Jesus. Think of God's care for you in sending someone to share His gospel with you. Think of God's grace to open your eyes to see Him. Such insight doesn't come to everyone: "the natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). It's God's grace that you come to see and understand the truth. Think of God's generosity, that someday you will be heirs of the kingdom of God; fellow heirs with Jesus Christ! (Romans 8:17).

And when you have written it all down, kneel down and "Be Thankful." Don't merely say, "thank you" to God.

Let's move on to our final section of Leviticus 7 this morning. For completeness' sake, I want to read it, and then focus on one thought. Beginning in verse 22, the focus changes. No longer are the instructions given to the priests. But, they are now to the people (verse 22, 29). It is dealing with the peace offering, and there still are some instructions for the priests.

Leviticus 7:22-38

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, You shall eat no fat, of ox or sheep or goat. The

fat of an animal that dies of itself and the fat of one that is torn by beasts may be put to any other use, but on no account shall you eat it. For every person who eats of the fat of an animal of which a food offering may be made to the Lord shall be cut off from his people. Moreover, you shall eat no blood whatever, whether of fowl or of animal, in any of your dwelling places. Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people."

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the Lord shall bring his offering to the Lord from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. His own hands shall bring the Lord's food offerings. He shall bring the fat with the breast, that the breast may be waved as a wave offering before the Lord. The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast shall be for Aaron and his sons. And the right thigh you shall give to the priest as a contribution from the sacrifice of your peace offerings. Whoever among the sons of Aaron offers the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right thigh for a portion. For the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed I have taken from the people of Israel, out of the sacrifices of their peace offerings, and have given them to Aaron the priest and to his sons, as a perpetual due from the people of Israel. This is the portion of Aaron and of his sons from the Lord's food offerings, from the day they were presented to serve as priests of the Lord. The Lord commanded this to be given them by the people of Israel, from the day that he anointed them. It is a perpetual due throughout their generations."

This is the law of the burnt offering, of the grain offering, of the sin offering, of the guilt offering, of the ordination offering, and of the peace offering, which the Lord commanded Moses on Mount Sinai, on the day that he commanded the people of Israel to bring their offerings to the Lord, in the wilderness of Sinai.

By way of application this morning, I simply want to focus upon one thought. My final point this morning is simply this:

3. Bring Your Offering.

This thought comes in verse 29 and 30, ...

Leviticus 7:29-30

... Whoever offers the sacrifice of his peace offerings to the Lord shall bring his offering to the Lord from the sacrifice of his peace offerings. His own hands shall bring the Lord's food offerings. ...

As much as we need a priest, we still have a responsibility. The worshiper was to take the initiative and come to the priest. The worshiper was to bring his own sacrifice of the peace offerings. The worshiper was to bring the food offerings. And it's no different for us today. When we come to God, we must come. We must bring our part. Now, since Christ has come, we no longer need to bring the animal. We bring our faith to trust in the sacrifice of Jesus.

And yet, let us remember, it's not our faith that saves. It is Jesus who saves. I close with a blog post that I read this week, entitled, "Jesus saves, faith does not" by Scott Swain. [\[7\]](#)

Jesus is the "agent" of salvation. Faith is the "instrument" of salvation. We must not confuse the two.

Jesus is the agent who accomplishes all saving graces for us and in us. Jesus "saves," "justifies," "sanctifies," and "glorifies" his people in fulfillment of his Father's sovereign purpose and by means of the Spirit's power. His name is "Jesus" because he saves his people from their sins (Matt 1.21).

Faith is the instrument that receives Jesus the savior (John 1.12). Faith is the weak and helpless means whereby Jesus grants his saving blessings to poor and miserable sinners like you and me (Rom 4.16-21). Faith isn't the obedience that Jesus demands when we've fallen short of his more difficult demands. Faith is an alternative to Jesus' demands (Rom 4.4-5). To be sure, faith is the root from which all grateful obedience to Jesus flows (Gal 5.6). But Jesus is the soil that nourishes this root and the life-giving water that causes it to bear fruit (Eph 3.17).

When faith becomes the agent of salvation, we run into serious problems. We start wondering if and when we truly believed, and if we are believing strongly enough, sincerely enough, consistently enough.

When Jesus becomes the instrument of salvation, we run into serious problems as well. Rather than trusting him to complete the good work he initiated in us (Phil 1.6), and to watch over his Word to perform it (Jer 1.12), we start thinking of him as a passive spectator to our salvation, someone we need to manipulate through pious activities so that he'll wake up and give us what we need, or what we think we need.

Jesus and faith go hand in hand. But they do so in a definite order and relation. Confuse that order and relation and you--as well as those who overhear your confusion--will have serious spiritual problems. Get that order right and you'll start thinking and talking a lot more about Jesus and his saving deeds and a lot less about faith. And that's a good thing: because Jesus is a spectacular savior and he alone--not our faith--is worthy of our trust.

Amen!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 23, 2014 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] http://www.rvbc.cc/Sermons/2010/2010-05-02%20-%20Heb%2007_26-28.htm

[2] Leviticus 1:5; 3:2; 4:4

[3] "How Deep the Father's Love For Us" by Stuart Townend. © 1995 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing)

[4] Townend, *Ibid.*

[5] Leviticus 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18; Leviticus 6:7

[6] <http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/feasting-on-thanksgiving>

[7] <http://www.reformation21.org/blog/2014/10/jesus-saves-faith-does-not.php>