

How God Deals with Unholy People

Paul / General Adult

The Lawful Use of the Law / ESV-A Leviticus 1–7

In seeking to understand what Paul means by the lawful use of the Law in 1 Tim. 1:8, this series tries to build a framework from within the Law to understand its purpose.

Introduction: We're here finishing what we started a little over a month ago, so we'll review a little bit. But first, we didn't talk much about the title of the sermon last time, so let's do that for a minute.

How God deals with unholy people: what do we mean by that?

Remember back in Exodus 33? The people had built a golden calf to worship, and they faced severe consequences for their rebellion in chapter 32. The worst part, though, came in chapter 33, where God said,

“Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying ‘To your offspring I will give it.’ I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.” (Ex. 33:1-3)

We saw that God relented and renewed the covenant with the people. They built the tabernacle, like they were supposed to, and God moved in. But something changed here.

Another thing to remember from Exodus 33: there's a little aside about Moses' ritual of going to the tent of meeting to meet with God. At the time, we wondered why it was there. But at the end of the book, we learn why. God through Moses was making a point about his holiness, and when God's glory entered the tabernacle, not even Moses could go in anymore. God is in the midst of his people, but there is still distance and danger. The people still can't come into God's presence. So God provides the sacrifices. It's no coincidence that Leviticus starts with the sacrifices immediately after Exodus concludes with God's presence in the tabernacle.

So, to review...

I. Review

a. Our interpretive questions

- a.i. What does this show us about our hearts?
- a.ii. How does this foreshadow the New Covenant?
- a.iii. How does this help us better understand our need?
- a.iv. How does this help us better understand what Christ accomplished?

b. Two types of sacrifices: “Pleasing aroma” sacrifices and sacrifices for sin

c. Pleasing aroma sacrifices

c.i. Burnt offering

c.i.1. Made atonement so a person could be accepted

c.i.2. Was kept burning continually

c.i.3. The whole animal was burned

c.i.4. Different animals were allowed so everyone could come to God without financial burden

c.i.5. We drew a parallel with 1 John 1:7

c.ii. Grain offering

c.ii.1. Acknowledged the importance of the work of the priests.

c.ii.2. These offerings provided food for those in the temple service, who had no time to grow their own food

c.ii.3. I recently found another way that God uses this sacrifice. Joel uses this specific sacrifice, or rather it's absence, as an illustration of the removal of his blessing. No grain from God, no grain offering for his priests, who were leading the people astray.

c.iii. Fellowship, or peace, offering

c.iii.1. We said three types, but we'll call it two this time

c.iii.1.a. Thanksgiving offering

c.iii.1.b. Vow/Freewill offering

c.iii.2. Time limits

c.iii.2.a. Same day for Thanksgiving – had to throw a big party

c.iii.2.b. Can't eat it on the third day for the vow/freewill offering – more private/intimate. Maybe foreshadowed Jesus' free offering of himself. It was accepted because he rose on the third day.

c.iii.3. This offering did not make peace. It expressed the peace that God had already made.

d. These "pleasing aroma" sacrifices all relate to a life of blessing for the people, and that blessing is tied to obedience (Ex. 19:5-6). But what about when they sin? They should lose that blessing, but...

II. Sacrifices for sin

a. Sin offering

i. This offering is similar to the burnt offering, because it makes atonement for the people ([Lev. 4:20](#))

[Leviticus 4:20](#)

(ESV)

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.

ii. However, it differed from the burnt offering in some important ways

(1) The priests did not burn the whole animal for the sin offering, but instead ate a good portion of it (6:26, 29-30; 7:6).

Note: Can you think of a better way to feed a group of people? Tie their food supply to people's sinfulness. Brilliant.

(2) The burnt offering was perpetual to be a pleasing aroma that covered the people's sinfulness. The sin offering was offered on specific occasions of a person or group sinning.

(3) The burnt offerings had different options based on the person's economic status. The sin offering had different options based on the level of influence the person or group had. This is a picture that, the more influence you have, the more costly your sin is ([Lev. 4:1-3](#), [13](#), [22](#), [27](#)).

(i) Note: there is also an economic provision for the poor for this offering, too. No one is exempt from the requirement to seek God's forgiveness, and no one is excluded from the opportunity to receive it.

iii. This offering does not cover every kind of sin.

"Unintentional" is probably not the best way to translate it, because it implies complete ignorance. However, chapter 5 lists at least one sin the person would be conscious of ([Lev. 5:1](#)). Rather, it is in contrast to sinning with a "high hand" ([Num. 15:27-31](#)). This is a matter of the heart wherein the person demonstrates hatred toward God (unbelief).

[Numbers 15:27-31](#)

(ESV)

"If one person sins unintentionally, he shall offer a female goat a year old for a sin offering. And the priest shall make atonement before the LORD for the person who makes a mistake, when he sins unintentionally, to make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. You shall have one law for him who does anything

unintentionally, for him who is native among the people of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them. But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles 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.”]

David was being literal, not poetic, in [Ps. 51:16](#)

[Psalm 51:16](#)

(ESV)

For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; |

you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. |

That’s where [Rom. 3:22-26](#) comes in |

[Romans 3:22–26](#)

(ESV)

For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. |

iv. If the burnt offering ties with [1 John 1:7](#), this offering ties us in with [1 John 1:8-9](#)

[1 John 1:8–9](#)

(ESV)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. |

There is a general acceptance for us in which Christ’s blood covers us in our sinfulness. But then, when we sin, we confess our sins (without offering a sacrifice), and God is both faithful and just, so he can forgive our sins and cleanse us. |

(I agree with our brother, Jim, that this is not a condition of forgiveness, per se, but a normal response to sin for a believer. 1 John is full of reassurances for true

believers, and this is one of them. It's not forgiveness conditioned on a work (confession); it's forgiveness conditioned on what Christ has done).

- So what does this teach us about our hearts?
- How does this foreshadow the New Covenant?
- How does this help us better understand our need?
- How does this help us better understand what Christ accomplished?

b. Guilt offering

i. This offering is basically the same as the sin offering ([Lev. 7:7](#))

[Leviticus 7:7](#)

(ESV)

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.

ii. The biggest difference is that it required restitution before the sacrifice would be accepted. This was for sins that harmed another person or violated the holiness of the tabernacle.

Another difference is that this is truly an unintentional sin, in that the person did not know they were doing wrong (5:17).

iii. Why restitution? It reflects a change in heart that both recognizes the wrong done and now desires the good of the one wronged

- So what does this teach us about our hearts?

Real restitution is a mark of a contrite heart – a heart that humbly acknowledges the wrong done and wants God more than what was gained through sin.

- How does this foreshadow the New Covenant?
- How does this help us better understand our need?
- How does this help us better understand what Christ accomplished?

Christ restores everything. This frees us for Rom. 12:19-21.

- a. What does this teach us about life in the new covenant? It instructs us that if we wrong someone, we need to compensate them. The 20% was a

teacher, but what does it look like with a heart that loves God? (cf. [Luke 19:8-10](#))

[Luke 19:8-10](#)

(ESV)

And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Conclusion: The story so far: God chose a people from among the nations to be his own, through whom he would reclaim all the nations of the earth. However, those people, because of their stubbornness and unbelief, rebelled against God and worshipped another god instead. This rightly brought the wrath of God upon them, but he relented and renewed the covenant with them. They built a tabernacle, and God made his presence dwell there among them, and he provided sacrifices to instruct them about their own hearts and to provide a means of access for the people to himself. What mercy and grace! This is who our God is! What good news!

Right?

No! This is a concession to the people so God can fulfill his own purposes for them. This was never the final plan. And praise God it wasn't! We'll look at one passage to prove this, and maybe dive in a little deeper next time I'm back.

(Read Deuteronomy 31:16-22 for the inevitable result of life under the law and 30:1-10 for the plan)