

Leviticus 4–5:13

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[0 : 0 0] We come back today, don't we, to Leviticus and these offerings. Let me pray as we get underway. Our Heavenly Father, I pray now that your word, read with all of its repetition and the arcane nature of its content, would by your Spirit lift from these pages, not as that which is dead but alive, and that our own hearts would be challenged and our lives would be changed.

In Christ's name, amen. The public television show Sesame Street debuted November 10, 1969, 56 years later now.

Now, the evidence is in. Big Bird, Cookie Monster, and the crew have made a lasting imprint on our culture.

I have read, quote, A 1996 survey found that 95% of all American preschoolers had watched it by the time they were three.

Probably a number of you here. By 2018, it was estimated that 86 million Americans had watched it as children.

[1 : 3 2] And as of 2022, the show had won 222 Emmy Awards and 11 Grammy Awards. That's quite an accomplished show.

Sesame Street. In the first ever episode, a song emerged and a game was played that became a trademark segment of the show.

The song was, One of these things. One of these things is not like the others. An adult actor would present three items which matched, and then a fourth item which was not like the others.

And the words of the song would ask the children viewing to figure out which one doesn't belong. And at the end of the song, the actor would present the correct answer.

Now, if you've been here three weeks, you've now seen four offerings presented. And let me tell you, three of them are similar, and one of them is not like the others.

[2 : 5 0] Do you know which one? There's the burnt offering. Chapter one. Followed by the grain offering. Chapter two.

Followed by the peace offerings. Chapter three. And now, you heard it repetitively read, the sin offerings. In chapter four.

If you want to know which one doesn't belong, it's this one. It's the sin offering. In a book that takes drawing near to God as its theme, we learn for the first time that there's an offering that has to be taken away from the presence of God as being equally essential.

Don't forget that little phrase, drawing near, is a wooden way of expressing the word offering. So the burnt offering, you were drawing near, gaining acceptance with God, fellowship with God, expressing the peace that we shared with God, even eating of that meal together before God.

Well, all of those things were ways in which you draw near. But now here's another offering, another drawing near. But ironically, the sin offering, for the first time, well, he requires that it be taken away.

[4 : 36] The sin offering is not so much the means by which you experience close fellowship with God, but what must be taken away if you are going to ever be granted forgiveness by God.

You're bringing something to the table that he has to take away. To experience God's presence this year, it will demand the expiation of your problem.

Ah, that's a big word, too big. Expiation, ex, out of, taking something away from. The sin has to be taken away from his presence if we are to enter into his presence.

Let me put it as simply as I can. And if you're sixth grade here today, write these three words down, listen for them. And if you follow them, the whole sermon can be easily traced.

The fellowship with God, which presupposes the forgiveness of God, involves making an offering that will be forsaken by God.

[6 : 03] Let me trim it. Fellowship with God, the forgiveness of God, requires something that is forsaken by God.

Let's take a look at this chapter as those truths emerged. Fellowship, forgiveness, forsaken.

I want to take the middle one first, forgiveness. This chapter, these chapters really, chapter four, all the way through chapter five and verse 13, underscore your need of forgiveness.

I say underscore because it's like drawing attention to your need. How does it do that? Did you catch in the reading how the writer wanted you to think about the depth of your need of forgiveness?

even unintentionally committed sins would demand a sacrifice for atonement.

[7 : 24] That's how. Let me show you the use of that word unintentional, unintentionally. I mean, he underscores it. Chapter four, verses one to three, you can see it right there in verse two, speak to the people of Israel saying, if anyone sins unintentionally in any of the Lord's commandments about the things not to be done and does any one of them, well, he must bring an offering.

Take a look. You'll see it even further in verses 13 and 14. If the whole congregation sins unintentionally and the thing hidden from the eyes of the assembly and they do one of the things that ought not to be done and they realize it, when the sin when they've committed becomes known, the assembly shall, well, then you have to make a sacrifice or bring an offering for sin.

It's there in verses 22 and 23. When a leader sins doing unintentionally any one of these things, well, an offering is required.

You can see it in verses 27. If any one of the common people sins unintentionally, well, something is therefore required. All the way through the text.

In fact, in chapter 5, although there's a change of the language, it's all these things that had been hidden or not known which are now revealed which yet require a similar sacrifice.

[8 : 58] Chapter 5, verses 1 through 5 show you that sometimes the people were hearing things but then hidden from them they weren't speaking the things they needed to be speaking or they were touching things without knowing that it was something not to be touched or they were speaking rashly, hurriedly things before they were actually thinking about things.

You ever done any of those things? You know, the kind of man or woman or child who's described in this way were supposed to do ready, aim, fire but there are people who fire and then they get ready and take aim unintentionally undoing the very thing they were about.

4.1 through 5.13 involve all the things that are unintentionally done which according to the text nevertheless require a sacrifice and offering for sin.

To put it simply then this chapter is underscoring that our unintended actions actually are also part of the undoing of our lives.

in the court of law there is a Latin phrase I don't know Latin or speak Latin but it sounded cool so I'm going to give it a run and about eight people in here will correct me afterwards.

[10 : 45] Ignorantia juris non excusant I didn't get any clapping from the Latin lovers out there so I'll assume it was pretty bad. What does it mean?

Ignorance of the law is no excuse. When you and I say well I wasn't aware of the law you're still complicit.

I never heard that portion of the law doesn't matter. If the entirety of the law has been published we are responsible for the entirety of the laws in which it is contained.

On a societal level this idea about ignorance not being an excuse is critical. Can you imagine what would happen to our justice system if all you needed to do was go in and feign ignorance of the law to get off from the consequences of the action you committed.

We'd never be able to tell who was telling the truth or not. It's an incredibly important principle for a society to operate well on.

[12 : 03] Ignorance of the law does not free you from the law or the consequences of breaking it. It keeps people from feigning ignorance in an effort to get off the hook.

Now put that in relationship not between you and me but between yourself ourselves as a community and God. It's equally true but for a different reason.

Chapter 4 isn't here to keep us from feigning ignorance as though God somehow wouldn't know what we had or hadn't done. What's happening here is we're being held accountable for all of God's commandments in this way.

It helps us understand the full absolute weight of his holiness in distinction from our sinfulness. He must be so holy that if we are to draw near to him our sin can't come with us as we enter in to meet with him.

It holds us accountable. If that's the case in this chapter and I think it is that word forgiveness we need it.

[13 : 33] That's how much we need it. our need for forgiveness is greater than we could have imagined without having known about the sin offering.

We are fully liable for breaking any of God's laws whether we know of them or not. We can't say I haven't heard.

He still is going to require the consequences. In the year 2000 the summer Olympics were held in Sydney Australia and the Romanian women's gymnastics team came to Sydney with high hopes.

They were led by a 16 year old athlete Andrea Raducan from Bucharest who the year before had taken two gold medals and a silver medal in the world championships held in China and on the final night of the 2000 Olympics in Sydney she took the silver medal in the vault her team took the gold medal in the team competition and she was awarded the gold medal as the all around gymnast for the Olympics but then came the drug testing after the competition and Andrea was stripped of her gold medal why well she had had a head cold earlier that week and the team physician had given her literally two sinus cold tablets unaware that they contained a banned substance guilty!

even if inadvertent even though unintended accountable even though it had no benefit to her athletic performance as it was and is on the floor of athletic competition Leviticus 4 is saying to you and me so it is with God ignorance of God's law does not excuse us from the consequences of breaking that law and if that's true then the depth of our need of forgiveness is greater than we ever could have imagined we have a much bigger problem than we thought an old dead guy by the name of Charles Hodge wrote something that stuck with me over the years

[16 : 28] I'm going to read it to you it's three or four sentences but it's amazing if you can mentally stay with it he wrote our guilt is great because our sins are exceedingly numerous it's not merely outward acts of unkindness and dishonesty with which we are chargeable if we have never loved him supremely if we have never made it our purpose to do his complete will if we have never made his glory the end of all our actions then our lives have been an unbroken series of transgressions listen to this our sins are not to be numbered by the conscious violations of duty they are as numerous as the moments of our existence forgiveness to have fellowship with

God presupposes that he can give forgiveness that comes from God but that is going to require a offering that in the end is forsaken!

God let's take a look not only is our need for forgiveness underscored the directions for the offering that's to be forsaken well that's what's outlined in the reading just scan your eyes back across chapter four isn't it interesting to see how the directions come forth by the kind of person who's unintentionally sinning the priest verse three and following the whole congregation verse 13 a leader verse 22 anyone of the congregation verse 27 chapter five verse one if anyone so the persons that are given directions actually bring in everyone there's nothing too different about that though that does seem to be much like the others take a look at the sacrifices that are to be brought interestingly the priest must bring a bull the congregation must bring a bull a leader must bring a goat the people can bring a female goat or a lamb and in chapter five the individual brings a female lamb or a goat or turtle doves or pigeons or flower depending upon their economic means but all of these offerings are sin offerings interestingly and this is where the thing begins to get different and stand on its own and is not like the others it's something that's going to be taken away from the presence of

God did you see that in the reading take a look at verse 11 and 12 I'm sorry 13 no I'm sorry 11 and 12 but the skin of the bull and all its flesh with its head its legs its entrails and its dungs all the rest of the bull he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place to the ash heap and shall burn it up on a fire of wood on the ash heap it shall be burned up we haven't seen that in the burnt offering the grain offering or the peace offering it's reiterated in verse 21 and he shall carry the bull outside the camp and burn it up as he burned the first bull as it is a sin offering for the assembly there's another difference here from the previous three offerings and that while all of those offerings took place on the bronze altar just inside the eastern gate of the tent of meeting the sin offering actually starts moving closer and closer to the holy of holies until it has to do a u-turn and come all the way out of the camp so the blood is sprinkled in the holy place it's as close as we've gotten in the book to where the holy of holies is and he throws the blood on the curtain and then he has to turn and take it back beyond the brazen washing basin beyond the altar where he pours blood out and now he's leaving the tent of meeting and he's going out out of the presence of

God out from among the people of God to a place that's bare where all of this sin offering can be burnt this is worth thinking on this offering is unlike the others it's not burned on the bronze altar the meal is not shared as a matter of fellowship this is symbolizing the taking away of sin without which fellowship can't happen let me put it to you this way drawing near to God if you want to do it will require making an offering before God that is to be taken away from God in some way we have to be able to bring him our sin that will somehow be removed that we might then enter back in the thing we bring to the table is the thing that must be removed from his presence the fellowship that we long for with

[23 : 05] God which supposes that we can have the forgiveness of God can't be done without a sacrifice that is forsaken by God let me illustrate it illustration number one you can't come in here dressed like that I'm in Boston my wife and I were recently newly married back then 8,000 years ago now my father was coaching in the NBA coming into town going to take us to a meal I think it was the Palmer house I hadn't frequented four five star hotels like that before I showed up probably in a pair of jeans and a sweatshirt for all I know got to the door where you could enter in to actually eat the meal and the head person at the table said

I'm sorry you can't come in here dressed like that you need a sport coat on or a suit coat I'm not sure I owned one at that time certainly wanted to eat with my dad I tell you what we got a few that we keep in a closet for men just like you he went and got a coat and I put it on I'm sure it didn't match but by the time I sat down at that table and hid everything else I had on I belonged what God is saying is when it comes to our sin we have to offer it to him but we can't come in there like that let me put it a little different way you can't bring that in here I was a senior my undergrad days getting ready to move into a house that we had just rented and

I was living with four other athletes we knew each other for a long time it was going to be a great year just met five guys in a house college years wow life was good problem is I was moving in from having lived in a place that had been infested with cockroaches and I was going to bring my dresser in so I am walking to the garage holding this dresser and my buddies best friends you can't bring that in here that thing had to sit outside until they were convinced that all that stuff wasn't coming in that's what's going on in chapter four here and five you can't come in here dressed like that you can't bring that in here just make it as simple as possible something that I'm sure you've heard don't come in here with mud on your shoes that won't work in this house

God's kingdom God's house God's presence God's character is so clean that we just can't walk in there hey I know I'm a mess I'm glad you'll take me God's God's God's to leave the promised land because he got to send them away.

Makes me think of Jesus, though, too. The Bible says that they took him away. You got to see this for yourself, especially if you're reading the Bible with us for the first time in your life.

[27 : 40] Turn way over to the back of the Bible. You'll find me in Hebrews chapter 13. Hebrews 13.

If you don't know where it is, just look at my Bible up here. There's not much left in the back side. Hebrews 13 picks up on Leviticus 4.

If you're catching up to me, Hebrews 13, I'm going to start reading at verse 10. The writer says, We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.

What he's trying to say is, We have a place to go where the priests who used to share the meal with you on the priest's, they don't have a right to eat this. They're not going to eat the sin offering.

You're not ingesting this. He says, He says, verse 11, For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.

[28 : 48] So, verse 12, put your eyes on it. Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

Therefore, let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. Fascinating. The bulls and the goats and the turtle doves and the lambs and the pigeons and the flower, which were giving some provisional, short-term approval that people's sins would be taken away, wasn't actually fully completed until Jesus himself offers himself as a sacrifice for your sin.

And when he was on that night, which we're going to get ready to celebrate this spring, with Good Friday and Easter, he came as close as possible back to the Holy of Holies in Jerusalem in the temple.

They actually led him all the way into the high priest's house. But then he had to pivot and they turned him and they walked him out. They took him out of the city to a little hill called Golgotha.

And they crucified him there, indicating, according to the writer of Hebrews, that what God did in Leviticus to take away sins until they could be taken away through his son, he did in Jesus on the cross.

[30 : 34] So if you want your sins taken away, well, then you show up at the tent of meeting and you hand your life, your stuff, your mud, your mess, you hand it to Jesus.

And he says, oh, I'm going to take this for you. I'm going to take this out of God's presence. I'm going to bear your sin on myself that you can enter in.

Wow. This is really something that... It is a good thing to remember what we're doing here this morning.

Fellowship with God, which holds out the hope that we can be forgiven by God, involves an offering made that is forsaken before God.

See, this is what Jesus is doing when he's on the cross, when he says, my God, my God, you finish it if you know me, if you know it. Why hast thou... He did it, not for his own sins, but for ours.

[32 : 10] And what does that then bring? It brings the sweetness of fellowship with God. Our need for forgiveness is underscored, and offering that must be forsaken has been highlighted, and the consequence then is our fellowship with God is accented.

And it was actually accented in the reading. As weird as that reading was. Let me show you the accent of forgiveness.

Seven times over in the text, the promise that atonement was made and forgiveness is given. Take a look back, put your eyes on it.

Leviticus chapter 4. Take a look at verse 20. And the priest shall make atonement for them, and they shall be forgiven.

That's the promise of God, is that the one who has a sin offering made for them, the sweetness of fellowship is now accentuated. It's there in verse 20. It's there in verse 26.

[33 : 30] Verse 31, the very end.

And the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven. Verse 35. And the priest shall make atonement for him, for the sin which he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.

Chapter 5, verse 6. And the priest shall make atonement for his sin. And again, down there in chapter 5, verse 10. The priest shall make atonement for him, for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.

Verse 13. And he shall be forgiven. The accent of the text is, I know you want fellowship with God, but all you have to bring is your sin.

But he can take it away so that you can be forgiven. You can be forgiven.

[34 : 41] You can be, I mean, seven times over. I'm forgiven. Because he was forsaken.

Amazing love. That is amazing love. How can it be that thou, my king, shouldst die for me? Let me shut it down.

This is what Jesus' death can do for you. He can carry your stuff outside the camp, outside the sight of God. And not just bury it, where God can't see it.

He can pay for it through his own blood. All that you bring to the table, he's fully capable of walking out.

If you've never asked Jesus to make that offering on your behalf, then I encourage you to do it today. If you want fellowship with God, a knowledge that your sins are forgiven, it's going to require that an offering is made that God is forsaken.

[35 : 52] And he does it by forsaking his own son on the cross to free you to walk fully into his presence. My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross.

I bear it no more. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh, my soul. Therefore, this morning, let us draw near with confidence.

Not because I got what it takes if I can retrofit these ancient rules into the walk of my life, but because he took what I couldn't do and made a way for me.

Oh, the joy of finding forgiveness. Fellowship, which presupposes forgiveness involved an offering that was forsaken.

Praise God for developing a plan to overcome the consequence of our sin. Our Heavenly Father, we continue to stand amazed at this ancient book and how they're so similar, these offerings, but with distinctions that are wonderful.

[37 : 27] Lord, I can only bring my sin to you given the greatness of that sin that would include now, to my knowledge, even unintentional things.

I don't know what else to do other than to bring it to you. and by faith, ask that your son would take it out of your presence. She would take it away that we would, as a congregation, be able to say, I'm forgiven.

And I'll tell you why. Because he was forsaken. In Christ's name. And I'll tell you why.