

The Principle of Restitution

Leviticus 5:14-19, 6:1-7, 7:1-10

How should we worship God today? That's the question I want to keep before you as we study Leviticus. How do these Old Covenant prescriptions for animal sacrifices help us learn how to worship acceptably today, in the New Testament? There are five types of sacrifices. Five typical expressions of worship that God has prescribed for his people. And what does all that mean for us?

What has stood out to me as I have preached these last five sermons, is the understanding of how these sacrifices are related to one another. And as I said at the outset, my goal in preaching isn't so that you can pass a test with questions about which animal went for which sacrifice. But I might ask you this question, "What do these sacrifices mean?"

Let's put all five into those two categories, those with a sweet aroma and those without, those pleasing to God, and, secondly, those in which he takes no pleasure. Three of the first variety, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the peace offering. The burnt offering, made with blood, represented consecration, the complete and whole dedication of the life of the worshipper to God. Remember, the whole animal was burned, representing whole or total dedication. And only such complete consecration is acceptable worship. Remember also it was a blood sacrifice, for our sins were placed upon the sacrificial animal. The blood of the animal is an atonement, and the holiness of God requires such atonement. Through this sacrifice, the worshipper finds acceptance with God. It is the first sacrifice, in a logical order, that a worshipper offers.

Remember, as well, that Jesus is the perfect burnt offering.

And ultimately, all the sacrifices of consecration that we offer are yet imperfect, and they are acceptable to God only because of the sweet aroma of that perfect sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

Then came the grain offering, which was directly associated with the burnt offering. It was also a thank offering, that expression of gratitude by the worshipper for the atonement secured by the burnt offering. No grain offering was acceptable without the burnt offering first, for remember, in the grain offering, there was no blood. No animal. No life surrendered. Just the expression of thanksgiving. It was a public testimony of the worshippers love for God.

Then the peace offering, in which everyone participated. The offerer, the priest, and the Lord, all had their portions. Since this sacrifice represents the reconciliation accomplished between God and his creatures, the altar of sacrifice becomes a banquet table of communion and fellowship between God and his creatures. The Lord's table is clearly seen as a New Covenant expression of this peace offering.

Then the last two,

I. THE SIN OFFERING AND THE TRESPASS OFFERING.

These are very closely related, both without a sweet aroma. Both, therefore, described as sacrifices which do not bring the Lord pleasure or delight, for they have reference to his perfect justice. These sacrifices deal with the issue of wrath and condemnation. The satisfaction of God's perfect justice, which requires that the guilty be condemned, for the wages of sin is death. So it is that those just consequences for sin were poured out upon a substitute. In fact, this sacrifice is completed outside the camp, so deeply and thoroughly is God's wrath portrayed, that the punishment couldn't even take place near his presence in the temple.

The blood of a substitute was shed, to meet the demands of justice. Jesus, of course, is the perfect sin offering, offered once and for all for our redemption. So we, the worshipper, have no part in this offering. The offerer does not share in this sacrifice.

But then we come to the trespass offering, and I want to look at both the similarities and the differences between these two.

First,

A. The similarities.

We realize how close these sacrifices are when they seem almost to be described interchangeably in 5:1-13. I basically covered those verses last week under the sin offering, but look at,

5:7

But then,

5:8-9

The two offerings are quite closely connected. That is also made pretty clear in,

7:1-10

Again, blood. Sprinkled all around on the altar. And the best portions, the fat and all the fatty parts, offered to God. Then,

v.7

“One law for them both.” Basically, then, they represent the same thing. Namely, the prescribed penalties for sin, namely death. Blood. And God continues to speak to his worshippers about the necessity of blood. And remember the sprinkled blood, the blood on that veil, or curtain, which separated the Most Holy Place from the rest of the tabernacle. God himself was behind that veil. And, as I quoted often last week from Hebrews, remember,

Heb. 9:11 “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, 14 how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

And, as a great encouragement to us, as the great application of this understanding of blood atonement, we read,

Heb. 10:19 “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and having a High Priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

So let us draw near to God, within that holy of holies, in full assurance of our acceptance before God, having been cleansed from sin by the sprinkled blood of Jesus.

But this fifth and final sacrifice adds something. Something we have to do. So with these last two sacrifices, there are...

B. Differences.

The sin offering was the offering of an animal’s blood. The trespass offering has something added. Money. Shekels of silver.

5:15-16

Before we get to the specifics of how that restitution was calculated. Let's think about this principle a bit. The idea that sin has to be dealt with, including the consequences of sin. There has to be reparations. In other words, the damage of sin has to be repaired, if at all possible.

This actually, is an easier concept for some folks to understand than the satisfaction of justice. In fact, many people, notably those who would fit under that label of "liberalism," tend to agree that sin needs to be atoned for, in the sense of reparations. But they deny that sin needs to be atoned for in the sense of God's wrath and justice. After all, they argue consistently, God is not a God of wrath at all. And so repentance, and worship, and atonement, have only to do with this horizontal dimension. Only to do with making up for what you have done.

So, "Do good." "Make up for what you have done wrong." And you will have a place in heaven. It's the social gospel. It's the prosperity gospel. It's the false gospel of liberal Christianity, if we can even say such a thing exists. If you sin, just make it right. Reparation. Address the consequences of sin.

But justice goes a step farther. Actually, many people are uncomfortable with the concept of the necessity of satisfying the justice and wrath of God. They are willing to talk about seeking redress for sin, but only that. Never are they willing to talk of the vengeance of God.

For example, Robert Schuller wrote that it is because "we fabricate our own images of God...that the unsaved human being imagines God to be angry rather than loving." It is due to our fears, he writes, that we "have pictured [God] as a threatening rather than a redeeming figure."

So it is, according to the modern gospel, that God is not a God of wrath, but solely and completely a God of love. With that, gone is the doctrine of hell and eternal punishment! And gone are numerous references in the Bible to this aspect of God.

But the problem is still the biblical reality of God's justice. So restitution is only half of the equation. The other half, as I emphasized last week, is what we call "propitiation." So we read, 1 John 2:2 "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

Propitiation. The satisfaction of justice! God's wrath is appeased. And how? By the blood sacrifice of his only begotten son.

2 Cor. 5:21 "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

He became sin! That's propitiation. He became the sin offering. He endured the cursed condemnation of his own father, forsaken for those three hours of darkness upon the cross. But there is still the opposite danger, I believe. The danger of believing all those things about propitiation, but forgetting that there are also consequences to sin. And your acceptable sacrifices of worship must take those consequences into account.

It is NOT that the shekels of silver would atone for the sins of the people. But the sin offering wouldn't be an acceptable sacrifice without those shekels of silver!

And so, in this trespass offering, while the offerer doesn't partake in the animal being offered, he does add something of his own. A restitution. A payment from himself, on account of his sin. So let's look at the principles of,

II. SIN AND RESTITUTION.

First,

A. Restitution for neglecting the things of the Lord.

5:15-19

So what are the holy things, in verse 15? One commentator suggests it means an inadvertent sin against the Lord's sacred property. The things of the sanctuary. Perhaps the best answer is those holy things are things which God requires of us in worship, that we are to offer freely. Things such as the payment of our tithes.

Withholding from God what is rightly due to him. Anything dedicated by men to God.

It could also refer to particular vows or promises that you have made to him, and failed to keep.

To seek his forgiveness, to avail yourself of the blood of Christ as the atoning sacrifice for your sins, you have to make restitution!

You can't seek forgiveness for withholding your tithes, if you continue to withhold your tithes! And if you have made a vow, and have sinned by breaking it, you can't offer to God acceptable sacrifices of worship until to make the commitment to keep that vow!

In fact, when there are tangible means to measure the value of the offense we have caused, there is even a penalty imposed.

5:16

Now, let me emphasize, as I have with all these sacrifices, in

terms of our standing with God, our justification, Jesus accomplished everything for us. Jesus is the propitiation, in his passive obedience, submitting himself to the horrid death upon the cross. And by submitting himself to all the demands of the law in his active obedience, all his righteousness is credited to us, and received by faith alone.

But that doesn't cancel the obligation of offering to God such a sacrifice as is shown forth here, as a testimony of our faith, as the necessary consequences of our faith.

The next few verses, v.17-19, seem to broaden the scope of our transgressions just a bit, referring in the things of the Lord, to the whole realm of our worship.

5:17-19

There is another broad area covered by this trespass offering, which is the need for,

B. Restitution for injustices committed against others.

And we find that description in,

6:1-7

The cases described begin with lying, actually perjury, "lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery." Also extortion.

The idea is fraud. Defrauding others. Or the violence of a robbery. Whatever it is, if you cause harm to others, the worship of God requires a sacrifice of restitution. Specifically, the whole value of the harm caused. Plus one-fifth more. That's your offering of worship.

So what do we do with all that? What are the,

III. APPLICATIONS.

Let me make three general applications. First, in regard to,

A. Civil justice.

This is a bit of an indirect application, since our text is focused upon the sacrifices of worship, but it is still appropriate and might be a question in some of your minds.

Restitution is essentially an element of civil justice.

Punishments and penalties for sins such as robbery and extortion fall under the realm of authority given to the civil government. And would that our own civil government would understand in the importance of this principle!

Restitution, to make right the harm done. To restore the injury. Whatever damage your crime has caused, you ought to be made responsible to fix it! And for all the effort we put forth in our criminal justice system, to say nothing of all the money, our own civil government is woefully lacking in this regard. All of the emphasis, or at least most of it, is upon punishing the criminal while little attention is given in that to restoring the victim. Justice requires restoring the victim. With damages.

Actually, when these principles of restitution are applied to civil justice, the award for damages was not simply reparation plus 1/5, or 20%. It was double. Or more. For example,

Ex. 22:1 “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and slaughters it or sells it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep. 2 “If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed. 3 “If the sun has risen on him, there shall be guilt for his bloodshed. He should make full restitution; if he has nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. 4 “If the theft is certainly found alive in his hand, whether

it is an ox or donkey or sheep, he shall restore double. 5 “If a man causes a field or vineyard to be grazed, and lets loose his animal, and it feeds in another man’s field, he shall make restitution from the best of his own field and the best of his own vineyard. 6 “If fire breaks out and catches in thorns, so that stacked grain, standing grain, or the field is consumed, he who kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. 7 “If a man delivers to his neighbor money or articles to keep, and it is stolen out of the man’s house, if the thief is found, he shall pay double. 8 “If the thief is not found, then the master of the house shall be brought to the judges to see whether he has put his hand into his neighbor’s goods. 9 “For any kind of trespass, whether it concerns an ox, a donkey, a sheep, or clothing, or for any kind of lost thing which another claims to be his, the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whomever the judges condemn shall pay double to his neighbor.”

I should note that Exodus envisions a situation where the offender is convicted upon the evidence presented against him, but in Leviticus the culprit confesses his guilt. Thus the one who confesses is penalized much less, encouraging voluntary surrender.

But the overall principle is my point this afternoon. The payment of restitution as a biblical principle of justice. This concept of reparation for sin also has,

B. Application to personal relationships.

Let me give you an example. A New Testament example. Given in the words of Jesus in teaching his disciples how to pray.

Mat. 6:12 “And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.”

Does that mean that the basis of the forgiveness is dependent upon our willingness to forgive? No. Does that mean that God

forgives us because of our good works in forgiving others? No. Yet is there something conditional in God's promise of forgiveness?

In this sense, yes. You can't ask for forgiveness yourself if you remain hardened in your own heart, unwilling to forgive others. You cannot offer your sacrifices of worship to God, if you don't include in those sacrifices this trespass offering! Without the willingness to forgive others, you cannot pray to God acceptably.

Seek to make it right. Restore those personal relationships. For example,

Mat. 18:15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother."

In other words, seek reconciliation. And, in fact, Jesus says, Mat. 5:23 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

And that is where the application to personal relationships becomes an,

C. Application to public worship.

You can't worship God acceptably, if there are unresolved offenses between you and your fellow Christians. You can't bring your sweet-smelling sacrifice of a peace offering, or the thank offering of grain, unless you come with this trespass offering of restoration and personal reconciliation.

The Old Covenant people of God would have understood that

so very well, wouldn't they? And we can learn from them. Consider the example of Zacchaeus. A short little man, we all remember. Remember also that he was a thief. A chief tax collector who had become rich by collecting taxes for himself as well as for the governor. We read in,

Luke 19:3 "And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." 8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Was he saved by his works? No, of course not. Did his acceptable offerings of worship to God require that, first, he offer reparations for his sins as the demonstration of his faith? Yes.

There is nothing meritorious in our trespass offerings, however. Nothing that earns for us God's favor. Everything meritorious was accomplished by Christ, and it is his perfect righteousness imputed to us that makes us fit for heaven.

But when that saving work of Jesus is accomplished in us, this is our worship, the worship of a burnt offering, the worship of the grain offering, the worship of the peace offering, and the reparations added in the trespass offerings.

As you worship God in that way, as you offer to God your acceptable sacrifices of worship even today, let me end with this great encouragement. Even at this point, most especially at this point, you must understand, that as in all the others, Jesus is the ultimate trespass offering.

Ultimately, it is Jesus who makes amends for your sin, even as he satisfies his father's wrath and justice. It is Jesus' blood that was slain to open to you the door to the presence of God. And just one final reference,

Is. 53:4 "Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

That's the sin offering. But then,

v.10 "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin."

The Hebrew word there, "an offering for sin," is this trespass offering we have studied this afternoon. Whatever the offense you have committed, the injury is removed, the harm is undone. "It pleased the LORD to bruise [Jesus]; He has put Him to grief. [God made] His soul [a trespass offering]."

2 Cor. 9:15 "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"