

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## The Burnt Offering – Acceptance: Leviticus 1

In Exodus 9:1, the Lord said to Moses to go to Pharaoh and say unto him, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." The great theme of the book of Exodus, as implied by its name 'Going out', is the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh. In chapter 12 they are redeemed from judgement by the blood of the lamb. Then in chapter 14 they cross the Red Sea, opened up to them by the rod of Moses, and find themselves saved from every power that previously held them in bondage. In chapter 15, led by Moses they are able to sing of the salvation of the Lord.

All this is a picture of the salvation that the believer on the Lord Jesus has today. We have been redeemed to God by the blood of Christ. The power of sin and death has been broken in the death and resurrection of Christ. We have a new life in Christ, with a new power for living in the Holy Spirit, so that we can now serve God acceptably in this world.

Much of the rest of the book of Exodus concerns the instructions to Moses concerning the building and setting up of the tabernacle. When we come to chapter 40, the work is completed. We read in verse 33, "And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work." A very wonderful thing then happened, "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

The book of Leviticus follows on from this point and deals with the service of God that went on every day in the tabernacle. We have arrived at the point that God had before Him when He commanded Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go. They could now serve Him freely and willingly, as He had redeemed them to Himself and delivered them from Egypt.

Our subject over the next four weeks, if the Lord will, is to be the four main offerings of this book of Leviticus and we hope to see their relevance to us today. The first is the burnt offering, which is a picture of the acceptance of the believer before God, based on the perfection of the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Leviticus 1:1 says, "And the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation." Having descended in a cloud and taken up His abode in the midst of His people, He speaks from the tabernacle with a view to His people drawing near unto Him to worship. God starts with the burnt offering, as it is the basis of all the other offerings. It is a picture of the greatness of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as being able to carry out the will of God perfectly, that God may be glorified and man brought into blessing as a worshipper.

This offering is a voluntary gift - not like the sin offering which was something God demanded. It was a free will gift to God. This immediately brings to our minds the willingness of the Lord Jesus in coming into this world to do the will of God. We often think of the words of Psalm 40, which are quoted in Hebrews 10:7, "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God." This is one of the chapters of the New Testament which shows us the importance of the old sacrifices offered in the tabernacle. They all looked forward to the fulfilment of them by and in the person of the Lord Jesus. He came into this world to carry out the will of God, which, according to Hebrews 10:10 involved our sanctification. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." This sanctification could only be by the offering of Himself to God as a sacrifice in death.

The animal had to be a domesticated animal taken from the herd or the flock. In our worship of God we have to learn what is suitable to Him. We may have our own ideas on this but what is important is what He wants. No wild animal would be accepted. There was nothing wild, or untamed about the Lord Jesus. He came in perfect obedience to do God's will, not His own, even as far as the laying down of His life in death, even the death of the cross. Verse 3 says, "Let him offer a male without blemish." The Lord Jesus came into this world as the "seed of the woman" and His manhood was absolutely perfect. There was no blemish in Him caused by sin. If there had been, then His offering would not have been accepted by God. We must always remember this. The Lord Jesus was without sin although a man like you and I, but as conceived by the Holy Ghost He had a nature that was pure and holy. Only thus could He be a perfect offering to God.

In verse 4 we learn how the perfection of the offering is transferred to the offerer. "And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." The word for 'put his hand

upon' in the original language means 'to lean upon'. The idea in Scripture of laying on of hands is identification. Here the offerer is fully identified with the offering so that all that is true of the offering becomes true of the person who offers it. How wonderful this is when applied to the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. To understand that when in faith I trust Christ as my Saviour, all the perfection of His person and work is transferred to me in the sight of God. John in his first epistle says, "as He is so are we in this world" 1 John 4:17. We do not even have to wait until we are in heaven; even now in this world God sees us perfect in Christ. This is probably the most important lesson we have to learn from the burnt offering. We will come to the same idea in the sin offering, but there all the sin of the offerer is transferred to the offering and it is then slain in his place.

The offerer then has to kill the burnt offering himself. It would have been no light matter for him. Having brought his bullock as a gift, then having laid his hands on its head, he had to slay the animal before it could be offered to God. Then in verse 5 the priests are first mentioned. They have to take the blood of the animal and sprinkle it round about the brazen altar. The priests are those who have been separated to God. They had been washed, anointed and consecrated, and would have a deep appreciation of the value of the blood of the sacrifice. They themselves stood before God in the value of it. But then the offerer, in verse 6, "And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces." Flaying means that he skinned the animal. This would bring to light all the inward parts of the beast and he could then cut it into pieces.

These detailed instructions would remind us of the necessity of having spiritual exercises and being intelligent as to something of the deep perfections of Christ. These, of course, are only known fully by God, but what a privilege it is that we can appreciate them a little bit and share God's pleasure in His beloved Son. We can only do this as we enjoy the position that the death of Christ has brought us into before God. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 1:5-6, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." May we understand more and more that when God sees us before Him, He sees us graced with all the beauty and perfections of His beloved One. There is no Christian blessing higher than this.

The priests carry out all the rest of the instructions. Let us remember that according to Peter's first epistle, every believer is a priest as well as an offerer. He writes in 1 Peter 2:5, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Of all the many privileges that we have as believers, that of drawing near to God as a worshipping priest is the greatest, and we should all, not just a selected few, be concerned about this, because according to Scripture it is open to every Christian.

Verses 8 and 9 tell us, "And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: but his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." We need to consider these various parts of the animal carefully to see the typical meaning. What a privilege it is for us to think of the person of the Lord Jesus in the light of these scriptures. We can link three of them with verses in the New Testament which speak of the sinless perfection of the Lord Jesus.

When we think of the head of the animal, we are reminded of the mind of the Lord Jesus. He perfectly knew what was in the heart of God and was able to carry it all out to God's glory. 2 Corinthians 5:21 also reminds us "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." There was never a sinful thought in the mind of Jesus as He lived here. He ever lived to please and to do the will of His Father.

The inwards, which would refer to the intestines etc, would remind us of the ever moving feelings and compassions that were His as He sought to live here for His Father. At the same time, He entered fully into the feelings of men and women all around Him. But again, none of those emotions and motives were affected by sin. The Apostle John writes in 1 John 3:5, "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins: and in Him is no sin."

And then the legs would remind us of the perfect walk of the Lord Jesus. Wherever He went, whatever He did was all in perfect obedience to the will of His Father. He never once exercised His own will. He never sought to glorify Himself, always His Father. And so the Apostle Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:22, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." So the three main writers of the New Testament epistles all bear witness to the sinless perfection of the Lord Jesus. This is in keeping with His being the true burnt offering, the One who could lay down His life as a sacrifice for the pleasure of God.

The remaining part, the fat, would tell us of the excellence of the offering. In all the offerings the fat is all for God; it was forbidden for the Jews to eat fat. It would tell us of that which only God could see in Christ. Those deep perfections that only the One who could look into His heart could see. The devotion, the faithfulness, the preparedness to give up all in submission to God's will, only God could fully evaluate. So all the fat was burnt on the altar.

We must comment on the two words that are used in the offerings for burn. In the sin offering the word used means 'to consume', and we can understand the significance of that meaning when the judgement of God against sin is the subject. But with the burnt offering the word used means 'to cause to ascend as incense'. The same word is used for the light of the candlestick and the altar of incense in the holy place of the tabernacle. We can understand that a totally different thought is brought before us. There was no judgement for sin in the burnt offering; it was completely for the pleasure of God. Judging sin brings God no pleasure although His righteousness demands it. But the burnt offering speaks of the pleasure that God has in His well-beloved Son, who as a man in this world ever brought delight to His heart and never more so than when He laid down His life to accomplish His Father's will.

How wonderful to think that even on the cross of Calvary, with all its terrible suffering and shame, there arose to God a savour of sweetness because of the perfection of the One who died there. With us, sadly, trial and suffering, the hatred and bad treatment of others, often brings out the worst in us, but in the Lord Jesus it only brought out His deep perfection. A hymn writer has touched on this with the words, "Where sin o'er all seemed to prevail, redemption's glory shed." Instead of the terrible sin that man had done in killing God's well-beloved Son, there arose a sweet savour of His offering Himself in order to accomplish redemption for us.

The remainder of this chapter deals with the alternative animals that could be offered. How gracious it was of God to make allowance for those who could not afford to bring a large offering such as a bullock. A sheep or a goat was quite acceptable according to how much the offerer could afford, and in extreme cases even turtledoves or young pigeons could be brought. So there was no excuse for any, for none could have said, "I am too poor, I cannot afford to give God anything." How true this is with each one of us. There is no true believer who has no appreciation of Christ. We may think we have nothing suitable for God but this is only belittling the grace of God that delights in even the smallest appreciation of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

There are, however, at least two ways we can consider these various animals. Obviously their size and value would suggest different appreciations of the worth of Christ in our hearts. If this is so, then we must be exercised to bring to God at least what we are each capable of giving. God does not expect a very young believer to have the same appreciation of Christ as a mature Christian, but likewise, He would not accept a turtledove from one who could afford much more. But whatever animal was brought, it is said of them all "a sweet savour unto the Lord." However small our appreciation of the Lord Jesus may be, God knows our hearts and He alone knows the full value of His person and work. How delightful to God must be the thanksgiving of the youngest believer for what Christ has done on the cross of Calvary. It may be said with stammering tongue and poorly expressed thoughts, but God reads the heart, and it is His valuation of the gift that counts, not ours.

The second way of looking at these animals is to see different aspects of the work of Christ. If we think of the characteristics of these animals we can see differences apart from the size and value of them. The bullock is characterised by strength - not speed, but a slow steady tread that can go on for hours until the day's work is done. This would remind us of the ability of the Lord Jesus to do the work that God gave Him to do. We thought at the beginning of this talk of that scripture from Hebrews 10:9, "I come to do Thy will, O God." Other scriptures use the character of the sheep to describe the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 53:7 says, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." The sheep would speak of the willingness of the Lord Jesus to do the will of God. The goat is a strong animal and its horns are often referred to. It was used in the consecration of the priests. I think it speaks of the devotion of the Lord Jesus. Finally the birds would speak to us of the One who came from heaven to do the Father's will.

In Leviticus 6:9 we read of the law of the burnt offering. From this we learn that the fire of that offering on the altar was never to be allowed to go out. Morning and evening a sacrifice was offered and the fire was kept burning all day. This teaches us that the death of the Lord Jesus as bringing pleasure to God and upholding His glory is the basis for everything and for all time, both for God and for the believer. May there be a greater appreciation in our hearts of all that Christ has done and a greater response to God who gave Him, so that our response in worship to Him may increase.

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