

January 30, 2022

“The Burnt Offering”  
Leviticus 1:1-17

FCF: Our tendency to put God in a box

**PROPOSITION:** (magnet) God calls for a totality in our relationship with Him.  
(anchor) We must live with this in mind.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

Putting God “in a box” often implies one of two things. Neither is good. The first limits what He can do. Our small-sized assumptions and steel-set constraints dictate our expectations. The second limits not so much what He can do but where He can go. That is, not so much small-sized assumptions but applications to our lives. Little depth and degree of obedience. His reign over our days constricted and His voice muted. There are some real and terrible problems there.

And Leviticus offers a much and often needed box-smashing corrective for God’s people.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** *Leviticus 1:1-17***PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

There are certain things we should bear in mind as we enter into a new relationship or a new phase in an already established relationship. Case in point, marriage and good premarital advice. Here is a sampling. No mind-reading allowed. Talk about your expectations. Let your spouse be the one to criticize their family. Listen well before you speak. Learn how to disagree. Again, there are certain things we should bear in mind as we enter into a new relationship.

We see something of that here in Leviticus. As we said last week, this is a continuation of the Exodus narrative, picking right up where it left off. The Lord has initiated a covenant relationship with His people, Israel. He has given them the Ten Commandments. “This is how you are to live in response to my love.” He has given them the plans for the Tabernacle. “I am your God and you are my people. And I am going to dwell with you, to live in your midst.” But how will that work? How can a holy God live in the midst of such a sinful people? This will require some special arrangements - priests and offerings. And we begin with the burnt offering.

This teaches some significant points. God wants a totality with us - a completeness and a wholeness. God calls for a totality in our relationship with Him. We must live with this in mind.

How do we see this totality in our text? In three rather striking ways. First, with a costly atonement. Second, with a whole-hearted worship. And then, third, with an inclusive concern.

**I. A COSTLY ATONEMENT**

First, a costly atonement. Our sin calls for God’s wrath. How can we be ransomed? Our sin is defiling. How can we be cleansed? The burnt offering points us towards the answers.

*A) A Felt Identification*

## 1. Laying on the hand

It begins with a felt identification (**READ Leviticus 1:4**). This laying on of the hand is a physical tangible act. Think of it. Your hand would feel the fur of this animal, its warmth on your skin.

2. Substitution needed

And your hand upon its head in this context establishes a relationship between the offerer and the offering. For you need a sacrifice. And it is going to be accepted on your behalf, in your place.

*B) With One of Great Value*

So there is a felt identification. And it is with one of great value (**READ Leviticus 1:3**).

1. A male without blemish

Why a male? In animal husbandry, the males are simply more valuable. And it is to be without blemish - healthy, without imperfection. Why? This offering must be worthy of the great King.

2. Utterly consumed

And it will be utterly consumed (**READ Leviticus 1:9b**). So unlike with the other offerings, no portion of the burnt offering would be saved for either the offeror or priests to eat. None at all.

So in every way imaginable, this is a costly atonement. You can see, hear, and smell it.

*Application:*

It is a picture of Jesus, the ultimate burnt offering (**READ 1 Peter 1:18-19**). And those who lay their hand upon Him, those who put their trust in His sacrifice for them, receive all the benefits of His sacrifice for them - utterly ransomed and cleansed. Lay your hand nowhere else.

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## **II. A WHOLE-HEARTED WORSHIP**

This costly atonement then calls for whole-hearted worship. That's the second point. The burnt offering was not just the most costly of offerings. It was also the most common. The fire upon the altar burned day and night. The symbolism and imagery captured a great deal.

*A) A Blameless Life*

A blameless life (**READ Leviticus 11:45**). God's holiness is meant to be imitated.

1. How the Lord is described

How is He described? We see this time and again (**READ Psalm 18:30a**). Holy and blameless.

2. How His people are to live

How then are His people to live? As He is (**READ Deuteronomy 18:13**). A blameless life.

*B) Given in Devotion*

An offering without blemish totally given, picturing a blameless life given in devotion.

1. Our total dependence

I said that the burnt offering was common. It pointed to other things as well - total dependence. The utter seriousness of a prayer request, a complete leaning upon the Lord for some great need.

2. His utter worthiness

Our dependence and His utter worthiness. This offering highlighted praise and thanksgiving.

Again, the point is that the burnt offering captured and pictured whole-hearted worship.

*Application:*

What would that mean for us? You've laid your hand upon the animal. Now watch as the fire consumes it and the smoke rises to the sky. (READ Romans 12:1) The very same idea. A good question to ask here would be, "What areas of my life have I walled off from my King?" We need to consider it all - our politics, our finances, and the most personal areas of our lives.

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### III. AN INCLUSIVE CONCERN

Which brings us to the third point, an inclusive concern. There are three sections. An offering of the herd (vv.3-9), the flock (vv.10-13), and birds (vv.14-17). What does this tell us?

#### A) *Three Different Sacrifices*

##### 1. Similar procedures

Three types of sacrifices, each with different physical features but basically the same procedures.

##### 2. Decreasing costs

What do we notice? Each is getting smaller and of less value and cost in the marketplace.

#### B) *Each Equally Acceptable*

Three different sacrifices yet each equally acceptable where it actually matters.

##### 1. A repeated refrain

Note the repeated refrain (READ Leviticus 1:9b, 13b, 17b). Each one is accepted by the Lord.

##### 2. No favoritism

With no favoritism. Different offerings were allowed dependent on what you could afford. The "best you could give" was the requirement. Which, of course, meant different amounts but the same level of sacrifice. Each one and each worshipper pleasing to God (READ James 2:1-6a).

The burnt offering pointed to an inclusive concern of the Lord for all of His people.

#### *Application:*

Again, what do you feel? What do you see? Who do you see coming to the altar? Who do you not? Everyone was to come. This is how God sees His people - without any splintering divisions or distinctions. Our differences in gender, age, race, culture, class, education, party, or tribe is meant to augment and beautify the oneness of the body. Is that how we see His people?

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### CONCLUSION:

Much like in a marriage. That really shouldn't be too surprising - even at the most basic level. Case in point, in Genesis 2, we read that the man and woman are to leave, cleave, and become one flesh. That implies three critical things, three things that have to be in place from the beginning and then throughout any marriage in order for it to be healthy. First, that bond is to be comprehensive - touching every area of life. Second, that bond is to be exclusive - no rivals are to be allowed whatsoever. Third, that bond is to be permanent. It is not a contract. It is a lifelong covenant. So to marry is to say, "So long as it stands, I will stand in it with you."

Comprehensive. Exclusive. Permanent. There is a totality in the marriage relationship. And that totality is a reflection of the totality in the relationship that is meant to be between God and His people - in the costly atonement, the whole-hearted worship, and the inclusive concern.

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