

February 6, 2022

“The Fellowship Offering”
Leviticus 3:1-17

FCF: Feeling abandoned by God

PROPOSITION: (magnet) The Lord has established fellowship with His people.
(anchor) He wants us to know and live out of this.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

I made a discovery this week. *YouTube* videos of animal rescues are insanely popular. Here’s one. A man walks a dog up to a store front. He ties the dog to a pole, goes into the store, says someone has abandoned a dog, and walks out. But he looks over his shoulder as he goes.

The comments on this video were all over the place. Some said the man was cruel and heartless. But others speculated he was undergoing hardship, doing the best he could by the dog. One thing was clear. Everyone felt bad for this animal. “Poor thing. Just abandoned like that.”

Its plight pulls on you. And we may feel that way ourselves - abandoned, left behind, cut off. But you can be sure of this. No matter what else has happened in your life, God will never do that to you. Never. In fact, His care runs so deep that He is determined we would know it.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Leviticus 3:1-17](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Here’s the question in a dating relationship. “When will they say ‘I love you’?” Results of a recent study say men, on average, take 88 days to say it while women take 134. Interesting. But there’s another question. “When *should* we say ‘I love you’?” Opinions vary on that but experts agree it should never be a one-and-done. It’s an important message that bears repeating.

That’s the Lord’s approach with us. And it’s been that way from the beginning. We’re in Leviticus. But to understand Leviticus, you have to go back to Exodus. There we see the Lord bringing His people out of Egypt. Then He gives them the Ten Commandments that they might know how to live in relationship with Him. Then He gives them the plans for the Tabernacle that He might dwell in their midst. But now we see something else. “Even as I dwell in your midst, I want to stay connected to you, to be close with you.” And so we have the peace (or fellowship) offering. For the Lord has established fellowship with His people. Think of that. The Lord has established fellowship with His people. With us. And He wants us to know and live out of this.

How do we see that in this offering? In three extraordinary ways. First, in how it is begun in blood. Second, in the burning of the fat. And then, third, in the bonding of the people.

I. BEGUN IN BLOOD

First, this offering begins in blood ([READ Leviticus 3:1-2](#)). Now this is foundational.

A) The Repeated Symbolism

1. Work of the priests

This is repeated symbolism - the priests throwing the blood upon the altar. Try to visualize this.

2. As with the burnt offering

There is no change up to this point with what we saw last week with the burnt offering. Why?

B) A Continual Reminder

This repeated symbolism, even with the fellowship offering, was a continual reminder.

1. The need for atonement

We need atonement - to be ransomed and cleansed from the guilt and defilement of our sin.

2. Must take precedent

And that had to take precedent. That had to come before anything pertaining to fellowship.

And so in these offerings, the message was clear. This relationship begins in blood.

Application:

The Lord was saying, "You must never lose sight of this." Not to shame His people but to assure them. (READ [Leviticus 17:11](#)) The stress here is on the Lord's provision, His gracious doing, His merciful initiative. He is the One who makes reconciliation possible. Our standing is forever secured not by our performance but by His provision. And that is beautifully freeing.

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II. BURNING THE FAT

So it begins in blood. But what of the burning of the fat? (READ [Leviticus 3:3-5](#))

A) An Ancient Perspective

This is to set the heart's orientation for the offering. Consider the ancient perspective.

1. Not something to be avoided

Fat was not seen as something to be avoided. "Too much fat" was not deemed to be a bad thing.

2. But the most prized part

In the ancient world, fat meant abundance. The fat was regarded as the best. It's why we read of the fat "of the wheat" or "of the land." The fat of the meat was the most prized of the portions.

B) The Deeper Meaning

1. Given to the Lord

So what is the deeper meaning here? The people were to give the fat to the Lord. It was to be placed upon the altar and burned. With none of it held back. Again, try to envision this.

2. He is worthy of great honor

What would this have meant? He is worthy of great honor. He is due the best. And this was a concrete expression of that conviction in that cultural context. This is why the fat was burned.

The meal was begun in blood. And the fat was given to the Lord for He is worthy.

Application:

He deserves more than our leftovers. What would that look like for us? Again, consider the rationale. He is worthy because of who He is. He is worthy because of what He has done. What then would it mean to connect those abiding realities to our own context? What would it mean to burn the fat today? We're here on the first day of the week. That's a start. What about

our household budgets? Do we determine how much we give by how much is left? What about our time, our energy, our commitments of the week? What would it mean for us to burn the fat?

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III. BONDING THE PEOPLE

Which brings us to the third point. This fellowship offering began in blood. The fat was burned. And its celebration served to bond the people. There is a strong relational element here.

A) A Shared Meal

1. A food offering

This was a shared meal. That's why it is described as a food offering (**READ Leviticus 3:5b, 11, 14a**). This is not a pagan sacrifice to a hungry god. This food offering had symbolic meaning.

2. Between parties

It was a meal between parties - between the Lord and His people and then between the people.

B) A Covenantal Setting

This was a shared meal in a covenantal setting. We read of such a meal between Isaac and Abimelech (Genesis 26) and between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31). A stunning example is found in Exodus 24 (**READ Exodus 24:9-11**). This was a shared meal in a covenantal setting.

1. An expression of hospitality

Partly, this was meant to be an expression of hospitality. That was true in the ancient Near East and it's still true today. It was right to share and to serve the very best you had with your guest.

2. The confirmation of a bond

But beyond hospitality, such a gesture was the confirmation of a bond, like a handshake. It was to enable remembering and reaffirming covenant promises, of rededicating yourself to covenant commitments - both to the Lord and to one another. Such a meal was meant to confirm a bond.

That's another part of the fellowship offering - a bonding of the people.

Application:

There's a parallel here to the Lord's Supper. Really, if you look at Jesus' words as recorded in the Gospels, He is harkening back to the celebration customs of a covenant meal. This is instructive for us. For instance, what are we to think about during communion? The power, presence, and promises of God to us in Jesus. As with ancient Israel, it is a time of reminding, reaffirming, and rededicating. We are to do this regularly, corporately, and joyfully.

For the Lord has established fellowship with His people. He wants us to live out of that.

CONCLUSION:

Back to saying, "I love you" - not just in the frequency of saying it but in the different ways it can be said. That's important to consider as well. In my relationship with my wife, I want her to know that I love her. So I tell her. But I also try to show her. I hold her hand. I hug her, kiss her. Those are important ways that my love for her can be communicated. If I only told

her and never touched her, that would be odd. And if I only touched her and never told her, that too would be odd. It needs to be both. It has to be both if I am going to communicate my love.

That's what we see with the fellowship offering. And with the Lord's Supper as well. For we are not just heads on a stick. We are embodied souls. So we need to hear God's love in physical ways. And He delights to speak to us in whatever way we need so as to hear - showing us and telling us. For He has established fellowship with His people. And He wants us to know and live out of this. Think of what that tells you about His heart for you. And ask yourself, "In what ways do I need to hear that?" And "What might change in my life if I took that to heart?"

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