

February 20, 2022

“The Reparation Offering” Leviticus 5:14-6:7

FCF: The problem of guilt

PROPOSITION: (anchor) The Lord has addressed our breaches of faith.
(magnet) We see this pictured with the reparation offering.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

I saw an interesting news report this past week coming from the art world ([READ](#)):

A valuable avant garde painting has been vandalised by a “bored” security guard who drew eyes on faceless figures in the artwork on his first day working in a Russian gallery.

Anna Leporskaya’s *Three Figures* was painted between 1932 and 1934, and had been insured for 75m roubles (A\$1.4m, £740,000). It was on display as part of an abstract art exhibition at the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Center in Ekaterinburg when the guard drew eyes on it using a ballpoint pen.

The damage was discovered by two gallery guests. The guard was fired. Fortunately, he did not press too hard with his pen and the brush strokes were not disturbed. The repair will cost \$4,600. That is, of course, quite a lot of money but relatively little considering the value of the painting.

The question I want to ask here at the outset is, “What do we do with our guilt?” Not the vandalism by another but the deep spiritual self-harm caused by our failure to love and our inevitable sin against God and others. What do we do with our guilt? Our text addresses this.

SCRIPTURE READING: [Leviticus 5:14-6:7](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

On lists of high profile betrayals, it’s common to see the Rosenbergs mentioned ([READ](#)):

The Rosenbergs were a married couple with communist sympathies who sold atomic secrets to the Soviets during the height of the Cold War. Julius Rosenberg helped exchange covert information and also recruited other spies for the Soviet Union. He, alongside his wife Ethel (whose level of involvement, if any at all, is still contentious), was arrested in 1950. After a controversial trial, both were executed for conspiring to sell atomic secrets to Russia on June 19, 1953.

Why do I mention the Rosenberg story? Because such treachery is at the heart of this offering.

The purification offering we looked at last week had to do with sin as defilement. This week, with the reparation (guilt) offering, we are looking at sin as a betrayal of covenant loyalty. It is to transgress, to act treacherously, or as stated twice here, to commit a breach of faith.

Keep in mind what we’ve said is the Leviticus question. How can a holy God live with such an unholy people? How can such a breach of faith be addressed? This is terminology used elsewhere to describe marital infidelity. We might think of it as spiritual adultery. How was it to be addressed? That is the function of the reparation offering. There is good news here. For the Lord has addressed our breaches of faith. And we see this pictured with the reparation offering.

We’re going to consider this in two ways. First, when was it needed? And, second, what was then required? When was the reparation offering needed? And what was then required?

I. WHEN IT WAS NEEDED

First, when was it needed? The offenses connected to this offering are more serious than that of the purification offering. That is clear in calling for a ram, a costlier sacrifice to be made.

A) *The Three Cases*

There are three types of trespass here, three different breaches of faith with the Lord.

1. The profaning of a holy item

The first is the profaning of a holy thing. We see this in 5:14-16. This would be the dishonor of something that belonged to the Lord, likely unintentionally eating food devoted to the priests.

2. An unknown sin

The second breach was an unknown sin. This is described in 5:17-19. Here someone suspects they may have sinned regarding the holy things, aren't sure, but still believe that they have.

3. Misuse of the Lord's name

The third is a misuse of the Lord's name. We see this in 6:1-7. The key here is a false oath that is invoked regarding the defrauding of someone. This is a crass profaning of God's holy name.

B) The Common Theme

So we have these three trespasses, three different breaches. What is the common theme?

1. Disrespect for holy things

Each involves a disrespect for holy things. Each involves a breach of faith towards the great high King's property - things of the tabernacle or His very name. Each involves treating what was holy and sacred as something common and everyday, treating the weighty all too lightly.

2. Disrespect for a holy God

Each involves disrespect for holy things. Which cannot be understood as anything but disrespect for a holy God, for the Lord Himself. That's the common theme of the three cases listed here.

And such cases, such breaches and offenses, called for the reparation offering.

Illustration:

To disrespect the possession of a person is to disrespect the person. We know this from our own experience. Think of how you feel when your personal property has been abused or treated in a trivial fashion. There is a sense of violation. This is what God feels for what is His.

Application:

We might then ask, "What things are His today?" (READ Psalm 24:1) That pretty well covers it all. But we can get more pointed. Think back to what we saw last week. Our bodies are His, His temple, the tabernacle dwelling of His Spirit (READ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). And based on that, Paul urges his readers to flee from sexual immorality. But he says something similar earlier (READ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17). Here the warning is not about sexual immorality but relational disunity. In both cases, what is it we need to remember? We are the Lord's.

The Bible says what it does about sexual immorality because of the Lord's high view of sex, both its power and purpose. Both are so much greater than the world's view. The Bible says what it does about relational disunity because of the Lord's high view of His church and each person as having been made in His image. And, again, with both we must remember we are His. That will encourage us to take steps to avoid these things. And also to assure us when we fail.

For we are His. He has addressed our breaches of faith with the reparation offering.

II. WHAT WAS REQUIRED

Which brings us to the second point. The first was why the reparation offering was needed. But what did the Lord require when such holy things had been treated in a trivial way?

A) *The Work of Reparation*

Put simply, what was required in this offering was the work of reparation.

1. Definition

This was a mitigated penalty to make amends for a wrong by making payment to those wronged.

2. Rationale

The rationale is simple. Justice was required; compensation needed. R. Laird Harris ([READ](#)):

In any kind of sin involving damage, full restoration must be made. Forgiveness does not allow us just to forget the damage done but requires us in repentance and with confession to make right as far as possible the wrong done. That forgiveness is free does not mean that it is free of obligation.

Illustration:

This is the principle at work when victims and families meet under court supervision with those who have wronged them to hear and be heard with hope of healing. This is the idea behind South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission following Apartheid. It is the driving force behind the current efforts in Canada to address historic wrongs against Indigenous Peoples.

B) *Towards All Parties*

Such efforts were part of the reparation offering and had to involve all the parties.

1. Vertically

Vertically, there had been a breach with God. And so the ram was brought to the priest.

2. Horizontally

But, horizontally, there had also been a breach with one's neighbor. We see this with the wrong done to the priest and the defrauding of 6:1-7 - restitution plus one-fifth the value of what was lost. That said, it's worth stressing these offenses were against the Lord ([READ Leviticus 6:2a](#)).

C) *In Proper Order*

Which brings us to this. The work of reparation involved all parties and a proper order.

1. Not passing by

Your neighbor was not to be passed by, the trespass and injury to him ignored. It was no good to say, "Well, this was really against God" and then forget about what had been done to this person.

2. But prioritizing

Rather than passing him by, his needs were to be prioritized. That work was to be done first.

So we see not just when the reparation offering was needed but what was then required.

Application:

What then is the significance of this for us today? Jesus carries this forward with great force in the Sermon on the Mount ([READ Matthew 5:23-24](#)). The context is temple worship. A more contemporary context would be a church service. But we need to notice this. Who is

angry here? Not us but someone else, another party, is angry at us. The idea being that, if it's good for us to refrain from anger within our hearts, then in love, we should strive to do all we can to prevent such anger from overtaking another's heart. Derek Tidball writes ([READ](#)):

One wonders how often the presence of God seems absent from our worship services, not because the minister is ill-prepared, or the liturgy defective, or the songs ill-chosen, but because some of those in attendance are deluding themselves by thinking that by their much singing and praying they can conjure up the presence of God, when what is really needed is for them to go and pay their bills, apologize to their friends, repair bridges with their neighbours, meet their obligations to their families and make practical amends for any cheating in which they have been engaged. Just as significant is the cheating they have done on God, by their meagre offerings or the paucity of time they have set aside for him in daily devotion or in public worship. If reparation were made in these areas, might we not see God 'open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that [we] will not have room enough for it'?

The Lord has addressed our breaches of faith. We see this with the reparation offering.

CONCLUSION:

There was a Harry Potter reunion recently. The films were based on a series of books, the last of which was *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Here's a line towards the end ([READ](#)):

Finally, the truth. Lying with his face pressed into the dusty carpet of the office where he had once thought he was learning the secrets of victory, Harry understood at last that he was not supposed to survive.

As Harry sees his friends suffering and dying in their fight against Voldemort, he gives himself up. He leaves his dearest friends behind and commits himself to one final walk alone into the forest, going to his death as his enemies mock and jeer. He does not draw his wand. He does not fight. He simply gives himself up for his friends - much as his mother had for him years before.

Here are a few thoughts from Jerram Barrs' *Echoes of Eden*, reflecting on this ([READ](#)):

At its heart Rowling's last Potter book is a reflection on the two biblical quotations included in the story: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," and "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." . . .

The question at the heart of the book is this: Will Harry keep going with the task that Dumbledore has given him, the task of finding and destroying the Horcruxes created by Lord Voldemort, Horcruxes that contain pieces of his fractured and wicked soul? The central issue is, where will Harry's treasure lie? For where his treasure is, there will be the devotion of his heart. Will his treasure be the longing for power? Or will his treasure be the commitment to fight against evil, whatever the cost to himself? . . .

Harry wins his battles not by wisdom and not by strength, but by things thought foolish and powerless by the world. . . .

Above all, he wins his battles by self-sacrificing love. . . . Precisely because he offers himself up to death and to defeat—just as does Christ—he conquers death, for it cannot hold him. . . .

It should be evident to anyone reading the above summary how many remarkable parallels to the gospel story there are in this final book of the Harry Potter series. I found myself weeping with joy many, many times as I read and reread this wonderful reflection on the work of Christ. . . .

The story points to the cost of love, a love that echoes Jesus' for us. That is worth considering.

Back to Leviticus. What was the reparation offering about? For what was it preparing the people? Towards what is it pointing us? ([READ Isaiah 53:10](#)) Jesus is the reparation offering. Everything we read of in Leviticus is ultimately about Jesus, Jesus and His costly love.

Love is costly. And the truer the love, the costlier it will be. This offering points us to a God who provides a way for guilty sinners to be free. But such love is not cheap. It is free to us. But it is terribly costly to the Lord. And it is out of this love that we make our confessions and our reparations to one another and to the Lord, knowing we are forever secure in His costly love.

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