

“There Will Be Blood” //

Leviticus 10:1–3; 16:1–29 //

The Whole Story #10

Well, if you’ve been reading your Bible through with us for the year, you have spent the last couple weeks in Leviticus.

- My guess is that some of you stopped reading the Bible over the last couple of weeks.
- Did you ever do that thing as a kid when you and some friends raced into the water at the beach? You are **sprinting and then when you hit the water** you are still running as fast as you can, but you suddenly slow down... that’s how reading through the Bible feels. Genesis! Exodus! Le-vi-ti-cus. Fall on your face.

Leviticus seems like a **strange** book, to be sure.

- First off, there’s the **name: “Leviticus.”** That sounds daunting. It’s **not a cool name** like **Exodus** or **Romans**. “Leviticus” sounds like a disease, or a pair of jeans, or something.
- Second, it is **filled with rules and regulations** about diet, dress, and archaic religious rituals. And some of them just seem **weird** or, at best, **random**.
 - **Eating locusts** is good, but shrimp is bad (Lev. 11:10-22).
 - God loves **sideburns, apparently**, because you’re not allowed to cut them (Lev. 19:27). Duck Dynasty was a permanent fashion fixture.
 - **Tattoos are not allowed** (Lev. 19:28). Even little ones on your ring finger to show how much you love your wife.
 - **Back-talking your parents** can get you stoned (20:9). Been waiting on AWANA to teach that one to our kids...
 - Absolutely no **clothes of mixed fibers** (Lev. 19:19). If you are **wearing polyester** this weekend, not only are you out of fashion; you’re in sin (if we were in the days of Leviticus). **If**

you’re wearing spandex this weekend, you are in sin for multiple reasons. That definitely translates into the New Covenant.

- One of the laws **states that if two guys are in a fight** and one reaches out and grabs the other one in a particularly, shall we say, sensitive, place, he is to have his hand cut off.¹
 - And you think, “**Of all the rules you feel like you need to spell out**, why that one? Was that a **common** problem in ancient Israel?”
 - We **have a staff handbook** with codes of conduct. We have never felt the need to spell out a regulation on that. Never been necessary.
- (And I hope you won’t hear any of that **that as sacrilegious--perfect**, but just an acknowledgement that a lot of it appears strange)

And a lot of people wonder, “*Why do we seem to follow some of the rules of Leviticus but not others? When Leviticus talks about **certain sexual behaviors as sin**, we quote that; but when it says **not to eat shellfish** or eat a hamburger with cheese on it² we say “that **doesn’t apply to us anymore.**” Are we picking and choosing what parts we want to follow?*

- **GUY ON AN AIRPLANE...**

Let me answer that last one really quickly, because **such a big question**. There are **3 types of laws** given in Leviticus:

- **Civil laws**, which are laws that govern the nation—behaviors, punishments for crimes, etc.
- **Ceremonial laws**: These are the regulations given about cleanliness, the sacrificial system... things like that.
- *Then there are **Moral laws***: Laws that declare what God sees as immoral. Everything from **murder and theft to ideals** for sexuality.

¹ Deut 25:11

² Exodus 34:26 says, “Do not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk.” This led to the Jewish dietary restriction that prohibits combining meat and dairy (in the same meal).

Now, when **Jesus came, he said two things about that law** that can seem contradictory at first.

- First, **he said that the law was perfect**. Matthew 5:18: “Sooner would heaven and earth pass away than one jot or tittle (what these were—Hebrews marks of punctuation) of the law fail.”
- But he also said that **those who were born again** by him were released from the law, because he **fulfilled it** for them.³

What does it mean that **Jesus fulfilled the law**? It means that **all the laws pointed to Jesus**. He fulfilled all that they pointed to.

- The **civil laws set up the nation of Israel** from which Jesus would emerge.
 - When Jesus came he started a new Israel, a spiritual Israel. So we’re no longer bound by the civil codes of Leviticus because God doesn’t have a nation-state on earth anymore.
- The **ceremonial laws illustrate for us God’s holiness**, our unholiness, and what God was going to do about it. The word holy (or, purity) is mentioned over 80 times in the book!
 - All those laws and sacrifices were fulfilled in Jesus’ life and death. The book of Hebrews makes clear that if we have accepted Christ, the ultimate sacrifice, we don’t need any of those lesser sacrifices anymore.
- The **moral laws, however**, reflect what God finds good and what he declares offensive, so those still apply to us since God doesn’t change.
 - **Jesus reaffirmed those** moral laws, by the way, and told us to be like him and love what he loved.

So **saying that the sexual ethics of Leviticus are still relevant but the prohibitions eating shellfish and wearing polyester are not is not an arbitrary distinction** at all. It’s **how the New Testament teaches** us to interpret Leviticus.

³ Matt 5:17; Romans 6:14, 7:1-6; Galatians 3:25.

FWIW, the book of Leviticus appears to be one of Jesus’ favorite books... The **verse he quotes most often** is from Leviticus, and he **appears to have** the whole book memorized.

- His **AWANA** a bit more rigorous.)

We’re going to look at **1 chapter** of the book, today, which scholars say the whole book of Leviticus is **shaped around: Leviticus 16**.

- Everything in the book, they say, either **leads up to it**, or flows down from it, like a mountaintop.
- **Like a Summit.**

In this chapter (16) God gives instructions about a **very important day**, the **most important day** of Jewish year: “Yom Kippur” (Literally, “the day of the ‘covering’”). This day became so central in Jewish life that it was just called “yoma,” or **“the day.”**⁴

As we get into this, you still may be tempted to think, “Well, this is interesting history, but not immediately relevant to my life.” But think of it this way:

The whole book deals with a problem that every single one of us face at some point in our lives: feelings of guilt about certain things we have done.

- **You can relate to that, right?** I know a lot of you can. You **walked in today** with some secret, and it’s **eating you up** inside.
 - **Every time someone says**, “Hey, we need to talk,” you think, *“Oh no. They know.”*
- Maybe a **sexual sin** you have committed.
- Maybe you know that you have been a **bad parent**, or a bad sibling, or a bad spouse, and you feel guilty about how you were to someone in your life.

⁴ Walter Kaiser, *New Interpreter’s Bible*, 1109.

- And **maybe that person isn't even around anymore** for you to apologize to! **Maybe they died** and you can never look at them and say you're sorry and get some kind of absolution from them.
- And then a lot of times **guilt leads to shame**. Shame is the question of, *"What kind of person am I who could do something like that? Or, "What if people found out that I have done..."*
 - **You know, confessing some sins get you sympathy.** *"I struggle with pride; lust."*
 - **Other sins**, if you confess them in small group, would make it awkward. **"You did what???"**
 - Christian counselor David Powlison says, *"Some sins, however, do not elicit sympathetic nods. If you were adulterous and your family found out, they would not be nodding. Shameful sins receive stares, not nods. Even when guilt is confessed, the shame remains."*⁵
- And then there is this whole thing psychologists call **"covert guilt,"** which is this sense we're guilty for something when we're not sure why.
 - I explained a few weeks ago that that goes back to **soul nakedness (GEN 2)**; a sense of guilt, a sense of guilt before God that you carry around.

But that makes all of us ask this question: **Am I going to be judged?**

- **Even if you don't believe in God**, it still sort of lingers there... I need some kind of atonement, redemption.
- **Let me ask... If you died today**, do you know absolutely for sure that you'd be good enough for God to let you into heaven? ***I was like that for a long time...***

Leviticus is **relevant to us** because all that is a **universal experience!**:

- *Are you really guilty, and, if so, why, and what can you do about it?*

⁵ David Powlison, <http://www.ccef.org/podcast/what-difference-between-guilt-and-shame>

Let's **start our examination of "the day,"** with this sobering incident in Leviticus 10 that sets it up: [10:1] Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron... offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them.

[2] And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. (Leviticus 10:1-2 ESV)

That sets up chapter 16: ^{16:2}The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron that he is *not to come whenever he chooses* into the Most Holy Place (Remember Nadab, Aaron???) behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die.

^{16:3} "This is how Aaron is to enter the Most Holy Place..."

Quick lesson (diagram) -

- In the Temple were two rooms: **the Holy Place**, and then beyond that, the **Holy of Holies**.
- **In the Holy of Holies** was *The Ark of the Covenant*. Think we have an actual picture of it here: **Pic from Raiders of Lost Ark)**
 - There were a **few sacred relics** inside the Ark,⁶ but on the top of it was the **mercy seat** where the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled;
 - **It wasn't a "chair," so to speak...** but the surface of the ark on which God's presence would rest.
 - On top of that mercy seat stood **two cherubim**, which stood like guards barring entry to the presence of God.
 - **Very similar to the angel with the flaming sword** that God put at in the Garden of Eden if you remember that after he'd driven Adam and Eve out to keep them from coming back in.

⁶ In that was a copy of the **10 commandments**; **Aaron's staff** that budded (That had been the proof that God had called him to priesthood). And a **pot of manna**. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, The Anchor Bible, 402.

- **The Holy of Holies**—where the Ark was—was closed off by a “veil.”
 - The veil was **4 inches thick**, woven of 72 blue and red and purple cords, each with 24 strands each. The veil was called “**the paroket**,” which means literally “shut off,” because **that’s what the veil did**. It shut off the presence of God from everyone.⁷
 - It was **totally dark** in there. **Shut off**.⁸
- The **main part of the temple was pretty busy**. Priests would go several times every day, offer sacrifices, and do a bunch of religious rituals. Not the holy of holies. **It could be entered by only one person**—the most High Priest; and only **one time a year**—the day, “Yom Kippur.”

Chapter 16 chapter goes on to describe the process of the HP entry. Let me use the summary of Old Testament scholar Ray Dillard:

SUMMARIZE: *(A week beforehand, the high priest was put into seclusion – taken away from his home and into a place where he was completely alone. Why? So he wouldn’t accidentally touch or eat anything unclean. **Clean food was brought to him**, and he’d wash his body and prepare his heart.*

*The night before the Day of Atonement he stayed up all night praying and reading God’s Word to purify his soul. Then on Yom Kippur he bathed head to toe and dressed in pure, unstained white linen. **BASICALLY WENT IN 3 TIMES**. Then he went into the Holy of Holies and offered an animal sacrifice to God to atone, or pay the penalty for, his own sins. After that he came out and bathed completely again, and new white linen was put on him, and he went in again, this time sacrificing for the sins of the priests. But that’s not all. He would come out a third time, and he bathed*

⁷ Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 152–153. Maurice Henry Harris, *Hebraic Literature: Translations from the Talmud, Midrashim and Kabbala* (M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 195–196

⁸ Psalm 97:2; Hebrews 10:20

again from head to toe and they dressed him in brand new pure linen, and he went into the holy of holies and atoned for the sins of all the people....)

...this was all done in public. The temple was crowded, and those in attendance watched closely. There was a thin screen, and he bathed behind it. But the people were present: They saw him bathe, dress, go in, come back out. He was their representative before God, and they were there cheering him on. They were very concerned to make sure that everything was done properly and with purity, because he represented them before God.”⁹

Chapter 16 explains that part of this sacrifice ritual was the choosing of two goats. One they offered in sacrifice...

¹⁰The goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD... ²¹He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat’s head. He won’t kill this goat, but instead sends it ~~shall send the goat~~ away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. ²²The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place; and the man shall release it in the wilderness.

- **BTW, I found a tradition that said they stationed** a priest outside the gate who captured the goat and made sure it found it’s way off a cliff, because it would have been a **bad omen** for the goat to wander it’s way back in—Hey, there’s all our sin!
- Could make for some awkward **theological campfire** conversations, also.

⁹ Tim Keller, quoting Rays Dillard from a sermon he heard Dillard preach. In *King’s Cross: The Story of the World in the Life of Jesus* (New York: Penguin Group, 2011), 79–80. For more on this, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, The Anchor Bible, 1015–16. Milgrom draws his conclusions from the Mishnah that expands on Yom Kippur with most detail, the *Yoma*. The *Yoma* includes details such as appointing a back-up priest in case the first is unfit, “dry runs” in which the priest practices the motions of pouring the blood, and the specific order of body parts to bathe.

So what do we learn about guilt and sin from this chapter?

1. Our sin is much worse than we imagined

- Reading Leviticus you get this sense over and over again that a great gulf exists between us and God.¹⁰
 - **Shut off**; guarded by mighty angels with swords.
- **At the beginning of this message** I asked you, “If you died today, do you know absolutely for sure that you’d be good enough for God to let you into heaven?” **The question behind that question** is “What is the standard God uses? What is the passing grade? How good is good enough?” Leviticus shows you—absolute perfection.
 - Nadab and Abihu shows you that you are so sinful that one **false move**, and Nadab and Abihu died! One sin.
 - We have a **very man-centered view** of sin. “Not that bad.” But it is. The slightest defilement...
 - Sin is sinful because of who it is against... kick a wall, sin of frustration; vs. dog; human; roundhouse the President.
 - **And we are filled with sin.** In all we think; all we say; all we do. **Leviticus even has a category for “unknown sins.”** Things we do that are sinful we don’t even know about.¹¹
 - **Even in your best actions**—as I stand up here and preach to you. This is a good thing, right? I have sin mixed in my motives. I am thinking, “What are these people thinking about me?” I am mad at that guy. I quickly get prideful and forget how dependent I am on God. I think, “Oh, they’re listening to me now. I’m sufficient as a speaker. I got this.”
 - **Hospitality**... how much is about love and just not wanting to look bad?

¹⁰ DeYoung.

¹¹ In Leviticus 5:17, it says, “If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the Lord’s commandments ought not to be done, *though he did not know it*, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.” There are 613 commandments in the Torah (the first 5 books of the OT). It shows us that there are myriad ways we fall short.

- **Puritans:** “Even our tears of repentance need to be washed in the blood of the lamb.”
 - **James 4:17** tells us that to know to do good and not do it is sin. How many times have I known something good I could do and think, “Ah, I’m tired.” Or, “next time.”
- **Leviticus shows us our sin is much worse and more pervasive than you’ve ever imagined...** I’ve compared it to getting a **blood transfusion** and finding out there is 1 microbe of the AIDS virus; or drinking a **glass of milk** and finding out it has a teaspoon of human urine mixed in.
 - But a **million x worse**: coming into God’s presence with any sin is like a **piece of flax paper** touching the surface of the sun.
- **Romans 3:23.** “Fall short.” The standard is the glory of God. Fall short means we don’t make it.
 - **I’ve heard that compared to “trying to swim to Japan.”** I am not a great swimmer. ½ mile and I’m dying. Vs. We have a guy who swam across the English Channel (21 miles). Amazing! But if the measure is, “Who can swim to Japan, is he really that much closer?” **That’s how we all are with respect to God’s holiness.**

2. God’s grace is greater than we dreamed

Why did God have them **use TWO goats**? To illustrate two different things God was doing with our sin.

- One goat was slaughtered for our sin, showing that our sin is paid for.
- A theological concept called “**Justification.**” *Justification means there* literally is **no more claim** against us.
 - If you **wreck into someone’s car** and they take you to court and the insurance pays their claim, literally that person has no more claim against you. The debt has been settled.

- The other goat, the one sent into the wilderness, illustrates for us the concept of **Cleansing**: God not only pays for our sins, he removes them from us.
 - Whereas the **first goat showed us that we are forgiven** on the basis of a substitute; the **second that our sins are forgotten** and removed from us, as the psalmist says, ‘*as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us*’ (Psalm 103:12).¹²
- The **prophet Micah** says that God has put our sins at the bottom of the ocean. **Corrie Ten Boom** said he puts up a big sign over that part and says, “**No fishing allowed!**”
- When they baptized **Sam Houston**, the Texan who helped establish the nation of Texas—a good friend of **my uncle Davy Crockett**—the pastor who baptized him said, “Sam, your sins are washed away now in the deepest ocean!” Houston replied, “**God help the fish!**” that’s how we should feel.
- There are some people who say, “**I feel like my sins are probably too bad**. I don’t think I can be forgiven, or that I can be saved? **Look at vs. 16: “...whatever their sins may have been.” (vs. 16)**
 - Do you see **ANY conditions** in there?
 - I know people who say, “I think I committed the **sin against the Holy Spirit** and can’t be forgiven.”
 - **What Jesus said about the sin of the Holy Spirit can’t contradict** other things the Bible says, like this, and the Bible says that **whoever comes to Jesus with whatever sin** can and will be forgiven. The sin against the Holy Spirit means you no longer desire forgiveness.
 - If you still desire forgiveness, whatever you have done, you can receive that forgiveness, and the fact you desire forgiveness means you haven’t committed the sin against the Holy Spirit.

¹² Kaiser, 1112.

- **When you say, “I can’t be forgiven,”** you are not exaggerating the size of your sin, you are shrinking the forgiving power of God. **Your sin is great, but God’s grace is greater.**
- You say, “Well, **maybe God can forgive me**, but I can’t forgive myself.”
 - **Now you’re saying that your opinion** matters more than God.” Who do you think you are? If God has forgiven you, and promises to restore you, who are you to exalt your opinion above God’s?
 - Don’t try to **out-holy** God.
- **Atonement** means literally = “**at-one-ment**”. On this day, God made us “one” with him again by satisfying the penalty of our sin and putting it away forever. And **what God has joined** together, let no man put asunder.

3. “The Day” was all about Jesus

- *Did you see the fingerprints of Jesus all through this sacrifice? This is Passion Week. When you read through this last week of Jesus’ life, you notice that Jesus seems to be staging his own Day of Atonement.*
 - *Just like the High Priest... he began to prepare for a week beforehand: it’s called ‘the Passion week.’*
 - *The night before his sacrifice, he **stayed up** all night.*
 - But he wasn’t **clothed in rich garments** like the Jewish High Priest. He was stripped of the only garment he had.
 - And instead of being **cheered on** by the people (like the priest was), he was jeered by them, and abandoned by nearly everyone he loved.
 - He wasn’t **bathed** in a purifying pool; he was bathed in human spit.
 - When he came before God, he didn’t receive **words of encouragement**; the Father turned his face away.¹³
 - **Silent as he stood accused, beaten mocked and scorned; bowing to the Father’s will, he took the crown of thorns!**

¹³ Deut 21:23. Keller, *King’s Cross*, 81.

- **He was struck dead**, even though he had no defilement on him. **But he was wounded...**
- **On the cross, when he died, he cried, “It is finished!”**
 - Tetelestai. They found that phrase inscribed on Roman receipts. Literally, “It is paid.”
 - In Christ, God has no more claim against our sin. Justified.
- The **curtain** that separated us from God was a symbol of his perfect flesh, torn so we could enter the presence of God.
 - During the crucifixion the curtain was literally torn in two, and for the first time in history, the way to God was wide open!
- Jesus’ body was **the mercy seat** where his blood was sprinkled so that we could find forgiveness of sins.
 - **When the disciples 1st come to find Jesus...** (John 20:12) John mentions two *angels* in the tomb, at the head and foot of where Jesus was laid... like the cherubim on the sides of the mercy seat on the Holy of Holies. Recreated the seat. Jesus’ slain body was now our mercy seat where we find forgiveness of sins.
- **Lev 16 says that when Aaron was done** with this atonement ceremony, he was to **take off his linen**. *You know what Peter and John found in the empty tomb? Just linens. Because the atonement had been finished.*

Jesus was the scapegoat who carried away our sins forever into his grave. Jesus went into the grave bearing our sin; 3 days later the came out and our sin stayed there.

- As far away as the East is the West, hidden in the depths of the sea. They are not merely covered over; they are gone forever.¹⁴

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah, writing 500 years before Jesus was born, describes a vision in which he sees a High Priest named Joshua about to enter the presence of God.

¹⁴ Heb 13:11–12; Keller, *King’s Cross*, 81.

But to his horror, **Zechariah sees Joshua**, his high priest, about to enter the Holy of Holies covered in human excrement. This was disaster: not only for Joshua; for all the people of Israel. This moment of representation by the high priest was their hope of forgiveness.

Just as Zechariah despairs, however, he hears the Lord say to Joshua, the High Priest:

“Take off your filthy clothes. See? I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.... I will send my servant and remove the sin of this land on a single day.”¹⁵

God had given Zechariah a vision of how we all, even the most religious among us, look to God as we approach him, and a promise to remove that defilement from us, forever, “on a single day.”

Before God, we are like the filth-covered Joshua that Zechariah saw. **Joshua is the Hebrew name for Jesus**. But because a new Joshua, who was perfect, was clothed in our filth and suffered its consequences, we can put on the garments of righteousness. Because Jesus, who deserved *commendation*, received *condemnation* instead, we who deserve condemnation can receive his commendation.

The gospel in four words: ***Jesus in my place***. *Jesus did not merely die for us; he died instead of us.*

He took our sin; he bore our shame; he rose to life, he defeated the grave. A love like this, the world has never known.

- **People misread Leviticus...** *look how many laws there are!*
- *Leviticus was not written to tell them all they need to do, but what God would do for them.*
 - **The effect of reading Leviticus on you should not be,** “Oh my God, look at how much I have to do for you!” but “Oh my God, look at what you have done for me!”

¹⁵ Zechariah 3:1–9

- **What is the goal of Bible teaching?** Is it to learn doctrine, facts and theories about Scripture? Is it to give you clear instructions on how to live your life? Laws to obey? Practical advice for living?
 - Not good advice, but good news!
 - DMLJ: “What is the goal of a sermon?” Lecture vs. motivational speech vs. gospel sermon.
 - **When you hear someone teach the Bible, you shouldn’t be overwhelmed by despair;** guilt; or duty... you should be overwhelmed by love—the story of what God did to rescue you!

4. All ways do not lead to God

- Note how God sets this whole thing up: ^{6:2}The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron that he is *not to come whenever he chooses* into the Most Holy Place... or else he will die.”
- **It’s really popular today for people today to say,** “Well, it doesn’t matter what particular way you try to get to God, as long as you’re sincere.”
 - **Nadab and Abihu were sincere.**
 - *If you were to come to the people of Israel right after the death of Nadab & Abihu, and say, ‘All paths lead to the same God,’ I think Aaron would say, “We’ve got two dead men here that were very sincere. My sons. But they did not come the way prescribed.”¹⁶*
- **Now, imagine Aaron.** He has to do this and go to the very spot where his sons Nadab and Abihu were struck down for entering carelessly.
- **This whole chapter declares: There is only one way to come to God.** *There is only one way to get into the holy presence of God; and God lays it out, not us!*
 - —Berta

It show us...

5. You have to accept the atonement for yourself (16:29)

- Even though full atonement has been made by Jesus, you have to individually appropriate it. Here’s where we see that in this chapter:
 - ^{16:29} “This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work—whether native-born or a foreigner residing among you— ³⁰because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. **Then,** before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins.
- This is such a beautiful picture. To **reap the benefits of the Day of Atonement** you had to do something. Automatic. And **what was that something?** Pay a lot of money? Say enough prayers? I love this. By observing the Sabbath. And what was observing the Sabbath? Doing nothing. You had to consciously do nothing. **The way that you received the work of the atonement was by doing nothing and resting in what God had already done.**
- **You have to receive it...**
 - ~~Another picture~~ of this: Leviticus talks about another sacrifice that each family was to make once a year that echoed the Day of Atonement: **Hand on the head of the lamb**
 - ~~That’s what we have to do.~~
- I recently read what must be one of the top 5 most bizarre Supreme Court cases of all time—[United States v. Wilson](#), from 1833. The defendant, George Wilson, had pled guilty to several counts of robbery and “endangering the life of a mail driver.” This was apparently a serious enough series of crimes to get Wilson sentenced to be executed. President Andrew Jackson, however, issued Wilson a full pardon. But Wilson (for reasons we will probably never know) refused the pardon. The odd case went all the way to the Supreme Court, and this was their verdict:

¹⁶ Tommy Nelson, *The Day of Atonement*

“A pardon is an act of grace, a contract... and a contract is not complete unless both sides ratify it. If it is rejected, we have no power in the court to force it on him.”¹⁷

No idea where they got that reasoning... but that’s what the Bible says about how God forgives.

Tragedy: many of you will go to hell with your sins paid for...

- *It’s not that you were too guilty... not that you were too bad... you just wouldn’t receive it!*

6. For the rest of your life, respond to this great sacrifice

- **Commentators point out that the order of events** in this chapter is incredibly significant. It begins with what the high priest does...first 28 verses. And only after that do we get the instructions about how we are to live.¹⁸
- **That’s such a common pattern** in the Bible: God’s work of **salvation comes first**; our obedience is done in response to it.
 - In other words, it’s **not being good and serving God in order to be saved**; but being good and serving God *because you have been saved*.¹⁹
- **And that makes a huge difference.**
 - **Martin Luther was the Catholic monk** that in some ways rediscovered this: that the Bible teaches that salvation was

¹⁷ **“A pardon is an act of grace... which exempts the individual on whom it is bestowed from the punishment the law inflicts for a crime he has committed. ... A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is essential, ... and delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may then be rejected...and if it be rejected, we have discovered no power in a court to force it on him.”**

¹⁸ The laws before and after chapter 16 are different, which might help. **Before** chapter 16, the laws focus mainly on how to construct the temple, how to ordain priests, how to offer sacrifices. It’s really all about how to do worship right, and chapter 16 is the capstone of that section. **After** chapter 16 is where you get most of the laws about ordering everyday life. So you might say that Leviticus is shaped so that the first half is worship, the second half is living. “Worship God for what he’s done, and live in light of that.”

¹⁹ Harris, 591.

not God’s reward for good works, but a free gift that God gives to all who will receive it by faith.

- The Church of his day reacted strongly and said, Martin, if you remove the threat of punishment, people will lose the will to obey. Luther said, “Quite the opposite. Being afraid of judgment will indeed produce a surface-level adherence to the law, he said, but beneath that thin veneer of obedience will rush a river of fear, pride, and self-interest. The only way to develop real love for God is to have fear removed. Only in the security of God’s love for us will love for God grow in us.”²⁰
- Similarly, the 17th-century leaders of the Anglican Church placed John Bunyan, the author of *Pilgrim’s Progress*, in prison for preaching the gospel of God’s unmerited grace toward sinners. Their argument was that when the fear of punishment was removed, people would run wild, doing whatever they wanted. Bunyan replied, *“If people really see that Christ has removed the fear of punishment from them by taking it into himself, they won’t do whatever they want, they’ll do whatever he wants.”*²¹

²⁰ 1 John 4:19; Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians 1535: Chapters 1–4*, LW 26. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1963. “I am saying this in order to refute the *dangerous doctrine* (*perniciosa doctrina*, or “damnable doctrine”) of the *sophists and the monks*, who taught and believed that no one can know for a certainty whether he is in a state of grace, even if he does good works according to his ability and lives a blameless life. . . . *This wicked idea*, on which the entire kingdom of the pope rests, is one that you young people should flee and regard with horror as a dangerous plague.” (LW 26:377. Emphasis added.) Also, “Let us thank God, therefore, that we have been delivered from this *monster of uncertainty* (*hoc monstro incertitudinis*) and that now we can believe for a certainty that the Holy Spirit is crying and issuing that sigh too deep for words in our hearts. And this is our foundation: The Gospel commands us to look, not at our own good deeds or perfections but at God Himself as He promises, and at Christ Himself, the Mediator. By contrast the pope commands us to look, not at God as He promises, not at Christ our High Priest, but at our own works and merits. From the latter course, doubt and despair necessarily follow; but from the former, certainty and the joy of the Spirit.” (LW 26:386–387. Emphasis added.)

²¹ The original source of this story has been difficult to track down. Bryan Chappell references it in his *Christ-Centered Preaching*. Through a personal correspondence Chappell told me that

What if you saw your entire Christian life as a *response* to the gospel of what God did on the day that he took away your sins? **How should your life be?**

- Hebrews says that **in response to the ultimate sacrifice** we now offer to God “sacrifices of praise.” Heb 13:15. Incredibly important **phrasing...**
 - **Not sacrifices to be saved**, but sacrifices of praise to God for having been saved.
 - Sacrifices of praise... That means the **worship we give in here** should be an appropriate response to the greatness of the salvation God has given to us. Is yours this morning? Hands in your pocket with a bored look on your face is not an appropriate response.
 - The writer of Hebrews goes on to say how we **share our things** ought to be a sacrifice of response, not to be saved, but because we have been saved (Heb 13:16).
 - **Everything we do...**
 - Why do we go? Not because we want adventure or don't like the US and always wanted to live overseas, but because we know how lost we were when Jesus came...
 - Why do we tell other people about Jesus? Not because we are extroverts or like theological debate...
 - “It makes me feel awkward.” Of course it does. Is that worth it?
- ~~Paul says **the way that we are kind** to each other is a response.~~
- ~~How **we forgive** (Eph 4:32)~~
- ~~How we **behave ourselves in marriage** (Eph 5:23).~~
- ~~How **we give** should be a reflection of the generosity God bestowed on us (2 Cor 8:9)~~

he has sense lost the original citation, though he remembered reading it in the collection of John Bunyan's letters kept at Oxford University.

- ~~**Peter says how hospitable** we are with each other, and even how we **submit to the government** and serve our employers should be a response to the gospel.²²~~
- All of the Christian life is, “As you have been to me, so I will respond to others!”

Two Questions:

- **Have you received** the free salvation offer that God has offered? Have you **accepted the pardon**? Have you **rested from your efforts** to save yourself and received in what he has done? Sabbath rest of salvation?
- Are you **responding appropriately to the gospel in all areas** of your life?

²² 1 Peter 1:22; 2:13; 2:21–24