

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

LEVITICUS 1-5

Just recently, while on vacation, I made an interesting discovery. I turned on the Food Channel. I knew it existed, but it was something I never really cared to watch... Actually, in my wildest imagination, I never would've thought you could be entertained by watching someone prepare and cook food. *But I got hooked...*

Hey, the Food Channel proves that food is the universal language.

People in all cultures - from all time periods - relate to food. Every human who's lived, has been interested in food. Which is why, God chose food to communicate some of His most important lessons, about the subject most important to us.

Nothing is more vital to you and I than forgiveness. And the sacrificial system God devised for Israel taught the Hebrews, and us, strategic lessons about the severity of sin - the depth of God's grace - and the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus.

The word "*Leviticus*" means "*pertaining to the Levites*" - and the tribe of Levi were the people God chose to carry out the various offerings and sacrifices. In order to minister in the Tabernacle you needed the right genes... *Levi genes*.

The first seven chapters of Leviticus describe the five major Old Testament sacrifices... the **burnt offering, grain offering, peace offering, sin offering, and trespass offering**... and note upfront the relevance of these sacrifices... They all speak of our Savior, Jesus, and the ultimate sacrifice - His death on the cross.

At Jesus' crucifixion, His death put away all sin, from all times, for all people.

In fact, shortly after His crucifixion in 32 AD, the Levitical system of sacrifice was shut down. The Roman army rose up against the Jews and destroyed their Temple – the only place a legitimate sacrifice could be offered. It was God's way of ending the sacrifices. Since Jesus animal sacrifices were no longer needed.

Actually, as far as practical instruction goes, the cross made the book of Leviticus obsolete... Yet as a picture of Jesus it remains highly valuable.

You'll discover every detail of the sacrifices casts a light on another facet of the marvelous work Jesus did on the cross. For that reason Leviticus is a rich book.

Exodus closes with the construction of the Tabernacle – *the place of sacrifice*. Now Leviticus takes up the subject of the *administration of these sacrifices*.

Verse 1, "Now the LORD called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When any one of you brings an offering to the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the livestock - of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish..." Which is a *perfect description* of our *perfect Savior* – Jesus was certainly "a male without blemish."

And "he shall offer it of his own free will at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD." Notice, **the burnt**

offering was not required, but a voluntary offering. You gave the burnt offering of your **“own free will”**.

It's interesting, at His trial, when Jesus refused to answer Pilate, the egotistical Roman governor, threatened Jesus, **“Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”** Jesus answered him, **“You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.”** Jesus was not Pilate's prisoner. He went to the cross of His own volition. He was a prisoner of God's will.

Understand, there were actually three animal sacrifices... Chapter 1 covers **the burnt offering** - which was more *God-centered*... It was offered to bring God pleasure. While **the sin offering** and **the trespass offering** were more *man centered*... their purpose was to bring about man's forgiveness.

Verse 4, **“Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.”** Here is the important principle of transference, or substitution - the death of one on behalf of another.

It reminds me of a picture in the Chicago Sun Times several years ago...

A couple sitting at a table were kissing. The caption read, **“Roderick Hinson gets a smack from Jacqueline Nash, after he served her three-day jail sentence for possession of an unregistered gun.”** Jacqueline had failed to register a handgun - so Hinson served his girlfriend's sentence. The judge allowed the substitution.

God also allows substitutions. In God's sacrificial system, the lamb became the person's substitute. The lamb died in place of the person. *This is the mechanics of salvation...* When we confess Jesus as Lord, He also becomes our substitute.

Notice too in verse 4, the word "**atonement**". It's the translation of the Hebrew word "*kaphar*", which means "*covering*". God judges sin. One day God will pour out His judgment on this wicked world – in that day, what will be you covering?

When my son was 11, he went on a school field trip to an outdoor festival. It was a rainy day, and he wanted an umbrella - a strange request for an 11 year-old male... Boys that age would just as soon get wet, as stay dry. *Why the umbrella?*

Well, it turned out he wanted to walk around the festival with an 11 year-old girl, and he thought she would be more inclined to do so, if he had an umbrella. It turns out his umbrella wouldn't open. All day long he tried to get it open, but to no avail.

Hey, when you stand before a holy God, and face His judgment it will be nice to know that you've got an umbrella that'll open up – that will cover your sinfulness.

Understand Old Testament sacrifices were a temporary covering for sin. God accepted the sacrifice, but eventually it had to be repeated. The sacrifice produced *probation* - you were spared until the sacrifice came due again. But the sacrifice of Jesus earns for us a *permanent pardon*. In Christ we're covered once-for-all!

Verse 5, “He shall kill the bull before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood and sprinkle the blood all around on the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of meeting...” Today, when we come to worship God we sing songs, pray, listen to a Bible Study – then we hug each other and go home. But in the Tabernacle to be close to God you had to butcher a bull – gut a goat.

Forgiveness was expensive! The wages of sin is death, thus forgiveness required the death of an innocent animal. It was all about the sacrifice. The key phrase in Leviticus is 17:11, “It is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

By the first century AD – after 1400 years of blood soaked sacrifices - the Hebrews had become graduates of the Levitical system. They understood the significance of the sacrifice. Thus when John the Baptist said of Jesus, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”... everyone understood.

Verse 6, “And he shall skin the burnt offering and cut it into its pieces.”

This is what the Roman torturers did to Jesus, when they scourged Him with a whip, and turned His back into ground hamburger... they literally skinned him alive.

“The sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar, and lay the wood in order on the fire.” Jesus too, was laid on the wood – the wood of the cross.

“Then the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat in order on the wood that is on the fire upon

the altar; but he shall wash its entrails and its legs with water. And the priest shall burn all on the altar as a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.” In contrast, the sin offering was eaten by the priest. It was a divine barbeque. The animal was butchered – then parts were offered to God, and parts were given to the priests for food.

But the burnt offering wasn't eaten. It was burned up on the altar – *totally consumed* – as was Jesus. Jesus died a brutal death. He held nothing back.

The cross demonstrated Jesus' total dedication to our forgiveness.

Verse 10, “If his offering is of the flocks - of the sheep or of the goats - as a burnt sacrifice, he shall bring a male without blemish. He shall kill it on the north side of the altar before the LORD; and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar. And he shall cut it into its pieces, with its head and its fat; and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire upon the altar; but he shall wash the entrails and the legs with water.”

Verse 13 concludes it, “Then the priest shall bring it all and burn it on the altar; it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”

Did you know the average nose can pick out about 2000 different smells? An above average sniffer can do better than that – it can discern 4000 odors!

God made the human nose to be a very sensitive instrument.

What are your favorite smells?

I love the fragrance of fresh honeysuckle – or the leather of a baseball glove – or meat barbecuing over an open fire. Women tend to like perfumes, and flowers. I saw a sign in a florist shop, “Bring flowers home to your wife. She must be mad at you about something.” It probably never hurts to bring flowers to your wife.

But about God’s favorite smells? *Hey, God loves the aroma of a sacrifice!*

And though we’re no longer required to offer an animal to God as a sacrifice - there are other New Testament sacrifices that we as Christians can offer to God...

Romans 12:1 tells us that rather than a carcass – a dead sacrifice – God would much prefer that we offer our bodies and lives to Him as “a living sacrifice”.

Hebrews 13:15 encourages us to “continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” Our worship is a sacrifice.

In Philippians 4:18 Paul calls the financial contribution that was given to his ministry “a sweet smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”

Good works are also sacrifices we can make to God. Hebrews 13:16, “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Put it all together and we can give to God *our body, our praise, our money, our good works* – these are all ways that we can fill God’s nostrils with sweet smells.

Verse 14, “And if the burnt sacrifice of his offering to the LORD is of birds, then he shall bring his offering of

turtledoves or young pigeons.” This was a provision for the poor. A lamb could be quite costly, but everyone could afford a pigeon.

And this too is symbolic of Jesus. He was an innocent turtledove who flew from heaven to earth and nested in a tree – a tree of wood called the cross.

“The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off its head, and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out at the side of the altar.” And remember the ring that sat on Jesus’ head. The only crown He ever wore was a cruel crown of thorns.

“And he shall remove its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar on the east side, into the place for ashes. Then he shall split it at its wings, but shall not divide it completely; and the priest shall burn it on the altar, on the wood that is on the fire. It is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.” In other words, if you couldn’t afford to barbecue a lamb you could offer God some wings! Either way though, the key is in verse 13, **“the priest shall bring it all...”** God wants all of us. He wants our whole life – not bits and pieces.

It’s so true, **“If Jesus is not Lord of all. He’s not Lord at all.”**

It reminds me of the little boy sitting in church with his dad when the offering plate was passed. He grabbed it - put it on the floor - then stood inside the plate. Of course, his dad was outraged, **“Son, what are you doing?”** The little boy said, **“We learned in Sunday School that we’re supposed to give ourselves to God.”**

Again, today, God is into *living sacrifices* not *dead carcasses*. God is pleased when we give to Him our arms and legs - eyes and ears - muscles and mind.

I read where the scientists at Illinois Tech have found that human beings are not only good sniffers, they're also little stinkers. The average person gives off at least 36 distinct body odors. Add up the combinations, and that's over 100 scents.

The researchers at Illinois Tech are developing ways of identifying people by their smell, or "*scent prints*". Well, if God took your "*scent print*" would he be pleased? Would he consider your life a sweet aroma? - a living sacrifice?

Chapter 2 mentions **the grain offering** – which was the only bloodless sacrifice. It spoke of service, rather than forgiveness from sin.

I'm sure you realize, our good works and charitable deeds are unable to save us. It's been said, "**Being good will keep you out of jail, but it certainly won't keep you out of hell.**" Salvation is the result of a blood sacrifice - not a grain offering.

Yet once you're forgiven, you'll want to serve the Lord. The desire of our heart is to present to Jesus the fruit of our hands - the results of our labor for Him.

But just as the grain offering had to be prepared according to specifications, our works please God only when they're carried out in a specific manner...

Verse 1, '**When anyone offers a grain offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it,**

and put frankincense on it.” Notice, the grain offering is unfit for sacrifice without the oil. And of course, throughout the Bible, oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Guys, whatever we do for God always needs to be empowered, and motivated, and directed by the Holy Spirit.

A work done without his influence is nothing but a work of the flesh.

“He shall bring (the grain offering) to Aaron's sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD. The rest of the grain offering shall be Aaron's and his sons'.

It is most holy of the offerings to the LORD made by fire.”

A part of the offering was kept by Aaron and his family. It was their provision. The priest was supported by a portion of the sacrifice the people gave to God.

We use the same principle today to pay the pastor. A portion of your offerings are kept by the pastors and their families. It enables them to serve you fulltime.

Reading verses 4-7 is almost like watching the Food Channel, **“And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil. If your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil. You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. If your offering is a**

grain offering baked in a covered pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

You shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD.”

Evidently, the grain offering could be prepared with oil in one of three ways: *it was fried in oil – or mixed with oil and baked – or cooked, then covered with oil.*

And the symbolism here is significant... The New Testament teaches there are three experiences we can have with the Holy Spirit... He is **with** us before we're saved – we're frying *with* the oil. He comes to dwell **in** us when we're saved – the oil is mixed *in* with the grain. And after we're saved the Spirit anoints us, or comes **upon** us with power – the oil is poured out *upon* the grain... *with, in, and upon.*

Whenever we serve in Jesus' name, God wants us to do so under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit. For God to accept our grain offerings of good works they need to be simmered, and sautéed, and saturated with the oil of the Spirit.

“And when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. Then the priest shall take from the grain offering a memorial portion, and burn it on the altar. It is an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.

And what is left of the grain offering shall be Aaron's and his sons'.

It is most holy of the offerings to the LORD made by fire.”

Verse 11, “No grain offering which you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven...” Leaven is a type of sin. It’s like pride, it corrupts by puffing up.

“For you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the LORD made by fire.” Honey is also forbidden. Honey is a sweetener that breaks down at high temperatures. It’s a sweetness that can’t stand up to the pressure and heat.

Honey is similar to the sweetness that’s often seen in church... On Sunday morning we’re on our best behavior. We’re charming and friendly, and want to impress people with our spiritual sweetness. We want folks to go home and talk about us... *“Oh, she’s so sweet, isn’t she? That girl is such a sweetheart!”* But what happens when we’re suddenly in the heat of a trial, or a persecution?

The syrupy, sappy, phony sweetness will break down. What we need is not our sweetness, but the fruits of the Spirit – His joy, and kindness, and gentleness.

Verse 12, “As for the offering of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD, but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma. And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.” Salt was a preservative. It spoke of longevity.

Whenever we bring an offering to God it should reflect an ongoing commitment. Not a token, one time - let me do this to get God off my back kind of statement.

“If you offer a grain offering of your firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire...” Green grain represents the freshest and best. “grain beaten from full heads...” Is broken grain. God desires brokenness. “and you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it. It is a grain offering.”

Frankincense was used by a priest when he interceded for the people. It spoke of prayer. All our good works need to be bathed in prayer.

“Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: part of its beaten grain and part of its oil, with all the frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the LORD.”

In chapter 3 **the peace offering** speaks of communion with God.

Remember, all the burnt offering was sacrificed – it was burned up - but with the peace offering only the fat of the animal was laid on the altar.

And in Scripture the fat is always a symbol of abundance...

God knows you have a demanding job... you work long hours... you have bills to pay... but what about the abundance of your time, and effort, and money?

We're told in 3:14, “**all the fat is the Lord's.**” Are you willing to take the surplus of your life and spend it on God? Does the Lord possess your fat... your extra?

The peace offering was the only sacrifice the person making the offering could also eat. In fact, it was sliced three ways... the person who offered the sacrifice ate a portion - the priests ate a portion - and the fat was offered to the Lord!

It was all a symbol of the fellowship and peace all three had with each other – the worshipper, the priest, and God were in essence all eating together. They were at peace with each another. They all were enjoying each other.

Verse 1, “When his offering is a sacrifice of a peace offering, if he offers it of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the LORD. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar. Then he shall offer from the sacrifice of the peace offering an offering made by fire to the LORD. The fat that covers the entrails and all the fat that is on the entrails, the two kidneys and the fat that is on them by the flanks, and the fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys, he shall remove; and Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is on the wood that is on the fire, as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD.”

In other words, God got the guts! The fat and entrails were sacrificed to God.

Notice, God was offered the fat near the flanks. The other day the group that recently went to Israel had a reunion at the Tobin's house, and Dave cooked up some Boston butt. You talk about good tasting barbeque... it was scrumptious.

Usually the fattier portions are the tastiest, but they're also the most dangerous to your health. We now know that fat carries cholesterol that clogs the arteries.

I'm sure the Israelites thought – “God this isn't fair! You're depriving us of the best tasting beef?” They assumed God was spoiling their fun and raining on their parade... In reality, God was keeping them from what would harm them.

When will we learn this lesson? When God says “No”... *No* to sex before marriage - or *no* to promotion at any price - or *no* to a lifestyle that hoards its money and refuses to give to God... He's doing so to save us from spiritual cholesterol. He doesn't want lust, or fame, or greed to cause a heart disease.

The fat in life is some tasty stuff – but God says “No” because He's looking out for our best interests. He sees dangers of which we're not aware.

Verse 6, “If his offering as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD is of the flock, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. If he offers a lamb as his offering, then he shall offer it before the LORD...” These instructions for a lamb are similar to those in verses 1-5 that applied to a bull or cow “of the herd.”

Verse 12, “And if his offering is a goat...” Again the instructions are the same. If you want to eat a meal and fellowship with the Lord He's happy to join you.

And He doesn't care what you're serving... a bull, or a lamb, or even a goat.

But there's one prohibition, verse 17, “This shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwellings: you shall eat neither fat nor blood.” The fat always belonged to God – and the blood was shed for sin.

Chapter 4, “Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them...””

Notice, you’re responsible for even the sins you don’t realize you’ve committed.

My kids excuse themselves all the time, “I didn’t mean too...” But it doesn’t matter if you meant to do it or not. God holds us responsible for our actions, as well as our motives. Even an unintentional sin necessitated a sacrifice.

This was **the sin offering**.

“If the anointed priest sins,” Notice he’s anointed with the power of the Spirit, but still sins. Samson was the classic case. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve... but that anointing alone didn’t necessarily produce a godly character.

“If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned a young bull (this was the same sacrifice offered in the nation sinned) without blemish as a sin offering. He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD.” Again, it was the principle of transference. The bull was slaughtered in the place of the sinner.

Verse 5, “Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting. The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the

blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the tabernacle of meeting; and he shall pour the remaining blood of the bull at the base of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.” The blood was spread three places... *in front of the Holy of Holies - on the altar of incense altar - at the base of the altar of burnt offering.* And why these three places? *I’m not sure.*

But know this - blood was splattered all over the place – inside and out.

Not too long ago, I read some interesting statistics. Americans have cultivated quite a taste for Mexican food. In 1996, \$1.6 billion was spent on salsa, refried beans, and taco shells... But researchers have learned that what most Americans want is a watered-down form of Mexican cuisine. Companies like Old El Paso and Pace now offer “cool” and “mild” salsas. Industry observers call this “gringo food”.

One expert writes, “The gringo-ization of Mexican food will continue. In 20 years, you won’t even recognize what they’ll be calling Mexican food.”

I’m afraid, in many quarters of the church today the same phenomena has taken place within Christianity. We have watered-down - and Americanized - and sanitized a core truth of the Gospel - *the wages of sin is death!*

There was a time when Christianity’s critics ridiculed it by calling it “a bloody religion” or “a slaughterhouse faith”. They scoffed at the Gospel’s insistence on a blood atonement.

They mockingly labeled us as primitive and barbaric. They made fun of believers swimming in a sea of plasma, and dog-paddling among the clots.

Yet, you rarely here these criticisms today... and it's because the Church, has in large part, done to the Gospel what Pillsbury has done to Mexican food.

We've diluted it! There are presentations of the Gospel that hide the blood, and pain, and loss... to make it palatable to American taste buds. Folks have removed, or downplayed the parts of the Gospel that are offensive to modern sensibilities. The cross has become a footnote. In essence, we've created a "gringo-Gospel".

This is why we need to study the book of Leviticus. We need to read about the blood sprinkled on the veil - on the altar's horns – and at the base of the altar.

The wages of sin is death, and life is in the blood, so forgiveness requires a sacrifice. Hebrews 9:22 puts it, "without shedding of blood there is no remission."

When Adam and Eve sinned they tried to cover their guilt with fig leaves – but their *fruit of the looms* wouldn't do. God replaced their wraps with animal skins. From the beginning God covered their sin with a blood-letting sacrifice!

Adam understood his need - as did Noah when he exited the Ark – Abraham also built altars and offered sacrifices. Here in Leviticus God categorizes and codifies these various sacrifices. He provides prescriptions for the execution.

But don't miss the main point – sacrifice was always necessary for forgiveness.

Verses 8-10 tell us the sin offering was cut up like the peace offering. The guts and fat was offered up to God. They were burned on the altar of burnt offering.

Verse 11 tells us, **“But the bull's hide and all its flesh, with its head and legs, its entrails and offal - the whole bull he shall carry outside the camp to a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned.”** Hebrews 13:12 tells us this detail actually spoke of Jesus, and was fulfilled when He was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem. The hill called Golgotha was just north of the Damascus Gate.

“Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done something against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which should not be done, and are guilty; when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for the sin, and bring it before the tabernacle of meeting. And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD. Then the bull shall be killed before the LORD....”

Then the same procedure is followed... the blood is sprinkled on the veil, spread on the horns, and poured out at the base of the altar. The fat is burned on the altar of burnt offering – and the rest of the carcass is burned outside the camp.

The only difference with national sin is the elders lay hands on the sacrifice.

Now if the priest sins, or the nation sins, a bull is used as the sacrifice. But if a civil leader sins – or if a common person sins – they’re to offer a goat or a lamb.

And the blood is spread on the horns of the altar of incense, and at the base of the altar of burnt offering – but not on the veil before the Holy of Holies...

And again, I’m not sure why? There could be a practical purpose. There were a lot more commoners than priests, thus to save time and effort they cut back on the ritual. And hey, we’re talking about the sin of politicians – if politicians were then like they are today these poor priests could’ve spent all their time at the veil.

It reminds me of the guy who went to heaven. He saw a clock for every person alive on earth. But he noticed the clock hands went around at different speeds. He was told that every time you tell a lie your clock moves forward just a little.

He just happened to see George W. Bush’s clock. The hands moved, but slowly. The angel told him that President Bush was trying his best to be honest.

That’s when he asked, “Where’s John Kerry’s clock?” The angel said, “Well, it’s up in the office right now. The hands move so fast they’re using it as a ceiling fan.”

Chapter 5 deals with **the trespass offering**.

The Hebrew word translated “**sin**” means “*to miss the mark*”. We sin when we try to please God, and fall short - whereas a “**trespass**” is a “*deliberate act of rebellion*”. We trespass when we cross a boundary God has established.

You violate a “*No Trespass*” sign when you go where you don’t belong. It’s to step outside your boundaries. This is what it means to trespass against God, or against another person. A trespass occurs when we go beyond our boundaries. When we step outside of God’s will - or infringe upon another person’s rights.

Verse 1, “If a person sins in hearing the utterance of an oath, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of the matter - if he does not tell it, he bears guilt.”

In other words, if you know the truth - and you take an oath to tell the truth – but you refuse and remain silent - then you have trespassed against the truth.

“Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether it is the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean livestock, or the carcass of unclean creeping things, and he is unaware of it, he also shall be unclean and guilty.

Or if he touches human uncleanness - whatever uncleanness with which a man may be defiled, and he is unaware of it - when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty.”

We’ll talk more about ceremonial uncleanness later in Leviticus.

“Or if a person swears, speaking thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, whatever it is that a man may pronounce by an oath, and he is unaware of it - when he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters.”

Notice the examples God uses of a trespass all have to do with infringements on the truth.

You'd think God might mention trespasses against sexual boundaries, private property, or a person's reputation – instead he's concerned with lies and a failure to tell the truth. Hey, God knows that all morality starts with an adherence to the truth. Sexual sin, and thievery, and slander all begin when you entertain a lie.

Verse 5, “And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing; and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin. If he is not able to bring a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD, for his trespass which he has committed, two turtledoves or two young pigeons: one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering.”

In other words, your lack of money doesn't let you off the hook. If you've sinned you have to offer some sacrifice. If you can't afford a lamb you can bring a pigeon.

Sin has to be dealt with... It's an issue we can't sidestep, or excuse away.

“And he shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer that which is for the sin offering first, and wring off its head from its neck, but shall not divide it completely.

Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, and the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering. And he shall offer the second as a burnt offering according to the

prescribed manner. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin which he has committed, and it shall be forgiven him.

But if he is not able to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons (if he's dirt poor), then he who sinned shall bring for his offering one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a sin offering." God's mercy goes even further... Hey, if you can't afford a pigeon bring a little flour. One-tenth of an ephah was about 3 quarts – not much.

"He shall put no oil on it, nor shall he put frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering." Notice the terminology goes back and forth between sin offering and trespass offering. It's because they're so similar. In fact, Leviticus 7:7 tells us, "The trespass offering is like the sin offering; there is one law for them both..."

"Then he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take his handful of it as a memorial portion, and burn it on the altar according to the offerings made by fire to the LORD. It is a sin offering. The priest shall make atonement for him, for his sin that he has committed in any of these matters; and it shall be forgiven him.

The rest shall be the priest's as a grain offering."

In the remainder of chapters 5 and 6 the trespass offering is associated with crimes against other people. Along with the sacrifice, restitution went to the victim.

It was not enough to gain God's forgiveness. Damages had to be paid.

The remainder of chapter 5 discusses trespasses against “the holy things”.

This involved sins like shortchanging God on your tithes - or holding back the firstborn from your flock - and the firstfruits of your crops. When this happened you offered a ram as a sacrifice - then paid what you owed God - plus 20%.

Chapter 6 applies the same principle to trespasses against other people...

Verse 1, “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "If a person sins and commits a trespass against the LORD by lying to his neighbor about what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or about a pledge, or about a robbery, or if he has extorted from his neighbor, or if he has found what was lost and lies concerning it, and swears falsely - in any one of these things that a man may do in which he sins: then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering.”

It’s not enough to cry out for God’s forgiveness. You’ve got to do the right thing toward the person you’ve harmed. Restore what you’ve taken, and add 20%.

And you need to do this even if the person you’ve harmed is your neighbor, or a relative, or the company where you’re employed, or even the government.