

Acceptable Offerings

Lev 22:17-25, 31-33

SS Lesson for 12/13/2015

Devotional Scripture: Rom 12:1-8

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson provides the principles behind God's requirements for **Acceptable Offerings**. The **study's aim** is to show that when we comply with God's instructions and expressed principles, we are obeying Him and owning Him as our God. The **study's application** is to arrange our thinking and actions so that when we do give, we will do it as God instructed, not as we think best.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Lev 22:31

31 "Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the Lord.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Ceremonial uncleanness prevented a priest from either offering or eating a sacred offering. The punishment for priestly noncompliance was severe—he was to be **cut off from God's presence**. Some sources of ceremonial uncleanness that prevented a priest from eating the sacred offerings were **an infectious skin disease** (cf. chaps. 13-14), **a bodily discharge** (cf. chap. 15), and contact with **a corpse** (cf. 11:39). The reminder for priestly compliance again stressed the holiness of God and His design to promote holiness in His people (22:9). The regulations are clarified concerning who may eat a **sacred meal**. The **priest's family** could, but who was considered a member of the priest's family? Apparently any permanent member of his household qualified, including **a slave** (v. 11) or a widowed or divorced **daughter** without **children** who returned to the household (v. 13). However, this did not include a **guest** or **hired worker**, who were not permanent residents (v. 10), or a **daughter** who lived with her husband's household (v. 12). The procedure for unwitting violation of these regulations (**if anyone eats a sacred offering by mistake**) was to **make restitution to the priest... and add** a 20 percent penalty. The **payment** (v. 16) may refer to this restitution or it may refer to a ram for a guilt offering (cf. 5:14-6:7). **The priests** were responsible to oversee the eating of **sacred offerings** to prevent such violations. The section regarding personal disqualifications of individual sacrificial animals begins with a general statement regarding **burnt** and **fellowship** offerings. The prohibition of **deformed** or defective sacrificial animals is explained in terms similar to those that precluded priests from offering sacrifices (21:18-20). This is probably intentional. Wenham argues that the sacrificial **animals** are "the priests of the animal world," that is, as the Gentiles are symbolized by unclean animals, and Israel by clean animals, the priests are symbolized by sacrificial animals (*Leviticus*, p. 290; cf. p. 170). The one exception that allowed an animal with certain defects as an offering was in the case of **a freewill offering** (22:23). Limitations are also given concerning young sacrificial animals. They were not an acceptable offering before **the eighth day**, nor were they to be slaughtered **on the same day** as their "mothers." A reminder is given regarding the time limitation for eating a **thanksgiving** offering. **It must be eaten that same day** (cf. 7:15). This conclusion emphasizes both divine holiness and divine grace (**who brought you out of Egypt**; cf. comments on Deut. 4:20) as a motivation for holiness in the lives of God's people (cf. 18:24-30; 19:36-37; 20:22-26).

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

If a survey were taken of Christians regarding which of the 66 books of the Bible is the least appealing or most confusing, Leviticus would probably rank in the top three. Who knows how many well-meaning individuals

have determined to read through the Bible in a year, only to find themselves bogging down when they reach Leviticus! They are bewildered (and perhaps a bit upset) by the constant references to the sacrificing of animals and to blood. Further, regulations about ceremonially clean and unclean foods seem far removed from life in the twenty-first century. Rather than focusing on the details of the laws and regulations when studying Leviticus, perhaps it is more helpful to consider the book's primary themes of sacrifice and holiness, both of which play prominent roles in the New Testament as well. Sacrifice is important because of Jesus' supreme, once-for-all offering of himself on the cross (Hebrews 9:24-28) and because of the responsibility of his followers to offer themselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). Holiness is crucial because the holiness imperative in Leviticus 19:2 is repeated in 1 Peter 1:15, 16 in instructing Christians how to live. Both themes play important parts in today's lesson text, from Leviticus 22.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Command Regarding Offerings (Lev 22:17-19)

17 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,

18 "Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: 'Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering--

19 you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.

Keeping vows and freewill promises (17-18)

Keep vows because they are a witness before God (Josh 24:14-22)

14 "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! 17 It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God." 19 Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." 21 But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord." 22 Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

Keep vows because we must do everything we say (Num 30:1-2)

30 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the Lord commands: 2 When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

Keep vows because God will demand completion (Deut 23:21-23)

21 If you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the Lord your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. 22 But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be

guilty. 23 Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the Lord your God with your own mouth.

Never hastily or rashly give a vow (Proverbs 20:25)

25 It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.

Firstfruit offerings (19)

Giving of firstfruits that honors God (Prov 3:9)

9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops;

Giving of firstfruits that are offered to God (Lev 2:12)

12 You may bring them to the Lord as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma.

Giving of firstfruits that come from what God has given (Deut 26:1-2)

26 When you have entered the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, 2 take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name

Giving of firstfruits as tithes to the Church (Mal 3:10)

10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

Giving of firstfruits that come from abundance to supply the lacking of others (2 Cor 8:14)

14 At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality,

Restrictions Regarding Offerings (Lev 22:20-25)

20 Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf.

21 And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.

22 Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the Lord.

23 Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted.

24 You shall not offer to the Lord what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land.

25 Nor from a foreigner's hand shall you offer any of these as the bread of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them. They shall not be accepted on your behalf.' "

No defects (20-24)

No defects because it is wrong (Mal 1:8)

8 When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?" says the Lord Almighty.

No defects because God is not pleased with them (Hos 8:13)

13 They offer sacrifices given to me and they eat the meat, but the Lord is not pleased with them. Now he will remember their wickedness and punish their sins: They will return to Egypt.

No defects because God will not accept them (Mal 1:10)

10 "Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands.

No defects because they are detestable to God (Deut 17:1)

17 Do not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him.

No defects because it is cheating God (Mal 1:14)

14 "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord. For I am a great king," says the Lord Almighty, "and my name is to be feared among the nations.

No corrupted offerings received from others (25)

Because the same rules apply even for offerings from others (Num 15:14-16)

14 For the generations to come, whenever an alien or anyone else living among you presents an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the Lord, he must do exactly as you do. 15 The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the Lord: 16 The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you."

Because the accountability is on the believer (Num 16:40)

40 as the Lord directed him through Moses. This was to remind the Israelites that no one except a descendant of Aaron should come to burn incense before the Lord, or he would become like Korah and his followers.

Because it could cause desecration of the offering (Ezek 44:7)

7 In addition to all your other detestable practices, you brought foreigners uncircumcised in heart and flesh into my sanctuary, desecrating my temple while you offered me food, fat and blood, and you broke my covenant.

Principles Behind Acceptable Offerings (Lev 22:31-33)

31 "Therefore you shall keep My commandments, and perform them: I am the Lord.

32 You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you,

33 who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord."

Keeping holy commands (31-32)

Keeping commands through love (John 14:15)

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Keeping commands is an obligation (Rom 8:12-14)

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation — but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it.
13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Keeping commands regardless of circumstances (Dan 3:16-18)

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

Keeping commands through suffering (Heb 5:8)

8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

Keeping commands that lead to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Keeping commands that show love for God (1 John 5:2-3)

2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. 3 This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, NIV

Being sanctified by God (32-33)

Sanctification by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:2)

2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Sanctification through the blood of Jesus (Heb 9:13-14)

13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Sanctification by setting apart Jesus as Lord in your heart (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Sanctification by presenting our bodies as a slave to God (Rom 6:19)

19 I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from J. Ligon Duncan

The whole of the ceremonial law is designed to draw distinctions or boundaries between what is clean and what is unclean, what is holy and what is profane, what is allowed and what is not allowed; and that distinction between clean and unclean, and holy and profane, and allowed and not allowed, all of those distinctions are designed to heighten the idea, the understanding, of the holiness of God: that God is distinct; that holiness is different from sin; that God is not like the sinful world; that God's people are not to be like the sinful nations.

All of these distinctions in the ceremonial code are designed to emphasize the uniqueness, the separateness, the distinctiveness, the holiness of God over against this sinful fallen world; and they are to show us that God is to be treated holy. So in this case, if God has specifically dedicated certain foods only to the priests, to partake of those foods is to blur the distinction that God has established in devoting those foods just to them, and that blurring of the distinction undermines the illustration God is bringing to bear in the ceremonial law. He is to be treated holy, and therefore that which is holy and that which is profane is not to be mixed. And only those who are part of the Levites, or the priests who have been specifically given the right to eat of this particularly designated food, are to take of it; else, God's distinctions which set forth His holiness are blurred and God is not treated as holy as He ought to be treated.

And so that's what this strange section is about: defining who can and who can't take of that food dedicated to the priests, because it is important to observe the proper partaking of that food in order to keep the distinction that God has made Himself in the ceremonial law. So once again the ceremonial distinction, the ritual distinction, is designed to illustrate a moral principle regarding God's holiness.

And then finally, if you look at verses 17-33, there's a third thing we need to see here.

You notice again for at least the fourth time in the Book of Leviticus, we have seen this God-motivation to holiness: I am the Lord; I sanctify you; I brought you out of Egypt; therefore, you be holy; therefore, you observe holiness; therefore, you keep the distinction between the holy and profane. Over and over, there is this God-motivation to holiness. Our God is holy, so we are to be holy. And that point is driven home over and over in Leviticus.

But it's the first part of this section that I want to concentrate on. The first part of this section basically says that only perfect animals need apply for the job of being a sacrifice. In this section, it is repeatedly stressed that the animals which are used for sacrifice — whether they're sheep, whether they're from the herd, whether they are goats — they are to be perfect.

And we need to ask ourselves a question: Why, in the ceremonial law, were perfect animals required? And there is more than one biblical answer to that question. One reason that perfect animals were required was because the animals were to represent to the people who were offering them the quality of perfection in God. Since God is perfect, what is offered to Him needs to be as near to perfect as is humanly possible to offer. In other words, the very thing that Israel was offering to God was to be reflective of the God to whom they were offering it.

Secondly, in connection to that, the offerings had to be perfect because the perfection of your offering represented your own estimation of God. If you brought something that was less than perfect, or in this maimed or spoiled condition that is described here in the third part of Leviticus 22, it says something about your esteem for God. It says that you have a low view of God. It says you don't think that He deserves the very best that you can offer. And so certainly, for at least those two reasons perfect sacrifices were required in the sacrificial system. But because we're New Testament Christians, we're beneficiaries of all the blessings and the fullness of the new covenant, we know that there is another reason, as well, because the Book of Hebrews tells

us that in the end, even those perfect animal sacrifices did not in and of themselves bring about the forgiveness of sins. As the author of Hebrews says, “The blood of bulls and goats cannot forgive sin.”

So why, then, all the emphasis on the perfect sacrifice? Ah! That brings us to our third and final and most important reason, and it is this: Because those perfect sacrifices pointed to the perfect Savior. It is stressed over and over in the Book of Hebrews, in the Book of I Peter, in the Book of I John, over and over again, that Jesus was...what? A perfect, unspotted, unblemished sacrifice; that there was in Him absolutely no imperfection.

Now, let's think about that for a minute. The point of the New Testament is not that Jesus was simply ritually perfect, that He met some sort of ceremonial standard of cleanliness. In fact, very often Jesus seems to be pushing the envelope in regard to ceremonial standards in His dealing with the people of God. But what the New Testament stresses everywhere is what Jesus' moral perfection — that He was utterly unspotted in His obedience to God's law...that He was not only a sacrifice for sin, bearing the penalty due to us, but He was perfect in His own whole obedience to the law of God.

So once again we see here the ceremonial as a picture of the moral. The ceremonial perfection of the Old Testament sacrificial animals points to the moral perfection of the only real sacrifice, the only Savior, Jesus Christ. He was perfect morally and not merely ceremonially; and, therefore, He is the perfect sacrifice. That is why pastors who are preaching the gospel will emphasize to you not simply that Jesus died as a sacrifice for your sins and made a satisfaction for your sins in dying as a sacrifice, but that His whole obedience accrued to His being a sacrifice for your sin.

And not only was He fully and wholly obedient to God's moral law, He was fully obedient to something that you and I could never have been fully obedient to, and that is the demands for the fulfillment of the covenant of grace; because, as Philippians 2 says, He was not only obedient, but He emptied Himself, taking on the form of a servant, and day by day went into this downward pit of humiliation and degradation on our behalf.

Adam was never asked to go into such a pit of humiliation and degradation as a part of his moral obedience to God. That was never part of God's requirement of Adam in the Garden before sin: that he go through suffering and pain and degradation and humiliation in order to enjoy communion and fellowship with God. But because Adam's sin plunged us into a state of misery and humiliation and degradation, the only way to bring us out of that was not only through a sacrifice, not only through perfect obedience to God's moral law, but a full obedience which entailed humiliation to its ultimate extent. And that whole obedience is part of what constitutes Jesus as the perfect sacrifice. And the perfection of those Old Testament sacrifices points forward to the fullness of the perfection of the Savior whose blood, unlike the blood of the bulls and goats of the Old Testament sacrifice, the author of Hebrews says His blood brings about forgiveness “once for all” because it's the perfect sacrifice.

And there in Leviticus, hundreds and hundreds of years before the Lord sent His Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ into this world, He is drawing the picture of the perfection of His Son and the fullness of His salvation.

That, by the way, my friends, is just one reason why evangelicals can never be satisfied with a view that says Jesus is “a” Savior; Jesus is one among many saviors. No. He is the only perfect sacrifice. Who will step up and claim to have done what He alone has done? And because of what He alone has done, we must only trust in Him. But — all who do fully trust in Him may be fully assured that He is able to save you to the uttermost.

(Adapted from URL:<http://www.fpcjackson.org/resource-library/sermons/the-lord-who-makes-us-holy>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Occasionally we hear or read of a parent who places excessive demands on his or her children. Perhaps the father was a star athlete in high school or college, so he expects his son to follow in his footsteps. The son, however, may have little interest or skill in athletics. But instead of allowing the son the freedom to make his own decision, the father prods the son to make athletics a priority. The result is predictable—frustration for

both father and son and a growing alienation from each other as time goes by. Some who read the requirements that God made of his people in today's text may also be a bit frustrated. Why did an offering have to be perfect if it was going to be burned up anyway? Wouldn't the concept of grace be taught more effectively by accepting offerings with flaws? And aren't God's standards teaching his people to look down on individuals who have certain "flaws," whatever they might be (compare Leviticus 21:16-23)? One must keep in mind when studying the laws concerning Old Testament offerings that undergirding all of them is the holiness of God. Throughout the book of Leviticus, the principle stated in Leviticus 22:32 in today's text is emphasized. It is vital that God's holiness not be compromised in any way and that his people learn to honor that holiness in every detail of their lives. So the requirements given in the Law of Moses regarding offerings are not there because God is a demanding, ruthless tyrant. Rather, they are there to impress upon those who present offerings the nature of the one being worshipped. And in the bigger picture of humanity's redemption, God's requiring "the best" prepares for how he one day offers his own best—his sinless Son—as the perfect sacrifice to die for imperfect people (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Under the new covenant, giving is not measured in terms of the kind of animals we offer. The New Testament's teaching on giving is centered more on certain principles, one of which is that the heart or motivation of the giver must be in tune with God's desires. Paul tells the Corinthians, for example, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Of course, we should be quick to add that sincere motivation and heartfelt obedience mattered under the old covenant too. As Samuel told King Saul, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22; compare Mark 12:33). Victor Hugo (1802-1885) wrote, "You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving." If we love God and make obedience to his will a daily priority, the proper kind of giving will follow.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Pastors of local congregations are responsible to preach God's Word (Lev. 22:17-18)
2. God wants our best; do not offer to God what you do not want (vss. 19-24)
3. It is essential that gifts given to God come from true worshippers (vs. 25)
4. The highest form of worship to God is following His commands (vs. 31)
5. A Christian's behavior must always mirror our Heavenly Father (vs. 32)
6. Remembering how God saved us is a reminder of His grace and mercy (vs. 33)