

# The Burnt Offering

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**Bible Text:** Leviticus 1  
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## Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

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We read God's word this morning in Leviticus 1. After reading Leviticus 1, we'll also read Leviticus 6:8-13, but our text this morning will consist of the entire chapter of Leviticus 1.

1 And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, ye shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock. 3 If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD. 4 And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him. 5 And he shall kill the bullock before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 6 And he shall flay the burnt offering, and cut it into his pieces. 7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire: 8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: 9 But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD. 10 And if his offering be of the flocks, namely, of the sheep, or of the goats, for a burnt sacrifice; he shall bring it a male without blemish. 11 And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar. 12 And he shall cut it into his pieces, with his head and his fat: and the priest shall lay them in order on the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar: 13 But he shall wash the inwards and the legs with water: and the priest shall bring it all, and burn it upon the altar: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD. 14 And if the burnt sacrifice for his offering to the LORD be of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons. 15 And the priest shall bring it unto the altar, and wring off his head, and burn it on the altar;

and the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar: 16 And he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes: 17 And he shall cleave it with the wings thereof, but shall not divide it asunder: and the priest shall burn it upon the altar, upon the wood that is upon the fire: it is a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

Now in chapter 6, verses 8 through 13, are found more laws regarding the burnt offering, especially now the laws that the priests must bear in mind.

8 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 9 Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it. 10 And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. 11 And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place. 12 And the fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. 13 The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out.

This far we read God's word.

Let us pray.

*Heavenly Father, open our eyes to behold wondrous things out of thy law. Give us ears to hear and may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen.*

Beloved saints in Jesus Christ, we are at the beginning of the book of Leviticus and that makes us ask the question to start: how does the book of Exodus end? The answer is that the book of Exodus ends with the building of and erection of the tabernacle according to the directions that God had given Moses. In other words, the book of Exodus ends with God providing a place for Israel to come to worship him, a place which would be called his house so that there he would not only be worshiped in an outward formal sense, but there Israel would come to dwell with him as their Lord and Savior in covenant fellowship.

That begs two questions and the answer to those two questions the book of Leviticus, if you consider it in its broad theme, answers. Question 1 is: in what way does a sinner come to worship Jehovah? What must the sinner do to prepare himself for fellowship with Jehovah God? Question 2 is: how can the sinner, even if he should prepare himself rightly, do all of the necessary things in the right way, how can a sinner come into the

presence of Jehovah and have fellowship with him? The book of Leviticus answers those questions as it points in the first half of the book, chapters 1 through 16, to the laws regarding worship, and in chapter 17 through 27, to the laws regarding a holy life.

The big picture then is that God is teaching Israel in the book of Leviticus that she will come to worship him in the way of obedience. She will enjoy fellowship in his house but there isn't something about his house that will make her enjoy fellowship if during the week and in the rest of her life she's not concerned to enjoy his fellowship. We enjoy fellowship with Jehovah in the way of obedience to his law. I did not say on the basis of our obedience or because of our obedience. That would bring us an answer to that second question, I'll get right to it, but in the way of a holy life Israel would enjoy fellowship with Jehovah God and the church in the New Testament also because our obedience does not earn or provide a basis how can the sinner worship Jehovah. Did you ask that this morning as you prepared to come to worship him? Examining your hearts and lives? Did you say, "But even the best of my works are polluted with sin. I still come with sin clinging to me. How can I?" And the answer is only on the basis of the blood of Jesus Christ shed for us.

That's the second question, how can, and to that also the book of Leviticus gives its answer when especially in the first 16 chapters speaking of the laws regarding worship, the emphasis lays on the fact that you must bring an offering and that offering, as we'll see this morning, must be an animal and that animal's blood you must shed. That's the focus of the first 16 chapters of the book of Leviticus. It's even more the focus of the first seven, for the first seven chapters of Leviticus treat the five different offerings that made up the worship of Israel: the burnt offering, the meat offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. No worship of Jehovah, no picture of being received into his fellowship and no assurance of being received into his fellowship except you bring an offering to the Lord.

As I indicated, the first five and into the sixth chapter of Leviticus deal with those five offerings from the viewpoint of the laws regarding the Israelite bringing them. Then when you get to Leviticus 6:8, you start reading the laws of the peace offering, and then the laws of the burnt offering, and then the meat, and the peace, and the trespass and the sin all over again and you say, "We just went through these." But there the focus is on the laws of the priest who must follow certain laws in order to bring the sacrifice in a way that's pleasing to God. One thing that chapter 6, verses 8 through 13 add to the law as we have it in our text, is that the fire of the burnt offering, an altar was always to be burning, and another regarded how the priest was to clean that altar. In both ways, he was to regard that altar and its contents as holy unto the Lord.

Now this is an Old Testament passage and even an Old Testament law and the fruit of this sermon this morning is certainly not going to be, ought not be, that you and I go construct an altar and start bringing our bull, ox or sheep and our goats. Why, then, would we examine this chapter today? Remember in answer to that question the principles that Belgic Confession Article 24 sets forth as to the place and function of the Old Testament law in the life of the New Testament saint. Not that we follow the ceremonies prescribed

in the law, but two things, this law taught Israel Gospel truths. It pointed Israel to Christ. You and I will be pointed to Christ this morning. We'll see that what the law taught then is what the Gospel teaches yet today and that is that Jesus Christ is the sacrifice for sin. In the second place, Belgic Confession Article 25 reminds us that from these laws we also can regulate our life in all honesty to the glory of God according to his will, that is, there are principles for holy living embedded in these laws even though we don't carry out the letter of the law, still the principle, the essence of the law remains.

Let's see how both of those things are true and that this passage is indeed pertinent to the life of the New Testament church. I call your attention to the text under the theme "The Burnt Offering." Notice, first, that it pictured atonement; second, that it required the bringing of a substitute; and third, that it signified complete devotion to Jehovah.

Atonement. That's the main picture that God would have Israel understand. If you will come into fellowship with Jehovah God and worship him, it can be only on the basis of atonement. And why is atonement needed? From man's viewpoint, yours, mine and Israel's, it's because of sin. We fell and even before we have sinned, Adam as our head fell from Jehovah's fellowship by his sin, estranged himself and the whole human race from God. We must have atonement, atonement must be made on our behalf if we are to worship Jehovah. Israel in the wilderness, that's where these laws were given, of course, would be reminded of that again and again and again as she sinned again and again and again, and would yet be taught in the sacrifice atonement will be made. Jehovah receives sinners back into fellowship with him again and again and again on the basis of atonement. The second reason why atonement was so necessary is that Jehovah is a holy God. He does not have fellowship with those whose sins he sees. He has fellowship with sinners but only with those sinners whose sins he declares he no longer sees. They must be covered, covered in the blood of Jesus Christ. Atonement must be made.

The whole sacrificial system taught Israel that. No only the burnt offering, though that in a unique way, we'll see that in a moment. The whole sacrificial system taught Israel that atonement must be made. What did Israel do day after day after day? It's true, our text in verse 3 speaks of a voluntary offering, an offering that an Israelite could bring when he wanted but the law required Israel not only to bring offerings sometimes when they wanted but other times to bring them in accordance with the requirement of God. There must always be offerings, animals, burning on the altar. Why? Atonement is necessary. The whole sacrificial system showed that.

Specifically the burnt offering. The text makes that explicit in verse 4 when at the end it says that "it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." The Israelite in bringing the offering and in seeing the blood of that animal shed, would understand that this was a picture of a covering for sin. That's what the word "atonement" means, "covering for sin." And because it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin, the Israelite understood this to be a picture of one who would come. It's for that reason also that according to the text the animal must be killed and then specific instruction is given in our text regarding what the priest was to do with the blood of that animal.

I didn't say it earlier so bear in mind a moment the structure of chapter 1. Verses 3 through 9 regard the procedure to follow when a bullock is offered; 10 through 13 are the procedure to follow when a sheep or a goat is offered; 14 to 17, the procedure to follow when a bird is offered. And in each of those three sections, there is a statement about what the priest is to do with the blood. For instance in verse 5, "he shall kill the bullock before the LORD," that would be the Israelite bringing it, "and the priests, Aaron's sons, shall bring the blood, and sprinkle the blood round about upon the altar that is by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." And again with regard to the sheep or the goat, verse 11, "the priests, Aaron's sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar."

Now in the Old Testament, the sprinkling of blood was a picture of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ and its effect for you and for me, and because that was such a common practice in the Old Testament, the sprinkling of blood, and because the King James uses the word "sprinkling," you and I might think that the priest was just to dip his hand in the blood and to sprinkle it towards the altar but that's not actually the idea of the Hebrew word translated "sprinkle" here. It means "throw." The priest was to take the blood of the bullock, the sheep or the goat in a basin and to bring that basin into and by the altar of burnt offering and to throw the blood against that altar so that the altar was stained with the blood of the animal. The Lord will not regard the sinner if he does not see blood. That picture was prominently made for the Israelite. In the case of the bird, verse 15 says, "the blood thereof shall be wrung out at the side of the altar." Much less quantity of blood, of course. No need to collect it in a basin but the priest was to take the bird to the altar, wring off his head there and cut the bird apart and let the blood drain down on the side of the altar.

Atonement must be made. Though that was also the picture of the sin offering and the trespass offering, the burnt offering emphasized in distinction from the others that atonement must be made because Israel was sinful. What I'm saying is that every one of the sacrifices that involved the bringing of an animal reminded of the need for atonement but the sin offering and the trespass offering reminded you or me or the Israelite that we need atonement because we spoke this evil word this week, or we committed that act of sin against God's law this week. The burnt offering was not to be brought because I remember, "Oh, I did something I should not have," the burnt offering was to be brought because the Israelite was conscious he was inherently sinful and corrupt, not only our transgressions but also our corrupt natures against which we fight all the day long must be covered in the blood of Christ.

It's for this reason that in the first place, the offerings were to be brought often and this burnt offering was the basic offering, the offering on which the whole system was built. The burnt offering was to be offered on behalf of Israel at the morning sacrifice and at the evening sacrifice, let alone the many other burnt offerings throughout the day from Israelites who brought them of their own voluntary will. Israel is a sinful people.

It's also because the offering was a picture of atonement being made for a sinful nature that we read that the priest is to burn that fire continually and to never let the fire go out.

The picture of atonement is never taken away from the Israelites. Of course, it was while they journeyed through the wilderness, when they went from camp to camp, but whenever they were camped and later when they were settled in the Promised Land, the picture was always there. That's instructive, then, for you and for me. Never apart from the blood of Jesus Christ do we come into the house of God to worship, or do we worship him in our families and private lives throughout the week; and never may we disregard, forget or ignore that it was on the basis of that shed blood we have fellowship with Jehovah God.

But as the Israelite brought his offering, he might think, "I'm doing what God said I had to do so he will receive me. I've done the right things." And yet we are reminded that it's not when we think we have fellowship with Jehovah, when we suppose that we've worshiped him rightly, but when he declares it that we can really have the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. In other words, the Israelite must see in this offering a picture of complete atonement. Not partial, not the beginning but the beginning and the end and everything in between.

This burnt offering was a picture of complete atonement in two ways. First of all, because the animal had to be killed, a picture, of course, of the bearing of the justice and wrath of God, and that animal had to be burned. Every part of the animal in case of the burnt offering, was to be burned on the altar with a couple of exceptions: the hide, the skin of the large animals was to be taken off and not burned on the altar. Later on in Leviticus 7:8 it would say the priest gets the hide. Then in the second place as regards the birds, we read in verse 16, "he shall pluck away his crop with his feathers, and cast it beside the altar on the east part, by the place of the ashes." So the feathers, again, the outward covering of the bird were not to be burned but also the crop which is the digestive tract, the part of that animal in which there would be filth and corruption was to be thrown away and put by the side of the altar, and later that refuse would be burned also in the trash heap of Jerusalem. But apart from those parts of the animal that were to be put aside, the entire animal is to be burned. The wrath of God comes out and consumes Jesus Christ entirely and must if there will be complete atonement for sin. He must give his life unto death.

Secondly, the refrain of each of the three sections of the chapter is this, "an offering made by fire of a sweet savor unto the LORD." What a picture of the completeness of the atoning work of Jesus Christ that God regards that work as a sweet savor, a quieting, a soothing smell. It is as if, and Jehovah speaks this way through the prophets, his face burns red with anger against us on account of our sins, and until his face is completely soothed and all traces of anger are entirely gone, you and I cannot be sure he will receive us into fellowship. Atonement must be made completely so that his justice is satisfied.

The blood of Jesus Christ would do that and the burnt offering pointed the Israelite to that fact. For that reason, the Israelite brought this offering again and again and again. The bringing of the offering was an act of faith that Christ would come to do what the offering pictured. Of course, the soul that sinneth, it shall die. In other words, we have to reckon with the fact that God was gracious and merciful in providing for the bringing of a

substitute. The law required that in order to remind the Israelite that really you and I and he and she must make atonement. It must be our death and our blood which appeases the wrath of God. But because we are mere mortal humans, we could never bear that wrath of God fully and then live again to enjoy fellowship with him.

The Israelite must bring a substitute. The text indicates what kind of a substitute God will regard and here we have a reminder that our worship of him mustn't just be the kind of worship we want to bring, not just, "I'm going to praise him for all he's done and so I'm going to do this and this and this." He tells us in his word how he will be worshiped, in what actions and in what state of heart he will be pleased.

First of all, then, the text makes clear that the Israelite was to bring an animal and I showed you already the three different kinds of animals that could be brought. What they all had in common, the bullock, the sheep or the goat and the turtledove or a young pigeon, was that these were clean animals and domesticated animals, the kind the Israelite would raise and own. It wasn't to go into the wild and shoot an animal and bring that as a burnt offering to Jehovah, he must bring his own possession, a picture that that animal represented him. And that possession must have some value to the Israelite. A bullock or a sheep or goat, and in the case only of the poor, the law later tells the Israelite that they bring a pair of turtledoves or young pigeons.

Secondly, the substitute must be a young male without blemish. A male, not a female. The sin offering made provision for the Israelite sometimes to bring females, but a male as a powerful reminder that the guilt and corruption of human nature is passed ultimately from father to son and began with Adam's fall into sin, our head. And then without blemish is a reminder that our substitute must be perfect in the sight of God. He is not pleased with any animal but one which has no defect. Leviticus 22:20 and following would spell out in more detail for the Israelite what kind of animal he may not bring. I don't just mean what kind of animal generally, I mean what kind of bullock or sheep or goat he may not bring. It must be one without blemish.

The Lord gets the best. What would the Israelite be saying about the value he placed on the atoning blood of the Christ who would come if he said, "That bullock will never do me any good. It's half lame to start with. He can't pull a cart. He can't pull a plow. I might as well give that one to the Lord as a picture of the Christ who will come, as a picture of one who will die on my behalf." I say again, what value is the Israelite then placing on atonement? A very low value.

He must bring a male without blemish. All of this points us to the kind of mediator that you and I need to which Lord's Days 5 and 6 direct our attention. One who is very God. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. He must be truly God and at the same time, he must be truly man because man has sinned, and then he must be himself perfectly righteous so that he has no sin of his own for which atonement must be made.

Then the text sets forth the procedure that the Israelite is to follow with regard to that substitute and we're going to start now in verse 4. Having brought the animal to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, that is to the courtyard of the priests, the Israelite may come into the courtyard of the priests but he brings the animal right to that courtyard and to the gate there. The Israelite puts his hand upon the head of the burnt offering. More literally, pushes down on the head. Not just a gentle laying of the hand on but a pushing down on the head of, as a picture that the offering represents the Israelite and that the guilt of the Israelite is transferred in picture form to the animal itself. Here is a beautiful picture of the gracious work of God imputing to Jesus Christ our sins and our transgressions. He didn't just die because somebody had to die, he must die as one who in the sight of God bore our sins. God then must declare that my sin and corruption and guilt is put to Christ's account and that's pictured by the Israelite pushing down on the head of the animal.

Then he is to kill the animal himself. Verses 5 and 11 make that clear, "he shall kill the bullock before the LORD," still speaking of the Israelite. The Israelite to show his need for a substitute must be the one to put the animal to death. And from that point on, the priests take over, taking the blood to the altar as we saw already, cutting the different parts of the animal into pieces so that the parts of the animal can be brought over to the altar and burning it on the altar. A picture of the wrath of God consuming Jesus Christ on our behalf. Substitution must be made. The call of the Gospel, the command of the Gospel to you and to me today, then, is to keep looking to Jesus Christ as our substitute and as the one who being our substitute made atonement for sin as often as the Israelite was to bring his sacrifice and regard the blood of that sacrifice on the altar of burnt offering.

Before the priest offered the animal, he was to do one other thing, he was to wash the legs and the innards of the animal with water, verse 13 and verse 9. Once again, a picture that the Lord requires a perfect sacrifice, a clean sacrifice. The legs of the animal were that part of the animal that came into contact with the ground, of course, the dusty ground and must be washed to remove all picture of defilement, and the innards of the animal, bloody, maybe defiled with some of the inner corruption of the animal, the feces of the animal, this must be washed before it was put on the altar. The Lord is pleased with a perfect sacrifice.

In all of this, the Israelite was saying that he so understood the effect of his sin on his entire nature that in response, in gratitude to God for the salvation God gave him, he would devote himself to God completely and entirely. The burnt offering signified complete devotion to God. In this way too, it was distinct from the other offerings that required the bringing of an animal: the sin offering, the trespass offering. This animal was completely burned. In the case of the other offerings, the priest was allowed not only to keep the hide but to eat some of the flesh, and in the case of the peace offering not only the priest but even the Israelite was brought back some of the flesh that came from that animal for the Israelite to eat in the courtyard of the women as a picture that they were consciously enjoying fellowship with God on the basis of atonement, but there was



nothing about the animal of the burnt offering apart from the hide going to the priest that would be of any benefit to any human. All was God's.

This is the real significance of the term "burnt offering." Leviticus 6 said it shall be called the burnt offering because it will be burning on the altar all night until the morning, and yet the idea or even the Hebrew word translated "burnt offering" is the a word that means "to go up; to be completely taken away from one and to go up in its entirety." The burnt offering went up to God entirely. It was completely his.

There is a historical passage in the Old Testament, we have to remember that that's the basic meaning of the burnt offering. I refer to Jephthah's vow. Jephthah, who ready to lead the Israelites to fight against the Ammonites, made a vow to Jehovah that if Jehovah would give him the victory, he would offer as a burnt offering to Jehovah the first thing that came out of his house upon his return victorious. He won. The Lord gave him the victory. He returned home and the first thing that came out of his house was his daughter, his only child of whom we read, "He did unto her according to his vow." Now if one was preaching on the historical passage, one would face the question, "Did he really kill her? Did he really offer her on the altar of burnt offering?" That was what he vowed to do. Having explained Leviticus 1, you can see how that's impossible. The Lord would have been abhorred by the offering of a human on the altar of burnt offering. The Lord made very clear what kind of substitute he would regard, only a bullock, a sheep, a goat, a turtledove, or a pigeon, only a male and a daughter was none of those things. Jephthah offered his daughter to Jehovah not as a blood sacrifice but he devoted her completely to Jehovah's service for the rest of her life. The history makes that clear. The idea of a burnt offering is consistent with it.

By bringing the animal as a sacrifice of complete devotion to God, the Israelite was really saying, "I, redeemed by the blood of Christ, brought out of Egypt's bondage, who remembered the blood of the Passover painted over the doorposts, and find it in that picture of the blood of Christ my deliverance from Pharaoh and my deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. I am completely devoted to Jehovah God."

To show that the Israelite was completely devoted to Jehovah, he was again to bring his burnt offering often, daily, in large numbers. Go read this afternoon after dinner out of 1 Kings, I believe it's chapter 8, how many burnt offerings were offered when the temple was built and dedicated. So many that even the altar of burnt offering, the courtyard of the priests and the priests themselves couldn't process them all and the Levites had to help and they had to be offered over a large area. But when you read how many, you'll get an idea of this point: complete devotion to God. The Israelite is saying, "I am thine. All that I have is thine." To put it in the words of John Calvin, that memorable quote, "My heart I offer to thee, Lord, promptly and sincerely." When you and I offer to him our heart, we have offered to him our all.

What a picture, again, of Jesus Christ completely devoted to God. During his life in his hatred of sin, in his pointing out the error of the thinking of the Pharisees and Jews around, in his own devotion to the will of God, doing the will of his Father so that he told

his mother, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"; so that he told his disciples, "My meat is to do the will of my Father in heaven"; so that he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, "My Father, if it be not possible except that this cup pass from me, thy will be done." What a picture of devotion to God. He said as the Psalmist prophesied in Psalm 40:6-8 and the writer to the Hebrews shows fulfilled in Christ, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."

Christ consciously devoted himself completely to Jehovah as our substitute. Here he sets an example for us as the inspired Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5:2, "as Christ also hath loved us, so love ye one another as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." Because he gave himself completely and his death, not only his death but his death on the accursed tree, shows that above all else. What man would die willingly for another? Sometimes you might find such a man. Scarcely for a righteous man will some dare to die but maybe, the apostle to the Romans. But if you chose to die for another, which one of us would choose hell? Which one of us would choose the death of the cross? To that death our Lord went willingly, a complete devotion to God.

So what is that abiding principle regarding a life of holiness that's embedded in the burnt offering and that is still in force for you and for me today? It is this exactly: let us devote ourselves an offering of complete devotion to God. Not a bloody sacrifice, the form of the law has changed, but one of complete devotion, the essence of the law remains the same. To this the apostle called the Romans and the church of all ages, chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And," showing how we are to do that, "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." And again in 1 Peter 2:5 and 9, I'll just read verse 5 now, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." What are those spiritual sacrifices? They include my wealth, they include my offerings but they are fundamentally me, myself, an offering of devotion to God.

When you and I come to worship him, do we worship him from the heart in spirit and in truth? That would be an offering of complete devotion to God. When throughout the week we say that we live in the service of Jehovah and to the glory of his name, does that mean that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world as the apostle told the Romans in chapter 12, verse 2, "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed"? Do we? That is an offering of complete devotion to God. When we recognize that to the degree we do it's only a beginning, that we fall far short, we are thankful that the blood of Christ once shed has an abiding value and that the forgiveness of sins includes the forgiveness of those sins that we commit as we strive to do good but when imperfection cleaves to even our best works.

But even more as we say that we devote ourselves to God a complete offering, do we bring to him a heart that hates sin? God impressed on the Israelite in the Old Testament that that was really what God wanted of the Israelite. The burnt offering pointed to Christ but it said something about the heart of the Israelite too. He impressed that on the Israelites in Psalm 50, for instance, where he calls the Israelites to repentance and accuses them of hypocrisy for their false worship, and he says to them in verse 8, "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds." In essence what he says is, "If you're going to live as hypocrites, don't bother. The law in Leviticus says thou shalt but if you're going to just go through the form and you're not going to bring a heart that is sincerely sorrowful for sin, skip the form. Stay away."

And what was made clear in Psalm 50, David also shows he understood in Psalm 51 as he confesses his sin against Uriah in murder and against Bathsheba. At such a time as David ought to bring an offering, he makes a startling statement, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering." What? Did not the Lord say that exactly those are a sweet smelling savor unto him? David goes on, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." And that is for the child of God in the New Testament, a sign that by the grace of God I have brought to him a sacrifice pleasing in his sight, completely devoted to him when I look at my sins and my life and I say, "I am sorry." I weep and I mourn and I hate sin and I resolve by the grace of God to turn from sin and look to the blood of Christ and rely on the Spirit of Christ to find the assurance that my sins are completely forgiven and that I long more and more for heaven where I know I will live a life of perfect obedience to him, and the way of obedience on the basis of the blood of Christ brought out of a heart of faith that's sorry for sin, Jehovah receives sinners into his fellowship and is pleased to dwell with us in his house. Amen.

*Our Father which art in heaven, apply thy word to our hearts and souls. If we doubt that our sins are forgiven, if we question whether we are thy children, may thy word today point us to the Gospel, reassure us and build us up and give to each of us a heart, not just a body that outwardly obeys, but a heart that loves thy law. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*