

EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

Group Bible Study 3

VERSES TO READ:

Leviticus 1:16

16 And he shall take away its crop with its feathers and cast it beside the altar toward the east, in the place of the ashes.

Leviticus 6:10-11

10 And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen trousers he shall put on his flesh; and he shall take up the ashes to which the fire has consumed the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar.

11 Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments and carry the ashes outside the camp to a clean place.

Galatians 2:20a

20 I am crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

DISCOVERY PORTION:

OUR EXPERIENCES OF CHRIST AS THE BURNT OFFERING

The burnt offering is not a light matter but a very weighty matter. The Hebrew word translated “burnt offering” literally means “that

which goes up” and thus denotes something that ascends to God. What is there on this earth that can ascend to God? The only thing that can ascend to God from earth is the life lived by Christ, for He is the unique person to live a life absolutely for God.

In ourselves we cannot live a life that is absolutely for God. We human beings are nothing but dirt. Whatever comes out of our being is dirty, and anything we touch becomes dirty. For this reason, according to the typology in the Bible, even when we come to God to do the most holy thing we still need the sin offering and the trespass offering. The burnt offering indicates a life absolutely for God. Such a life is absolutely out of a pure source, with no element of the fall, no defect, and no sin. This kind of life is pure and holy. In ourselves we cannot live this kind of life. We have fallen to such an extent that we have become the world, which is altogether dirty. Actually, the world is we ourselves, and we are the world. Every part of our substance, our essence, our fiber, our element, is dirty. We could never be a burnt offering to God. Therefore, we must take Christ as our burnt offering.

Offering Christ as our burnt offering is not effective unless we have had some experience of His experience as the burnt offering. We can offer Christ as the burnt offering only to the extent to which we have experienced Him as this offering.

A person does not need any experience of Christ in order to offer Him to God as the sin offering and as the trespass offering. A sinner may hear the gospel, repent, and say, “O God, have mercy on me! I take the Lord Jesus as my

Savior.” A sinner who prays like this will be forgiven immediately, for he is not required to experience Christ. The repentant sinner simply takes Christ as his sin offering and trespass offering. The situation is absolutely different with the burnt offering. We can take Christ as the burnt offering only to the extent to which we have experienced Him in His experience.

As the burnt offering, Christ was slaughtered, stripped, and cut into pieces. Why was He willing to be slaughtered? Because He was absolute toward God. Why was He willing to be stripped and cut into pieces? Because He was absolute toward God. The reason we are not willing to be slaughtered, stripped, and cut into pieces is that we are not absolute toward God.

Why do Christians still have problems in their family life? Why are there problems among the brothers and sisters in the church? Since we all have been saved and love the Lord Jesus, there should not be any problems. It is natural for there to be problems among the unsaved people in society, but why are there problems among the saints in the church? The reason we have problems in our married life and in the church life is that we are not absolutely for God.

Because Christ is altogether absolute for God and we are absolute for God only to a limited extent, we cannot experience Christ as our burnt offering to the uttermost. We may be absolute for God, but we are not utterly absolute for Him. Therefore, we can offer Christ to God as the burnt offering only in a limited way. If we do not experience Christ in His experiences as the burnt offering to God, all our talk about Christ as the burnt offering will be in vain. We will have no burnt offering

to offer to God unless we experience Christ in His experience.

IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST

On the one hand the burnt offering is just Christ Himself. Yet, on the other hand, if we would present Christ as the burnt offering, we must be one with Him. This is why in the presentation of the burnt offering there is the laying on of the hand of the presenter. This simply means that the presenter is one with the present; the offerer is one with the offering. To lay your hand upon the head of the burnt offering means to be identified with the offering.

If, throughout the whole day, we have never been one with Christ, it is rather difficult to come into the meeting to present Christ as the burnt offering. If our hand has been kept away from Christ, yet we come to the meeting and try to present Him as our burnt offering, it is indeed awkward. We all must be identified with Christ. We must be one with Christ all day long. All day our hand must be on the head of Christ. In other words, throughout the day we must be one with Christ in our spirit.

The life of Christ within us is so willing to be cut. By His life you will never quarrel; you will never have any exchange of words with your wife. You will be so willing to be cut into pieces. Then when you come to the meeting, you will have something of Christ to offer and present to God. On the other hand, if you quarrel a little with your wife and reason with her in even a small way, you are through. You will come to the meeting with your hands empty. You will have nothing of Christ to offer.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:10-12, “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you” (lit.). We must bear the putting to death of Jesus in our life. All day long we are given to death. Do not think that it will be those who are so much against you who will kill you. Many times your wife kills you, and sometimes your classmates at school kills you. All these are just the proper cuttings for you.

Do not take this matter of the burnt offering as a teaching in an objective way. We all must realize that the burnt offering is our oneness with Christ. All day long we must identify ourselves with Christ in a practical way in our daily walk. We must be one with Christ in our practical daily lives, and to be one with Christ as the burnt offering means to take the life which is so willing to be killed, skinned, and cut into pieces.

A SIGN OF GOD’S ACCEPTANCE OF THE OFFERING-TURNING TO ASHES

The ashes are a sign of God’s acceptance of the burnt offering. For God to accept the burnt offering is for Him to turn it to ashes. Concerning this, Psalm 20:3 says, “Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice.” The Hebrew word translated “accept” here actually means “turn to ashes.” When our offering has been turned to ashes, this is a strong sign that it has been accepted by God.

Ordinarily people do not regard ashes as something pleasant. However, to us who offer the burnt offering, ashes are indeed pleasant, even precious, because they are a sign which gives us the assurance that our burnt offering has been accepted by God.

For the burnt offering to be turned to ashes means that God is satisfied and that we therefore may be at peace. If we understand this, we shall realize that in our Christian life there should be a lot of ashes.

The ashes signify Christ reduced to nothing. The Lord's desire is that all the believers in Christ be reduced to ashes. Since we are one with the Christ who has been reduced to ashes, we also are reduced to ashes, that is, reduced to nothing, to zero. The more we are identified with Christ in His death, the more we will realize that we have become a heap of ashes. When we become ashes, we are no longer a natural person; instead, we are a person who has been crucified, terminated, burned—Gal. 2:20a.