Leviticus - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

Things New and Old: Volume 29, Offerings, Short Papers on the: No. 9 - the Sin Offering

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“When a ruler hath sinned,” or when one of the people sin through ignorance, in any case, whether the sin or trespass be against the Lord or against the neighbor, there must be the sin offering. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. We do not propose to examine at this time the various details of the sin and trespass offerings in these chapters, but to take up the great principle, the absolute requirement of atonement. It should be observed that in these cases of sin, and atonement, it is not propitiation, but actual substitution. Propitiation is the foundation of all relationship with a holy God. This was shown on the day of atonement. God must be glorified by the death of Christ, this is the very first thing. the blood of the expiatory goat was brought into the very presence of God, and sprinkled before, and on, the mercy-seat. And no hand was laid on the head of that victim. And the bodies of those beasts must be burnt outside the camp. The blood was sprinkled on the holy’ place, and the tabernacle. It was for the priests’ household, and all the congregation. It typified the blood of Jesus, as it is written, “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

In this sense He tasted death for everything. (Heb. 2:9.) He thus glorified God that His love could flow out in righteousness to the whole world. “God so loved.” God is love, and God is light, and an infinitely holy God could not dwell in the midst of a sinful people, and in a sin-defiled universe, and be indifferent to sin. His righteousness demanded propitiation; and the blood of propitiation must be shed and sprinkled first on the golden mercy-seat, and then sprinkled on that which typified the church, the people, and the universe, as seen in Lev. 16.

And all this is a picture of Him “whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” (Rom. 3:25.) All God’s dealings with this whole world have reference to that propitiation. It is what Christ was to God in His propitiatory death that establishes the righteousness of God in proclaiming forgiveness to all. “Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.”

Now, as atonement, or propitiation, was made for all. Israel, as well as for the house of the priest, so, “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.” Oh think as the body of the beast whose blood was brought into the sanctuary was carried out without the camp and burnt, so Jesus was taken out of the city, away from the temple, to a place of a skull. There the holy One, without blemish, was made sin for us. There God was glorified, and His righteous claims met.

But to return to our chapters. (Lev. 4; 5) We do not here find that aspect of the atonement, but substitution. In each case it is more like the people’s goat of substitution on the day of atonement. The hand is laid on the head of the substitute. It is the transfer of sin; and the victim is dealt with in the place and stead of the one, or those who have sinned. Every sin must be confessed and laid on the head of the sin offering. All this evidently could not make the fallen sinner perfect, or give peace of conscience. There was not a moment in which the person, whatever position he occupied, from the priest to one of the people, might not have some sin of ignorance, which needed the death of a substitute.

We will now turn to a few scriptures to see the way of God in dealing with His people’s sins. Thus He speaks of His own people Israel, “Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity.” “Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isa. 1:4, 18.) He speaks again, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will riot remember thy sins.” What words are these for God to speak to a guilty nation, or to the reader or writer, as once guilty sinners? (Isa. 43:25.)

Or even yet more. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord bath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains,” &c. (Isa. 44:22, 23.) Mark the joy of God in pardoning our sins, to be remembered against us no more. The Lord bath done it. But how? And how are we to know it, and share with God in this blessed certainty?

We pass on to another chapter. (Isa. 53) Here is a despised person, rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Yes, a life of griefs and sorrows. A wonderful discovery is made, whether to the soul now, or Israel in days to come—that this Person was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. Here is an actual substitute, that is dealt with, in our stead, for our transgressions and our iniquities. Just as on the day of atonement the iniquities, of Israel were laid on the head of the substitute: or when a priest, or ruler, or the congregation, sinned, the sin was transferred to the head of the victim, and atonement must be made in order that sin might be forgiven. So here a person takes the place of all those offerings. “And the Lord bath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” “For the transgression of my people was he stricken.” By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.” He bare the sin of many.” (Read Isa. 53. 4-12.) Thus this Person is the great Antitype of all the sacrifices of the law. Who is this, the sinner’s substitute; or rather, the substitute of His people, bearing their sins? in another place He says, “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked of the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” All this did He suffer from the hands of men.

His bitter cry when bearing sins, and enduring the wrath due to them, is heard in the Psalm “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

It is also said of Him: “Behold, a virgin shall ‘conceive, and hear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel!” (Isa. 7:14.) Wonderful things are said of that Son in chapter 9:6,7. And further, when God heard the confession of Daniel’s sins, and the sins of His people, He sent the angel Gabriel to announce the fact, that it should be the Messiah who should “make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.” (Dan. 9:24.) Mark, this is a great advance in revealed truth. All the offerings find a fulfillment in a personal Substitute—the righteous Servant of Jehovah. (Isa. 53) And that Person who shall make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, is

the Messiah. God will soon open the eyes of His ancient, people the Jews to see this.

We have not yet had the name of this rejected and despised One, the sinner's Substitute, and the Messiah, but as the time drew nigh, indeed was come, the due time announced by Daniel, this same Gabriel, angel of the Lord, was sent again to announce the birth and name of this long foretold One. He spake to Joseph, saying, Joseph, thou Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary, thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS [that is, Savior]: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall he with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us." (Matt. 1:20-23; Luke 1:26-33.)

Thus have we learned that the Substitute of Isa. 7 is the Messiah, and that He made reconciliation for iniquities. That Messiah's name is JESUS. And that He who shall save His people from their sins, is God—Jesus, the Son of the Highest. Many glories await Him, but let us pursue our subject—Jesus, the bearer of His people's sins.

If we have the testimony of Gabriel at His birth, we have also His own testimony at His death. He had come up to Jerusalem to be betrayed and crucified. (Matt. 26:2.) It was written in the volume of the book, Lo I come to do thy will." And now the hour was come. "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:27, 28.)

On that very night He was betrayed. At six the next morning He, the holy, holy One, was condemned. At nine He was crucified. At twelve darkness covered the earth until three. The awful cry was heard, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He was Jesus, He was wounded for our transgressions, Jesus was bruised for our iniquities.

Reader, can you say, He loved me, and gave Himself for me? Reconciliation was made for iniquity. Solemn words! He cried, "It is finished," and bowed His blessed head, and gave up the ghost. The atonement was finished. His body was laid in the sepulcher, but not to remain God raised Him from the dead: proof, everlasting proof, that His one atoning sacrifice was accepted forever. He showed Himself to His disciples in full proof of His resurrection from the dead. Ever to be remembered were His first words to His redeemed little company, "peace be unto you." And He showed them His Lands and His side. Earth had rejected Him heaven was opened unto Him. There was no righteousness in this world which had rejected, and killed the only righteous one. The righteousness of God was exalted in receiving Him up above all heavens.

God the Father had given His only-begotten Son. He was with God, and was God in the beginning. The Son had accomplished the will. of God in His one sacrifice for our sins. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. And though this world had rejected, despised, year killed with the most shameful death, the holy One of God; yet all this was to accomplish the will of God. And God did not leave the world in its own darkness: but He sent the Holy Ghost to remain here to lead and guide believers, into all truth. Let us then next look at the explanation the Holy Ghost gives of the effect of the atoning death of Christ, since He came down on the day of Pentecost. May He, the Spirit, guide us into all truth, to the glory of God.

Things New and Old: Volume 27, Trumpet of the Jubilee, The

"And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of that jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession." &c.

Thus the trumpet of the jubilee was not the trumpet of judgment, but the trumpet of most perfect rest and liberty. Not merely a seventh-day rest, or a seventh-year rest, but the most perfect expression of rest—a sabbath, or rest, consummating seven times seven sabbaths of years. And it was not to be a limited rest, as to persons, but to be proclaimed to all the inhabitants of the land.

There was one thing above all others connected with the jubilee. May we not say, the very foundation of this glorious proclamation of perfect rest and liberty? "In the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land." The victim's blood had been shed, and sprinkled before God on the mercy-seat; the sins of Israel, in all their transgressions and iniquities, had been transferred to the substitute-goat, and borne away; and now, hark! the trumpet sounds through all the land—perfect rest to the weary—complete liberty—oh, sweet sound!—liberty to every slave! Can we fail to see the meaning of all this? It was a proclamation of liberty.

The word jubilee itself is also very significant. In the Greek, or Septuagint, translation it signifies "a manifestation." And what a type, what a manifestation of God to man, on the ground of the atoning death of Christ—the jubilee, the manifestation of God in the gospel sounds aloud throughout all the land: liberty to every slave of sin; perfect rest to the weary and heavy-laden soul. After all, do any of us apprehend or understand the manifestation of God to man—the gospel jubilee? "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." (Psalm 89:15, 16.)

If we now turn to Isa. 61, we shall see Him, and hear Him, who first sounded the jubilee. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach [or proclaim] good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; t proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Now see Jesus, in the beginning of His ministry to men, in the Gospel of Luke. The opened heavens to Him, the testimony of the Father, and the temptation of Satan. "And Jesus returned, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee." "He went into the synagogue on the sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the hook of the prophet Esaias." And these very jubilee words were those He read. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach [or proclaim] the acceptable

year of the Lord. And he closed the book." Yes, at that very jubilee place. He did not go on to the day of vengeance. In infinite mercy that day has not yet come—it is still the acceptable year of jubilee.

Jesus said, as He stood in the midst of His disciples, "Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:19-21.)

Now, in this jubilee, the manifestation of God goes out beyond Israel, to all the inhabitants of the land. It is, God so loved the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ," &c.

If one may speak for others, how we have failed to sound the trumpet of jubilee! What profound grace this has been to us! Mark, it is all of God. Not a shekel, or the smallest coin, had the poor slave to give for peace or liberty. Hark! the trumpet loudly sounds. He is free—free.

What a profound subject for our meditation! The atonement has been made; God has been glorified by the death of His beloved Son; the blood has been sprinkled on the throne of God, and He is glorified; infinite propitiation has been made. And, not only so, Jesus has been made sin for us. He has presented Himself the Very Substitute of His people. Our sins were transferred to Him. He was delivered for our iniquities. As the goat bore them away, in figure, once a year, to be found no more, so Jesus has not in figure, but has actually borne our sins away, to be found no more, to be remembered no more. What proof we have of this, for He who bore them on the cross is now in the glory of God.

The atoning work is done. Jesus said, "It is finished." On that ground, then, alone the trumpet sweetly sounds, Peace to you; rest to you—seven times seven times, perfect rest to you. Proclaim everlasting liberty to every sinner-slave on earth. Peace through the blood of Jesus; liberty through the death of the cross.

How sweet to God is the savor and the sound of jubilee! Had He not far more joy than the long-lost prodigal? Yes, He said, Let us rejoice. Have you heard the sound of jubilee? Have you believed what God says to you? He says, Jesus having died, and being raised again, "Be it known unto you, therefore.... that through this man is preached [or proclaimed] unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things." Do you say, But have I nothing to do for all this peace and freedom? What had the poor slave to do in the year of jubilee? It is all of God. The poor slave hears the sound—the long, loud sound—and immediately, on the very authority of the word of God, it proves he is free, and free to rest. He, the slave, does actually nothing for his freedom, but believes God. God has willed his freedom on the day of atonement. God has willed that every poor slave of sin, that hears and believes the gospel, shall, on the ground of the atoning death of Jesus, be everlastingly free: "Justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Yes, freely, as freely as liberty was proclaimed to the poor slave.

But some may say, Have I not to repent, as the price, or condition, of my liberty? No, the slave had not to repent as the price or ground of Ids liberty. His liberty was proclaimed on the day of atonement. Who can tell the change of mind and position that sound produced? He was no longer to be the slave of his old master. It is so in the gospel. On the ground of the atonement the glad tidings are preached, and then men are commanded to repent. Thus the goodness, the jubilee, the manifestation of the love of God, leadeth to and produceth repentance. And, oh what a change of mind and position! No longer the slave of Satan and sin, but a free-born child of God: perfect rest, perfect deliverance. And the moment you believe God, and taste the sweetness of liberty, that moment you will hate your former state of bondage. Bead through the Acts of the Apostles, and you will find every preaching on the principle, of the jubilee. If we know the joyful sound, Jesus says, "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." Is it not, then, our duty and privilege to proclaim, to sound the trumpet of liberty, to every slave on earth, and through all the land—to every creature—without money, and without price? "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

These are but a few thoughts, but oh, how much more there is in the joyful year of jubilee! "According to the number of years after the jubilee, thou shalt buy of thy neighbor, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee." Thus everything was leased, or valued, according to its distance of time to the jubilee. And are not we expecting earnestly our glorious jubilee—yea, creation's jubilee? "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Now, in buying or selling, in possessing or losing, what is the measure of our lease? The length of our lease, the measure of time value, before the year of our joyful jubilee, is, a moment. What a change! "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor. 15:51.) Yes, blessed to know this; we can value everything down here at the lease of a moment; the next moment, and then forever with the Lord. C. S.

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The Live Bird Let Loose: Cleansing as Seen in Leviticus 14, Leper and the Live Bird, The

How very good God has been in giving us such plain pictures in His Word, setting forth man's moral condition and his own great deliverance, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And certainly there are few more striking than the picture or type of the two birds. To a person deeply anxious to know, with certainty, that he is cleansed from sin, this picture is most valuable. I have seen such brought by the blessed truth set forth in this type into the most abiding confidence of faith. And God gives me this confidence, that many more will be brought, by this little paper, into His own perfect peace.

Let us now look at the picture. This was the law appointed of God in Israel: "The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be" (Lev. 13:4546).

What a terrible picture of sin leprosy is — what a living death of wretchedness and desolation. The disease itself was most loathsome, with the person covered with sores so as to be unfit for human eye, wandering alone or with others in like wretchedness. Those most dear to him were

not allowed to come near. His food must be left for him by a brook or under a tree, or he must live as best he could from the wild fruits of the desert. At times there must have been heart-aching longings for home. One thing was very remarkable: If the leprosy had covered him all over, from head to foot, all turned white, then he was clean.

The priest is appointed of God to express God's mind or judgment in the case. The manner of his cleansing was this: "Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds [or, sparrows; see margin] alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop; and the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water: and he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field" (Lev. 14:47).

Then the priest comes down to this poor, anxious leper by the brook in the valley. Solemn moment for the poor leper! Will he be rejected and left in his wretchedness, or cleansed and restored to his longed-for home? He watches every movement of the priest. One bird is killed and its blood falls into the earthen vessel. How expressive of the death of Christ! And now the priest takes the other bird in his hand; watch him! He dips it in the blood of the dead bird; you see the blood on its feathers. He sprinkles the blood on the poor leper seven times, the perfect number. He is about to speak the sentence of God on the poor, anxious leper.

The leper listens with breathless silence. He fixes his eyes on that live bird, held captive in the priest's hand —thoughts of happy home rush into his mind — his liberty is bound up in that little, captive bird. If it is let go, then the leper is free. The priest pronounces him clean — the bird is let go loose into the open field — tears of joy gush down the cheeks of the cleansed leper — his streaming eyes gaze on the flight of the blood-stained bird, a living witness of his cleansing and liberty.

Ask him how he knows he is cleansed, and his reply would be, "The priest of God pronounces me clean. The bird is free and flown away. That is how I know." Yes, as certain as the living bird is flown away, so certain is it that he is cleansed, for this is the way God has made known His mind to the poor leper. The bird could not be set free until he was pronounced cleansed. Then followed the washing of his person in water. Nothing could be more plain or more precious than the truth thus set forth. The one bird shows the death and the other the resurrection of our blessed Lord. This is God's only way of cleansing the wretched sinner from his sins. And, blessed be God, your case cannot be too bad for God's cleansing. If you recognize that you are a sinner all over; if, like the leper, the leprosy having spent itself turns white; if you have spent all in sin; if character, health, friends and home are all gone; if weary of life, however wretched and desolate, then God meets you in the death of His own beloved Son, with the certainty of the forgiveness of all sins, through His blood, to everyone that believes.

I think I hear my reader saying, "Yes, yes, I have read that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin, but how am I to know that it cleanses me?" You say, "My poor, trembling, anxious heart wants to know that! Can you tell me?" Oh, yes, blessed be God, His Word leaves no uncertainty. How did the leper know he was cleansed? He believed God's priest and the token he gave him in the living bird.

And has not the precious blood of Jesus been shed? Has it not been spilled on this earth, as the blood of the bird that was killed? One bird could not be killed and then let fly, so there had to be two, to show the death and resurrection of our precious Substitute. Watch that bleeding Surety die for sin and then laid captive for you (trembling believer) in death. Now, as the blood of the bird was sprinkled seven times on the leper before the living bird could be set free, has not God as surely pronounced His judgment as to the perfect and everlasting efficacy of the blood of Jesus for every one that believes Him? The bird was let loose because the leper was cleansed —Christ is risen — the believer is purged.

You don't suppose that the priest, if he had the mere feelings of man, would pronounce the words so that the leper could not tell whether he was cleansed or not — nothing could be more cruel than such uncertainty. There was the priest's word, and the bird flew away. This gave him the utmost certainty and joy. And can we then suppose that God has spoken in His Word so indistinctly as to leave the anxious believer in cruel uncertainty? Oh, no; God could not have spoken more plainly. He says, having raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:3839). Do you believe Jesus died on the cross, bearing your sins in His own body on the tree, there taking our place as Substitute for our sins? Just as the bird could not be let go unless the leper was pronounced clean, so Christ our Surety could not be let go from the prison of death, if His blood had not purged our sins. But God, by the very raising of our Substitute from the grave, pronounces every believer justified from all things.

I repeat again, the leper knew he was cleansed; the priest said so; the bird was free in the open field. I know I am forgiven and justified from all things; God says so, and my captive Surety, the blessed Jesus, is risen and free in the highest heavens. God could not give me a greater proof of the certainty of my justification than He has in raising Jesus from the dead for my justification.

Then, do you believe the precious blood of Jesus has been shed? And do you believe that God has raised Him from the dead? Then God pronounces the forgiveness of all your sins through Jesus. And, more than that, He pronounces you and every believer justified from all things. God pronounces every believer justified. This gives you the clearest certainty.

Now, as the leper being cleansed by this sprinkled blood then washed his person in water, so, my fellow-believer, being justified, let me beg you to seek the constant washing of the Word. Your standing is certain, justified from all things in the risen Christ. But your walk needs the constant washing of His precious, priestly service.

As the blood was put upon the ear, the thumb and the toe of the cleansed leper, and the oil upon the blood, so may we who are cleansed with His precious blood be filled, led and kept by the Holy Spirit. Yea, may body, soul and spirit be henceforth sanctified wholly unto Him. Amen.

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