

Read Leviticus 1

'If his offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he shall offer it, a male without defect; he shall offer it at the doorway of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD. Lev 1:3

I love my wife, but I am so awful at getting her good gifts. She's hard to buy for because she asks for so little. Even talking to her friends rarely provides me with many answers, so I just end up getting her a CD or some similarly unimpressive gift. She is the only coffee drinker in our house, and doesn't often drink it because she hates getting the coffeemaker out just for a cup or two. A few years ago, I found a one cup coffee maker that makes a cup in 2 minutes. I was so excited and I bought it as her Mother's Day gift. She tried to use it and it didn't work. We sent it back and got another one, and it didn't work. After years of searching for the perfect gift, the one I found didn't work.

God makes it clear that when people offered up their gifts to Him, the gifts had to be without defect. In the Old Testament, offerings were given as part of the act of repentance over sin. If you were asking God to forgive you of some sin, you wouldn't want to present an offering that might fail to be accepted. They had to offer it right at the doorway of the tent of meeting, because the very first thing they were to do when coming to the Lord was to seek forgiveness. **What do you offer to the Lord? Do you offer Him anything of value, or just whatever you have lying around? Do you seek forgiveness from God, or is that an afterthought of your prayers? Hearing people end a prayer "and forgive us for our sins" sounds so cheap to me, and I'm sure to God. The first thing we should do is ask for clean hands and a pure heart before the conversation.**

Read Leviticus 2

'Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt. Lev 2:13

I've heard about a church that allows people to give their offerings in many ways. They can pay cash or check in the offering plate. Or they can swipe their credit card in a card reader as they come into the sanctuary. Or they can give their bank account to the church, and have a monthly debit from their account. These may all seem like good ideas to keep people accountable, but when the church takes the offering for the person to remove the opportunity to keep it as an act of worship. It simply becomes another bill to pay.

There were many instructions on how to prepare different grain offerings, because God wanted it done a certain way. The priests didn't do everything for the person giving the offering. The offering was prepared by the individual. One of those preparations was that God instructed the people to put salt in their offerings. Salt was of great value and has even been used as a form of payment because of its value and difficulty to acquire. By putting salt in the offerings, it was another way of showing the value that they ascribed to their offering. They were not willing to hold anything back, but that their offering would be of the utmost value. When Jesus came for us, His offering was of the utmost value. He gave His life and took a terrible punishment. **But, do you hold back from Him? Do you**

fail to fully offer yourself to Him as He did to you by His death? Is there something in your life too valuable for you to give to the Lord? Your money, decisions, job? God doesn't demand your valuables, but your heart. He wants to be listed first among those things you count as precious. Holding back anything from the Lord proves that you have other gods who are getting priority. That is sin and you must confess and repent of it.

Read Leviticus 3

'Now if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without defect before the LORD. Lev 3:1

If there were a list of items that people today would buy, peace would be on that list. With cell phones, laptops, in-car phone/navigation systems, we are constantly on the go and connected. But sometimes, it's nice not to be at every one's fingertips. We don't need more hurried lives, but we need peace. Peace with people, peace and quiet, just something that's different than the hustle we go through on a constant basis.

We even need peace from our sin. Maybe your sinful failures are on your mind and difficult to deal with. The Jews had an offering for this situation. A peace offering was just what it sounds like...to bring peace between a child of God and the Father. A person was asking for peace from the guilt that they were experiencing, and to have peace with God. The Bible makes it clear we can avoid judgment from God, if we'll fairly judge ourselves first. **Do you feel at peace with God? How about with yourself? Both of them require that you show God the proper devotion and respect. When you confess your sins and seek to live your life to honor God, you will feel better about your prayer times and your interaction with a holy God. You will also feel better about yourself, because you'll know that you are pleasing to Him by your actions. It's an easier life to live at peace with God than with sin-induced separation.**

Read Leviticus 4

"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'If a person sins unintentionally in any of the things which the LORD has commanded not to be done, and commits any of them, 3 if the anointed priest sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to the LORD a bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed . Lev 4:2-3

I've had two speeding tickets in my life, both going at or close to 20 mph over the limit. Both of them were quite unintentional. In the first case, I didn't see the sign that said I was entering a 45 mph zone, and so I was still cruising along at 60. The second ticket came when I started accelerating out of a town and hadn't left the city limits yet, so Barney nailed me (I'm simply guessing at the small town deputy's name). I certainly was not trying to intentionally violate the law, but the fact is that I did and received tickets each time.

We should confess any and all sin that we are aware of. Not because Christians will go to Hell for unconfessed sin, but we do it as part of living a holy life in honor of our Lord and Savior. Also by acknowledging it, we can acknowledge our need for His help, and ask Him to help us avoid those sinful situations in the future. We all find ourselves at times having committed sin that was never intended. However, just as ignorance of human law is not a valid excuse, the same goes for God's law. If we're ignorant of His law, we place ourselves in a bad situation of not knowing what God may expect in a certain situation. It's hard to know how to handle a conflict with a fellow Christian if you've never read Matthew 18 for instance. **How do you treat unintentional sin? Do you just ignore it, knowing that Christ has covered it? Apparently from Leviticus we can see that God even takes this kind of sin seriously. If we don't deal with unintentional sin, it may very well turn into intentional sin that we have become accustomed to. Ask God to reveal the unintentional that you may have been ignoring or missing.**

Read Leviticus 5

'Now if a person sins after he hears a public adjuration to testify when he is a witness, whether he has seen or otherwise known, if he does not tell it, then he will bear his guilt . Lev 5:1

When I witness to people, I generally will start with Romans 3:23, which tells us that everyone sins. I always like to ask the person, "What is sin?" You'll hear a lot of answers, and generally lost people say it's when you do something bad. Yes, but it's more personal than that. Sin is when we disobey what God has said to do or not to do. It's not right or wrong because of the church, but because it violates God's character and He has defined good and evil.

This guilt offering was important because it covered sins of commission and sins of omission. My first pastor helped explain this. Sins of commission are those you have willfully committed (sexual immorality for example). Sins of omission are those that you are guilty of by your inaction (withholding the truth in a matter, withholding your tithe, etc). God declared a guilt offering was necessary in either situation, which makes it different from the previous offerings. It certainly causes me to think about what I'm guilty of doing, but also what I'm guilty of not doing. **Are there some big omissions in your life? Since the Bible states in 1 Thessalonians 5 to "pray without ceasing", does that makes prayerlessness a sin? Since the Bible is commanding us to pray, it seems to be a sin of omission . We don't have to be bogged down with commands from the Lord, but we should be conscious of them and prepared to obey. Examine yourself and evaluate not just what you're doing intentionally, but also the sin you are guilty of by your inaction.**

Read Leviticus 6

and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any one of the things which he may have done to incur guilt Lev 6:7

As much as I would love to talk about the fire for offerings never going out, I think verse 7 hits a little closer to home for a lot of people. If you had to identify one of the worst after-effects of sin, most people would say guilt. It's not just the physical or permanent results from whatever you may have done, but also the internal effects. The constant thought of frustration with yourself for doing something so monumentally stupid. Or the thought that God is done with you because you are just so worthless and wretched. You feel like someone standing in a courtroom and hearing the jury declare "guilty", but not just once. You relive your courtroom experience on a daily or weekly basis, hearing "guilty" over and over for sin that you've confessed to the Lord and repented of.

Christians often talk about something being a "God thing." Sometimes they're referring to unexpected blessings or new ministries that have succeeded. However, guilt is not a God thing. When the children of Israel issued their guilt offering, through the priest, the verse above says that they were forgiven of whatever brought their guilt. So if they did this, and still felt guilty, it was not of God. How much better is the sacrifice of Jesus that we now claim as Christians? With Jesus serving as our great high priest, we know this forgiveness is for us as believers through Christ. **So why do you have guilt? God brings conviction so that we might turn from sin. But, once we have, to bring the sin up again is not of God, but of the Devil. Adrian Rogers said "God brings you down to lift you back up. The Devil brings you down to keep you there." If you're being held down by guilt over sin you've confessed, ask God to give you assurance of that forgiveness. Also ask Him for how you might serve Him in a new way. As you see the blessings of obedience, you will know that God is not holding guilt trips over you.**

Read Leviticus 7

'Of this he shall present one of every offering as a contribution to the LORD; it shall belong to the priest who sprinkles the blood of the peace offerings. Lev 7:14

Sometimes people get confused by the nature of offerings. Here in Leviticus 7, when people offered up animal or grain offerings, the animals most important part was the blood, and the importance of the grain was in the aroma or cooking of it. Afterwards, there was either meat or a grain cake of some kind left over. God said that this was for the priests. All these offerings had to be offered by the priests, and what remained of the offerings belonged to the priests. They certainly weren't offering sacrifices so they could get these things, but it was the way that God supported and fed the priests.

When people today give their tithes, they don't always make the connection of giving to their church as supporting the kingdom of God. However, as a minister, we are working to see His kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven. We need provisions for our families and so the money that people give out of obedience is used to take care of the needs in the church. Some people find it difficult to listen to a preacher talk about giving money, when he will be the beneficiary of it. But, the church body is the real beneficiary. By supporting the ministers, they don't have to work extra jobs and can be completely focused on the ministry and vision for that church. I've been part-time and full-time in ministry, and full-time was much more productive, saw more growth, and was a better service to the people. **Are you supporting your church staff? If you're not giving,**

then you're not supporting. It's easy to allow others to carry the load, but it's not about the money, but obedience. God is asking you to be obedient to His commands, and as a result of obedience, you and your church are blessed.

Read Leviticus 8

Moses also took the breast and presented it for a wave offering before the LORD; it was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination, just as the LORD had commanded Moses. Lev 8:29

At an evening service leading up to Christmas, Nikki and I had been married a short time. The church decided to make it a night where the congregation really led the service. We had a Christmas tree in the sanctuary, and people brought decorations that they had purchased or made with their families, that represented the story of Christ. It was neat to see entire families come up that had made things together. Then we gave our special offering for foreign missions. Again families were asked to come forward and put their offering in the plate, instead of having the offering plates passed through the sanctuary. I think I liked this approach, because we often times are passive during our offering times in church. We sit there and drop it in the plate.

The wave offering mentioned here was not a passive offering. The full meaning of what it was has been lost over the years, but it literally was an offering that the priests themselves would wave before the Lord. It represented work, perhaps the work and diligence needed to keep oneself pure before the Lord. It was not passive, but was apparently a very important offering in the life of the priests, who were offering up the aroma of the sacrifice on behalf of the people. **What have you waved before the Lord? Is there something that you would willingly hold back if He asked for it? Your money, your employment, or your family? The Lord is deserving of our efforts, not willing that we would passively follow Him, but to actively do so through prayer and obedience. We need to apologize for when we simply gave a "drop offering", to drop our offering with little thought or effort. Let us be excited about our opportunity to give unto the Lord.**

Read Leviticus 9

Then fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the portions of fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces. Lev 9:24

As you read this chapter, you notice all the sin offerings that were talked of before are being now done by the priests. They wanted to cover every angle of disobedience they may have been guilty of before the Lord. This may seem tedious or over the top, but they were doing just as the Lord and Moses had commanded. Despite the work that went into the cleansing, clearly they were rewarded as the Lord consumed the offering by fire. God gave a dramatic answer in response to a dramatic desire for holiness by His people. Some people think living a life for God is just too much work and no fun.

Is it difficult to live a life for God? It can be. Others can simply do whatever they want and seemingly live a charmed life as they don't worry about sin, or going to church or any of the other daily concerns of a believer. However, those who ignore God are not the ones who are blessed. Living a selfish life for 100 years will still never compare to living a selfless life through Christ and enjoying eternal rewards. Maybe you won't be written about in the history books of humanity, but who cares about the history books when you're written in the Book of Life? God is reading and examining the work of my life. He's the only one I care to please. I want to present myself before Him as blameless by confessing my sin, so that just as the Israelites did, I can see dramatic answers from my Lord concerning my life.

Read Leviticus 10

Then Moses said to Aaron, "It is what the LORD spoke, saying, 'By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, And before all the people I will be honored.' " So Aaron, therefore, kept silent. Lev 10:3

Have you ever seen someone who didn't think that the rules applied to them? I have been reading the paper and there have been an unusual amount of celebrities who are being arrested for DUI, DWI, drug charges, and many others. However, one of them served a jail sentence of 4 hours, and another one agreed to a jail sentence of an entire day. What has our justice system come to, when famous people get different treatment than the rest of us? There should be a standard punishment system that doesn't take into account some one's public stature, but the nature of their offense. God works on such a system. Some people may think they can come to God any way they want to. They may believe rules don't apply to them because of their great value to the kingdom.

Whatever the reason, we sometimes find ourselves arrogant before God. Aaron's sons, as priests, felt they could offer up fire, or incense, whenever they felt like outside of the normal parameters. Who knows why they did it, but they failed to act in a holy and set apart manner, and as a result they lost their lives. **Do you seek holiness in your life? Do you feel that the consequences of sin will not be as severe for you as they will for others? I assure you God is concerned with holiness, and He will take appropriate steps to teach us to honor and respect His commands. If you are acting outside of the commands of God for your life, then you are acting outside of the blessings and protection of God. You wouldn't carry an umbrella in the rain while holding it arm's length away. You would hold it over your head to protect you from the rain. That is the purpose of God's commands and plans for your life; to protect you like an umbrella in a storm.**

Read Leviticus 11

This is the law regarding the animal and the bird, and every living thing that moves in the waters and everything that swarms on the earth, to make a distinction between the unclean and the clean, and between the edible creature and the creature which is not to be eaten. Lev 11:46-47

Why do some of the rules that we live under exist? My parents had plenty of rules when I was growing up, and to me some of them just didn't make any sense. As I look back, those that I disliked most weren't all that important to my safety, but were more of an obedience issue. When we could wear shorts and when we couldn't (if we could see our breath in the morning, we couldn't wear shorts...even though Missouri spring days often start very cool before warming up). But for my parents, it was about obedience more than shorts. There were times my brother took shorts in his backpack and then changed in the locker room at school. After school he had to change back to his pants. I always thought it was just easier to be obedient.

God sets forth some rules in this chapter regarding which animals should and should not be eaten. It's interesting to note that many of these animals that God instructed Israel not to eat, are viewed as inedible in many places of the world still (camels, moles, various birds, etc). Why did God set up these restrictions? It's not totally clear. Perhaps part of it had to do with health issues that certain animals might cause for His people. To speculate beyond that is difficult. All that is really clear is that God made it clear what to eat and what not to eat, so it became a matter of obedience. **Do you have obedience issues? If you're put in a situation you don't like, do you tend to make the best of it, or find sneaky ways around the rules? If you'll do this with human rules, you'll do it with God's rules. Accept the authority of those over you, and follow their rules. The Bible is clear that those in authority will give an account for their rule over you, but that you will also be accountable for the way you did or did not follow them.**

Read Leviticus 12

'Then he shall offer it before the LORD and make atonement for her, and she shall be cleansed from the flow of her blood. This is the law for her who bears a child, whether a male or a female. Lev 12:7

This can certainly be a difficult chapter to fully grasp on the surface. A woman after giving birth was considered "unclean". Being unclean was always a ceremonial thing. It didn't necessarily signify something wrong with physical cleanliness, though in this case it was closely tied to the physical process of birth. Blood is an important thing to God. Blood was used early on for sacrifices and for forgiveness of sin, until the blood of Christ came to cleanse all. But, this flow of blood from birth made the woman unclean. Remember, God told humans to have children, but after the Fall of Adam and Eve, every birth results in someone who is born with original sin. So the sexual act that brought the child, nor the child himself were the sin, but the blood brought about uncleanliness and that is why an offering had to be given up. God was not totally without care. He reserved the time of the circumcision for boys to be 8 days so that the mother would be cleansed by then and could be there.

We don't know all the reasons for these declarations by the Lord, but we know He made them. If He declares us unclean, we should take that very seriously. **What areas of your life are unclean before the Lord? You may not think it's a big deal, but scripture declares that you are in error. God has given us a clear understanding of how we are to live our life in Christ, and the actions we should take regarding our own sin.**

If you have sin that is causing you to be dirty before the Lord, simply confess it. The great thing about our God is He loves to hear us tell Him we're sorry. It proves our love for Him, and our desire to fully serve Him.

Read Leviticus 13

Or if the raw flesh turns again and is changed to white, then he shall come to the priest, 17 and the priest shall look at him, and behold, if the infection has turned to white, then the priest shall pronounce clean him who has the infection; he is clean. Lev 13:16-17

After about 3 weeks in basic training, we began having classes on basic medical training. Slowly it turned from dealing with sprains, fatigue and broken legs, to medical catastrophes. We not only learned about, but also had to see pictures of gruesome battlefield injuries such as a sucking chest wound (let's just leave it at that). Everyone they showed us a picture of, was someone who survived because of the help of his non-medic buddies next to him. I turned to a friend and said "I'm sorry, but if I see you like that, all I've got for you is a bullet." He agreed that's all I'd get from him. But, I'm sure some of these men who did heroic things to save their friends thought the same things. But then, in their friend's helplessness, something helped them to look past the blood and gore and save his friend's life.

Lots of people in Israel looked upon those with leprosy about the same as we looked at these battlefield injuries. We'd rather not think of them, and wish it didn't happen. But, it did, and while it may seem that those with leprosy were placed under great scrutiny, it fully shows the love of God. God put it on the priests to care for these people. To help them determine the extent of their disease. There are both curable and incurable forms of leprosy. It seems that Jewish genetics allowed for the curable kind, however, people still died from the infections and complications. Because of the care of the priests, many who would have been discarded and died, instead lived. **Who are your lepers? Are they people who are poorer than you or richer than you? Are they people who have been through divorce? What about homosexuals? There are some people who are hard for us to acknowledge, but just as God called on his priests in the OT, He calls on us as His kingdom of priests (Rev. 1:6), to reach out to the "unclean" of this world and show them the love of Christ.**

Read Leviticus 14

Now on the eighth day he is to take two male lambs without defect, and a yearling ewe lamb without defect, and three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil Lev 14:10

In basic training, we would constantly be doing some sort of physical exercise. If we were waiting to go somewhere, we were doing push-ups or some or fun thing. About halfway through basic, Drill Sergeant Matzen showed up. He was hardcore, and had all these killer ab exercises. If someone in our platoon of 50 was slacking, everyone suffered. One day he caught Private Gaveldon just lying on the ground during our

regiment. He stopped the formation, and pulled Gaveldon out and made him watch while Matzen just killed us. We were so close to done, but Gaveldon's actions caused us all to suffer.

We have to remember that our actions do not just affect us, but those around us. When a leper was found, he had to offer two sacrifices. One was for him, and the other was for the people of Israel that he had been around. Not because he infected them with the disease, but simply because his uncleanness had been around the camp. Lepers were considered unclean because of the exposed skin and secretions that would happen during the course of the disease. So these people would give two offerings to cover their uncleanness and the uncleanness they brought on others in Israel. **Do you realize how your actions affect others around you? There are so many people who watch you that you may be unaware of. Your bad actions can lead others to the same situations, because people are always looking for a justification for sin. You need to not only ask forgiveness for sin, but also ask God to forgive you for any way that you wrongly influenced a person to sin. Think about your actions and decide if you would be happy with your spouse, friends, or children copying your behavior.**

Read Leviticus 15

Thus you shall keep the sons of Israel separated from their uncleanness, so that they will not die in their uncleanness by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them." Lev 15:31

The youth at our church in Mississippi had a great weekend retreat, and the speaker was invited to preach to the entire church on Sunday morning. He was doing a great job, and had a really dynamic PowerPoint presentation that was being used. Suddenly, one of the slides was a picture of a woman's nude back, showing from her head down to her waist. I was very uncomfortable with the image, and I felt that others in the sanctuary were as well. I never asked him or even our pastor about it (I hate dumping every little mistake on the pastor to answer for), but I really felt that something had been brought into God's house that wasn't necessary. It caused embarrassment for me, but perhaps was a source of temptation for others. It should not have found itself in God's house, and I probably should have talked to the speaker about it to help him rethink the use of that slide.

God considered any bodily emission to cause uncleanness. As a result, when people found themselves unclean, they had to separate themselves from others and from the tabernacle of God. The tabernacle was God's dwelling place among Israel, and was not to be occupied by people who were unclean or in sin. I think that people bring a lot of unclean things into the church. Songs that are more secular than sacred are sometimes sung as a special music. People are so afraid of offending people that a lot of questionable things are allowed into God's house. **Do you bring uncleanness into the house of the Lord? Through unconfessed sin or thoughts? Perhaps your conversation at church is more about the things of the world (weather, sports, hunting), than spiritual conversations. When's the last time you asked someone in church about their quiet time? We're afraid to, in case we might offend someone**

who's not doing those things. But if we really love them, we can turn it into an encouraging situation to lead them to a greater walk with the Lord.

Read Leviticus 16

But the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat . Lev 16:10

I've heard of someone being made the scapegoat before, but I didn't realize the spiritual significance to the term. It essentially means the passing on of blame that doesn't belong to the person who is accused or charged with the wrong-doing. Brothers and sisters are often guilty of making the other the scapegoat, and pointing the finger when Mom or Dad approach them about a broken object or rule. Adam made Eve a scapegoat, Aaron made the people a scapegoat. They tried to deny their guilt in the situation, but their denials were of little importance.

If you've ever been made the scapegoat in a situation, then you know what it's like to be a sin offering. You did nothing wrong, yet you will be "sacrificed" to provide forgiveness and cover for the real offenders. Being made the scapegoat is a difficult thing. **But, have you ever made another person the scapegoat? Have you confessed sin, but qualified that it was someone else's fault for the mistake. The biggest mistake we make with sin, is refusing to acknowledge our responsibility in it, and trying to blame our poor choices on someone else. If you truly want to please God, it won't come through hiding sin. Admit to the Lord your sin, and see the benefits and blessings in your life.**

Read Leviticus 17

"They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations." Lev 17:7

There are many items that can count as our sacrifice to God in the current age. It used to be blood in the Old Testament, as they offered it waiting for the blood of the Messiah to come once and for all. But now, we offer our time, talents and treasures to the Lord as our offering. However, some people pervert the offering. I remember when Jars of Clay, an early Christian alternative band, first came on the scene. They had a great message, and powerful music. Their hit song "Flood" was even being played on a local rock station, with the words unedited. Some thought Christians shouldn't have their music played there, but I thought "get it to the people who need it most." Later the group Avalon had a hit "I Can't Live a Day without You", sung to Jesus. There was a place the singer sang "O....Jesus." in talking about the life we have in him. Later, they allowed it to be released on secular radio stations with the line "O....baby". What a perversion of the original offering they had given unto God! They weren't like the singers who sing never knowing or honoring God. They knew their talent was from Him and for Him, and choose to sell out. Many Christians singers have tried this, some succeeding in the secular, and some failing there.

God warned Israel about offering sacrifices that weren't to Him. There was nothing wrong with a blood offering, but some were offering it outside to a goat idol (demon is also used). Right sacrifice, wrong receiver. **What about your offerings? Do you have the right sacrifice of your time, talents or treasures, but you're laying them on the wrong altar? Instead of God getting the first fruits, the world gets them, and God is expected to search for scraps under the table. I assure you, God will do no such searching. Give yourself, your whole self, fully unto God. Stop playing the harlot by allowing yourself to be owned by someone or something other than Creator God.**

Read Leviticus 18

'You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. Lev 18:4

People in their selfishness have a real problem with authority. During my freshman year of high school I moved from a school that had about 300 in the whole school, to a school where there were more than that in our Jr. high. I remember being shocked at the attitude of students towards the teachers. In my smaller, rural school, teachers were in charge and had corporal punishment (paddling), and a variety of serious suspensions and disciplinary actions. At the bigger school, the teachers didn't use any physical punishment, and their only recourse was to give detention, and make a student stay after school. It never really deterred the troublemakers, because it wasn't solving the problem. The problem wasn't trouble students, but a lack of authority from the teachers.

God makes it very simple in talking to His people. He gives His authority to act before it's ever challenged or asked for. He says you will obey Him for "I am the LORD your God." Why do I obey God? Because when I accepted Jesus, I didn't just say "take me to Heaven", but that I would serve Him to see, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven". God has forced no one to follow Him, but we choose to do so voluntarily. **Is God the ultimate authority in your life? Or is it a spouse or parent? Who is the one who guides your decisions? If God doesn't have the ultimate authority in your life, you will not honor Him as you should. You will constantly be in a state of disarray, because you are missing His good, pleasing and perfect will.**

Read Leviticus 19

'Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God. Lev 19:10

Many times in life, authority needs to be established in order that commands will be followed. In all branches of the military, when major firepower is going to be used, there has to be an authentication for it. In Field Artillery, before we ever learned how to fire the big guns, we had to learn how to use the radio and how to verify we were talking to the right people. There is a procedure of authentication that is established at the beginning of a conflict so that those radio commands from that position are known to be friendly forces.

God has no need to establish His authority with His commands. However, during this stretch in Lev 19, we constantly see "I am the Lord" or "I am the Lord your God", in leading the people to obey what He said. At every turn, He reminded them of why they are to follow and obey. In this verse, God establishes a welfare system that doesn't just give a handout, but allows those in need to be a part of their own solution as they gather fallen grain, and the grain on the edges of the field. Those who were not poor had a responsibility to leave that grain, and those who were poor had a responsibility to pick their own grain for their food. **Do you understand your responsibility? You have a responsibility to honor and obey the Lord your God. He has authority to direct you in any way that He sees fit. To disobey God is to sin. Sin occurs any time you do something God said not to, or when you don't do something He told you to do. If you're not living under the authority of the Lord, you are not living under the protection or blessing of the Lord either. Repent of your selfishness in your actions, and seek out a life that honors Him.**

Read Leviticus 20

'Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine. Lev 20:26

One of my favorite past times as a child, was to play with G.I. Joe's with my friends. Since we all brought our own toys, most of my friends would write their names or initials somewhere on their soldiers, so that they would know which ones were theirs. I never did that. First of all, I didn't want to write on my toys. Secondly, I knew which ones were mine. I knew every nick and scratch on my toys, that I could tell the difference between two similar action figures.

God set apart His children as His possession. However, God doesn't have to write His initials on us to remember which one's belong to Him. He knows us by name. He knows us by face. He knows of every hair on our head. He has set us apart to be holy, as He is holy. He expects us to act and behave differently from those who don't belong to Him. It shouldn't require Him writing His name on us to tell which are His. He can recognize us by our works. **Do you belong to God? Has He taken possession of you through Jesus Christ? Or do you still simply belong to yourself. It's time to allow God to set you apart and make you different. Does your life clearly indicate that you belong to God, or does your life send a different message?**

Read Leviticus 21

'They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they present the offerings by fire to the LORD, the food of their God; so they shall be holy. Lev 21:6

God set standards on the priests and what would qualify or disqualify them for service. There were even physical problems that would exclude them from offering sacrifices on behalf of the people. Many people look at those restrictions and say "God made them that way, so why would He then exclude them for something He did?" God's desire is not that

everyone in life will have the same position. Should a handicap mean that someone could not serve the Lord in another way? I knew a man who was confined to his wheelchair and had been severely burned and had a rebuilt, immobile hand and a hook. He went back to college after the accident, and eventually became our church treasurer. He found a way to be useful for the kingdom of God.

Is there some ministry that you want to be a part of that God has said no? Perhaps that ministry area has been sufficiently staffed. Perhaps you want to be a deacon or minister, but you know that you do not meet the biblical qualifications. Just because you cannot fill those very public roles, does not mean that you cannot serve in less visible ways. Sunday School teachers probably make more impact on people than pastors, because of the depth of relationship that develops through that type of class. People are needed to welcome new residents to a town that may not have a church home. **Instead of focusing on what you can't do, focus on what you can. I assure you that your church has a need that you can fill perfectly, because the church is a body, and you are a part. Your church may be operating without an arm until you step up to do what God meant for you.**

Read Leviticus 22

'When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it. Lev 22:21

I'm a very precise spender of dollar bills. If I have a variety of \$1 bills, I'll spend the worst looking ones in a restaurant or gas station. Why? Because I know that somewhere at sometime, I may come across a vending machine and need a dollar. And there is no pickier contraption than a vending machine trying to accept a dollar. So I keep the best dollars for those situations and give the smelly, dirty and torn dollars to the cashiers. It's not anything diabolical, or a conspiracy against cashiers. I just know that the vending machine has a high standard on the types of dollar bills it accepts, and if I know that in advance (which everyone does), I'd better be prepared for it. God is certainly not a vending machine, although people would like to think so. They like to think they can pray their 50 cents worth and get something out of God.

The Israelites who did not have the benefit of Jesus' blood yet, had to offer up a blood offering on their own. It had to be from an animal without defect. A person could not just go in and pick any animal he wanted. It had to be closely inspected, and found to have no physical abnormalities of any kind. Only then could it be offered. Today when people give to God of their time, talents, or treasures, they don't do a close inspection. They leave their offering to the end of the month and write a check for what they think they can afford to live without. They tell the church they'll do something if "you can't find anyone else." **How do you give of your life to God? Do you do a close inspection for sin in your life before you attempt to serve Him effectively? Do you give to God of the first fruits of your time, talents and treasures? Or do you just try to wait until it's almost too late, and just give God the left-overs. God doesn't want left-overs any more than you do.**

Read Leviticus 23

'You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the LORD. Lev 23:16

I am such a creature of habit. When I used to work for an insurance company, we had a great cafeteria. Rose was one of the ladies that worked there, and I always enjoyed talking with her. She knew exactly what I wanted when I came in: a chicken strip meal with fries and a Sprite. I ate this almost everyday, and I liked it. But, one day they had a new Mexican wrap, and she challenged me to try it. I didn't want it, because I walked to the cafeteria, totally planning on eating chicken strips that day. But, the next time they were being served, she convinced me, so I tried them and thought they were great. Later I started eating other foods that weren't chicken, and actually found myself liking them. I didn't mind the change, but I sure would have liked having a little more notice.

God all the way back in Leviticus is giving the people an understanding of a new Sabbath. God is setting up a special time that was 50 days from the Sabbath, then on a Saturday. 50 days from Saturday is Sunday, and the people were experiencing a time with the Lord. Later on, Pentecost will be the same thing, celebrated 50 days from the Sabbath. Eventually, the people will see that Jesus was raised on a Sunday, and the Holy Spirit came down on a Sunday. These are just a couple of reasons that the Sabbath is now celebrated as Sunday. But, not everyone celebrates it. **How do you celebrate Sunday? Do you go to church? That is not a celebration of a special day, but of God. When our entire Sunday is devoted to rest and to worshipping the Lord, that is what God expects. If you don't have time for Sunday because of your work around the house, or some non-critical occupation (doctor is a critical occupation), you are simply saying to God that following His commands are not that important. He has given us plenty of warning about the Sabbath. Live in the blessing of God's day of rest. The world has plenty of work for us later.**

Read Leviticus 24

They put him in custody so that the command of the LORD might be made clear to them. Lev 24:12

I enjoy going for ride-alongs with my brother-in-law who is a police officer in a college town. One night, around 2 in the morning, he drove to a street that had a couple of night clubs. Apparently, they all close at 2 am, and you suddenly have a mass of people just standing around in the street. They're usually a bit drunk and willing to fight. My brother-in-law said the police go down and instruct the crowd to disperse. He went into the crowd and came back out with a young woman in handcuffs. Quickly, the calls by the officers for people to leave were obeyed as they saw people being arrested. She was placed in the backseat, and my brother-in-law assured her that she would not be at the police station long. He said an example had to be made, and her willingness to resist him, caused her to be one of those examples. She was very upset and probably thought twice about staying at those clubs so late.

Sometimes no matter how many times a command or rule is stated, people won't really respond until they see the consequences. In this situation, a man was clearly and willfully breaking a commandment in his treatment of the Lord's name. They didn't just punish him, but they held him in custody so that others would see his sin, the reasons it is sin, and the consequences. You may think that stoning was an awful way to deal with the situation. God allowed it though, so that sinful influences would be purged. Israel was coming amongst groups of people with different gods and religious rules. If Israel didn't hold fast to the One True God, then they would fall apart as a nation (which eventually happens through disobedience and sin). **Has God placed you in custody? Have you seen another Christian who is clearly in sin and suffering as a result? Is there clear and deliberate sin that you are guilty of in your life? If you feel that God is trying to punish you, realize that He's more interested in your repentance and removal of that sin, and not in tearing you down. Don't resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Repent of your wrongdoing, and move on with your life in Christ. By resisting God, you are inviting sin and heartache into your life.**

Read Leviticus 25

'He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. Lev 25:40

Living near a school again has caused me to have lots of school flashbacks. When I leave the church for lunch, I often will hear a bell ring at the school across the street. Then, around 3:15, the parking lot becomes full of buses and waiting parents who will take on the wave of students escaping school for the rest of the day. There was nothing better than the final bell of the day in school. You weren't listening to the teacher, but listening for the bell. You became upset when you realized the clock you were watching in the classroom was fast, and the bell wasn't going to ring yet. Or the worst, was a teacher who kept you after the bell to keep teaching. Sure it was only an extra 30 seconds, but it felt like an eternity.

Many of the people of Israel looked forward to the year of jubilee like I looked forward to the bell. But, they didn't get one everyday, but instead every 50 years. The year of jubilee is one of my favorite parts of Leviticus. People read this book and may say that God is an uncaring taskmaster with no concern for the people (you would only arrive at that conclusion if you didn't read it carefully). However, then we find the Lord's command regarding the year of jubilee. It was a time of restoration. Someone who couldn't afford his land and had lost it, could return to it as theirs. Someone serving as a slave could leave and have their service ended. It didn't matter if you had been there for 49 years, or for 49 hours. When the year of jubilee came, the ram's horn sounded, and people all over the land rejoiced. **Have you experienced jubilee? The jubilee for us today comes when we realize we've been freed from our bondage. Not to man, but to sin. No matter how long you've walked without God, He will accept you today if you will accept His Son. Jesus died so that you could have an exciting life, free of the eternal punishment for your sin. We rejoice as Christians, for we have been set free and are able to serve a great God.**

Read Leviticus 26

'But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.' Lev 26:45

What is a promise? In our society, they are a source of heartache. I'm tired of broken promises. I see them every day in marriages, I see them in people who promised to live for Christ, but rarely seem to. God used a more serious word when talking about a promise...He used the word covenant. A covenant is more than a promise, but it is a conditional arrangement. I've promised my kids that we're going to the zoo soon. They don't have to do anything to make that happen, because I've already promised.

God's promises are surer than mine, but He includes some stipulations for people who enter into covenants with Him. He promised to be good to Israel, and in return expected them to be good to Him. If they choose disobedience in the midst of their covenant relationship, God would bring judgment on them. But, He would never remove His promise of being their God. Even as Christians today, when God chastises a believer, He has not removed the promise of salvation. That promise is still good, but there are expectations that God has. **What areas are you ignoring in your covenant relationship with God? Jesus was the sign of the new covenant, of being God's people through the blood of Jesus. Is there something you choose disobedience in? You may think your life is going ok now, but if you were to give those areas over to the Lord, you would see a difference in your life. Obedience always brings blessings, and disobedience always holds them back. Which life are you living?**

Read Leviticus 27

'Nevertheless, anything which a man sets apart to the LORD out of all that he has, of man or animal or of the fields of his own property, shall not be sold or redeemed.' Lev 27:28

They say confession is good for the soul...maybe it will teach you a lesson too. When my wife and I were first married, we didn't tithe much. When I say we, I mean me. It was my responsibility as the head of my household to do these things for our family. Eventually I got in the habit of writing my check for my tithe before any other check, which is giving the first fruits. But, I would then keep it in my wallet until the end of the month. If we didn't "need" that money elsewhere, I would give it. If we were short in other areas, well, sorry God; we need it worse than you. When I was unfaithful to Him, I wasn't blessed. I don't mean He was unfaithful to me, because I was still saved and still received much that I shouldn't have. But, I wasn't fully blessed because I wasn't fully obedient. My first pastor said "Partial obedience is still disobedience."

Leviticus 27 is all about evaluating what we give to God, what we should give, and why. The priests would even help people to make an exact determination. But, once it was set aside, there was no other purpose it could be used for, but to give to God. I was not setting aside my giving for God only, but allowed other purposes to creep in. If you're going to give to God, do so wholeheartedly. And while the Israelites did a very precise measurement of giving to the Lord, they still gave gifts above and beyond. We saw that

when they kept giving for the tabernacle, and Moses had to tell them to stop because there was too much! But, remember that God wants your heart, and when He has that, you won't displease Him in your offerings to Him. **How do you give to the Lord? Precisely and methodically without any thought of going "over"? Or do you joyfully give, and even attempt to do more than is required of you? I'm glad that God does stick to a permanent blessing scale. Sometimes He blesses in such a way, that I can't believe it. Treasure Him with your treasure.**