

Reading: **1st Peter 1:18-21**

INTRO. Leviticus is the 3rd book in the OT, written by Moses as a guidebook for the Israelite nation. The Jews referred to it as “the law of the priests” since that’s what Leviticus deals with most, the priests and how they’re to conduct worship in the Tabernacle.

*People who are squeamish don’t like reading the Book of Leviticus much because of it’s bloody nature. It gives some gory details of the sacrifices that were required. Others, however, find it dull because of the many different sacrifices that are described. You know, they had **burnt** offerings... **peace** offerings...**sin/guilt** offerings. Of course, there were the 3 annual festivals ~ Passover, Pentecost & Tabernacles ~ all of which had special sacrifices... as well as the day of Atonement. All of these blood sacrifices were offered yearly by the thousands (if not millions) by faithful Jews. And if you & I lived back then, I can assure you we would’ve found those sacrifices to be anything but dull... most of us wouldn’t have had the stomach for them because of all the blood that was spilled.*

*However, those sacrifices are what make the book of Leviticus so important for us today. Those sacrifices help us to better appreciate what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross. Depending on the occasion, & what a man could afford, a faithful Jew would bring some animal to the tabernacle. It might be an ox, bull, sheep, goat, pigeon or turtledove...the most common was a male lamb, which best typified our Lord. **But, can you imagine what that scene was like?** The worshipper would come before the altar, which stood in the middle of the court of the Tabernacle, & he’d tie his animal on a ring on one side of the altar. Then, he’d take his knife, & there in view of anyone in the area, he’d plunge it into the animal & kill it. Then, he’d skin the animal, & cut it into several pieces. The priest who was presiding would take part of the blood & sprinkle it over the altar, then he’d take pieces of meat from the animal & burn it on the altar.*

*Of course, the ritual would vary somewhat, depending on the type of sacrifice you’re making. If you’re making a **burnt** offering, the*

whole animal was consumed on the fire, symbolizing your complete surrender to God. If you're making a **peace** offering, some of the meat was given to the priest to eat, & you kept some for your family. If you're making a **trespass or guilt** offering, you'd give all the meat to the priests. It's hard for us to imagine what all of that was like, but for **1500 years**, this was the practice of God's people, & during that time the fire on the altar was never to go out, but kept burning.

It's said, the **blood** that flowed from the altar was like a mountain stream & they had a method of washing it out so it'd flow under the temple. And today, ever after 2,000, dark stains from that blood can still be seen on the stones where the temple once stood.

There are over 300 references to **blood** in the Bible, & over 175 references to sacrifices. While all of that seems foreign to us, we have to realize that all of that blood which flowed during that 1500 year period was pointing to a day when the Lamb of God would be slain for the sins of the world. The Bible says that Lamb was "...slain from the foundation of the world," (Rev. 13:8). Meaning it had been God's plan from the beginning to provide a perfect sacrifice to atone for our sins, but all of those earlier sacrifices - the tens of 1,000's - were to point us to **Jesus** & the **blood** that He shed for our sins.

Now, what are the benefits of that blood, which Jesus shed? What does it say to us? The Hebrew writer, **Heb. 12:24**, says the blood of Christ "**speaks better things than that of Abel,**" so what does it speak to us about today? 4 things:

1st ...The blood of Jesus speaks about "Justification". Look in your Bible at **Rom. 5:8-9**: "...God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

Justification is a court term; it means to be declared "just" or "blameless". Another word is "acquit". Some of you remember the words made famous by O. J. Simpson's lawyer, when he said, "**If the gloves don't fit, you must acquit.**" And the jury returned a verdict of "not guilty" which shocked much of the country. The problem with your sin & mine is, "**the gloves fit!**" & nothing we do or say can prove otherwise.

*We're guilty of sin; we've violated God's law, & no amount of money, or pretending or acting will get us off. And there's no sacrifice that we can offer up to God that will "justify" us. Even if we could offer our **own blood**, it wouldn't be good enough to save us.*

Years ago, there was a young lady who had a rare type of blood, & because it was so rare, she donated it to the Blood Bank, something many people never do. Then, when she was living in Michigan, she got seriously ill, & needed surgery. This meant she needed blood, so they searched the whole country looking for this rare type; finally through the computer network, they found her type of blood in a Blood Bank in Florida. To their amazement, they discovered it was her own blood which she'd given to help others. So, she was saved by her own blood.

*So, physically-speaking, you can do that. And in a day of "tainted" blood, due to AIDS & other diseases, some people will donate their own blood in advance when they know they're going to have surgery. But, spiritually-speaking, our blood is of no use! We need the blood of Jesus! **Why?** Because He lived a sinless life, thus His is the only blood by which we can be justified... acquitted... & saved!*

***2nd...The blood of Christ speaks of "Redemption".** In **Eph.1:7** Paul says, **"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."** Biblically, the idea of redemption had to do with slavery. It's said there were approximately 20 million slaves living in the Roman Empire in NT times. Slaves were bought & sold like merchandise; it was big business. And sometimes a man might save his money for a lifetime so he could "buy back" a relative or friend who was a slave, so he could give them their freedom. That's what the word "redemption" really means.*

*Well, sin enslaved us! Sin put everyone of us under a penalty of death, & on our own we can't break sin's power. We need redemption; without someone to redeem, we'll die eternally! So, Jesus came to the redemption block to set us free. **But, what was the redemption price? What did it cost Him?** Peter said in our text silver & gold couldn't do it. Jesus*

has all the silver & gold in the world, He owns it all. Yet, that wasn't good enough. Jesus had to go to the cross & shed **His blood** to redeem us! That's the price He had to pay.

I've love the story, apparently true, about Abraham Lincoln who once saw a young girl being put up for sale on a slave block. So, he decided to "redeem" her, & put in a bid. As the girl looked at the tall, homely, white man trying to buy her, she figured he was just another slave owner who wanted to take her & abuse her. But, when Lincoln won the bidding & paid for her, he told her she was free! She didn't understand, & said, "What does that mean?" He said, "It means you're free!" She said, "Does that mean I can say whatever I want to say?" "Yes," he answered, "You can say anything you want to say." "Does that mean I can be anything I want to be?" "Yes, you can be anything you want to be." Does that mean I can go anywhere I want to go?" "Yes," Lincoln said, "You can go anywhere you want to go." With tears now streaming down her face, she said, "Then I'll go with you!" And, when we understand what **Jesus** did in giving His life as a ransom for us, we too will want to make Him our only Master, & go with Him wherever He leads us.

But this is what the blood of Christ speaks of...1st justification, & 2nd redemption.

3^d...The blood of Jesus speaks of "Reconciliation". Reconciliation has to do with being restored to a right relationship. {If two people are 'reconciled' it means their friendship is restored. They had been enemies, but now they're friends; they've been reconciled.} And we need to be reconciled to God! We need to be restored to a rightful relationship with Him. **Why?** Because sin disrupted our relationship. As **Isaiah 59:2** says, "Your iniquities have separated you from God; & your sins have hidden His face from you."

What's important for us to understand here is the separation that occurred between us & God wasn't God's doing, but ours! {Usually, when there's a falling out between friends or family members, you can trace the problem back to one or the other parties, & often to both!} But that's never the case with us & God! Always, the fault lies with

us, never God. We're the sinners; our sins separated us; so it's up to us to be reconciled to God! Never does the Bible speak about GOD being reconciled to man; always it's man who needs to be reconciled to God... because we wronged Him!

*But how are we going to accomplish that? We wronged God! Our sins separated us from Him! So, what can we possibly do on our own to make things right & win back His favor? Apologize? Say, "I'm sorry?" Think that's enough? What about the next time we sin, & the next time, & the next time? We don't have enough "I'm sorry's" to win back His favor! Really, there's nothing we can do! BUT, here's what makes the gospel "good news", for God has made it possible for us to be reconciled back to Him by the death of His Son. Even though **we wronged Him**, He's fixed it so we can be restored to His favor! Isn't that remarkable? The Bible says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..." (2nd Cor. 5:19). The only thing that can change you from an "enemy" to a "friend" of God's ~ & that's reconciliation ~ is the **blood** of Jesus. Listen to what Paul said in Rom. 5:10: "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." What a wonderful offer God has given to us! Because of our sins, we were separated from God, & made His enemies. But because of Jesus' death & shed blood, we can be reconciled to Him. Why would anyone refuse such an offer?*

***4th ...Finally, the blood of Jesus speaks of 'Remission'** The Hebrew writer said, "...without the shedding of blood there is no remission," (Heb. 9:22). That was true under the OT law, & it's true today. Yet, today, we don't have to take a bull or lamb & offer it up to God. Aren't you glad? Even if we did, it wouldn't work anyhow! The writer said, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls & goats could take away sins," (Heb. 10:4). For nearly 1500 years, that's what God required, but those sacrifices could never do the job, completely; that's why they had to offer them time & time again, every year until such time that a perfect sacrifice could be made. And JESUS was that sacrifice! HE became our **sin** offering, our **peace** offering & our **guilt** offering all at once.*

When Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper, He said of the fruit of the vine, "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," (Matt. 26:28). We need remission of sins! And I can't imagine anyone not wanting it.

We've all known of people who've been diagnosed with cancer: it's a dreaded disease that often kills. Both of my parents died from it, & some of you have lost loved ones from this terrible disease. But, you know, it's not always fatal. Sometimes, people go through chemo or have radiation treatments, & receive the good news that their cancer has gone into "remission". And they go on to live full, active lives!

But how can people be so concerned about "remission" as it relates to a disease in their body, & not be mindful about "remission" as it relates to sin in their soul? Without remission, a cancer will kill your body, but sin will destroy your soul! So, we all need remission, but if Jesus hadn't been willing to shed His blood for us, we could have no remission of sins!

So, the **blood** of Jesus speaks of 4 wonderful benefits: justification, redemption, reconciliation & remission. Obviously, to receive these benefits, we must come into death of Jesus, where His blood can cover or wash away our sins. But how do we do this? How do we come into Christ's death to receive the benefits of His blood? There is only one way. The Bible says, "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life," (Rom. 6:3-4). This is why Peter commanded those on Pentecost day, "Repent & be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38). At baptism, we come into the death of Jesus, & at that moment we receive these wonderful benefits of His blood: justification, redemption, reconciliation & remission of sins.

If you want to claim these blessings, you need to come to Christ & obey the gospel. If you need the prayers of the church, as an erring child of God, come back today, while together we stand & sing.

