

A Sacrifice to Remember

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Please turn your Bibles back to Leviticus 2, as we learn how to bake bread and give it as a gift to God.

Well, Hannah, my wife, and I are not, it's a good thing that she's not here, Hannah and I are not gift-giving people.

So ever since we started dating, until after we had been married for five years, we had rarely given gifts to each other. But last November, after both of us almost missed our wedding anniversary, we decided that, okay, that was quite bad, so we have to do something about it.

So we decided to start giving gifts to each other, because we thought it would be good practice for at least three reasons. Do you have to click on it?

Sorry. Thanks. For at least three reasons. So gift-giving helps us express how we value the other person, their worth.

[1 : 24] Gift-giving helps us express our thankfulness for the other person, for what they've done, and for the person that they are. And gift-giving helps us remember the relationship that we have between us.

Now, if that is what gift-giving is about, and remember we have a relationship with God as He dwells with us, what gift do we give God to show His worth, to show your thankfulness for Him, and to remember your relationship with Him?

Well, that's what this passage is about. So here, in this passage, we see the grain offering, which is closely connected to the burnt offering that we explored last week.

The burnt offering and the grain offering are very similar. They're both to be offered voluntarily, and they both act as an aroma that pleases the Lord, in verse 2 and 9.

In fact, the grain offering often directly follows the burnt offering. So they burn their burnt offering, all the bulls and the sheep and the goats, and then straight after, usually, they give the grain offering.

[2 : 50] But the grain offering serves a slightly different purpose to the burnt offering. Yes, they both serve to please God, as you can see there.

It's an aroma pleasing to the Lord. But in different ways. The burnt offering has an explicit atonement component to it, in chapter 1, verse 4.

But the grain offering says nothing about atonement. So, what is it for, then? Well, the grain offering usually follows the burnt offering, because it is, as it were, a response to the burnt offering.

Through the burnt offering, God forgives the people's general sins, and allows them to dwell with Him. And through the grain offering, the people bring a gift, as a response to the forgiveness of sins.

And as with the gift giving between Hannah and me, this gift, that is the grain offering, functions the same way.

[4 : 03] The grain offering helps the people express God's worth. It helps the people express their thanksgiving to God. And it helps the people remember their covenant relationship with God.

So, let's explore those three elements. First, the grain offering is a gift that expresses the worth of God.

In fact, you can see that in the word for grain offering. The Hebrew word for grain, in grain offering, doesn't mean grain.

It literally means a tribute. So, it's a tribute offering. It's a present. It's a gift that is offered to a king or someone highly respected.

And we can see that in the kind of gift that the people are to bring in this offering. They can bring the grain offering in for different forms, as Andrew has shown us earlier.

[5 : 12] So, they can bring uncooked flour, in verse 1, or cooked in an oven like bread, in verse 4, or cooked on a griddle like flat bread, in verse 5, or cooked in a pan like a pancake, in verse 7.

But all these different forms, if you notice there, have almost the same requirements. First, they all have to be of finest flour, in verse 1, 4, 5, and 7.

Now, the finest flour is the most expensive and the very best flour, which is supposed to reflect God's very best nature.

And second, they all have to contain olive oil, in verse 1, 4, 5, and 7, which enhances both the flavor and the smell of the offering when it's burned.

As if to say, the finest, most expensive flour is not enough to reflect God's worth. Now, for the uncooked flour, in verse 1, this smell has to be enhanced further by some incense.

[6 : 33] Probably because burning raw flour doesn't smell fragrant. And it's not just regular incense, but the original word refers to frankincense, which is very costly and fit for kings.

And then third, they all have to be without yeast or honey, in verse 11. Probably because yeast causes fermentation of the flour, and therefore is seen as corruption.

And honey quickens the process of fermentation through sugar. So, by excluding yeast and honey, they want to make sure that the gift is the very best, the most pure, uncorrupted.

Through this gift, they want to express how much God is worth to them. The gift reflects what the giver thinks of the giftee.

For last Christmas, this was Hannah's gift for me. It's a Lego Iron Man gauntlet.

[7 : 56] You can play with it and move the fingers, which is quite cool. This gift reflects what Hannah thinks of me, which is accurate, actually.

I love the Marvel Universe, or the movies and the comic books. And I love building Lego. I'm a child at heart.

And also because she knows that I like spending time alone doing meditative things like building Lego. Now, this gift was quite costly, because, you know, Lego is expensive.

But it's not even close to what the Israelites bring to God as a gift. In chapter 1, the best of the animals.

Here, the best of flour, with the best of incense, frankincense, without ingredients that may corrupt the gift. Hannah and I don't have to give the best gift to each other every single time, because in this relationship, we are equal in worth.

[9 : 04] We are both human beings. But in our relationship with God, He is the infinitely worthy. We have covered that last week.

And we are unworthy in comparison. What we bring to God has to reflect His worth. And then second, the grain offering is a gift that expresses the people's thankfulness.

This is already obvious from the fact that they bring the grain offering as a response to the burnt offering. The people are thankful that God has forgiven their sins through the burnt offering.

But it's more obvious, especially in the first fruits offering in verse 14 to 16. The grain offering of first fruits allows the people to say thank you to God for giving them harvest and food.

This is why the requirements for first fruits offering are slightly different to those for the normal grain offering. Notice that in verse 12, yeast and honey are allowed to be offered as first fruits offering, as long as they're not burned on the altar as a pleasing aroma.

[10 : 35] And so in verse 16, which talks about the first fruits offering, the first fruits are to be burned, but not on the altar, like the normal grain offering. Notice that compared to the normal grain offering instructions in verse 2 and 9, verse 16 is the only one that doesn't say that the first fruits are burnt on the altar or as an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

And so the purpose of the first fruits then is slightly different. It's more of an expression of the thanksgiving of the people rather than an expression of the worth of God, which we covered in the first point.

And so the symbolism of purity in the absence of yeast and honey, which reflects God's pure worth, is not needed because it reflects our thanksgiving, the people's thanksgiving.

This offering shows God as king who is in control of the world and who provides food for his people.

And the people bring this gift not only as a tribute to the king to reflect his worth, but also to express their thanksgiving.

[11 : 55] And third, the grain offering is a gift that evokes remembrance. You see, all these different forms of grain offering follow the same procedure.

They all must be given to the priests who will then take a handful and burn that as a memorial portion. And then they keep the rest as the most holy part.

You can see that in verse 2 to 3, verse 9 to 10, and verse 16. Now, the memorial portion is a token portion to indicate that actually the whole sacrifice belongs to God, but he chooses to leave some, which we call the most holy part, for the priests.

And this was necessary back then because when Israel arrived in Canaan, the priests did not get any land. So they will rely on the provision of these offerings for food.

But we might ask, what does a memorial portion mean? And why is the rest called the most holy part? It indicates that the memorial portion is more than just a token portion, and the most holy part is more than just provision for the priests.

[13 : 27] The names suggest that there might be something more. The memorial portion is the handful that is to be burnt for God because this portion serves to evoke God's remembrance of his people in the covenant.

As it were, every time they burn this for God, this memorial portion, Israel is praying, remember, Lord, that we are your people.

in light of their sins, this is important. Because in Exodus 32, after the Israelites make the golden calf to be worshipped, remember, they make the golden calf and they worship it, God becomes angry and is about to leave them and not dwell with them anymore, Moses says, remember that this nation is your people.

This is the same idea. Every time they make a grain offering and they burn some portion, which is called the memorial portion, they are praying to God, remember that we are your people.

Keep dwelling with us. Do not forsake us. And God, in response, leaves the most holy portion.

[14 : 51] Offerings in Leviticus, in general, are divided into two categories, holy and most holy. The most holy portion is left with the priests and has to be consumed only by the priests to evoke remembrance that in this covenant relationship, the priests are called to be the most holy people.

Whereas, the holy portion can be consumed by the general population, the general Israelites, to indicate that in this covenant relationship, Israel is called to be a holy people.

You see, the two portions signify the two sides of the covenant relationship between God and Israel. This is like what happens at a wedding with the exchange of vows symbolized by the exchange of rings.

I wear this ring everywhere to remind myself and other people that I belong to someone, that I have a covenant with Hannah, that I have vowed my heart to her.

Here too, God is left with the memorial portion and the people are left with the holy and most holy parts so they remember their relationship in this covenant.

[16 : 17] Now here, the addition of salt to all of the offerings in verse 13 makes sense. The salt is called salt of the covenant because salt was used as a symbol that their covenant relationship lasts forever.

This is like when we say till death do us part. in summary then, the grain offering is the people's gift to God because the people want to express God's infinite worth because they want to be thankful to God who provides and because they want God and themselves to remember their covenant relationship.

Now what does that have to do with us today? before we apply this to ourselves and ask ourselves how we can bring a gift to God we need to realize that God has first given us a gift the ultimate gift His Son even when our worth is nothing compared to God's worth even when He has nothing to thank us for He still gives us the ultimate gift and that's why in John it says in Jesus we receive grace after grace grace literally means unmerited gift unmerited favor or blessing again again and again God has shown us that He's not just demanding things from His people in the book of Leviticus He's actually prepared to do and give way more than we often are

God is gracious we have explored that last week He is the God of gifts and so when we talk about applying this passage we need to realize that our gift to God is merely a response to His ultimate gift again sort of like the Israelites bringing this grain offering as a response to the burnt offering that atones them so with that in mind three short points of application first application is offer your holy life as an act of worship this is a short reminder of the general application that we covered last week just as the Israelites were called to be the holy people of God we must also remember that

Christians today are called to be the New Testament holy people of God as our reading second reading in first Peter says but you are a chosen you the Christians the church are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light we must remember that in Christ we belong to God as his people as his new testament Israel as his bride in fact when we are baptized or when we are confirmed we have vowed remember the vows we have given our lives to him in the new covenant we have exchanged rings with

[20 : 15] God so to speak just like the old testament Israel who needed some remembrance of their status and calling as the holy people of God we too must remind ourselves like we said last week we are to offer our whole lives as a pleasing sacrifice holy and pleasing to God but if last week you were wondering how you could do that specifically in your daily lives here are some more specific applications so second application offer your money as an act of worship in first Corinthians nine Paul uses the language of the grain offering to invite Christians to give to the gospel ministry don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar in the same way the

Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel this is one specific way you can bring a gift to God give to gospel ministry and not only at church but also to missionaries AFES City Bible Forum Bush Church Aid and others through giving our money to God we are doing the same three things giving our money to God shows that he is worth the thing that sustains our lives and the thing that gives us security and the thing that buys us comfort and giving our money shows that we are thankful for God's provision realizing that God is the source of life not our money and in a sense through giving our money we are saying to

God God I'm letting this go because I believe and I know that you will remember that we are your people don't allow us to go hungry give us our daily bread we are trusting him because of the covenant relationship give to gospel ministry thoughtfully not just whatever you have in your pocket on a Sunday morning but thoughtfully your gift displays what you think of the gift to God and how much he is worth to you so give thoughtfully and intentionally again by giving our money we're not trying to buy God's grace his grace is attained by Jesus cross only we bring this gift as a response to his grace again just like the

Israelites bring the grain offering as a response to the burnt offering third and last application offer your prayer as an act of worship in psalm 141 David says that his prayer is like incense and evening sacrifice in revelation 5 and 8 prayers of God's holy people are depicted as an incense fragrant offering going up to God now this should not be a surprise right again through prayer we are doing the same three things praying to God means that we acknowledge him as worthy of our devotion as we pray we adore him and we praise him that's why we do a prayer of adoration praying to God allows us to be thankful to him acknowledging that he is sovereign and therefore we can be thankful of all the good things that we have because they come from him the prayer of thanksgiving and as we raise our requests to

God in supplication prayers we again evoke that covenant remembrance God receive our prayers hear our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord in other words because you have promised that in Christ we are your people you will hear our prayers we request God's response based on his remembrance that we are his people do you pray do you pray regularly and voluntarily as the old Israel also offered this sacrifice regularly and voluntarily because let me encourage you every time you pray for things big or small you are burning an incense and it smells fragrant and

[25 : 41] God is pleased to pray there are multiple resources that might help you here we have the anglican prayer book which you can pray daily morning and night because it contains prayers every day, Monday to Sunday, morning and night.

There's this book here called The Valley of Vision, which contains a collection of great Puritan prayers. I found these two books helpful, especially because I'm a man of few words, and these books give me the words to pray.

If you need to pray with other people for accountability or to give you motivation, then you can come to prayer night on Wednesday or form a prayer triplet with your friends at church.

I have a prayer triplet that meets monthly for two hours, three of us, to confess to each other and to pray for one another. I find it immensely helpful.

Or invite me to pray together with you. If you come to me and say, Hey, Ricky, I'm eager to do 15-minute morning prayer three times a week at 7.30 before school or before work.

[27 : 08] Would you like to join me? I'd be inclined to say, Yeah, let's pray. Pray and pray regularly.

Friends, God has given us the ultimate gift, the unmerited gift. In the fullness of His Son, we receive grace after grace.

Let us offer our lives and our money and our prayers as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that you are the God of grace, the God of gifts.

Thank you for giving us the ultimate gift which we don't deserve, your Son, Jesus. Help us through your Holy Spirit that we may offer our holy lives as a pleasing sacrifice, holy and pleasing to you.

[28 : 14] In Jesus, our true High Priest, we pray. Amen.