

Intro:

Back in my real estate days, I had a house for sale over off Quadra Street in one of those newer subdivisions. The house wasn't that old at the time, it was reasonably well kept, it was quite big, and it had a fairly good price on it. But it took a long time to sell. Why? Well, it was located right next to those big power lines that go through that area.

- In fact, one of those big towers was in the green space right next to that house.
- How many of you would have had a problem with living next to a big tower like that?

Well, that's one thing.

In our neighbourhood, there is a house where a murder-suicide took place. How many of you would be really comfortable buying that house?

Well, that's another thing.

They are proposing to put up some very big towers in Colwood – over 40 stories. Suppose a house came up for sale right next door to one of those? Would you like to live there?

That's another thing...

A few years ago, there was a fellow off Keating Cross Rd who was mad at the city. I forget why, but he made his property a nuisance. He piled all kinds of trash and garbage all over his yard. The smellier, the better. How would you like to move in next door to him?

Here's another thing:

Where I grew up, they have some coal fired power plants. I toured them when I was in Junior High school. The power plant uses water from a lake, then sends the water back into the lake... kind of 'warmish'. How would you like to live right next door? Especially right next door to the "outflow"?

Still another:

Suppose you were contemplating buying a house right next door to a manufacturing plant where toxic chemicals were in use and there was some risk of them getting into a stream between your house and the plant?

Or suppose you were thinking of buying a house right next door to a nuclear power plant? How many of you would like to do that?

[I am in favor of nuclear power, but I'm not sure I want to live next door!]

There is a reason why I am giving you all these examples. What is the common thread about these houses, real and imagined, that I am describing to you?

They are all 'contaminated' in one way or another.

I want you to think now about God and God's house. What do you think God thinks about His house when it is contaminated?

Read Lev 4.1-13, 22, 27, 35

Proposition: In order for God to forgive sin, the pollution the sinner has caused must be cleansed.

The offering we are considering is called *the sin offering*. It might be better to call it *the purification offering*, since all the offerings were for sin in one way or another.

I. The creeping pollution of sin that must be cleansed

A. Understanding the meaning through understanding the ritual

1. Differing categories of purification offerings

- a. The High priest (3)
- b. The 'congregation' – probably the congregation as represented by the tribal elders acting as representatives (13)
- c. Any 'ruler' individually (22)
- d. Any 'common person' (27)

2. The basic outline of the purification offerings

- a. Presentation of animal at the tent of meeting
- b. Laying on of hands [confession of cause]
- c. Slaughter before the Lord
- d. Use of the blood
 - 1) For Priest/nation
 - a) Sprinkle seven times on the veil in the holy place
 - b) Smear some blood on the horns of the altar of incense in the holy place
 - c) Poured out rest at base of altar of burnt offering

- 2) For ruler/common people
 - a) Smear some on the horns of the altar of burnt offering
 - b) Poured rest at base of altar of burnt offering
- e. Burned fatty portions on altar of burnt offering
- f. Disposed of meat
 - 1) For Priest/nation: burned on the ash heap outside the camp
 - 2) For ruler/common people: given to officiating priest

Some similarities with other offerings:

- Presentation, laying on of hands, slaughter, burning portions on altar

Some differences – these are the key to understanding

B. The distinct actions of the purification offering that enlighten its meaning

1. The use of the blood

“The rest of the ritual was unique to the purification offering. In the burnt and peace offerings the blood of the animal was thrown against the altar. But in the purification offering some of the blood was caught in a basin and the rest was poured away at the foot of the altar. The blood which was set aside was used in a variety of ways depending on who the worshiper was.”¹

- a. Priest: blood sprinkled seven times on the veil, *i.e.* the entrance to the holy of holies; blood also smeared on the horns of the incense altar in the holy place
- b. Ruler or a common person: blood smeared on the horns of the altar of burnt offering in the open courtyard
- c. Day of atonement: (Lev 16) blood taken into the holy of holies itself and smeared on and in front of the mercy seat [purification for the accumulated sins of the nation]

¹ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* p. 90.

2. The significance: the purification offering cleanses God’s dwelling place, God’s house, from the pollution creeping into it from the sins of the people
 - a. The sins of the common man or individual ruler on a one and one basis are seen as polluting ‘as far as’ the altar of burnt offering
 - b. The specific sins of the High Priest or the Congregation are seen as polluting ‘as far as’ the Holy place
 - c. The many sins of all the nation collectively each year pollute to the very Holy of holies

I asked you this question earlier:

- I want you to think now about God and God’s house. What do you think God thinks about His house when it is contaminated?

God sees the sins of His people as pollutants — God is of holier eyes than to look upon evil, He will not dwell in the squalor of sin.

II. The seemingly insignificant source of pollution from sin

- A. The kinds of sins that pollute the sanctuary (2)
 1. Sins of ‘ignorance’ (KJV)
 2. ‘Unintentional’ sins (NAS)

The whole system of the purification offering, including the landmark ritual of the Day of Atonement — all of this is for *unintentional* sin.

Read Num 15.27-29

“The sin offering covered only sins committed unintentionally. This category included sins done by mistake, in error, through oversight or ignorance, through lack of consideration, or by carelessness. That is, this sacrifice covered sins that sprang from the weakness of the flesh (cf. Num. 15:27–29).”²

Is God unreasonable?

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003). Le 4:1.

B. What are unintentional sins?

1. The uncleanness brought on by a woman's monthly cycle (Lev 12.6-8)
2. The uncleanness brought on by leprosy – when a man is cleansed, he must offer a purification offering (Lev 14.19)
3. Any bodily discharges bring about pollution of the sanctuary (Lev 15.31)
4. There is pollution of the land when a murder is committed – though the people of the region are innocent of the murder itself (Dt 21.1-9)

Shakespeare – Lady Macbeth:

- 'Here's the smell of blood still:
all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this
little hand.
Oh! Oh! Oh!'

The sins we have listed are merely sins of the weakness of humanity – the human condition. But any sin pollutes the land – deliberate or accidental.

The Lord in his grace provided Israel with a ritual to provide cleansing from the pollution caused by inadvertent sin — the sins that could not be helped.

III. The costly sacrifice that cleanses from the pollution of sin

A. Especially for the high priest and the nation: a bull [costliest sacrifice of all]

1. The Holy place is cleansed
2. The meat is not consumed by men, but offered to God, outside the camp (until the pollution is gone, the Lord will not enter the camp)
3. The sin offering often preceded the burnt offering
 - a. Burnt offering appeases God's wrath
 - b. Sin offering makes God willing to receive the burnt offering

Several NT references that apply the significance of this, but we will consider just this one:

B. The Lord Jesus suffered outside the gate – and by his suffering cleanses the whole world, making God willing to receive sinners unto himself (Heb 13.10-16)

1. We have a superior altar to the OT altar (10)
2. We have a superior offering outside the gate (11-12)

Note: ‘sanctify the people’ — not the temple!

But also note: ‘we are the temple of the living God’

3. Let us go out of this world, outside the gate to Him, reproached by the world, acceptable unto God! (13-14)
4. By Him, then, let us serve God with praise and holiness (15-16)

We are accepted as clean in the presence of God on the basis of Christ’s sacrifice — but our sins can yet mar and hinder the fellowship we have with God.

“There is the continued threat in the NT that sin can drive the Spirit from the believer just as under the law God could be driven from the tabernacle.”³

Conclusion:

Are you cleansed by the blood of the Lamb?

Are you walking in fellowship with God?

Proposition: In order for God to forgive sin, the pollution the sinner has caused must be cleansed.

³ G. J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus* p. 103.