

Leviticus 1:1–17: Bringing the Sacrifices into Perspective

As we dive into Leviticus, we're stepping into a system of sacrifices that might feel foreign to us. That's because these rituals were part of the old covenant—a temporary system God put in place to point forward to something much better. The sacrifices of animals couldn't truly make anyone perfect. Instead, they were like road signs, pointing ahead to the ultimate sacrifice: Jesus Christ.

Paul explains it beautifully in Ephesians 5:2, where he calls us to follow God, walking in love just like Jesus, who gave Himself as an offering and sacrifice—a sweet-smelling aroma to God. Jesus wasn't just a sin offering; He fulfilled the role of the sweet savor offerings, too.

Types of Offerings

The offerings in Leviticus were divided into **sweet savor offerings** and **sin offerings**:

1. Sweet Savor Offerings:

- **Burnt Offering:** Represented total consecration to God.
- **Meal (Grain) Offering:** Symbolized service to God, made of fine flour and oil.
- **Peace Offering:** A picture of fellowship and communion with God.

2. Sin Offerings:

- **Sin Offering:** For specific sins against God.
- **Trespass Offering:** For wrongdoing or harm done to others.

Voluntary Commitment

Leviticus 1:3 highlights a key point: any offering had to come from the person's own **voluntary will**. God never forces anyone to love, serve, or give to Him—it's always a choice. Just like how Adam and Eve used their free will to turn away from God, it takes free will to come back into fellowship with Him.

The act of laying hands on the animal before it was sacrificed was deeply symbolic. For sin and trespass offerings, it represented transferring guilt to the animal, which then died in the person's place. For burnt offerings, it was a way of saying, "This animal represents my complete dedication to God."

Atonement: Old Covenant vs. New

The word **atonement** in the Old Testament comes from the Hebrew word *kaphar*, meaning "to cover." Animal sacrifices didn't remove sin—they just covered it temporarily. It was like putting a bandage over a wound instead of healing it. That's why these sacrifices had to be repeated over and over again.

In the New Testament, though, atonement takes on a whole new meaning. Through Jesus' sacrifice, our sins aren't just covered—they're completely removed, once and for all. Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 1:18–19 that we are redeemed not by temporary things like silver or gold but by the precious blood of Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God.

Total Consecration

Chapter 1 focuses on the **burnt offering**, which was all about total dedication to God. If someone wanted to fully commit their life to Him, they'd bring an animal (like an ox, sheep, or even turtledoves if they were poor). They'd lay their hand on the animal to symbolize that it was taking their place, and then the whole animal would be burned on the altar—a sweet-smelling aroma to God.

This sacrifice was a reminder that **consecration to God must be total**. Nothing could be held back. It's a challenge for us today, too. How often do we hold back areas of our lives from God? Paul urges us in Romans 12:1 to present our whole selves—our bodies, minds, and everything else—as a living sacrifice, fully dedicated to God.

Personal Application

The burnt offering challenges us to ask: **Am I holding anything back from God?** True consecration means giving Him every part of your life—your time, talents, relationships, and plans. It's not about perfection but about surrender.

Thankfully, we don't have to bring animals to the altar anymore. Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, taking our place once and for all. Now, we're called to live as walking sacrifices, completely devoted to God. So today, reflect on what areas of your life you might still be holding back, and ask God to help you fully surrender.