

# CHAPTER 5

This chapter, and part of the next, concern the trespass-offering. The difference between this and the sin-offering lay not so much in the sacrifices themselves, and the management of them, as in the occasions of the offering of them. They were both intended to make atonement for sin; but the former was more general, this applied to some particular instances. Observe what is here said,

## I. Concerning the trespass. If a man sin,

1. In concealing his knowledge, when he is adjured (v. 1).
2. In touching an unclean thing (v. 2, 3).
3. In swearing (v. 4).
4. In embezzling the holy things (v. 14-16).
5. In any sin of infirmity (v. 17-19). Some other cases there are, in which these offerings were to be offered (<sup><ORR></sup>Leviticus 6:2-4; 14:12; 19:21; <sup><ORR></sup>Numbers 6:12).

## II. Concerning the trespass-offerings,

1. Of the flock (v. 5, 6).
2. Of fowls (v. 7-10).
3. Of flour (v. 11-13; but chiefly a ram without blemish (v. 15, etc.).

## <sup><ORR></sup>LEVITICUS 5:1-6

### LAW OF THE SIN-OFFERING

#### I. The offences here supposed are,

1. A man's concealing the truth when he was sworn as a witness to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Judges among the Jews had power to adjure not only the witnesses, as with us, but the person suspected (contrary to a rule of our law, that no man is bound to accuse himself), as appears by the high priest adjuring our Saviour, who thereupon answered, though before he stood silent, <sup><ORR></sup>Matthew 26:63, 64. Now (v. 1), *If a soul sin* (that is, a person, for the soul is the man), if he *hear the voice of swearing* (that is, if he be adjured to testify what he knows, by an *oath* of the Lord upon him, <sup><ORR></sup>1 Kings 8:31), if in such a

case, for fear of offending one that either has been his friend or may be his enemy, he refuses to give evidence, or gives it but in part, *he shall bear his iniquity*. And that is a heavy burden, which, if some course be not taken to get it removed, will sink a man to the lowest hell. He that *heareth cursing* (that is, that is thus adjured) and betrayeth it not (that is, stifles his evidence, and does not utter it), he is a partner with the sinner, and *hateth his own soul*; see <sup>(~~1004~~)</sup>Proverbs 29:24. Let all that are called out at any time to bear testimony think of this law, and be free and open in their evidence, and take heed of prevaricating. An oath of the Lord is a sacred thing, and not to be dallied with.

**2.** A man's touching any thing that was ceremonially unclean, v. 2, 3. If a man, polluted by such touch, came into the sanctuary inconsiderately, or if he neglected to wash himself according to the law, then he was to look upon himself as under guilt, and must bring his offering. Though his touching the unclean thing contracted only a ceremonial defilement, yet his neglect to wash himself according to the law was such an instance either of carelessness or contempt as contracted a moral guilt. If at first it be *hidden from him*, yet when he knows it he *shall be guilty*. Note, As soon as ever God by his Spirit convinces our consciences of any sin or duty we must immediately set in with the conviction, and prosecute it, as those that are not ashamed to own our former mistake.

**3.** Rash swearing. If a man binds himself by an oath that he will do or not do such a thing, and the performance of his oath afterwards proves either unlawful or impracticable, by which he is discharged from the obligation, yet he must bring an offering to atone for his fully in swearing so rashly, as David that he would kill Nabal. And then it was that he must *say before the angel* that it was an error, <sup>(~~1005~~)</sup>Ecclesiastes 5:6. *He shall be guilty in one of these* (<sup>(~~1006~~)</sup>Leviticus 5:4), guilty if he do not perform his oath, and yet, if the matter of it were evil, guilty if he do. Such wretched dilemmas as these do some men bring themselves into by their own rashness and folly; go which way they will their consciences are wounded, sin stares them in the face, so sadly are they *snared in the words of their mouth*. A more sad dilemma this is than that of the lepers, "If we sit still, we die; if we stir, we die." Wisdom and watchfulness beforehand would prevent these straits.

**II.** Now in these cases,

**1.** The offender must confess his sin and bring his offering (v. 5, 6); and the offering was not accepted unless it was accompanied with a penitential confession and a humble prayer for pardon. Observe, The confession must be particular, *that he hath sinned in that thing*; such was David's confession (~~(504)~~ Psalm 51:4), *I have done this evil*; and Achan's (~~(602)~~ Joshua 7:20), *Thus and thus have I done*. Deceit lies in generals; many will own in general they have sinned, for that all must own, so that it is not any particular reproach to them; but that they have sinned *in this thing* they stand too much upon their honour to acknowledge: but the way to be well assured of pardon, and to be well armed against sin for the future, is to be particular in our penitent confessions.

**2.** The priest must *make atonement for him*. As the atonement was not accepted without his repentance, so his repentance would not justify him without the atonement. Thus, in our reconciliation to God, Christ's part and ours are both needful.

## ~~(332)~~ LEVITICUS 5:7-13

### LAW OF THE TRESPASS-OFFERING

Provision is here made for the poor of God's people, and the pacifying of their consciences under the sense of guilt. Those that were not able to bring a lamb might bring for a sin-offering a pair of *turtle-doves* or *two young pigeons*; nay, if any were so extremely poor that they were not able to procure these so often as they would have occasion, they might bring a pottle of fine flour, and this should be accepted. Thus the expense of the sin-offering was brought lower than that of any other offering, to teach us that no man's poverty shall ever be a bar in the way of his pardon. The poorest of all may have atonement made for them, if it be not their own fault. Thus the poor are evangelized; and no man shall say that he had not wherewithal to bear the charges of a journey to heaven. Now,

**I.** If the sinner brought two doves, one was to be offered for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering, v. 7. Observe,

**1.** Before he offered the burnt-offering, which was for the honour and praise of God, he must offer the sin-offering, to make atonement. We must first see to it that our peace be made with God, and then we may expect

that our services for his glory will be accepted. The sin-offering must make way for the burnt-offering.

2. After the sin-offering, which made atonement, came the burnt-offering, as an acknowledgment of the great mercy of God in appointing and accepting the atonement.

II. If he brought fine flour, a handful of it was to be offered, but without either oil or frankincense (v. 11), not only because this would make it too costly for the poor, for whose comfort this sacrifice was appointed, but because it was a sin-offering, and therefore, to show the loathsomeness of the sin for which it was offered, it must not be made grateful either to the taste by oil or to the smell by frankincense. The unsavouriness of the offering was to intimate that the sinner must never relish his sin again as he had done. God by these sacrifices did speak,

1. Comfort to those that had offended, that they might not despair, nor pine away in their iniquity; but, peace being thus made for them with God, they might have peace in him.

2. Caution likewise not to offend any more, remembering what an expensive troublesome thing it was to make atonement.

## ~~<OR4>~~ LEVITICUS 5:14-19

### LAW OF THE TRESPASS-OFFERING

Hitherto in this chapter orders were given concerning those sacrifices that were both sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, for they go by both names, v. 6. Here we have the law concerning those that were properly and peculiarly *trespass-offerings*, which were offered to atone for trespasses done against a neighbour, those sins we commonly call trespasses. Now injuries done to another may be either in holy things or in common things; of the former we have the law in these verses; of the latter in the beginning of the next chapter. If a man *did harm* (as it is v. 16) *in the holy things of the Lord*, he thereby committed a trespass against the priests, the Lord's ministers, who were entrusted with the care of these holy things, and had the benefit of them. Now if a man did alienate or convert to his own use any thing that was dedicated to God, unwittingly, he was to bring this

sacrifice; as suppose he had ignorantly made use of the tithes, or first-fruits, or first-born of his cattle, or (which, it should seem by <sup><R214></sup>Leviticus 22:14-16, is principally meant here) had eaten any of those parts of the sacrifices which were appropriated to the priests; this was a trespass. It is supposed to be done through mistake, or forgetfulness, for want either of care or zeal; for if it was done presumptuously, and in contempt of the law, the offender died without mercy, <sup><S08></sup>Hebrews 10:28. But in case of negligence and ignorance this sacrifice was appointed; and Moses is told,

**1.** What must be done in case the trespass appeared to be certain. The trespasser must bring an offering to the Lord, which, in all those that were purely trespass-offerings, must be a *ram without blemish*, “of the second year,” say the Jewish doctors. He must likewise make restitution to the priest, according to a just estimation of the thing which he had so alienated, adding a fifth part to it, that he might learn to take more heed next time of embezzling what was sacred to God, finding to his cost that there was nothing got by it, and that he paid dearly for his oversights.

**2.** What must be done in case it were doubtful whether he had trespassed or no; he had cause to suspect it, but he *wist it not* (v. 17), that is, he was not very certain; in this case, because it is good to be sure, he must bring his trespass-offering, and the value of that which he feared he had embezzled, only he was not to add the fifth part to it. Now this was designed to show the very great evil there is in sacrilege. Achan, that was guilty of it presumptuously, died for it; so did Ananias and Sapphira. But this goes further to show the evil of it, that if a man had, through mere ignorance, and unwittingly, alienated the holy things, nay, if he did but suspect that he had done so, he must be at the expense, not only of a full restitution with interest, but of an offering, with the trouble of bringing it, and must take shame to himself, by making confession of it; so bad a thing is it to invade God's property, and so cautious should we be to abstain from all appearances of this evil. We are also taught here to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to ask pardon for the sin, and make satisfaction for the wrong, which we do but suspect ourselves guilty of. In doubtful cases we should take and keep the safer side.