

The Naked Bible Podcast 2.0

Number 67

“Leviticus 5”

Dr. Michael S. Heiser

With

**Residential Layman
Trey Stricklin**

September 20, 2015

Leviticus 5

Leviticus 5 focuses on the so-called “guilt offering” of the OT sacrificial system. As was the case with the “sin offering” of Leviticus 4, the terminology / translation “guilt offering” is misleading, due to how Christians naturally filter OT sacrificial talk through what happened on the cross. The episode discusses what the “guilt offering” really meant and accomplished (or not).

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 67, Leviticus 5. I'm your layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey Mike, how are you doing?

MSH: Very good, very good, good to be back in Leviticus some more.

TS: Absolutely, well, we're trucking right through so I'm excited about number five.

MSH: Yeah, I actually got a comment on the blog that someone said, hey, I learned something from Leviticus. I had an a-ha moment from Leviticus.

TS: Yeah, I agree. I think the biggest thing I've taken away from it is the decontamination thought process behind it. That was really an a-ha moment for me.

MSH: Well good. Well, today we're going to hit chapter 5 and for those who listened to the last episode, chapters 4 and 5 were laws governing sacrifices of expiation. In other words, they had something to do with atonement. We talked about what atonement meant in Leviticus, basically the idea of purging or wiping away, not covering. And then also the concept of forgiveness, meaning we talked last time in Leviticus 4 about sacrifices for inadvertent offenses. So there was really no moral issues so the concept of forgiveness was that God looks at the person bringing the proper sacrifice and sort of the matter is settled. God looks upon that favorably.

You did what you needed to do with the right attitude and it was inadvertent and we're good. So that was chapter 4, and I had made the comment in that episode and also probably least once before that when we hit this section, we're going to be reading about sacrifices concerning unintentional offenses, unintentional sins, and basically that's what the sacrificial system is about. If you something defiantly, we talked a little but about this already, there were more severe consequences for that. And in many cases, there's no sacrifice. There's nothing you can do about it.

We're going to get into more of that today in Leviticus 5 but we're going to see an exception to this, but the exception really isn't about moral absolution. The exception is something that is done intentionally and if there is regret, and there is only certain types of offenses where this would apply to, if there is regret then the guilty person is allowed an opportunity to pay retribution or reparations is probably the better way to say that, to just restitution is the word I'm trying to think of here. So there's an opportunity to pay restitution not retribution, that's the wrong word, but restitution or reparations. So chapter 5 you will see sometimes in commentaries and literature referring to what most English translations have as the "guilt" offering.

It's better rendered, better understood as the reparation offering or the restitution offering so you'll see that at some points in the literature. So we'll get there in chapter 5. We're actually going to spill over into chapter 6 a little bit because in the Hebrew Bible, the first seven verses of chapter 6 in English translations are actually in chapter 5. So when we get to that point I'll just issue that reminder again so people won't wonder why are you going into chapter 6. Well, the answer is we're not really in chapter 6. We're in chapter 5 according to the Hebrew Bible. There are not a huge number but there are a fair number of instances, I guess you can chalk this under Bible trivia, where the versification of the Hebrew Bible is not the same as the versification in English Bibles.

Sometimes that's due to the Septuagint. Sometimes it's not. Sometimes there are other reasons. But it happens and we're going to hit one of those today. So let's just jump into chapter 5. Last time it was the sin offering, the decontamination offering in Leviticus 4. Leviticus 5 is going to be the so-called guilt offering so let's just jump in here. We might as well start with the first 13 verses. And the first 13 verses of chapter 5 still involve some language about the sin offering. You're still going to see the sin offering mentioned and I said this during the last episode, the sin offering stuff spills into chapter 5 and this is just another reminder of that. But you're going to see references to sin offering procedures but then you also get other offerings mentioned.

For instance, in Leviticus 5:7, there's the mention of the burnt offering and also later in the chapter the guilt offering. I made the comment before when we introduced Leviticus that sometimes the offerings will overlap, in that certain things will happen where the offerer either is required to or can bring more than one kind of offering depending on what the situation is. So let's just read the first 13 verses here in Leviticus 5 to start off here.

“If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity;² or if anyone touches an unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean wild animal or a carcass of unclean livestock or a carcass of unclean swarming things, and it is hidden from him and he has become unclean, and he realizes his guilt;³ or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever sort the uncleanness may be with which one becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and realizes his guilt;⁴ or if anyone utters with his lips a rash oath to do evil or to do good, any sort of rash oath that people swear, and it is hidden from him, when he comes to know it, and he realizes his guilt in any of these;⁵ when he realizes his guilt in any of these and confesses the sin he has committed,⁶ he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed, **[MSH: and the word compensation there is 'asham, which is going to be the word for “guilt offering” . Notice ESV translates it compensation, there's restitution idea here. If you become unclean unknowingly, and you sin unknowingly,] a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat, for a sin offering. [MSH: So right there you have a reference to the 'asham , the guilt offering, and in the same verse, the sin offering, the chatat. We talked about last week. So here you have offerings overlapping.]** And the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.

⁷“But if he cannot afford a lamb, then he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation for the sin that he has committed two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a sin offering

MSH: So the compensation, the *'asham*, which in many translations is guilt offering; the compensation is both for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. So now you have three offerings referred to here in verse 7. So the reason I'm reading through this is because really two

things, to show you that offerings overlap. Remember the burnt offering was so that you can approach the Lord. The *chatat*, the sin offering is actually decontamination offering. So that decontaminates sacred space, sacred objects. It insulates holy things from you because you're ritually impure. And then we're getting into material in Leviticus where what you're bringing is also viewed as a compensation for something. That's going to become more explained as we keep going in chapter 5. So the overlap is I think significant. We take note that this actually does happen and also to introduce the idea, the second reason I'm reading through this, this compensatory idea, this restitution idea is going to be important in this chapter. So continuing with verse 8,

⁸ He shall bring them to the priest, who shall offer first the one for the sin offering. He shall wring its head from its neck but shall not sever it completely, ⁹ and he shall sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering on the side of the altar, while the rest of the blood shall be drained out at the base of the altar; it is a sin offering. ¹⁰ Then he shall offer the second for a burnt offering according to the rule. And the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin that he has committed, and he shall be forgiven.

MSH: So again, you will be purged of your impurity. That's the atonement language, purged of your impurity that you have incurred upon yourself through something you did with really inadvertence without real knowledge of it. And God will be good with you. It will be taken care of. There will be sort of nothing to your account. Verse 11,

¹¹ “But if he cannot afford two turtledoves or two pigeons, then he shall bring as his offering for the sin that he has committed a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it and shall put no frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering. ¹² And he shall bring it to the priest, and the priest shall take a handful of it as its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, on the LORD's food offerings; it is a sin offering. ¹³ Thus the priest shall make atonement for him for the sin which he has committed in any one of these things, and he shall be forgiven. And the remainder shall be for the priest, as in the grain offering.”

MSH: We talked about the grain offering earlier. So those are the first 13 verses and there are some issues here we need to talk about. These 13 verses deal with what scholars might refer to as acts of neglect. In other words, in verse 1 there's this failure to testify on some incident and the rest would be some sort of thing that you did that rendered you impure that you really didn't know about. And so there was a failure to deal with the impurity until the point is reached where you are alerted to the fact that oh, I realize that I've become ritually impure. I better take care that. So the first 13 verses here tended to be referred to by scholars as failures or acts of neglect or sins of omission or something like that. So there's that issue, sort of to properly frame them. But there's an issue with the first one at the beginning of the chapter. I'll read it again.

“If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity;

MSH: Now that sounds very deliberate. It doesn't sound inadvertent at all. But the rest of the stuff in the next 12 verses is clearly inadvertent. So problem is what's the relationship between these things? How do we understand everything in the 13 verses when you have the first thing in the first verse seems different in character than what follows in the next 12? There's basically three views this. Some scholars see all of the acts of the first 13 verses as intentional, all of them, but the act of verse 1 is singled out as defiant, as deliberate. I should say deliberate and defiant aren't the same thing in Leviticus.

Deliberate is it's not inadvertent. You made a decision to do this but defiant is sort of an attitude issue, an intent issue. There's a pomposity to it. A defiant sort of stance, I don't care what God says. I'm going to do this, as opposed to I'm afraid to testify and I think I'm not going to do that. It's a little bit of a motivation difference. So we want to be careful to observe that. Some people say they're all intentional. Only this one is defiant. So that one is, since it's defiant, this view says why the verse says that person's going to bear his iniquity. But the rest of them are not an intentional. They're not defiant and so there's provision for sacrifice. That's one approach.

The second approach some scholars would see all of these acts of neglect as intentional but none of them are defiant, even the first one. That is, they would characterize the person who doesn't testify when he's been publicly, when a public call has been issued. If anybody knows about who did this or that crime, you need to say something. Some scholars would say well, maybe the person's just hesitating. It's still deliberate. It's still a decision but they're not doing it defiantly. And so some would say all of these things are intentional but none of them are defiant. We don't have to read defiance into the first one. And naturally that raises the question well, why does the first verse say he shall bear his iniquity? The answer would be the bearing of the iniquity would speak to the fact that whatever circumstances were sort of described in the public abjuration, the public call to testify, this person may still suffer consequences but it's still not defiant.

And that takes us into what this public abjuration is. The public abjuration was a sort of a forceful call to the community that if anybody knows what's going on or what happened or who the guilty people are, you need to come forth as a witness lest, and then there's typically some sort of consequence for not coming forth. That's all I want to say on that because I want to get into what the specific Hebrew term means in a moment. But the call to abjuration isn't just sort of a, like today where a cop goes on tv and says please testify. Help us solve this crime. It's a little stronger here in Leviticus by virtue of the term that's used, and also just the culture. The culture was you need to come forth because if you don't and we find out, then there's going to be consequences.

There's just a little bit of a threat that goes into what the ESV has translated here as a public abjuration. But some people would say look, somebody hears that, decides, so it's intentional not testify, but it's too much to call it defiant. Maybe they're just afraid, there's some hesitation. Third view is that some scholars would see the act of verse 1 as intentional and not covered by sacrifice deliberately contrasted with the rest. The rest are unintentional violations that can be addressed by sacrifice as in prior portions of Leviticus. Well, personally I'm just

going to give you my thoughts on this. I think the second option is probably the least likely. The second option was all of the acts in the first 13 verses are intentional. I just don't see that because I think the language is clear from verses 2 to 13 that people just don't know if they did something wrong so I don't see how that can be intentional. SO I think the second option is probably the least likely.

If the first option is correct that all of the acts here in the first 13 verses are intentional then this would be a passage, it's one of a handful in the Old Testament, where there's still an opportunity to sacrifice even if you do something deliberately. But even if that's the case, we're still not dealing with a defiant sin so there's really no sacrifice solution for defiant sins. If the third option is the best one, well, it's still true that sacrifice only addresses unintentional sins. So there's a difference of opinion here. It's not terribly important. I think we are going to get some clear exception language as we go on so when we hit that I'll mention it again. Now, before we leave verse 1, I want to go back to this 'he shall bear his iniquity in this public abjuration' idea. So the first verse says,

“If anyone sins in that he hears a public adjuration to testify, and though he is a witness, whether he has seen or come to know the matter, yet does not speak, he shall bear his iniquity;

MSH: Now the Hebrew word here, it's in the ESV. It's translated public abjuration is *alah*, which elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, this is kind of interesting, refers to a curse that's been put on someone. Isaiah 24:6 is an example of that. Just look at that verse quickly.

Therefore a curse devours the earth,

MSH: Again, *alah*. It can be a curse laid on, in that case, sort of a general curse statement, devours the Earth, curse devours the Earth. It can also be a specific curse laid on someone, an individual. Ezekiel 16:59,

“For thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant,

MSH: Again, the oath language there is this abjuration. So God is going to punish someone directly for that. You have, let me see if I can find another one here. Proverbs 29:24,

The partner of a thief hates his own life;
he hears the curse, but discloses nothing.

MSH: In other words, he's called on to testify and he doesn't do it so he's willfully putting his own person under threat. He's risking potential harm. The same word *alah* could be a curse that's part of an oath, part of a covenant treaty agreement, that sort of thing. So without belaboring it too much, this public abjuration often would include consequence, cursing language, that hey, we have a situation here. We need witnesses to come forth. And again, it's more than just, oh please help us. It's hey, we want to know who did this so the guilty is punished and not the innocent.

And if we find out later that you knew, then here are some consequences and those would actually be issued in the public call for witnesses. So that's why the language is what it is really in verse 1, that this person is going to bear his iniquity even if it wasn't defiant. Let's say he's just fearful. Well, if they find out later that that guy knew, there's still going to be consequences even though it wasn't this high-handed defiant snubbing God kind of attitude. So even if he didn't have the worst attitude, he could still suffer consequences. Certainly if he's defiant, then there are going to be consequences if they find out. People might regret it like why didn't you come earlier.

Why didn't you just respond even though we know you weren't doing this defiantly, there still consequences. We still have to follow the law. We still have to follow this abjuration. And now you're stuck. That's one thing if someone's just doing it like screw you kind of thing. Well, then we don't really care if there's consequences. We're certainly happy to dish them out. So you have, just again, sort of an odd situation there. Let's go down to verse 14, and this is really sort of the heart of the matter for today's episode. This is when the "guilt" offering gets a little more detailed. It's already been mentioned that it overlapped with the sin offering and the burnt offering. I want to say something more specifically about the guilt offering, so here's the rest the chapter. It's only five verses. Verse 14,

¹⁴The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁵"If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering.

MSH: Now, ESV actually takes the same word there, let me read it again. 'He shall bring to the Lord as his compensation, *'asham*, for a guilt offering, *'asham*. It translates the same word two different ways, first-time compensation, second time guilt offering, exactly the same terminology. I don't know why they did that because frankly, I think translating it guilt offering, okay, the person here, again, it's still unintentional. If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally, it's still a violation. It's still unintentional here. In a couple of verses we're going to some things that are certainly intentional, so there's still guilt.

I get the idea of translating it guilt offering but why don't you do that in the first part, he shall bring to the Lord as his guilt offering. Why translate it compensation? Well, it's because the translator knows and I think in this case didn't really do a good job of knowing that the issue with this offering is restitution. So this kind of mixed translation I think creates some flawed impressions in the whole sacrifice. Because what did I say last time? When we hear sacrificial language in the Old Testament, because we're Christians, because we are more familiar with the New Testament, because that's all we ever hear preached or whatever the reason is, we tend to filter the language of the Old Testament through the New Testament, through the work on the cross.

And so when we hear guilt offering, we read that in our translation, we might be led to think that when the sacrifice is killed, the blood is applied to the offerer. He's clean now just like what Jesus did or that the offering covers defiant acts, every kind of sin, just like Jesus. Well, none of those things are true. It doesn't cover everything and it's never the blood of the sacrifice,

like the other ones, is never applied to the sinner. So we're at risk here because we filter the Old Testament through the New just sort of subconsciously of misunderstanding. And in this case, I don't think the translation helps. What you need to get in your head is that the "guilt" offering is about paying restitution.

That's the guts of the whole thing. So if we go back to verse 14, let's just slow down and pick a few things here. 'If anyone commits a breach of faith,' Well, what is breach of faith? What is that? The Hebrew term is *ma'al* and commentators like Levine will point out that the etymology of Hebrew *ma'al* is not certain. That is, it's unclear as to what sort of comparative Semitic term, what broad Semitic terms this one could've come from because Hebrew has homographs. I've mentioned this before. The Semitic languages are going to have several words that could be behind *ma'al* and the question is which one applies to the one used here in Leviticus 5. Well, it's not clear. Levine actually says this. I'll quote him a little bit here. He says,

"All biblical occurrences of this term really directly or indirectly to ancient notions of sacrilege and impurity. As such, it is an appropriate term for misappropriation of sanctuary property. It may also refer to betrayal of trust in some contexts like with marital infidelity. In some contexts, it's used for acts of deceit. In other cases, it's used of a violation of the covenant between God and Israel through worshiping foreign gods. In legal texts, Levine points out, the crime of *ma'al* involves actual loss of property."

MSH: And so, we'll shut Levine off there for the moment. His view, and I think it's borne out by what follows a little bit in the remainder of the chapter, is the breach of faith here has something to do with the unintentional misuse or destruction or some kind of misappropriation, misuse of sanctuary property. Now it's clear that it's inadvertent because we have the word just like we had before, *shégagah*, inadvertent, unintentional in the passage. So maybe this refers to the sort of unintentional taking of something that should've been used only for the sanctuary, some sacred object or something like that.

It's a possibility. If it is, then this is a good example of if that's done unintentionally then it can be taken care of through the restitution sacrifice. This is quite in contrast to like what Achan does in Joshua 7 where he goes, deliberately takes something that had been put under the ban, put under the *cherem*, in the tent and, of course, loses his life for it when it's found out. Another possibility here is that the breach of faith refers to inadvertent touching, not necessarily taking but touching or handling a sacred object. That's possible. A lot of scholars come down more specifically that it refers to some piece of sanctuary property, not something owed to the priest, like maybe they took part of the sacrifice or ate the wrong part.

Most scholars would say this language *ma'al*, because of the way it's used elsewhere where there's clear loss of property or damage to property, probably in this context refers to that same kind of thing going on, that something was associated with the sanctuary itself and was either misused or damaged or destroyed or accidentally taken away from sacred space. If that happens, if there's this "breach of faith" *ma'al*, it's unintentional. The point of verse is that okay, now you need to bring compensation. You need to compensate the priesthood, the people in charge of the sanctuary. You need to compensate them for this loss.

¹⁵ “If anyone commits a breach of faith and sins unintentionally in any of the holy things of the LORD, he shall bring to the LORD as his compensation, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued in silver shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a guilt offering. **[MSH: It has to be a certain level of value to it.]** ¹⁶ He shall also make restitution for what he has done amiss **[MSH: that’s the actual word, *chata*, which to miss the mark, to sin as we discussed last time]** in the holy thing **[MSH: And that is the word, *ha-qodesh*]** and shall add a fifth to it and give it to the priest. And the priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering, and he shall be forgiven.

MSH: So what’s going on here is that if you were an Israelite and you inadvertently touched something that belonged to the sanctuary or destroyed it or damaged it or picked it up when you were cleaning up, whatever, off you go to your tent and you realize when you unpack, whatever it is you brought to your tent, it’s like holy cow, this belongs in the sanctuary and here it is in my tent. What do I do? Because you know it’s a violation, well, if it was unintentional, and I think this is especially clear if something is unusable again like it was destroyed or damaged, then what you did was you took a ram at a certain value. It had to be 20% more than the weight of the shekel for that object weighed, the precious metal and all that kind of stuff. Whatever metal it was made of, whatever the shekel weight was. You had to compensate 20% beyond that, take it to the priests, and then you were good.

What the priest would do is actually something we’re going to discuss next week. It’s in Leviticus 7 because in this chapter, the restitution offering is never described as being slaughtered. In chapter 7 it will be. And there’s something done with the blood and part of the animal is a food offering for the Lord. We talked about that before. Another part of it is for the priest. The priests have no income other than what they’re able to eat in certain kinds of sacrifices. And so this would’ve been an important part of their livelihood. Israelites need to make sure that they were doing what they needed to do, not only, and primarily, of course, it was you need to take care of impurity so that the sanctuary is not defiled because there could be serious consequences to that. And there are certain instances in the Bible that point that out. People die and they get injured or whatever, so you need to worry about that but you also need to do this so that the priesthood is taken care of, too, because they have no other means by which to support themselves. So it was something that they needed to pay attention to. So probably in these couple of verses here, we have an unintentional act and this is what you do. You pay restitution, 20% above. Now the last three verses of chapter 5 are a little bit different. It says,

¹⁷ “If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity. ¹⁸ He shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish out of the flock, or its equivalent for a guilt offering, and the priest shall make atonement for him for the mistake that he made unintentionally, and he shall be forgiven. ¹⁹ It is a guilt offering; he has indeed incurred guilt before the LORD.”

MSH: So this feels to many scholars less accidental than the other ones but you still have this, the person doesn't have complete knowledge of what he's doing, and therefore it's not a defiant act. See, a defiant act would be I know what I'm doing right now is against God's will and I'm going to do it anyway where as in this case there's a question but you still do it and you find out later that you shouldn't have done that. That's viewed differently than this defiant sort of arrogant sinning with hubris kind of disposition in a person. So the law distinguishes those kinds of intent. Now Levine writes about some of these verses that regarding the inadvertent misappropriations sanctuary property, the first couple verses, verses 14 and 15 and 16 that that's different than this. And he says,

‘There were no witnesses to the crime. The usual laws of testimony before were not applicable but in this case the accused realizes that, yes, I did something of my own will but I found out only later that it was something I should not have done whereas before, it was like just a complete accident. Nevertheless, he’s still guilty but he is still given the opportunity to make restitution, to make up for it. And there's still an opportunity for this restitution offering.’

MSH: So Levine is trying to say and articulate here is look, this is an instance where it's not a complete accident. It's not completely inadvertent. There is a decision made to do a certain thing, even when you had doubt, and it turns out that you should've listened to your doubt. But you did it anyway, and God knows that you did it anyway. It wasn't a total accident. This is an act of your will but now you realize that you made the wrong decision. You made the wrong decision. And so God, even though there's an element of intentionality here, God still will, if you repentant, will allow you opportunity to pay restitution for that, so bring your restitution offering and the priest will make atonement for you and you will be forgiven.

So this is one of the few instances in Old Testament sacrificial law where you can have someone make a decision, an intentional act, but still it was something that there was doubt about but you just made the wrong decision. You just screwed up. It's different than total accident. And even though God knows that you acted on your own free will and you became guilty, God still looks at you if you're repentant when you do realize what happened and says okay, I'm going to make an exception here. We're going to allow you to bring a reparation or restitution offering so that you can take care this. You're still allowed to do that even though it wasn't done with total ignorance or totally accidentally. So this is sort of in my mind kind of an exception that sort of proves the rule. It was a really serious thing in the Old Testament system for anyone to sin defiantly.

You're basically out of luck if you sin knowingly, willingly, defiantly as opposed to total accident or I'm not sure but I'm going to do this thing and I'm going to take the risk then you wind up being on the wrong side of that risk. All that's different than the attitude of the sinner that just says who cares. Screw God, I don't care about this rule. I'm going to do what I want. I'm going to get what I want. I'm going to sleep with who I want, whatever. You act defiantly, that was viewed quite differently than some of these other circumstances. In other words, God in this passage, the heart was part of the assessment. It's not just did you do it or not. It wasn't a black-and-white letter of the law.

This is sort of one of those spirit of the law kind of passages where the intent of the person is factored in to what's going on and the grief that they have over making the wrong decision is factored into what's going on. So I think it's a significant passage but it still highlights the severity of how sin was looked at in the Old Testament. So segue way to wrap up here, just a few thoughts of how this might potentially apply to our thinking, especially how we view this in contrast to in light of the New Testament. But the principle here is that sins that are defiant and for which there's no restitution, and no restitution is frankly possible, you have no resolution other than being cut off from the community. So if you do something defiantly, like if you kill somebody, there's no restitution for that dude.

Now if you accidentally, you have the refuge, the cities of refuge and the whole avenge your blood thing. We've actually covered that I think in our first episode or maybe the last one, I can't remember when. But even that, because it was a life or death thing, the law to distinguish but it's a good case. You can't restore that. You rape a girl, you can't restore her virginity or her status prior to the rape as being someone's wife. She's violated and that doesn't go away, can't make restitution for that. So when you have sins for which there is no restitution and especially if they're defiant, it's a serious thing. You are cut off from the community. That either means the death penalty or some sort of banishment we've talked about before.

The sacrificial system just doesn't address that. Those offenses that could be addressed were the ones where there was no defiant intent and there's genuine repentance. There's a voluntary realization I did wrong and I'm sorry and I want to make this right. But even then, think about it. You couldn't just, since the disposition of your heart is still an issue, just bringing the sacrifice was not enough. In other words, here's a scenario. Let's say that, I don't know if this is going to render me unclean or not. I'm not sure. I'm going to take the risk. I'm going to make a decision. And then I wind up on the wrong side of it. Well, if my attitude is, I blew it. I'm sorry. I'm going to go to the priest. We're going to make this right. That's one thing, but what if it's like, this is a nuisance. I screwed up. I made the wrong decision, whatever, and I have to be talked into taking the sacrifice.

My wife says you better take care that or you're going to get in trouble. Ok, I'll do that. That's not sorrow of heart. What is described here in Leviticus, the system, and again, we can sit here and wonder how well was this enforced, sure. But the system was designed to really respond to the person who was sorry for their sin. They weren't defiant and they could make restitution. There's opportunity there. It's not so somebody could twist their arm and I don't like this calf over here. Let's kill that one. That is not adequate, even if it was of the right value. The heart is still an issue. So the sacrifice itself is not going to be adequate in the spirit of the law. Third thought, the restitution offering didn't absolve some one of the moral guilt of the offense. I think this is an important lesson for us. In what respect? Well, appreciating how much better we have it on this side of the cross.

The restitution offering didn't absolve the personal moral guilt. In other words, they were actually guilty. That was a fact. The sacrifice didn't make them Like we hear preachers say now because of the New Testament, rightly so. It didn't make them as clean as though they'd never sinned. That's not what the "guilt" offering did. It's not what the restitution offering did. They were guilty and when you brought it, everybody knew you were guilty. What it did was it allowed you the chance to make amends. That's what it did. So it was kind of limited. You're not like morally clean now. Yes, the matter's taken care of between you and God. You don't put yourself at risk by approaching sacred space or anything like that.

The matter's taken care of but it doesn't make you as though you'd never sinned. It's not like you're not going to be known as someone who had done this. There's still going to be some consequences there. We have that, too, but in God's eyes it's a little more clean. We're placed in Christ. God looks at us as though we never sinned. He looks at us and He sees Jesus, all these New Testament thoughts, that isn't actually what's going on here. It's that God says I know your heart. I know you want to make amends. Here's a chance to do so and that's sort of where it stops. The frightening thing is what if you didn't have enough wealth to make restitution because you'll notice in the last three verses, it doesn't talk about the pigeons and the grain and all that kind of stuff. It's you have to have a commensurate value sacrifice to make restitution if something was destroyed. So in theory you might have to wait. You might want to make amends but you can't do it just right now.

You might have to wait. You're sort of in limbo status or something like that. We don't have to worry about that in the New Testament. But at least in the Old there was a chance to make amends if their heart was right. In our case, we can be forgiven for sins, think about it, for which restitution is impossible. There are none of these limitations in the New Testament forgiveness language. Well, the work of Christ is good enough if you have the right attitude or if you can make restitution then what happened on the cross will cover you. But if you can't make restitution then it doesn't. There's nothing like that in the New Testament. We can be forgiven for sins for which restitution is impossible.

Our repentance and faith in God's own sacrifice is sufficient for any circumstance at all. So if you're a Jewish reader, a Jewish convert to Christianity and you know your sacrificial system and you read books like Hebrews or you hear Paul preach something about the extent of forgiveness and whatnot, that's a little mind blowing. It's a little mind blowing because it's so much better than what you had going into that situation. You don't have to worry about well, what was I thinking when I did this? Is God going to look at this as inadvertent or accidental or am I sure that God's not going to sort of decipher this thing I did as defiant or not? You don't have to worry about any of that. You are covered regardless of the circumstance and regardless of whether restitution is possible or not. It's just a superior sacrifice which is the whole point to that section in the book of Hebrews.

TS: Mike, I wonder what the gossip was like back then. There goes ol' so and so with the ram. I wonder what he did. Trey's got two turtle doves. There he goes. I wonder what he did. I can only imagine the gossip back then.

MSH: Yeah, it's visible. You have to take the things to the sacred area and people are going to see that, family members, people who aren't family members. They know the system. It'd be like, I'm not a Catholic, but it's like if people see you going into the confession booth. It's a poor analogy because every good Catholic is going to say we all sin and that kind of thing. There's still this we know you had something to take care of even though we know we all do, but the fact that we saw you going to that confessional booth, or we saw you take that animal or those two pigeons or whatever. I think you're right. It would start tongues wagging. It would start suspicion.

TS: It would start a whole level of accountability if you had to walk this animal through the village and everybody knows what's going on, it's something to think about.

MSH: Yeah, now, and I'm not going to say it's not an advantage, because it is. You take things privately to the Lord. But still if we're honest with ourselves, we take advantage and we sort of, I'm looking for the right word here. We can sort of abuse it. I know people because they've told me afterwards I did this thing knowing I can confess it to the Lord. Nobody would know about it. That's really not the spirit in which this is intended. That's really presumptuous. But I know Christians who thought that way and thankfully if they're telling me then they know that that was wrong. But there's still that opportunity we take something good and we can sort of abuse it or misuse it.