THE GUILT OFFERING

Leviticus 5:14-6:7

Key Verse: 5:16

“He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priest, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.”

Thank God for the wonderful words about the sin offering. What is specific regarding the sin offering is that the blood of the animal was sprinkled seven times before the LORD in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. Seven times of the blood-sprinkle indicates perfect forgiveness. The curtain separated the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place which signifies the barrier between God and man. Amazingly, when Jesus died on the cross shedding his blood, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. What an astonishing revelation! Thus the way for us to come to God is open. According to the author of Hebrews, the curtain was Jesus’ body totally broken on the cross. This is a new and living way to God and God wants us to draw near to him. What a blessing! And the blood of the animal was sprinkled on the horns of the altar of incense that was right before the Most Holy Place in the sanctuary and sprinkled on the horns of the burnt offering in the courtyard. This sprinkling implies the restoration of all authority beginning with the authority and privilege to pray. What a grace! And we are to know that specific sins break our relationship with God and also makes relationship with others superficial. When sins are neglected with no confession and repentance, the effect of sin becomes more and more serious. It must be resolved at each time in the grace of our Lord Jesus who shed all his blood on the cross for our sins. God wants us to live in the utmost blessing of forgiveness of sins, resulting in full restoration of life in Christ Jesus.

The guilt/trespass offering is an offering for atonement for sin, where restitution was possible. For sins against the Lord’s property, restitution was made to the priest (5:14-19), while restitution was made to the person who suffered loss in other instances (6:1-7). It was to protect God’s people and community as a holy nation. It was to practically honour God as God and respect other fellow believers in the community of God. This offering reminds us of Christ Jesus who gave his life as a ransom for our redemption so that we might belong to God, being freed from the grip of sin and Satan. The guilt offering teaches us to be responsible for what belongs to God and what belongs to others with a clear attitude about materials and furthermore to live a life of giving and sacrifice in the grace of the Lord Jesus. The guilt offering was compulsory along with the sin offering.

The passage concerning the guilt offering begins with the words, “The LORD said to Moses.” This start is the same as that of the sin offering (4:1). Again, this expression shows that the words are the words of the LORD, not of Moses. Then in verse 15 the LORD continues, “When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD’s holy things...” Here a person is in Hebrew, not *Adam* but *nephesh*, as in the case of the sin offering written in 4:2, “When anyone sins unintentionally…” This offering like the sin offering is for the one who strives to live a new life and grow mature as a new creation in God. In NKJV it says, “If a person commits a trespass, and sins unintentionally…” In NASB, “If a person acts unfaithfully and sins unintentionally…” The Hebrew word “*maal*” is translated to “violation”, “trespass” or “unfaithful.” A trespass offering is in Hebrew *asham,* meaning offense, violation against others’ property. We can think it as reparation/restitution offering, or compensation offering.

Then what are the LORD’s holy things? Numbers 4:15 says, “After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, the Kohathites are to come to do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy things or they will die. The Kohathites are to carry those things that are in the Tent of Meeting.” The holy things are things belonging to God. Deuteronomy 26:2 says, “take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place of the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name.” The firstfruits are to be given to God. Leviticus 27:30 says, “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.” A tithe of everything is holy belonging to the LORD. According to Malachi 3:8 not offering a tithe to God is robbing. There is an interesting conversation between God and the Israelites. The people of Israel ask, “How are we to return?” the LORD says, “Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.” Tithing is a holy duty of God’s people. At the same time, it is a clue through which God wants to provide material abundance for his people. Here, in Malachi 3, God continues, “Test me in this and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out to much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Mal 3:8-10). This promise has been proven true to all those who have sincerely offer a tithe to God. Once again, a tithe is a holy thing to the LORD.

Here in Leviticus 5, when there is a violation concerning the LORD’s holy things, the person is to bring to the LORD as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel.” The phrase, “a ram from the flock, one without effect and of the proper value in silver is in KJV “a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver”, and in NASB “a ram without defect from the flock, according to your assessment in silver by shekels.” The size of the ram to be brought depended on Moses’ estimation and assessment by shekels of silver, making a sound judgment for the violation. A shekel of silver is 11.5 grams of silver, and when we refer to Exodus 21:32, 30 shekels of sliver is the price of a slave. It says, “If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull must be stoned.” So a ram is at least two shekels of sliver.

Now verse 16 says, “He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priest, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.” In the case of the sin offering, forgiveness comes through atonement. But it the case of the guilt offering, it is through restitution and atonement. 120% of the value in restitution has to be made.

When we consider God, who is the Spirit, it is easy to think that materials do not seem to matter much to God. It is true that repentance is to be done from the heart. Yet, true repentance involves offering one’s treasures. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Lk 12:34). Materials, treasure and heart go together. And Jesus says further, “You cannot serve both God and Money” (6:24; Lk 16:13). When Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, repented and welcomed Jesus, he said to Jesus, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” This is a beautiful true repentance. David said in 2 Samuel 24:24, “…I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” When something is not paid of my own pocket, it is not easy to know its value.

In Numbers 3:40-51 God told Moses to take the Levites for him in the place of all the firstborn of the Israelites. The number of the firstborn males a month or more was 22,273, while the number of Levites was 22,000. The difference was 273. Then God gave Moses a direction to redeem the 273 firstborn Israelites by collecting five shekels for each one, according to the sanctuary shekel. So Moses collected 1,356 shekels and gave the redemption money to Aaron and his sons. To God, money is important and in terms of money, God is accurate. God is responsive even to a small amount of money. In Luke 21, Jesus praised a poor widow’s offering of two very small copper coins, for that offering was the expression of her whole heart. Again, money matters to God.

Here, the offender was required to make a 120 percent restitution, which was considerably lower than that prescribed elsewhere in the Mosaic law. For example, Exodus 22:7 says, “If a man give his neighbour silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbour’s house, the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double.” And in 22:9 it says, “In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, ‘This is mine,’ both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to his neighbour.” Perhaps this is the case of an adjudicated and forced conviction, and 120% is accounted for by a voluntary confession. We see that 120% restitution shows God’s mindfulness for the offender.

In this part we learn that God wants us to take responsibility on what belongs to God, not just taking it for granted.

Now we can think of the case of the restitution being made to the fellow men, not to the priest. This is written in 6:1-7. It reads, “The LORD said to Moses: ‘If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving his neighbour about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, or if he finds lost property and lies about it, or if he swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that people may do—when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering.” Here we see that God’s concern is detailed dealing with the seven cases of sinning and becoming guilty and five cases of returning to the owner. The restitution had to be made in full with the addition of a fifth of the value to it and given all to the person who was damaged on the day of presentation of his guilt offering. In this way, the offended would be soothed and relieved.

The cause of the sin was being unfaithful to the LORD. If our relationship with God is not right, then our relationship with our neighbour cannot be right. And the restitution could not just be lip service but with the cost paid. In verses 6 and 7, it says continually, “And as a penalty he must bring to the priest, that is, to the LORD, his guilt offering, a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any of these things he did that made him guilty.”

Also, when our relationship with God is right, it is to be expressed in our relationship with others. When one’s sins are forgiven, it is to be shown to the people around the person. Among believers, there are those who take advantage of others, particularly in regard to money. Because in the matter of money, relationships can be broken with much damage. Because of the love of money, one loses even his or her mission and his faith becomes shipwrecked. 1 Timothy 6:10 says, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” God wants us to be very clear in dealing with materials. Romans 13:8 says, “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.” Any debt is to be paid as early as possible. We also should be sensitive to others’ time, especially to the believers, not making use of their generosity. But if you are a lender, be mindful and merciful to the borrower, especially when he is poor and needy (Ex 22:25-26). Paul said to the elders of the Ephesian church in his farewell speech to them in Acts 20:35, “…remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.” You and I may know more and more this blessedness of giving. It is as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 9:6, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” Paul continues, “…God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

Most importantly, the guilt offering, trespass offering, or restitution/compensation offering all point to Christ Jesus, who gave his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45). Romans 3:23, 24 says, “…all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” 1 Corinthians 6:20 says, “you were bought at a price.” Again he says 7:23, “You were bought at a price.” Ephesians 1:7 says, “In him we have redemption…” Colossians 1:14 says, “in whom we have redemption.” 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men…” Hebrews 9:15 says, “…he has died as a ransom to set them free…” Hebrews 9:12 says, “…he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.” In Revelation 5:9, twenty-four elders sang a new song to the Lamb, “…with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” What a rich expression concerning Christ’s ransom, redemption, and purchasing! The redemption is eternal and the purchasing is forever. The price he paid is incredible, immeasurable, and certainly incomparable without equal. The Son of God, who is infinite, came to this world and gave his life as a ransom. There are around 8 billion people in the world and probably about 16 billon people have lived on this world. Still, 16 billion is a finite number. But the price for our redemption was infinite. What a payment! What a redemption! What a purchase!

What is specific about the guilt offering is as written 5:16, “He must make restitution…add a fifth of the value to that and give it all the priest…” and 6:5, “…He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all the owner…” In consideration of the guilt offering, we may first learn to take responsibility to what belongs to God and others as the holy people of God and the members of the community of God. And when we think of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are eternal debtors to him with an unpayable debt. A debtor’s heart is a beautiful heart. Paul said in Romans 1:14, “I am obligated to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are in Rome.” This is the reason Jesus said, “Do you love me? Feed my sheep.” With the debtor’s heart may we live the life of serving and giving and sacrifice, having no debt but only the debt of love. May we keep the words of the Lord Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”