

Living Free From Guilt
Clean: Finding Jesus in leviticus
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Hey, can I just say thank you for reaching out to others? We're one church, three campuses, and a lot of you engaging online as well. But we have a campus and almost that falls and one of Lorain Correctional and Middleburg. And I just keep on hearing stories like Johnny appeared here. Johnny said, What a power. I love all the testimonies today.

Wow. And he said, I had a guy work who reached out to me. And we hear that happen over and over again. In fact, I want to read a different person who this week we sent our first impressions surveys to any newcomer at Grace and just say, Hey, how can we do better? What did you find meaningful, etc..

So this one was what were your first impressions of Grace? He says, I began attending in September 2023 with a friend. I noticed a change in him and realized I needed to explore more. It has been an amazing experience to be at grace and it changed my life. I look forward to the weekly services. What did you find most meaningful?

I'm learning so much and appreciating God's grace. I feel welcomed as part of your community and encouraging. One of the big factors you said I noticed a change in my friend and realized I needed to explore more. It's the power of living a contagious life right? That just makes people ask questions and you go and then as you have opportunities, what makes you tick?

Or what is it about you? Are you even in crisis? You're you sort of have this sense of like, you know, you don't just descend into like mean attacks on other people or what or whatever. Aren't you grateful that God uses messed up people? I'll speak for myself, messed up people like me? Maybe a few of you go, I'm a little bit messed up as well, right?

And that we can say, But God chooses to use very ordinary people to do things that accomplishes purposes despite some of the regrets we might have in life. So our new series is talking about what do you do with regrets? What do you do with guilt? What do you do with some of the challenges that you have in your life?

And so I want to start by quoting a well-known theologian John and very famous. Her name is Cathy, as in the comics. Anybody remember that? If you're really young. But but Cathy at its height was she was in 14 different newspapers around the nation, around the world, and she hails from the Buckeye State. I mean, so she's like, you know, of course, a lot of good things come out of.

Hi. Right. So this one time in this one episode, she's having a bad day and she's sitting at home alone with her thoughts and hear the thoughts. She's thinking, the things I should have done at work, Things I wish I'd said to Irving. That was her boyfriend later her husband, things I promised myself to never do again.

But I did anyway. Ways I made myself miserable that I could have avoided Her look of depression deepens things I could have done for my family, my puppy, my friends, my coworkers, my neighbors, my finances, my home, my diet, my closets are millions of people in need whom I've never met. Cathy had a way of dealing with guilt all the time.

In the final frame, Cathy summarizes, replied, Even when I'm not going anywhere, I have £300 of luggage with me. I think a lot of us can relate to that, that we can look back in life and say, I'm not even going anywhere, but I just feel the weight of stuff that I've done that I regret. It may be a wound that I inflicted on someone that's still haunts me, that I go, I can't believe, like words that cut like a knife.

Like, what was I thinking? Maybe we were dishonest in some way, or it was anger unleashed at someone that we really care about. For a lot of people my age, lingering regret that they missed a lot when their kids were growing up. It could be guilt over things we didn't do, and we wish we had. For some, it's like a thousand different things that just go.

It just all added up together. I just heard the voices in my head and and for some others it might be one or two particular things that go. Not even my own closest friends know about that. They would be shocked. There's a question I think we all can agree that we carry around weight, or at least at some point we have.

If we you know, and if we haven't learned how to deal with that, it can be that no one can. I can't see your guilt. You can't see my guilt. Thank God for that. But we all carry these regrets and the skills that can feel like we're lugging along and we're weighed down and the voices are just calling on our heads that were inadequate that we've messed up.

And it's condemnation. That's what the Bible calls it, and left unaddressed. Like if we don't figure out how to deal with that, it devastates our relationship with God. And really it impacts the people around us as well. Some of us have gotten so used to carrying this weight in shame that it almost becomes normal. And we're just like, well, I mean, what else do you do you got to regret, right?

I mean, you just deal with it, I guess. But what if we could be free? What if we could say It's not that I'm dismissing what I did was terrible, or I really felt regret over that, But I don't own it anymore. What if we could walk out of here today with a reminder that I don't have to carry that luggage anymore of guilt?

I want us to look at that today, because that is the wonder of what God has done for us. So we're going to check out the gospel according to what's the name of the book, Leviticus. Some of you go on, Leviticus, Leviticus, a really bad rap. But if you had your paper Bible or you got your phone and you can turn with me to Leviticus Chapter 13.

The name of the book comes from the tribe of the Levites, who were the tribe of had all the religious duties. And and it tells, you know, there's sort of the protocol for what they're supposed to be doing. And we just finished reading the book of Leviticus in our Bible reading. They're called the Full Story. And some of you might go, I was supposed to finish it, but actually the road of Bible plans is littered with people who never made it past Leviticus, right?

Then today I would like us to be able to say, How do you interpret that book? Because a lot of times you return, you go sort of harsh, a lot of laws is sort of confusing. It feels totally distant. We're like, say, why? Like, what is this book about and why are there so many things we don't even follow in it, which we're going to talk about in a couple of weeks, but it can seem sort of boring or harsher.

So what's the key to interpreting the book? Here it is. Here it is. Really. Leviticus is not a destination. It's a signpost. It's a signpost. Would you say that word with me? Ready? Signpost? It's a signpost that points ahead to something that would happen 1500 years later that would absolutely rock the world in a really positive way. Leviticus is a signpost.

It answers a number of questions or it tells us about the history of things like why were sacrifices needed, Leviticus tells us why. Why is there so much blood? Why

is blood needed and forgiveness? We find the answer. Leviticus. Remember when Jesus died and his he breathed his last as it is finished and he takes his final breath and the curtain of the temple is torn in to from top to bottom.

Where did that come from? That's in Leviticus. Or how about the phrase scapegoat, anybody? So I was a scapegoat. I was, you know, where that word finds its origin and the book of Leviticus. We're going to see how there all points, all of these things point forward to Jesus as in fact, Jesus himself saw it that way. And he's one occasion he's talking to these two guys the very day that Jesus comes back to life and he's walking on this road to a town called a Mass, and he catches up with these two guys, they don't recognize him.

Maybe it was dark, or maybe they just were like, You know, Jesus is dead. Or the fact maybe is that God just didn't want them to see at first. But anyhow, they they're telling about a Jesus died and all the rest and, and Jesus begins to talk to them about the Old Testament scriptures. And here's what it says in Luke chapter 24, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, that is the first five books, the Bible, that's Moses, all the prophets, that's the rest of the Old Testament.

He explained to them what was said and all the scriptures concerning himself. And that includes Leviticus Jesus saying, Hey guys, remember Leviticus? All of the stuff about sacrifices that was talking about me, that was a signpost pointing ahead to to me. You know, what's interesting is in today's church, Leviticus is like the last book we turn to. In fact, I've never done a series on Leviticus, but in Jewish synagogues, it's the first book that children are taught and so to correct our mistake, I'm beginning today, I wanted to announce just with excitement, a 52 week series.

No, I'm just teasing. We're no, no, no. We're not going to do that. Not at all. We're going to do a few weeks of this book and just say, let's highlight a few themes and see how do you handle the guilt that can weigh you down in life? How do you deal with this? All this baggage of stuff that can hold you back and your relationship with God.

So I'm glad you're here. And as we dig in and just want to let you know that the app, the Grace App, is going to have some extra resources about this series, I think it's the first time we're doing this, but they're going to be downloading some things tomorrow night. And you see at the top right there, it's as clean as the new series in resources.

And there's going to be some like study guides and prayers and other things. And you'll find a message notes there. In fact, that's always available. A few thousand people have downloaded that. And you'll see the film notes at the bottom right there for the message today. And the weekly bulletin, etc., etc.. So one of the ways to catch the themes of Leviticus is to see words that appear over and over again in the book.

In fact, the words you see on the screen here and and right there are words that are mentioned in Leviticus more than they're mentioned in any other book in the Bible. In fact, some of those words are mentioned more Leviticus than all the other books, the Bible combined. And so, for instance, the word clean is mentioned 57 times in Leviticus blood, as mentioned, 65 times.

I could have added guilt mentioned 49 times in Leviticus more than any other book, because the theme here is how do we get rid of the guilt that harasses us, that we have a God is wholly and we're not, and there's this big chasm between us. How do we overcome that? And that's what we're going to see today.

And it really is, to me, just a reminder that we have such amazing news before we look at it, Leviticus 16, just one more slide. It's the flow of Leviticus. It sort of is the outline as in your notes that maybe you got on your way in. You'll find them on the app as well, but you'll see how the book begins there.

The lower left side with rituals, chapters 1 to 7. We're going to see today the five different kinds of offerings, and then it goes up and there are some instructions for priests and chapters 8 to 10 and then ritual purity, some things that we go. That's the really confusing part of Leviticus and why don't we follow those things any more?

We're going to talk about that. It's not just because we don't like it, it's because, well, we'll see why we don't. It's because the New Testament gives us freedom from that. And then the Day of Atonement and then you come back to purity again, then priest, and then the rituals down at the bottom. But we're going to focus on that tapas, right?

The center of the book is this day of Atonement. In Hebrew, it is Yom Kippur, Yom is day keeper, is atonement, covering ransom. And it was this one day a year happening that was this huge event when forgiveness was provided. And it was an elaborate series of steps that you had to follow just right. And if you didn't look what happens, beginning with verse two here in Leviticus chapter 16, it says this

The Lord said to Moses, Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come whenever he chooses into the most holy place.

That's like the most inner sanctum of the tabernacle behind the curtain in front of the Atonement cover the Ark, Ark of the Covenant, or else he will. What? Serious stuff, Right. Got his holy. And we're not for I will appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. And this is how Aaron has to enter the most holy place.

He must first bring a young bull for a sin, offering an IRAM for a burnt offering. And it wasn't just for his own sin. Everyone was guilty. It was like a giant infection that was pervasive, in fact. And back in Leviticus four, verse 27, we read this. It says, If any of the common people sinned by violating one of the Lord's commands, but they don't realize it, they're still guilty.

You know what that means? If before I talked about luggage, I'm just going to be transparent here. But if you're like, I don't feel at all. I have never felt guilty. Like, I feel awesome. I don't think I've ever done anything wrong. Seriously wrong. This talking about you here, you're guilty. You're just not aware of it. Because the Bible says in Romans chapter three, it says, For all have what sin we've all messed up.

We all have regret and guilt and we all fall short of God's standard as glory. And in so back in that day, unless your guilt was taken care of, you couldn't experience God. And so the question for them and for us is how do you get free from the guilt and shame that way is down, the God is holy and I'm not.

And if I can't bridge that gap like I'm never going to experience the presence of God in his welcome and be part of his family, which is what I was made for. You can enjoy certain aspects of life, but until you have a relationship with God, the Bible says we were made by him and we were made for him in the Tillerman relationship with God.

Even my greatest accomplishments are just going to have a sense of like, that was good, but I feel still sort of empty. Like what's what else is there? So how do we get to know God? You know, if we even see where the book of Leviticus comes in, the Pentateuch, the Pentateuch, five books, Genesis X's, Leviticus, number of Deuteronomy just before Leviticus is the book of Exodus.

And Exodus ends with all this elaborate instruction and and then construction of the Tabernacle, this ornate tent that was right in the center of Israel. You see a picture of it right there, and that's where the presence of God was located. I want

to read the last five verses of Exodus, and I want you to see where is Moses in this description.

Okay, here's this says last five verse of your follow long Exodus chapter 40, verse 34. Then the cloud cover the tabernacle and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could no longer enter the Tabernacle because the cloud had settled down over it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Now, whenever the cloud lifted from the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out on their journey following it.

But if the cloud did not rise, they remained there where they were until it lifted. The cloud of the Lord hovered over the tabernacle during the day and a night. This was quite a scene. Fire glowed inside the clouds so the whole family of Israel could see it. This continued through all their journeys. What a sight. It might have been like this right in the middle of the camp.

You have the tabernacle there and you're like, What is that in the background? Scholars say that there was probably 2 million people in Israel at that time. Imagine going to Mohican State Park and there's 2 million people gathered. That's what all those there by tribes all the way around the tabernacle, right. The center is this presence of God.

And where is Moses? Inside or outside? Outside. That's how Exodus ends the book, just after Leviticus, is the book of numbers, the very first verse of numbers. Look what it says. Where is Moses now? The Lord spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting the tabernacle in the desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month.

So here's the question How does Moses get from the outside to the inside? How does he go from the place of I'm not able to do it to I'm able to do it. That is the book of Leviticus. How can you and I experience and be welcome in God's presence? How do we deal with failures in our lives in sin so we can be forgiven to know God personally?

Summary You brought an offering, You brought an offer, and that was God's plan. So back in Leviticus chapter four again, here's what it says. It says this If someone brings a lamb as their sin, offering in this way, the priest will make atonement for them, for the sin they have committed, and they will be what forgiven? What did they bring?

They brought a lamb. Remember that. We're going to come back to that. Here is the point. It was all about forgiveness. God designed us for friendship with him, and so he graciously removes anything that comes between us, guilt to be removed. And so the first seven chapters, if you page through the first seven chapters of Leviticus, you're going to see that it's all about these sacrifices.

There's five kinds of sacrifices. We saw them earlier. I'll just go through this again. You'll see them on the screen. The first three were ways of saying thank you to God. You had the burnt offering, the green offering and the peace offering. And there's a phrase that keeps on being repeated. It was an aroma pleasing to the Lord.

It was like, God, we're just we want to do something to let you know we honor you. We thank God we love you. The next two sacrifices, the sin offering and the guilt offering were ways of saying I'm sorry, receiving forgiveness. It was the way that God was able to get rid of evil without getting rid of us.

I say that again. A sacrifice was a way for God to get rid of evil without getting rid of us. And this is where sacrifices came in. They were substitutes. It was a way for Israel to know with confidence that they could live in God's presence. They had peace. They they didn't to fear that they were going to be struck down.

They were forgiven. And it was all because when they brought a sacrifice, God said, Is that animal's blood for yours? Their life for your life? It wasn't something that people achieved. It was something they what they received. They received forgiveness from God. And that becomes the gospel all the way through that we we can earn our forgiveness. We can try hard enough to somehow overcome our guilt.

We just go, God, we receive from you this gift of forgiveness. It's a lot more we can say on that. But let me just say again, Leviticus is a what? It's a signpost. Pointing forward to the people in that day would have wanted. They would have said, What will it be like when God someday deals with our sin once for all?

What did they bring for a sacrifice? Many times a lamb Right. Fast forward 1500 years from Leviticus 1500 years to a little town in Israel called Bethlehem. And there's a little boy who was born in a stable and his parents were told, you'll name him Jesus because he'll save his people from what? From their sins. He grows up.

John the Baptist sees him. He goes, Look, there's the what? The LAMB of God who takes away the sin of the world. You see how Leviticus was a signpost pointing forward to a lamb who would one day come and would be the ultimate sacrifice that would deal with our sin and our guilt. Friends, Jesus rocked the world and the best way possible.

I mean, he did here was just it was incredible what he did. And here's what I want us to see. If Leviticus is a signpost pointing to this LAMB of God, why is the forgiveness of Jesus and his sacrifice so much better than what happened in Leviticus? But I want us to if you look at your notes, if you have those either on the app or maybe you got the piece of paper on the way in, I want us to just do a quick compare and contrast.

But let me just read the New Testament, that equivalent of Leviticus. You have Leviticus in the Old Testament, sort of its twin book in the New Testament as the book of Hebrews, sort of like the Book of Proverbs in the Old Testament Twin is sort of the book of James. And so there's a number of, you know, parallels like that.

But let me just read one couple of verses from Hebrews Chapter nine and here's what it says, Hebrews chapter nine, verse 13 Under the old system, the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a could cleanse people's bodies from ceremonial purity. Just think how much more the blood of Christ will purify our conscience is from sinful deeds so that we can worship the living God for by the power of the eternal Spirit.

Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. That is why He is the one who mediates a new covenant between God and people, so that all who are called can receive the eternal inheritance. That's heaven that God has promised them for Christ died to set them free from the penalty of the sins they had committed.

It's comparing is saying this is what happened and this is so much better. How much more? Jesus. So let's do a quick compare and contrast between Leviticus and the sacrifice of Jesus. Again, you'll see this in your notes back then, the place where you went for your forgiveness and you offered a sacrifice was the tabernacle, right? It was the picture we saw earlier.

And you went now this altar outside and it was sort of a holy place today. What do we do today? We look back at what happened on a hill called what Calvary

outside the city of Jerusalem. It's a place you could still visit today. And it is the place where the greatest act of forgiveness, the most amazing gift ever, was given, not a holy building, but a hill.

Next in Leviticus, the high priest would carefully enter the most holy places inner sanctum of the Tabernacle on your behalf. Sort of by proxy. And the person was always a Levite, a son of Aaron, which meant that the person was always a sinner. So they had to seek forgiveness for their own stuff first. You'll see in back in Leviticus chapter 16 how they how they did it and the Day of Atonement.

It it says this, Aaron, to offer the bull for his own sin, verse six, offering to make atonement for himself and his household. That was then. Today, our high priest Jesus, the Son of God, is sinless, right? The verse at the top of your nose from second Corinthians five says this God made Christ, who never sinned to be the offering for our sin so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

In other words, Jesus never messed up, which means that instead of offering a sacrifice for his own sin, he could just go in and say, I'm offering a sacrifice for Jonathan, for Lissa, for Bob, for Jermaine. I'm offering a sacrifice for next The old system. You didn't know the high priest who would be because from year to year, from one Yom Kapoor to the next, Yom Kippur, the David told me to know who is you know, if the priest is going to die in between.

But you come to Jesus and offers his own life like he is the sacrifice and the priest and he offers himself, and then three days later, he comes back to life. And so he is our priest. For how long? For forever, Right. He we always know, is Jesus. Who is your. He is Jesus is the answer for all of the you know, the problem is in the guilt and in my life.

Another contrast in the old way to release the heavy luggage of guilt. The priest would go on on your behalf and they would go into this, you know, most holy place, and they would take a bull. And the bull was filled with what? With blood. And you go, Why did they have to have so much blood? I've asked that question myself and I go, I don't know.

At some point I go, He's God and I'm not right. But there was something about sin that brought death, and blood was a way to show that something had died to cover, to be an atonement for sin. So the Book of Leviticus and in the Book of Hebrews, it says without the shedding of what a blood, there's no there's no forgiveness.

So the priest would take a bowl with blood and then they would sprinkle it all. I mean, over and Jesus comes and what does he do? He comes and he says, I'm not just bringing the blood of an animal, but he stretches out his arm on the cross and he sheds his blood for you and for me. And it's this amazing gift.

And he gives his life so that you and I could be free. God doesn't ask the high priest to bring a vial of tears. He doesn't ask for, like, sweaty, you know, rags from working out. In other words, it wasn't how sorry you were. You could cry over your sins from here until the end of your life. And all of those tears can't pay for what you've done wrong.

Or you could try to sweat it out and say, I'm just going to work harder. If I can just be good enough and do as many good deeds as possible, maybe I can find my forgiveness. No, no, no, no. Only what would do only, only blood. It's why we sing so often about the blood. Why? Because it was a sacrifice.

It was their life for your life. Their blood. For your blood. And here was the downside of the old system. The sacrifices never stopped. Right? Because they were never ultimately effective. It was just a temporary cleansing. And so you had to sacrifice over and over and over and over again. And I want to say today, thank God that was just a shadow of something far better to come, right?

That Jesus would come and he'd be a final sacrifice, a better sacrifice in Jesus as the lamb of God would mark the end of all animal sacrifices. No longer do you have to slaughter countless animals and sprinkle their blood, because here's what we read about Jesus the new way in Hebrews Chapter seven. It says this Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifice his every day.

They do this first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this what once for all, when he offered himself as a sacrifice for the people. Since I love that once for all, it's a done deal. I'm innocent today, right? Not because I've never messed up, not because I've never experienced guilt, but simply because Jesus blood was shed for me, right?

I mean, that's just friends. That is the best gift ever. Confidence that our sins are washed away. Our guilt can be removed, and we no longer have to listen to the voice of condemnation. Do I still have guilty voices? Come on my head. Yes. But I can say, You know what? I can just speak to the enemy, whoever it is, and say, I transferred my guilt to Jesus.

It's gone. My sins have been removed completely. It's a sacrifice has so much better friends. Think about this. You didn't have to carry a lamb and to church this morning. Praise God for that. Right? You didn't have to carry a bowl of blood. Imagine that, right? We didn't. We didn't have to do that. You don't have to go through a priest to find your forgiveness.

You don't have to come and do confession to me. You can go directly to God. You don't have to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. You just come to Jesus and say, Jesus, when you died, you died in my place. And that was a sacrifice. That was once what for all? Once for all friends, We have it so much better.

Do we not? During Old Testament times on a festival day in Jerusalem, the noise and the smell of sacrifice. We just sort of picture this all the animals in the blood and we're just these vivid reminders of the gulf between God and his people that he's holy. And we're not. And we just go, but and then Jesus, Jesus goes to Calvary and everything changes for the better, right?

His death removes my guilt. His blood cares for all my sin forever. Friends, we're free, right? We're free. We know our past. We know our past. If if you have any sense of of just clarity about your past, you go. I know the things that bring me. Like the luggage and the shame and the regret and all the rest.

But I also know the one who shed his blood. So all that can be gone. Hey, man, I mean, just what a savior we have. Here's my question. Do you know him? Have you trusted him? Have you transferred your stuff under him and said, Jesus, when you died, you died for me? We're going to listen to a couple of stories here in 2 minutes from people whose sins have been covered.

And as we listen, it might be time for you just to say again, Jesus, thank you. Thank you for what you did for me, that I live now and not then. Thank you for being a once for all sacrifice. Maybe for you it's time to. Say, Lord, I've never really dealt with my guilt in that way. I've been trying to work harder.

I've just been sorrowful and I realize now the only way that I'm going to be free is to accept your sacrifice and to receive your forgiveness. I do that today. Let's take a listen and see how these people have been suffering.