

Righteousness and peace

Part 1

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[00:00:00] I make no apologies for turning to this book, only to say, if I'd had my own free will, I daren't have read that chapter tonight, but I'm not a free person. I'm here as, I hope, a true agent, a tool in the hand of my Lord.

So I'm going to grip what I believe is my message, and in a few words, say, well, really, you ought to read the first chapter. Of course, you have done many times, but do you remember, you weren't listening when it was read, were you? And a lot of it slipped past, and you said, well, gracious, I didn't understand that. Not very interesting, and the more you do that, and the more you'll get a phobia about it, but let me be simple. The first chapter of Leviticus deals with the offering of animals, utterly and completely, [00:01:07] beautiful animals, without blemish, offered in true worship to God, and there is a recurring phrase, a sweet savour or odour to God.

I'm not going to get into the toils of the details of that chapter, only to say, there is a picture of a wonderful sacrifice once made in this aspect, that the Lord Jesus Christ was the one who not only fulfilled, but he filled full all the terms and conditions laid down in that chapter, to the extreme.

[00:02:01] He was, who by the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God.

Let's move on.

Chapter two comes along, and you come into the bakehouse, don't you? Not to the butcher's shop, you move next door to the baker's department, and there's nothing there of bloodshedding, it is the meat offering, or shall we call it the meal offering, because it is to do with flour, and cakes, and things, and what does this speak to us of? It speaks to us of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ, not just in that great offering that he made, but as a man on this earth, but it finishes up in the fire, doesn't it? And it speaks to us of all his perfections, as a man, obedient unto death, it goes to [00:03:10] the ultimate.

You might think that it's very much like Cain's sacrifice, he brought the fruit of the ground and he offered it to God, and really God struck him down for it, because there was no shedding of blood.

True enough, that's why closely guarding this is the first chapter, if I may say drenched with the blood of the offering, and that's like Abel's offering, isn't it? He brought a wonderful offering to God, acknowledging that he needed redeeming by blood. Let's put it another way, there were ten

commandments, oh yes you know them, or I hope you do, because [00:04:05] God there revealed a standard and he's never given any permission or indulgence for anyone to break it.

He doesn't ask you to keep it, but quietly, that's because he knows you can't. Having been broken, it's done with, except that the Lord Jesus Christ kept those commandments, not just in the letter, but in the spirit. May I make one other observation? The first four commandments that deal with a man's relationship with God, you may feel correspond very well with the first chapter of Leviticus, where there's that wonderful [00:05:03] burnt offering.

But when it comes to the second chapter, don't these correspond with a man living a perfect life in this world, where still the commandments stand, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not kill, so on.

Man's responsibility to man, man as a man in this world. So you see those two chapters just fit into the perfect design that God is unfolding.

And this, too long a peroration for which I apologize, I couldn't have got it much smaller, could I, if you know the matter that's in those chapters, brings us to the fact there is a peace offering.

Now what do you know about peace? Well I do know that there's a peace council, and that there are peace talks and talks about [00:06:07] peace talks, and it all goes to pieces in this world, because it is a matter of man's idea of peace.

But he gets it wrong, because he's never read that little verse that puts God's order before us, whatever else it says, righteousness and then peace.

Righteous first, peace afterwards.

But peace costs an awful price.

People say, oh peace at any price for me, but God doesn't. God calls for peace at its proper price, and the proper price of peace you find displayed [00:07:12] on Calvary's cross when Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, when he died on account of the sin question, when he made peace by the blood of his cross.

He's the Prince of Peace, isn't he?

Now this peace offering that I want to talk to you about for a few minutes, is an offering that picks up some of the very sweet characteristics of both the sacrifices that we've been talking about and brings in other elements, and it is the other element that I'd like to get [00:08:04] across to you tonight, if I can.

God helping me, you may suddenly see what I'm trying to say. That would be the Spirit of God taking the scripture out of my hands, out of my voice, and telling you that there is peace. It is at a price, and it's at the extreme price that Jesus paid when he died on the cross.

There are three degrees in this chapter of the bullock, the lamb, and the goat.

I'm going to push those all together as one offering because of time, and if you want [00:09:03] to find

out more about what that means, then I suggest you attack this chapter soberly and in God's presence, and he'll show you what those degrees mean. But to concentrate them, and yet to pick up the salient points, it is this, that when the animal was brought, the man who offered it was there, the animal was killed, I know I'm abbreviating this, the animal was killed and the priest sprinkled the blood round the altar, which we can be quite sure was a brazen altar, where the blood had been poured out of the burnt offering.

And then he removes the inward fat, and if you look carefully, the rump of the smaller [00:10:05] animal, so that the blood is offered to God, to Jehovah.

The Lord, when it's printed in block letters, may well be printed full out, Jehovah. That was Jehovah's portion. The blood, yes, the blood is a life, the scripture says, it's always his. He is a source of life, it's derived from him, he has the full rights of it, and he never hands it to another.

So the blood was sprinkled, and the fat, those inner resources of vitality and energy, and indeed the rump, which is always in a healthy animal, a sign of well-fedness.

[00:11:08] It was God's.

It was for Jehovah.

What did the priest do with it? He offered it on the altar, upon the burnt sacrifice.

It had its place there, and it was a sweet odour offering to God.

Let's project our thoughts forward. We think of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died on Calvary's cross. Oh yes, he died for me.

I hope you can say that, because the sinner who believes is free, can say the Saviour died for me, can point to the atoning blood and say, that's made my peace with God.

[00:12:05] And as the offerer saw this happen, he may well have thought that here was something that would redeem him, and in figure, it did.

To us, it speaks of the wonderful sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, not the burnt sacrifice. It wasn't a sin offering. That comes somewhere else, but this was the experience of a person who brought what is called later, a thanksgiving offering.

Something that was a sign of a wonderful joy, and a sign of gratitude that made him bring this animal to the Lord, and God's portion first.

[00:13:04] That's right, isn't it? That's right, yes.

But look, just at three verses, and then we'll leave this chapter. In verse five, it says at the end of it, it is an offering made by fire of a sweet savour or odour unto the Lord.

The Lord Jehovah derived his pleasure from that.

Verse 11, the priest shall burn it, those are the parts we've spoken of, upon the altar. It is the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord. So Jehovah not only enjoyed its fragrance, he fed on it. It was food to him, and come down to verse 16, it is the food of the offering made by [00:14:02] fire for a sweet odour, and all the fat is the Lord's.

Now dare I invite you to turn over your Bible just a page or two to the seventh chapter, because that isn't the end of this peace offering. This peace offering is referred to in the eleventh verse of the seventh chapter.

It says, and this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the Lord. If we offer it for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice, that's what we've been speaking about, the sacrifice, he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled [00:15:04] with oil of fine flour fried.

Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering, leavened bread, with the sacrifice of the thanksgiving of his peace offering.

And of it he shall offer one out of the whole, oblation, that's one of each kind of cake, for an heave offering unto the Lord, and it shall be the priest that sprinkles the blood of the peace offering, and the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until the morning.

[00:16:01] Shall we stop there for a moment? The man who brought this animal as a peace offering, which is here further explained in a thanksgiving attitude, and with peace and thanks, there's another motion arises, that is joy, isn't it?

Oh some of us have failed to derive the real joy and the thrill, not of being a Christian.

Now look I can sing oh happy day, oh happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away, I can sing that with anybody on any occasion, but you know you're only dwelling on the threshold if that's how far you've got, because these are the mazes, they're intended to torture [00:17:09] your mind until you get to the centre, and the centre of these tracks leads you to a person so exquisitely perfect, so wonderful, that may I say, when the God of heaven looked down on Calvary's cross at the sacrifice and that wonderful offering, he saw all that takes place in these early chapters of Leviticus in a moment of time, there was the complete mix. Here it's sorted out onto the simple planes that you and I may carefully follow, and if [00:18:01] you mature and allow the Holy Spirit of God to mature your thoughts in a book like this, you will suddenly come to realise that just on the next step you're into a field of thought, a field of meditation, and a field of love that will characterise your life, not in transcendental meditation to get rid of the sorrows of this life, and lead you to a person who is so utterly satisfying that God himself is satisfied to the point when he rejoices.

I've spoken, best I could, in the time I've had, of the burnt offering and of the bread [00:19:06] offerings and meat offerings, one speaking of the propitiatory work of Christ, the other of his wonderful life, all acceptable, all perfect, all seen before God. And in the meat offering it says unleavened bread, but here you get something else mixed in. Now there was to be some leavened bread.

This might surprise you because it says no leaven in all your offerings. This isn't the only occasion where leaven turns up, but this is a regulation, the priest's instruction to guide the man who brought it,

and there's a reason. [00:20:05] Let's just freeze that there and say there's a reason. We must come back to that point, most important, but in a few minutes. Now may I turn you back to the scripture again because this is more important than anything I can say, and in the seventh chapter we'll read a few more verses. See I'm getting quite a lot of dry reading across bit by bit, aren't I? It says in verse 28, And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, He that offereth the sacrifice of his peace offerings unto the Lord shall bring his oblation unto the Lord at the sacrifice of his peace offerings. His own hand shall bring the offerings of the Lord made by fire, the fat with the breast. [00:21:02] It shall he bring that the breast may be waived for a waive offering before the Lord, and the priest shall burn the fats upon the altar, but the breast, that's part of the meat isn't it, the breast shall be Aaron and his sons.

You know Aaron was, he was a priest, and the sons, the priestly family, that was for the breast.

He among the sons of Aaron that offereth the blood of the peace offerings and the fat shall have the right shoulder for his part.

For the waive breast and the heave shoulder have I taken of the children of Israel from off the sacrifices of their peace offerings and given them unto Aaron the priest and unto [00:22:01] his sons by statute forever from among the children of Israel. So part of this animal now, the blood had been offered, sprinkled, the fat and the corresponding parts had been offered on the sacrifice right on top of the burnt offering. What an exalted place.

But there was a part of the carcass left and there was a division of it. The breast, I'm sorry, the shoulder, the right shoulder you shall give to the priest for an heave offering. Well nobody seems to be able to say much more about a heave offering than heaving is this [00:23:01] way. Blood before the Lord, a demonstration that here it is, here it is sir, look at it, here it is, and it goes to Aaron and his sons.

But the breast is for a waive offering and I'm told that this is from side to side, a demonstration again that here it is, the very breast that you spoke about, O God, goes to the priest that sprinkled the blood. Let's stop here for a moment, we haven't finished yet, but let's stop here. If Jehovah received the sweet savour offering of this peace offering, he calls into fellowship with himself from that same sacrifice the priest that offered it and his sons.

[00:24:12] And the priest who offered the perfect sacrifice is the Lord Jesus Christ himself and he has his part in that wonderful work of Calvary's cross.

He draws food from it.

As Jehovah had food of the offering, so has the priest, food from that offering that satisfied and sustained him.

Do you know, slipped into that wonderful prophecy of Isaiah, a verse you well know, in the 53rd chapter, he shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.

[00:25:15] So there's a communion between the God of heaven and the priest, but it extends still further.

There's an entitlement of the priest's sons, and when you find Aaron and his sons mentioned in the Old Testament, just have a second look at it, because it is a picture that may be lifted forward in time into our area.

Aaron and his sons is not the house of Israel, it's a picture that God has used in the Old Testament for something he never talked about in the Old Testament of the church. [00:26:03] And you know the scripture says that of present day believers they're kings and priests.

And don't be put off by the man in the collar, or the vestures, or the mitre, which he should not wear when he's in the house of God, whoever he may be. There, they would say there is a hierarchy.

But in the scripture, every believer has this relationship in the priestly family.

And so, you're brought in, and I'm brought in, just because we're believers.

As we come together, we're brought into this, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who sustains the [00:27:08] heart of God meeting all his need.

The Lord Jesus Christ himself, who can look back at the travail of his soul and be satisfied with the work he did.

It overflows to you and to me, if we've only got our eyes, spiritual eyes, open to see that we too come into this offering in a three-fold communion with God, or with the priest, and with, well let's go further, and let's read back a few verses, back into the seventh chapter. It says, in verse 15, and the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offerings for thanksgiving [00:28:12] shall be eaten the same day that it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. It was the he, it wasn't the priest, it wasn't Aaron, it wasn't his sons, it was the one who offered.

Now where does this bring us? It brings us to this very serious point, an experience that some believers never get up to, let alone across, and that is of knowing what it is, not only to eat of the peace offering as a priest, but to eat as an offerer. [00:29:01] You see, there is a wonderful position given to those who take it, and if it's an offering of thanksgiving, as the offerer, you have the right to eat. And furthermore, there is, in verse 19, and it says, as for the flesh, all that be clean shall eat thereof.

Who are they? They are his friends.

Who are your friends? I hope you count them amongst the people of God, because this is a wonderful communion centred on Christ, the work that he's done, the wonderful sacrifice for sins, coupled with that wonderful immaculate life of his that knew no impurity, no unevenness, and [00:30:09] was faithful unto death when the Lord Jesus Christ gave to God all that God could expect to demand from anybody.

He fully gained it in that wonderful person of his son.

And then he called, spoke like you and me, to the position of bringing the peace offering and really entering into the joy of thanksgiving.

Some of us fall short.

Many of us have never experienced the thrill of knowing, not only my sins forgiven, but my acceptance accepted in the Beloved.

[00:31:09] Now you know the peace offering, it just overflows, just like Jordan floods, it overflows. We've seen that Christ has his satisfaction in the fact that there was food for the priest and there is that wonderful verse that says he shall see the travail of his soul and be eternally satisfied.

He's got a portion in that sacrifice. And God the Father could roll the clouds a bit aside and say, my beloved son in whom is all my delight.

And you think of Thomas who looked at Jesus after his resurrection and bowed before him [00:32:01] and said, my Lord and my God.

This is what brings us closer still and we've got to ask ourselves, haven't we, very seriously if we've really stood on this central square where there's fellowship.

Ah, John speaks of fellowship, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And you know, this is the engine room that produces a result. This is, we're looking now at the blueprint of the machinery that gets it moving. Don't tell me it's dry, it concerns my Saviour, the wonderful wonder of the person, of the man Christ Jesus, of the Son of God.

[00:33:04] And we ought to grip the qualities of our Saviour and we should be gripped by the qualities of the one who has gripped the love of God. What a wonderful union there is here as we're brought into this wonderful, wonderful activity.

Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. May I briefly say that the righteousness of God demanded my death.

The interception of the blood of Christ satisfied God in the way we've been looking at.

[00:34:02] It finished with me, but didn't leave me a heap of bones on the dry desert for some archaeologist's shovel.

But there's a new life in belief in Jesus Christ.

Thou shalt confess Jesus as Lord, that's the thing, to get our eyes on that person and know him as our Lord.

There's salvation in that and eternal salvation in that. Now the prerequisite to peace, eternal peace, is righteousness. And the first time righteousness is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis, chapter 15 if I mistake not, where it says Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. [00:35:03] Marvelous thing.

But in the previous chapter, Abraham had met a most unusual man.

His name was Melchizedek.

In Melchizedek it says of him in Genesis that he was the king of Salem, priest of the most high God.

And then if we go over to Hebrews, chapter 7, we find just two or three words about this man that are really a revelation in themselves.

It says, For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the high God, who met Abraham returning [00:36:05] from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being, by interpretation, king of righteousness.

Because Melchizedek means, my king is righteous, or king of righteousness.

You've got to get right down to Hebrews to find out the secret of this man. King of righteousness, king of peace, priest of the most high God, and Melchizedek, I hope you don't mind me calling him that, most people call him Melchizedek. But in that seventh chapter of Leviticus, there's just something that I've overlooked and I'll apologize for it and do nothing about it. [00:37:02] It is that the thanksgiving offering goes on a bit later and it says, If it be for a vow. Now the advice of the scripture is don't take a vow, but if you do, keep it. Now it was dear brother Matta Benen, who walking down the streets with me one day, and I can't think whether it was in England or in Cairo when I saw him there, he turned to me and laid his hand softly on my shoulder as we spoke, and he says, Please I want you to promise that you will never call that man Melchizedek. His name, two words, Melchizedek, and I said, Sir, I will call him so in future.

So I'm a man under a vow.

It sounds much nicer, my king is righteous. [00:38:03] But the effect of meeting that priest, king of righteousness, king of peace, priest of the most high God, who blesses Abraham, what kind of a blessing did he give him? I'm not going into that physically, but in the very next chapter you'll get an outburst of the blessing, Abraham believed in God, and God counted unto him for righteousness. The first man that was spoken of, of having conferred righteousness. And he's put before you, especially in the epistle to Romans, as the man who obtained righteousness not by keeping a code of rules, but through faith. And it is faith in Jesus Christ, who himself has been set in this order, the order of Melchizedek.

[00:39:06] Unique, not derived from parents, with no descent because he has an eternal priesthood.

Not like Aaron who went in with the blood of the sacrifice to entreat God, but the one who comes out in blessing.

King of righteousness, king of peace, and your eternal privilege is to derive your delight from such a person, and to know that really he was the one who satisfies the heart of God, who can satisfy your heart, not just for time, but for eternity, and derive from [00:40:04] it an enormous satisfaction, not just gratification, satisfaction.

When we go in for something in this world that's pleasurable, it gratifies, and I'm told that that always has an end, but satisfaction is a completeness of utter delight.

Oh, if we were only in this sphere, where we could know what it is to have delight in a son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Just another comment, if I may.

When the Lord Jesus Christ met his gathered disciples in the 24th chapter of Luke, his [00:41:05] first word, peace, peace unto you, that was peace after the storm, wasn't it?

But in the 14th chapter of John, he says, peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. That was peace before the storm, wasn't it? And if you are in the storm of life, may I remind you that he was the one who could stand in the wind-tossed boat and say, peace.

He commanded it.

King of righteousness, king of peace.

If you believe on Jesus Christ, you have conferred on you righteousness, well why not be so sure [00:42:03] that you have the peace of God dwelling in your hearts? And lastly, I mean lastly, or nearly lastly, Hebrews tells us, when that writer is writing of better things, things that were past, but better things for us, the more excellent were. Things that are spiritual against things that were handmade and carnal. He speaks these words, we have an altar whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. And it is at that altar, not a marble, not in size or shape, but when you eat the peace offering, you feed on the very thing that satisfies the heart of God.

[00:43:06] And you can eat it all. And you can call your friends. Because true peace offering is with the community of the Lord's people. And I cannot get it out of my heart that it doesn't take us very close to the Lord's morning meeting, when in communion with God, in fellowship with Jesus Christ, the one who loved us and died for us, we find ourselves all feeding on that, our own portion of those, of that very work, and will do, and find our joy and satisfaction.

And if there's anything of a response, and you know God looks into our hearts for a response, what is it? Couldn't care less. [00:44:02] Now, what is it?

Very impressive. Nice meeting we had this morning. Oh, but if you've been moved, I've never said a word, you may be moved by the love of Christ and the love of God, and you find yourself in that area of fellowship where the Father and the Son and earthly things fall away.

And I'll tell you something else, once you've developed a taste for it, it'll so change your taste buds, that some of the things that seem fascinating in this world, taste pretty putrid.

It has a cleansing effect in itself, as it draws us nearer to our Lord. [00:45:03] But the order is not peace first, and then try and get righteous afterwards. It is righteousness and peace. And I promise you, very lastly, I'll read you a verse, you needn't turn to it, you know it so well, I'm frightened of quoting, in case I quote it wrongly. In the Ephesians, when Paul is giving some very sound advice, he says, Having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You get the same order right through the scripture, first it's righteousness, and then peace. Have you got peace with God? If not, question the fact whether you know what it is to be constituted righteous before God, because like Abraham you believe him. [00:46:03] That's the first step. The next

one is to know that you're constituted righteous before God. He cannot find anything wrong with you, because he's accepted you in the offering of Christ. But can I say, as a Yorkshireman, pretty bluntly, do get your teeth into the peace offering, and eat it. And remember that there is a word in that chapter that we didn't dwell on, which says, you must eat it that day, or during the night, or you can't eat it the next day.

And our appreciation of Christ in all, and our thankfulness for him, must never deteriorate into a liturgy, a series of words, it must always livingly be connected with the death of Christ and our appreciation of it.

[00:47:05] There is a point to which I said I'd come back. There was an unleavened cake, wasn't there, to be offered, most unusual, but when God brings us into fellowship with himself, he recognizes this, that Jack Packer has a sinful nature, and it's incorporated in this.

A sinful nature, leaven is always a type of sin, and nothing can be done about it, down here. But go down further in the chapter, that doesn't disqualify the man from eating, but go down further in the chapter, it says don't let anybody eat of this if they're unclean, if they're ceremonially unclean, don't let them eat of it if they've defiled themselves by touching a dead body.

And there's a lesson in that, that whilst God knows our frailty, and allows for it in [00:48:06] the peace offering, he stamps his foot very hard upon unconfessed sin, defilement of the world, he says that soul shall be cut off from his people. That's a terrible note to end on, isn't it? But think of the nice things we've said. And don't forget, the little offering, call the peace offering that we so often jump over when we're reading our Bibles.