

Lessons from the Ceremonial Laws

Let us turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4. 2 Timothy chapter 4. Verse 6, I decided it would be helpful because we've not hit this, unless we go to Leviticus or Exodus, to go over the ceremonial laws and how we can learn from them, that is in broad strokes. Verse 6 of 2 Timothy 4 Paul writes, let's listen intensively to the word of God, for I am already being poured out as a drink offering. Let us pray.

Here in this expressive metaphor of spiritual truth, Lord, may it draw us to Jesus and to our responsibilities and our sanctification and growth. We see the ceremonial laws indeed speak primarily of your Son Jesus Christ, his work for us, who he is, our great high priest, even the Lamb of God, but also in a secondary, nevertheless important matter, it reflects our call of holiness. It is certainly Christ's holiness for us and to us, but also in and through us by the power of the Spirit, hence our sanctification.

And to that end, as we read this text and go over other texts related with similar language, God Almighty, may it bring a vivification, a vividness in our mind and our imaginations as we contemplate some of these sacrifices, some of these passages, some of the ceremonial law that it should draw us unto a greater walk of holiness. We ask this by your Son's mercy upon us, we pray. Amen.

So, with this interesting phrase used by Paul, being poured out as a drink offering, I touched upon it a little bit last week as we went through the verses around these texts here. We are encountering language of the ceremonial law of the Old Testament, that which was part and parcel of the Jews in the New Testament era. They took this for granted.

They understood what this was about. They knew what these things were in a way, of course, we are not familiar with. We didn't grow up with this.

What the ceremonial laws were and their signification was assumed by these authors since, of course, they were Jews. We don't have this, and so it would be good for us to learn about this, especially why Paul uses the language of the system here of laws. These laws that I call deadly, as you recall last week, the old scholastic way of describing the Mosaic judicial laws as dead but can be resurrected by the general equity, but the ceremonial are deadly, should never be resurrected.

It's kind of interesting historically because that's what the Roman Catholic Church did. They supposedly followed the schoolmen, as they were called. That's the teachers of the high medieval ages.

They're not binding upon us. Nevertheless, we can still learn from them. We can learn, and how we can learn and benefit from such as the book of Leviticus, for example, we shall see.

The Old Testament Ceremonial Laws

So the first point here, the Old Testament ceremonial laws. The definition is a ritualistic offices, acts, events, items, and locations for the worship of God. First and foremost.

But, in addition to that, of course, symbolic of Christ and his work, and then secondarily of our sanctification and holiness. Those two parts I'm going to unpack. That latter part, right? Christ, a little bit, but mostly the sanctification part.

Because clearly Paul is applying it to himself here in verse 6. A drink offering, not to Christ. Although Christ is our drink offering, that's true. It's both.

Because it's symbolism. It can be multiple significations because God gives its signification or significance for us. But I want to here focus on the crux of the matter, the ritualistic offices, acts, events, items, and locations for the worship of God.

Ritual, of course, as in set forms for public worship. Not just formal public worship on the Sabbath day of their day and age, their Saturday, but also throughout the week. If you run across a dead animal, you walk, you're traveling, you touch the dead animal, you are ritualistically unpure.

So you have to purify yourself before God and in the priest. That's an act of worship. You may not think of it that way, but it is.

Because it's what? Honoring and it's with respect to God himself. Although it's outward form. We have outward forms even in the New Testament.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are outward forms. They're with respect to God. They're worshipping God through these things.

And so that's what they had is. They are set forms of public worship. And I list a number of what they are, right? Offices, acts, events.

That would be like days. The holy days they had. The additional holy days.

Items. We're going to see a little bit about that in Hebrews. And location, of course.

The temple on holy Mount Zion. There in the holy city of Jerusalem. The location is significant when it wasn't before.

And of course the worship of God. That is the honor of our Lord and what we do for him. Not just on, again, for ourselves today in the Lord's day, but throughout the week.

And they also had to be honorable and fulfill some of these obligations throughout the week as well. And done individually or collectively. Collectively, of course, when you had the great day of atonement and you had the weekly sacrifices.

The priests themselves did it individually, as it were. And their daily offerings of the sacrifices, they had to do it every day and twice on the Lord's. On Sabbath day.

The Old Testament Sabbath day. The origin and nature of the ceremonial laws is significant insofar as it teaches us that they were going to be temporary to begin with. The ceremonial

system, the rituals of the Old Testament, by God giving them, already showed us that they were going to change.

They weren't going to stay that way forever. And the first hint is already, they didn't exist before. If it was part and parcel of worship of God, we would have had it from day one.

But we weren't. They were given later. And we're going to see about why that is.

So the origin and nature here, they are part of what is known as instituted worship. On the one hand, you have natural worship. That is, that which is required of all men, saved and not, of honoring God.

They know they're supposed to believe in Him, and love Him, and fear Him, and follow Him, and worship Him, and pray to Him even. We hear about the atheist and the foxhole prayer. They know this instinctively without the Bible.

Instituted worship is built upon God's good pleasure alone. It's not caked into creation as such and into our heart and mind and natural law. Natural worship is part of natural law.

It's baked in to who we are. Instituted worship is not. Not at all.

It's merely the good pleasure of God to pick and choose events, times, places, and the like, so that we may honor Him. They're not built into the situation as such. There's no intrinsic goodness in them, in other words.

Like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I remember as a kid, you hear this story as a young man. You're like, God put this tree here and if you ate it, you learned good things.

And of course, there's the tree of life over here, and if you ate that you lived forever. As though, and in the mind of a 10 or 12 year old, the fruit has intrinsic power to give you life forever more. No, of course it wasn't.

It was symbolic. They're outward forms only. And they're instituted.

God said, I'm going to choose it. He could have chosen a whole bunch of fruit trees and said, you can't touch any of them. But He only chose one.

That's what I mean. It's built merely upon His good pleasure. That's what instituted worship is.

And you only know it by His will telling you. Of course, verbally as He told Adam and through Adam to Eve, or through the Bible that tells us to have the Lord's Supper and Baptism, which we wouldn't have figured out any other way. Because it was only built upon His good pleasure.

And so, the Lord freely chose to take that test and give a test to Adam on top of the natural law, right? Super added to the natural law. And so, with the whole Old Testament

ceremonial system, and in fact, the New Testament as well. Because in Heaven, there is no more Baptism.

It's done away with. Because it's not intrinsic to worship as such. It's added by God's good, mere good pleasure.

And of course, ultimately for our good. That's why He does it. Not because He just feels like doing things willy-nilly.

It's for our good. So, there you have the temple. You have the priest.

You have the altar and the sacrifices. There's nothing inherently holy and better about them other than God says, they are holy and better. You wouldn't have known otherwise.

He said, that's the temple. You've got to do holy things at a certain time, in a certain way. I'm telling you why.

Because it's my good pleasure. And of course, compared to other places of worship, even. They were worshiping other places than the temple at Mount Sinai, right? Abraham was.

Everywhere he went, he had Ola sacrifices. That tells you something. That God is the one who restricts these outward acts, these instituted worships, and calls them, or gets rid of them, as He wills.

So God told them to erect it, and so they stopped right there, and everyone had to go to Jerusalem, when they didn't have to do before that. That's instituted worship. Natural worship, as I mentioned before, is part of natural law.

It's built into us. Unbelievers understand this as well. They know there's a God.

He should be honored, and all the like. It's moral necessity, and it's observable in the sense that we would know it either, we could say, intuitively or recursively, by thinking and meditating upon who God is, and therefore we should honor Him. And this is the basic natural worship is summed up in this.

You should love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. That's the first principle, right there. Those are acts of worship.

Not just on Sunday. Your whole life is supposed to be this way. That's not what the instituted worship is.

You don't need a priest, you don't need a temple, you don't need the offering, the sacrifices, you don't need the special holy days. And so that already tells us that the ceremonial system of the Old Testament was going to be temporary. It had its purpose.

It has a specific reason in history that God gave the Old Testament church. On the other hand, could never replace natural worship commanded by God. We're supposed to do the sacrifices and live a life of rebellion.

To obey is better than sacrifice. And he doesn't mean worship. If we conflate natural worship with instituted worship, as I did almost my entire life as a Christian.

I didn't know there was a distinction. Then you would read that and go, well, I don't have to worship God. It's more important that I obey Him.

It's referring to instituted worship. The outward acts that are built merely on God's good will. You should give a sacrifice.

But if there's a conflict, those always fall by the wayside and you must follow God. Always. And even today.

If there's a conflict, you may not have to have the Lord's Supper or something. Because you're going to get everyone sick with some massive disease or war. People are going to come in and kill us, whatever the case is.

But you can always worship God in your heart. And pray to Him and love Him. That doesn't change.

That worship is always there. So, they were given to supplement and teach. The ceremonial system was given to supplement and teach.

And we have this described in our larger catechism, the Westminster Confession of Faith, when it speaks of worship. Partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, and partly holding forth diverse instructions of moral duties. I mentioned that before.

They're ritualistic acts of worship, symbolically pointing to Christ, and also teaching us moral lessons or life of holiness and sanctification. And our tradition teaches that because it's in the Bible. I'm going to show this.

And it's there in our Confession. Partly the worship, prefiguring Christ, and partly holding forth instruction of moral duties. So the purpose in use then, I'm already talking about there, partly for worship of Christ and prefiguring Him, that is pointing to His work and what He would do in the future at the time.

And so there was symbolic, the Old Testament there, of the person and work of our Lord and Savior, the Messiah. They knew Him as the Messiah, the Anointed One. Christ is just the Greek for the word Messiah, which is the English or the Hebrew.

And it's the same idea. It's the same word, the Anointed One. The Chosen One that will redeem His people from their sin.

What sin and what kind of redemption are we talking about? Well, we know already the whole sacrificial system points to that. Someone has to die. Someone has to be satisfied.

And there must be a shedding of blood, which is just an emphatic way of saying death. There has to be death that will bring about the redemption of His people. They were never

intended, the priesthood, sacrifices and the like, to be something in themselves, but always pointed beyond them to Jesus and the future.

And even to the work of Jesus at the time, because we know they have the Spirit of God, and God gave them and granted them justification, adoption, and sanctification before Christ came on earth as a man. They had it, of course, to a lesser degree. They were weaker in many ways, but they had it nevertheless most truly.

They never saved or justified anyone. Never about that. The Jews who took it that way in the New Testament era, the Galatian heresy and the ones that Jesus was dealing with all the time, they twisted these things and argued how significant they had to be.

They were simply outward acts describing Jesus. Describing who He would be, the Great High Priest or the Lamb of God. You already have two different things going on here.

The priest slaughtering the animal. And Jesus is both the animal or the lamb in that case, John 1, and the priest, because of symbolism. It's a symbolism.

It's a beautiful symbolism. It's a real symbolism in the sense of it's set by God by His mere good pleasure to say, this is important, this is holy, to teach you about the second member of the Trinity, about your Savior and deliverer, and you shouldn't be messing with this stuff, because it's about your redemption. The symbolism is.

The wine, of course, represents the blood of Christ in the New Testament, the shedding of blood in the Old Testament. The animals were a picture of shedding the blood of Jesus. But also, on the flip side, as we get to the other point, the shedding of blood necessary.

People must die. You must die for sins. Somebody's going to die.

And it should be Jesus, of course. The worship elements that pointed to Christ. Hebrews 9, 1. Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

So the book of Hebrews, written to His audience to explain to them, you don't need to go back to the old Jewish way of doing things. These things are passing away. The whole sacrificial ritualistic system is gone.

Then indeed, even the first covenant, the Mosaic covenant, had ordinances of divine service, or worship of God, and the earthly sanctuary. He's going to emphasize the earthly or tangible things of this world. For the tabernacle was prepared, the first part of which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary.

And behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the holiest of all, or the Holy of Holies. So he's describing here, in Hebrews, what's going on in the temple, physical description, which had the golden censer, the Holy of Holies, and the Ark of the Covenant, we know about that, overlaid on all sides with gold, and which were the golden pot that had the manna that was in the desert. Aaron's rod that budded when they were in the desert.

And the tablets of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. He's describing the detail here. And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, right? Two cherubim, angels, somewhat like you saw in Indiana Jones, covering over the wings, covering the middle there.

Of these things we cannot now speak in detail, he writes. What he's saying is there's significance, moral significance to each of these things, the lampstand, the ark, Aaron's rod blossoming, that can teach us something about Jesus. Verse 6, now when these things have been thus prepared, the priests are there putting all the stuff, and God put everything there through the men's hands, the priest always went into the first part of the tabernacle performing the services.

They would give the sacrifices or the libations and the like. But into the second part, the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself in front of the people's sin committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing.

The Holy Spirit was signifying what? Through the symbolism of the act of the great high priest once a year. He had to repeat it all the time. The author is telling us it's symbolic.

Don't take it as though it's really atoning people's sins. It could never be. Indicating that the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest, that is Christ had not come yet while the first tabernacle was standing.

It was symbolic, verse 9 of chapter 9 of Hebrews. It was symbolic, there it's more explicit. It was symbolic all this, the work of the great high atonement, which is what he's describing there, the great day of atonement, verse 7 in particular, for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience.

You cannot perfect your conscience. You will always have a guilty conscience with these sacrifices because they do not atone for sin. They're symbolic and symbolic only.

Concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. So he goes off and explains, look, all of it, the food, what you could eat, what you could not eat, the drinks themselves, the libations as we have here in verse 6 being poured out before God as a sacrifice, and the fleshly ordinances, right, the earthly things, the tangible things that God told him to do, all that was there until the time of reformation. It was temporary from the get-go when Jesus comes.

But Christ came, verse 11, as high priest of the good things to come with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. Jesus has come because appointed to him as the eternal tabernacle. The whole thing is a picture in so various many details of Jesus and his work for us and in us and to us.

Hebrews 10.1. For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, that is the ceremonial law, can never with these same sacrifices, which

they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. Because if it made them perfect, you would only have to do it once, but they have to do it every year, showing that they are imperfect because they're just merely symbolic. For then, Hebrews 10.2, they would not have ceased to be offered.

For the worshipers once purified would have had no more consciousness of sin. Their guilty conscience would have been assuaged. And those sacrificed the remainder of sins every year because they were never there to get rid of sin, but to point to the perfect one who gets rid of the sin himself, Jesus Christ.

And so the Old Testament ceremonial system points to our Lord and Savior. Galatians 4.1-3. Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is a master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the Father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world, that is, the elements of the ceremonial system, because it was a childish way of teaching people.

Children like tangible things. They like their what? Picture books. And eventually you outgrow picture books.

At least most of us do. Not like there's something wrong with a book and a picture, obviously. A picture and a book.

But we understand the mindset. It's completely different. They're very visual, very immature.

That's the picture painted in Galatians here, that the sacrificial system given to the Old Testament church was for their state of immaturity. Galatians 4 is even, that's part of Galatians 4 here, that they were children under a tutor. But the point being, it's temporary.

When they grow up, you don't need it anymore. Colossians 2.17, so let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regard to, what, a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substances of Christ, they were only shadows, right? Shadows is what's, I can't say reflected, what's left when there's no light hitting the body. You hit a body, in this case the body of Christ, the light shines on him and what's behind him is the shadow.

But the shadow, from that perspective, what points to the person making the shadow, doesn't it? That's the imagery here. And those Old Testament sacrificial rituals were but shadows pointing to the greater one who made the shadow, Jesus Christ. So the whole system was not the real thing.

Shadow's not a real thing. It's the absence of light. So it was never about the ritual laws.

It was never about the ritual laws. The Pharisees were wrong and arrogant in their error. All this, the teaching of them of the old, the Messiah to come, that he would be their priest, that he would be their altar, that he would be their lamb in sacrifice, that he would be their tabernacle.

But, this is all gone and done away with. I already hinted at that already. This brings us to the second point, the abrogation of the ceremonial laws.

Abrogation of the Ceremonial Laws

From the nature of the Old Testament ceremonial laws, as I hinted at before, tells us they're going to pass away. One, they're instituted. They're not built into the moral structure of things, but based upon God's mere good pleasure, we've never figured out that we needed the temple or an altar without God saying, go ahead, make altars and temples.

Otherwise, you just worship God in prayer and the like. They did not exist, the bulk of it. The temple didn't exist.

The priesthood didn't exist before Moses. It was built into the moral requirements of the universe that this is the way you're supposed to honor God. Why was it only given during Moses' time? Because it wasn't built into the moral fabric of the universe.

It was added by God's mere good pleasure. That's another reason. That's reason two.

Reason three, they're external matters. I kind of hinted at this this morning. They don't get to the heart of worship as such.

They're supposed to be aids to worship. That's true, because we're still weak and we want things tangible, so God gives us what? Baptism, Lord's Supper, even preaching itself. They're aids to worship, but God wants worshippers who what? Worship him in spirit and truth.

That's always been the case. So they could never have been the substance of worship. And then lastly or fourthly, they are prophetic.

And we already saw some of that earlier. They point to Jesus Christ and his work that we become, and he has done and finished them. So the whole book of Hebrews is like, there you go, you don't need it anymore.

It's done. So they're fulfilled in our Lord. Colossians, I already read part of Colossians there.

And it's fulfillment, Colossians 2, 4, "...having wiped out the handwriting of the requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Christ coming to earth as our Redeemer. The priesthood has now exploded. He is the great high priest.

Even the kingship is gone. He is our king. We don't have to have a Davidic line anymore.

Right? And so all of this is gone and finished and abrogated and should not be ever be brought back again. Hebrews 9, 8, "...and the Holy Spirit, indicating this, that the way into the Holy Sabaoth was not yet made manifest, but it was a symbolic," verse 9, "...for the present time until the Reformation." So the whole book, again, argues this, that it's all done away with. We don't need to have sacrifices anymore.

The Useful Lessons from the Ceremonial Laws

Third point, the useful lessons from the Ceremonial Laws. The useful lessons of the Ceremonial Laws. The Old Testament teaching here for us today, in general, so I'm going to go over some passages, making the blanket claim, a very broad claim, that you can go to the Old Testament and learn as a believer, both by the practices given to us therein, as well as the doctrines.

1 Corinthians 10, 1 is a classic passage for this. I always remember this when I started hearing about this. I was like, this is really amazing, because I was taught, we're not Jews, we're Christians, and we just follow the New Testament.

That's a partial truth, we don't sacrifice animals anymore, so we're following the New Testament, but there's a common sanctification beyond that which is added by the mere pleasure of God, i.e. the ritualistic systems. That's the natural law, given to all of us, the Ten Commandments. 1 Corinthians 10, 1, "...Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

All ate the same spiritual food." Well, this is interesting. Spiritual food? I thought this was physical food. No.

It says, "...and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." They were supposed to believe in Christ. The miracles given to them were supposed to point to Christ. They were supposed to believe in the Messiah to come.

Unfortunately, many of them did not. "...But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness." Verse 6, "...Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also have lusted." So, although he does point to Christ, you can call that a Christological interpretation, but he doesn't keep it there only. He now gives a moral lesson in verse 6, that we shouldn't lust after things that they lusted after.

That is, things that don't control our desires and they run amok. Their example is a moral example for us. There's nothing wrong with it at all.

Paul thought it was a good example for us to learn by. That is our sanctification. I say moral, of course I mean morality in the best Christian sense, that we're filled with the Spirit and we can obey, however limited, for God's glory and by His strength and His grace upon us.

Not by our own power and might, of course. I shouldn't have to repeat that all the time. Paul doesn't.

Paul is very clear here. What they did or did not do in the Old Testament was an example for us today. Of course, in his case, he's admonishing the Corinthian churches.

The book of Hebrews is also arguing this implicitly, but with a longer list. Hebrews 11, the great hall of faith, right? They've run before us. We read the end of chapter 10.

They've gone before us, this great cloud of witnesses, and he goes and expresses and explains who this great cloud of witnesses are. All of those who were before us, they're all Old Testament saints, doing a bunch of different things, and the lesson is we can learn from them to persevere and to trust and to believe in the midst of our actions. And what kind of actions did they do, whether men or women, in peacetime or in war? Whatever they did, they did by believing and trusting in the Messiah to come.

That's the hall of faith, the chapter of faith. And so there are a bunch of moral lessons there. From Samuel, Isaiah, to Abraham and the like, who was not looking for a city made by earthly hands, but a heavenly city.

And of course, there are many other uses of the Old Testament in the New Testament by the Apostles and Christ himself, referencing over and over again, quoting, I'd like to remind us, he didn't quote himself, he quoted the Old Testament, he quoted the Bible, or the story of David eating in the field on the Lord's Day. He uses an example, an actual event, and gives a moral lesson for the New Testament saints. We can use the Old Testament, that's the point, and grow thereby.

And here we have the Old Testament ceremonial lessons. We have a number of texts. You heard a couple of texts last week.

Here are the other ones. 1 Corinthians 5.7 uses ceremonial language to talk about moral truths for us today. 1 Corinthians 5.7, Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you are truly are unleavened.

For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. He's, of course, alluding to the Passover feast of Exodus 12. And in Exodus 12, it speaks of unleavened bread.

And he picks it up as a moral picture for us, of purity, of getting rid of, that you may be a new lump, to purge out the old leaven. So leaven, then, is a picture of sin in that case. We're supposed to get rid of it and become pure, since you are unleavened.

For indeed, Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Yes, Christ is sacrificed for us. And you could even say Christ was here this bread that was leavened for us, or unleavened for us, purified for us.

But it's also for us. It says that you are supposed to have the old leaven removed out of the bread, to be purified. So it's a metaphor here for purification of the church there in 1 Corinthians 5.7. 2 Corinthians 6.17, so the Corinthians again.

2 Corinthians 6.17, Therefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord God. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. And this is Old Testament language, quoting Isaiah 52.11 and following.

Come out from among them. Don't touch them. Don't touch which is what? Unclean.

That's Old Testament ceremonial language. Can't touch dead animals, for example. That's unclean.

They mean ceremonially or ritually unclean. And from that, it's a picture of moral uncleanness. Sin.

Don't touch sin. Don't be around sin. Don't be hanging out with sin.

So it reflects the Levitical laws of uncleanness, and it's symbolic of moral holiness and purity. Philippians 4.18, Indeed I have all, and abound, I am full, having received from the things sent from you a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. He's using the sacrificial language of the Old Testament.

A sweet-smelling aroma. You have that language, I think one of the first times there was Noah. Noah offered a sacrifice to God, smelled it, and it was pleasing to him.

Not because, again, a dead animal actually pleases God, but the faith in giving the sacrifice of worship and believing and trusting in God, Noah's faith, God said was pleasing to him. And this language is used for us in the New Testament era. An acceptable sacrifice.

This gift, in this case, a physical or something that he needed, a thing sent from you to me, to Paul, that I needed. Even physical things. It doesn't have to be, we sometimes use the word spiritual in a vague sense.

Physical things with spiritual intent, for the good of the apostle or for the good of the church, is a sacrifice, acceptable, and a sweet-smelling aroma before our God. And Hebrews 13.15, lastly. These are the languages, many passages that use the language of ceremonial rites.

Therefore by him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. Do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. So first of all, therefore by him let us continually offer, that is by Christ, the sacrifices of praise to God, that is the fruit of our lips.

So he's mixing interesting metaphors. A fruit, supposed to give the first fruit, that is the best of what you have in the Old Testament. To God, hear it with your mouth, praising him with songs, songs, and spiritual songs.

For example, Colossians and Ephesians 5. And he uses that language of sacrifice, saying you're supposed to give these things up before God. The fruit of your lips, the fruit alludes to, I believe, that giving of the first fruit and the like. Giving thanks to his name is also a sacrifice of praise.

There's that spiritual or metaphorical language, sacrifice. And he continues, but do not forget to do good. It's good works.

For with such sacrifices, what sacrifices? Doing good works. As an expression of, to use the Old Testament language, it's a sacrifice. You're giving a sacrifice, not only of praise, but of good works to God.

And God is indeed well pleased with such sacrifices. To give up your life to God, in this case of these good works or giving of money for the poor Christians and things like that. That's what he's talking about.

He's saying this is what it teaches. The very same sacrificial system that we all know and appreciate because God put it together, to point to Jesus as the lamb, as the priest, as the temple itself and tabernacle, also points to our calling to be holy. That's the common theme in these four or five passages I quoted here, is moral holiness.

And so it makes sense, of course, because it points to Christ, who is our holiness. He is our justification. He is our sanctification.

We read at the end of 1 Corinthians 1. And because of that, it's our sanctification as well. It's a picture of our being sanctified by Jesus Christ for us. It's obedience to God, separation from sin, don't touch the unclean or unholy thing, the dead animal or anything else.

That's what the ritualistic laws taught them of the Old Testament. That is, the best of the saints by God's Spirit who understood it wasn't just the outward act that somehow made them holy. But it pointed to the inward act, the movement of the heart and the trust in Jesus to do these things for God's sake, for His glory.

There are visible and tangible lessons in, of course, Jesus, but also our own sanctification both individually and corporately. Whole burnt offerings? That's your whole life. You're supposed to offer all that you are before Him, to love Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, as expressed in that outward act of the Ola or the whole burnt offering, all given up to God.

I don't get to touch any of it. No one ate from it. Don't touch dead things? Stay away from sin.

Sin is a dead thing. It's a deadly thing to you. That's the lessons being taught in the Old Testament Levitical system.

Not a lot of commentaries on Leviticus. You can imagine why. But there are some.

And the good ones, of course, about the Puritans who go through and explain how it points to Christ and also points to our moral call of sanctification and holiness. Bonar has one. I have at home.

There's a positive call of obedience and the sacrificial system as well as warnings from sin. Don't do this, but do that. Give your whole life and all that you are to Him and to one another, but don't give in to sin.

We can read the Old Testament ceremonial systems and acts and signs and days as a call of holiness, brothers and sisters. And, of course, the important point, again, is we're not called to duplicate the outward practices. Rather, what they were pointing to spiritually or morally, the inward holiness called for all of us.

When reading the Old Testament stories, because many of them deal with sacrifices and spiritual events like that or ceremonial events like that, we can see both Jesus and the call of holiness and godliness for all of us as we are His followers. May the Spirit of God equip you to be poured out as a drink offering for the work of God's kingdom, brothers and sisters, wherever He puts you in this world. Let us pray.

We thank You, Lord, for using these tangible things, although we don't practice nor should we these things in outward form, but they point to inward truths, God, of a holy heart, of a love to You, of hatred and zeal against sin. And may, whenever we have opportunity to go over the Old Testament and see such events occurring, 1 and 2 Samuel and Kings, and, of course, Leviticus and Exodus, to remind ourselves it does indeed point to Jesus, but also to Jesus' work in our lives, that is, our call of holiness and sanctification by the power of the Spirit within us. Amen.