

INTRO:

PAUSE FOR TECH LEADER... Amen. Would you **Pray** with me? *“Father, thank you for your Word today. By it we are reminded that, in a world which prizes the new, the changing, the evolved, YOU are the same yesterday, today, and forever...and so WE can rest knowing that this Word you’ve given us, ‘is trustworthy for speaking what’s true, commanding what’s right, and providing us with what’s good.’¹ Help us now to hear-from and depend-on you more today. We pray this in Jesus’ name - And all God’s people said (on mute), “Amen.”*

So, one of the things I’ve learned as a Pastor, is that for one reason or another a lot of people assume that I have or am supposed to have it altogether; ya know that I wake up every day and say, *“Good morning, Lord,”* before banging out a few love psalms to Jesus on the harp next to my bedside...when the reality is I usually wake up saying NOT *“Good morning Lord,”* but *“Good Lord, it’s morning already.”* ...I definitely don’t have it all together and more than that, I’ve shared with you before that, even as a Pastor, I’ve had seasons in which I’ve struggled with faith. Honestly, I think one of the toughest has been this last year/maybe like you...And it’s been over the issue we’re gonna discuss today...The issue of **guilt**...shame/not feeling good enough/ for me, like I’ve not Pastored you well enough!...And I know I’m not alone. One of my favorite atheists, Jean Paul Sartre says, *“inside every human heart, whether you believe God or not, is a voice that whispers “not acceptable. Condemned.”²* Guilt! Many of you today, I’d believe, are wrestling with some sense of guilt: over something you’ve done/some secret you have OR something you’ve failed to do/some regret you’re holding onto! Even as Christ-followers right, we can live with this lingering sense that at some point, God’s gonna finally take it out on us, UNLESS we find some kind of redemption or atonement!³

We’re continuing our **“True Myth”** series today, and in the book of **Leviticus**...DunDunDunnn... Yes I know, Leviticus is seen by many, as AT BEST, confusing and irrelevant, and at worst offensive. Cuz to be sure it’s the book filled with laws like being able to eat locusts, but not shrimp, and men not being allowed to cut your sideburns (which right there would knock out like 99% of dudes in Southie). SO before you tune-out, hear me say: Leviticus is actually incredibly relevant. Because at a macro level, it gives us window into God’s heart, since laws, we know, are always based on what we value right? We have laws against murder and stealing because we value life and property rights for example. So Leviticus and all it’s laws is actually a book showing you what God’s values.⁴ But then at a micro level, and for our intents and purposes today, Leviticus deals with the universal experience of **guilt - why we feel it and what can be done about it!**...So let’s listen to the reading of God’s Word: **Julie Intro’s Self > Leviticus 10:1-3; 16:1-3, 5,11,15-22,29-30...**

¹ Language adapted from "Taking God at His Word: Why the Bible Is Knowable, Necessary, and Enough, and What That Means for You and Me" - Kevin DeYoung

² Quote cited in "What Went Wrong" // Genesis 3:1–19 // *The Whole Story* #3 - J.D. Greear

³ Intro adapted from explanation in "By No Means Clearing the Guilty" // Exodus 34:6–7 // *The Name*, part 4 - J.D. Greear + "There Will Be Blood" // Leviticus 10:1–3; 16:1–29 // *The Whole Story* #10 - J.D. Greear

⁴ https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/preaching-leviticus-sidney-greidanus/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=tcgcblog

CONTEXT/TEXT:

Thanks **Julie**... So off-the-top, you can see why we've put these two chapters together. **Ch.16, v.1**, says that, "*after the death of Aaron's two sons (Nadab and Abihu), the LORD spoke to Moses,*" and gave these instructions for what we now know as the Day of Atonement, or what Jews refer to as Yom Kippur. So this Day of Atonement beginning with the mediation of the Priests for their sin and then moving, you see, to the cleansing of the people of Israel for their sin/ALL of that was occasioned by the death of Nadab and Abihu in **ch.10**...Because recall where we are in the Biblical story: God, out of a desire to "*build a family who will love, honor and reign with Him forever,*"⁵ has just freed Israel from Egyptian captivity. And in doing-so established a covenantal relationship WITH Israel, meaning a kind of marriage vow to ensure that His people, not only lived in proper relationship to Him, but accurately reflected that relationship to those around them. Since that's always the two-fold call on our lives! To, as Jesus said, "*Love God and Love your neighbor!*" Or as we say, "*Share the Freedom and Family of Christ.*" God brings you into loving relationship with Him, so that He can then send you out to share His love with others. He saves you in order to send you, which is why Charles Spurgeon famously said, "*every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter!*"...So having freed Israel, God establishes this covenantal relationship with her; the BASIS of which is the legal and sacrificial system we find in Leviticus. That's Leviticus; a kind of handbook for holiness and relationship...And really the pinnacle/you could say the "HUB" of the Levitical system was the Day of Atonement because it ensured that people like you and me, who are full of sin and guilt, could still become ONE with God. "Atonement" literally "at-one-ment."⁶

TRUTHS:

So what do we learn about atonement, sin and guilt from these passages here? **Four Things** if you're taking notes: **First**, that **Our Sin Is Really Bad**. Ya know, when you read Leviticus/ especially the account of Nadab and Abihu, you get this sense right, that there's a huge chasm between us and God. That, in His holiness, God is not to be taken casually. Cuz that's really what Nadab and Abihu's sin was. You see it says "*they gave an unauthorized fire or offering before the Lord.*"? That just means they decided to worship God in their own way. They were casual/ flippant with God.⁷ And you say, "*that seems a little extreme. Doesn't God want us to come to Him as we are?*" Yes! But we need to be careful not to hold less to what we might call, a "*man-centered view of sin,*"⁸ in which assume that living for ourselves isn't really that bad. But it is! Our "*You do you*" mentality, you understand, that was the original sin of Adam and Eve. And it is sin precisely because of who it's against...God! Cuz think about it: If you were to kick a wall out of, let's say, the sin of impatience, what would the punishment be? Prolly not much except for maybe a broken toe or something right? But what if you kicked the President? What then?

⁵ Purpose Driven Life - Rick Warren

⁶ "CHAPTER 6: The Wonder of Atonement - Leviticus 16" - February 28, 2010 - A Chronicle of Redemption - David Platt - in *David Platt Sermon Archive* (Birmingham, AL: David Platt, 2010), 2451.

⁷ Explanation adapted from "NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY - Leviticus 16" - April 13, 2014 - For the Love of God - David Platt - *David Platt Sermon Archive* (Birmingham, AL: David Platt, 2014), 4277. + ESV Study Bible

⁸ "CHAPTER 6: The Wonder of Atonement - Leviticus 16" - February 28, 2010 - A Chronicle of Redemption - David Platt - in *David Platt Sermon Archive* (Birmingham, AL: David Platt, 2010), 2451. + "There Will Be Blood" // Leviticus 10:1-3; 16:1-29 // *The Whole Story* #10 - J.D. Greear

Prolly a little more than that right?...BECAUSE the punishment needs to fit the crime. And the CRIME is determined by who's sinned against. So if you sin against a door, you're not very guilty. If you sin against a person, you're guilty. If you sin against God, you're infinitely guilty, because HE is infinitely honorable...And what's the only infinite punishment to fit the crime of sinning against an infinite being?...Death!...Nadab and Abihu sinned against the eternal God by being flippant and casual with Him/choosing to engage Him the way THEY wanted...So let me ask you: ***Are you guilty of being too casual with God today?*** Maybe in the way you view His Word and the priority you do/or don't give to it...His church and treating it as a kind opt-in/opt-out organization in which you can come and go when it's convenient, comfortable, preferable, rather than as the the body and bride for which Christ died?...Or maybe some other area, but ***Where are you being too casual with God today?*** Cuz the whole point of the Nadab and Abihu story is that **Our Sin is Bad**/there's a seriousness and severity to it because God won't allow His holiness to be violated⁹...And that's a good thing, because:

Second, God's Holiness Is Good: See, ultimately what we're being shown in these passages, is that God's holiness is so awesome that for sinful people like you and me to approach Him; it requires an atoning sacrifice.¹⁰ Actually, God says as much in **ch.10, v.3**, when He says, "*Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.*" He's saying, "*I will be acknowledged as holy.*"¹¹ And that's good for two reasons: One ***Practical*** & one ***Spiritual: Practically***, you have to remember: these laws, as frustrating or mundane as they might seem to us, were given to a people - to form how they'd related to God AND each other. I think a lot of times, we skim through Leviticus or some of these laws and think, "*Why am I reading this?*" But remember, the community to which these laws were given, they didn't have, for example, modern medicine and antibiotics; not to mention, they were at this point about a million people strong, wandering a wildness surrounded by pagan cultures that were doing things like sacrificing babies by boiling em in blood...So when God gives these cleanliness laws about what you could and couldn't eat or touch, and certainly when He gives these holiness laws here, He's doing it out of genuine care for His people, SO THAT for example, in a world without modern medicine, one little health issue didn't become a community-wide health issue OR so that the broken morality of the communities around them didn't begin to break them! So really when you read these verses about God commanding holiness, you're not supposed to say, "*Man, this OT God's so angry and such a prude.*" No! You're supposed to say, "*Boy, this God sure is concerned about taking care of and protecting people.*"¹² In other words, you're supposed to see all this like you'd see a sign at the trailhead of a dangerous hike that reads, "*Failure to stay on the path will result in serious injury.*" God's concern for His holiness is practically good!...But ***Spiritually*** too! Because, you understand, without holiness you have no God. I touched on this

⁹ ESV Study Bible + R. Laird Harris, "Leviticus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 588.

¹⁰ R. Laird Harris, "Leviticus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 588.

¹¹ Translation insight from "CHAPTER 6: The Wonder of Atonement - Leviticus 16" - February 28, 2010 - A Chronicle of Redemption - David Platt - in *David Platt Sermon Archive* (Birmingham, AL: David Platt, 2010), 2451.

¹² Explanation adapted from "NEW COVENANT COMMUNITY - Leviticus 16" - April 13, 2014 - For the Love of God - David Platt - *David Platt Sermon Archive* (Birmingham, AL: David Platt, 2014), 4277.

two weeks ago, but a lot of people/especially in Boston say, “*I believe in God, but not one who punishes, or sends to Hell, or needs to be assuaged through an atoning sacrifice.*” You ever heard that? It sounds very progressive and modern doesn’t it?...And that’s because...it is!...Cuz notice, after Nadab and Abihu are killed and God says that He’ll be acknowledged as holy, Aaron/Nadab and Abihu’s dad it says, “*held his peace,*” meaning he didn’t argue or protest that God should be more loving and less punishing! No! Because he understand, as generations of people before us have ALWAYS understood, that a part of God’s goodness is NOT the absence of holiness but the PRESENCE of it. It’s really only in our modern, politically correct culture that we’ve downplayed the need for holiness. Cuz ya know, if you say God should only be loving or forgiving, but not holy and willing to punish sin and injustice, then ironically, your God of “love,” is actually far LESS loving than the Holy God of the Bible!¹³ I mean haven’t we learned this last year that there’s nothing loving about letting injustice slide? ***God’s Holiness Is Good.***

Third, we see that: **Jesus’ Grace Is Better**: Ya notice, after a young bull was sacrificed for the priest; two goats would then be offered for the people; one that was killed and the other sent off into the desert as an “Azazel” - literally means in Hebrew, “go away goat”¹⁴/where we get our phrase...“scapegoat.” And you say, “*why two goats for the people?*” And the answer is, because they’re illustrating the two different things God was doing with our sin and guilt: Write these two words down: ***Propitiation*** and ***Expiation/Propitiation*** and ***Expiation***. Propitiation means to satisfy. In the case of God’s holiness and righteous wrath against our sin, that’s what the first goat being slaughtered signified. It signified God’s wrath toward our sin being satisfied. You can think about it like if you wreck someone’s car, but insurance pays their claim. At that point there’s no more claim against you right? Your debt’s been settled. Your obligation to “pay up” has been propitiated/satisfied! That’s what the first goat signified...But here’s the thing: Any of you that’ve gotten into a wreck know that “propitiation” is good, but it’s not enough, cuz what happens even after your debt’s been settled? The accident’s still on your record right? That’s why the SECOND goat there is so important. Because while the first represented the Propitiation for our sin; the second represented ***Expiation*** - the expunging or removal of sin from your record!... So put all this together: Whereas the first goat shows you that you can be FORGIVEN on the basis of a substitute; the second shows you that your sin can be FORGOTTEN!...That this God cares so much about relationship with people as to establish a system whereby even in our sin, we can continue to be one with Him...Incredibly good news right?...So let me ask, “*Why then aren’t we continuing to do a bunch of goat sacrifices?*” Like when I asked you to get out your Bibles, why didn’t I also ask ya to also get out your goat for the morning? After all, God’s people were commanded in **vv.29-30** to continually observe this ritual. So why don’t we? BECAUSE this Day of Atonement here was never intended to be the end-all-be-all. Rather, it was intended provide an explanation, you could say, through “*moving pictures*”,¹⁵ of what would ultimately happen when Jesus died on the cross.

¹³ Explanation adapted from “The Story of the Lamb: The Gospel According to Moses: Discovering the Lost Language of Salvation” - September 29, 2002 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

¹⁴ R. Laird Harris, “*Leviticus*,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 588. + “There Will Be Blood” // Leviticus 10:1-3; 16:1-29 // *The Whole Story* #10 - J.D. Greear

¹⁵ 13 - Day of Atonement - Leviticus 16:1-34 - Kenneth A. Mathews, *Leviticus: Holy God, Holy People*. Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 133.

Cuz see, before Jesus died, he said two things about these rituals and the Law of God as a whole here. **First**, he said that the law was perfect and would never pass away. But **Then** He said that those, who were born again, were released from the law, because He'd fulfilled it for em. In other words, Jesus didn't do away with the Day of Atonement. Rather, the cross, He in effect, staged His own BETTER Day of Atonement/one which no longer needs to be repeated by His people. As **Hebrews 7:27** says, *"(Jesus) has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself."* The key words there being *"Himself"* and *"once and for all."* While the Priests would offer two goats for propitiation and expiation, Jesus offered Himself. As the God-man, He gave HIS blood so that when you give your life to Him, your sins are not only forgiven, but ALSO forgotten - carried away forever. They no longer need to haunt and condemn you!

And some of you desperately need to hear that today, because you're holding onto some guilt that's, frankly, tearing you up! But Friend, if you've surrendered your life to Christ, no matter how deep you think that guilt goes, I want you to know that it's not only forgiven; it's forgotten. You no longer stand accused...Just this week I experienced the beauty of that truth again, when I got a call from a dear friend who used to be a part of Hub - and I got permission to tell this story, but I also wanna be sensitive to her privacy, so I'll just say "she" called to tell me that she was really excited, because she felt like God had lifted a huge weight of guilt off of her that honestly she'd been carrying around for proly 15 years; specifically, the guilt of having had an affair with an older man early in her marriage, which of course destroyed her marriage, and the affair, and even years later lead her to enter into a lesbian relationship as a way of compensating FOR the guilt she felt with men. And as she was sharing, the image I got of her was one of carrying around, for years, this like 50lb dumbbell of guilt wherever she went...But then she said this, *"But I'm just so excited and I had to tell you, because through a series of events, I realize now that as wrong as the affair, and the divorce, and the lesbian relationship were and how, as you always told me, it wasn't God's best for me; the guilt of it all no longer has to weigh me down! Jesus has forgiven me!"* And I just sat there on the phone smiling to myself saying, *"Yes! Yes!, Thank you Lord."* ...That's exactly what Jesus wants to do for you! Like the prophet Micah said, bury your sin and guilt at the bottom of the ocean.¹⁶ And then as Corrie Ten Boom said, put up a big sign on that part of the ocean that says, *"No Fishing Allowed!"*...God help the fish!...Friend, that's the **Better Grace** of Christ who, on the Cross, took your sin and guilt, becoming sin and guilt for you, so that you could become a Friend of His and a son or daughter of God the Father! No matter how guilty/broken you think you are, God is telling you: *"I've atoned for it. And I'm not just putting yiu back together; I making you more wonderful in the process."* - like the Japanese art form, Kintsugi, in which broken pottery is mended at the cracks with a lacquer... that's mixed with gold...so that what results is something far more beautiful and valuable than before. Something like **THIS (PIC)**...THAT'S the **Better Grace of Jesus**...

So that **Fourth and Finally**, you have to **Respond** if you wanna enough that grace! And by Respond, I really mean Rest! Cuz notice in **vv.29-30**, Israel's commanded to annually set aside

¹⁶ Micah 7:19

this Day of Atonement right? But notice how they're to do it and how they ultimately reap the benefits OF God's atonement. It's not by giving money, or saying prayers, or serving in the neighborhood, getting a therapist, leaning into your passions, or removing yourself from "toxic situations." No! It's by, as it says, "*afflicting themselves and doing no work.*" You see that? It's by resting/humbly Sabbathing. The way they received the work of the atonement was NOT by doing something, but by simply resting in what God had already done... You understand, when Jesus Christ died on the cross He said, "*it is finished!*" And by that He meant that there's nothing more you need to do to be free from the guilt of your sin. It's finished. And that's good news, because even though that MOST DEFINITELY wars on our law-loving, fix-it-yourself, have-something-to-bring-to-the-table hearts; as one person said, "*if there's anything we have to bring to the table other than faith, we'll never make it to dinner!*" It's good news. AND YET, you still have to come to dinner/still have respond. It's like the ultimate gift-card. According to CNBC, over \$3 billion worth of gift cards go unused every year.¹⁷ The same is true with the Gospel, but even more so. Sadly, countless people will stand before God guilty and deserving of hell, BUT with they're sins having been paid for. Not cuz they were TOO guilty or TOO bad. But just because they didn't respond/cash-in on the Gospel... They let it go unused!... So let me ask you in closing here: ***Are you living in response to the Gospel today?*** Have you rested from your efforts to save and cleanse yourself and begun resting in Jesus's efforts FOR you? In other words, are you seeing your life not as a treadmill of striving, performing and earning to make yourself better, but as response to the Gospel? Which can I just say: THIS is the reason we ***Gather on Sundays!*** Not because jumping online or attending church in some way atones for us. No! But to remind ourselves that there's no more sacrifices, no more doing needed to be free of our guilt and shame! As Dallas Willard said, "*It's not that Gospel is opposed to effort. It's that it's opposed to earning.*" We gather to remind ourselves that in Christ our sin and guilt has been forgiven and forgotten so that we might be people who forgive and forget with those around us... It's also the reason why we put so much effort into our ***Missional Family Meetings***/really kinda structure the life of our church around em; Because no matter what circle you find yourself in, everyone seems to agree that: 1) there are currently about 250 million people who aren't connected to a church family in the West; 2) that 43,000 people leave the church weekly; 3) that 37% of those who are age 15 to 30 want nothing to do with church; and 4) that upwards of 70% of those outside the church aren't interested in attending a service of any kind. So if not for committing to open, hospitable spaces like Missional Family Meetings in which friends and neighbors can be invited in, how else will they can get a taste of what it looks like to respond and live in to the Gospel... And it's also why we so strongly encourage you to be in a ***DNA Group***; not because that'll make you a "good Christian," but because we really believe that when you have a couple people, who know you, and are committed through prayer and the study of the Scriptures together, to help you respond to the Gospel in every area of your life; that it has the ability to super-charge your spiritual growth more than anything... So Hub, again, I wanna ask you: ***Are you living in response to the Gospel today?*** Cuz it's the only way, you'll find real freedom from your guilt and shame. ***Are you?*** ... Take a moment to consider that, after which we'll move into our breakout rooms.

¹⁷ <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/10/3-billion-of-gift-cards-go-unused-each-year-dont-let-them-go-to-waste.html>

APPLICATION:

At this time we're gonna move into breakout rooms for just a few minutes, so that you have an opportunity to begin discussing that question you just thought about, with others in your Missional Family...If you're not connected to a Missional Family, no worries - we invite ya to remain here and enjoy just a low-key time to connect and ask any other questions you might have...But after a few minutes discussing the question onscreen **NOW**...we'll re-gather back here for a sending blessing...Ok? Ok!...

CELEBRATION:

Welcome back. Hub...I hope that gave you a chance to start a conversation that we really do hope you'll continue during your respective Missional Family Meetings this week. But in the meantime, before I send you out with a blessing, would anybody be willing to come off mute and just BRIEFLY share any Aha's, or ways God working in your life, so that we can celebrate with you? Anyone?

SENDING:

So Church as you are SENT into your week, receive this, our Missional Family Meeting passage and blessing for the week from **1 John 2:1-2**, which says, "*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*" Go in peace, believing that your sin has been forgiven and forgotten AND sharing that good news with everyone you can together! Thanks. **You are Sent!**