

Egypt & Exodus

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon 4: Surviving the Presence of God

Leviticus 16; Hebrews 6, 7, 10

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- March 29, 2020

Well, good morning, Grace. Yes, I'm wearing a white suit. And I'll tell you more about that in just a second. It's good to see you ... umm ... it's good to be seen by you again. Here we are again, gathered but separate. What an exciting time that we live in right now. I don't know if you've read, but even in the *Wall Street Journal* there's an article about people having significant spiritual conversations as a result of this quarantine.

And I know some people were asking if we should change the teaching schedule to reflect the unique circumstances, and I was very open to that as we're going through the Bible together. And then I looked at each week that we're looking at and I thought, *No, we need to stay with this, at least right now, anyway.* We get to read the Bible together. And wasn't Ruth a breath of fresh air? And so, we're all reading together, we're all growing together. And the bigger thing is that the Bible was written for such a time as this. The Bible was written for people to understand to a greater depth who God is what His nature is, so that they can live by faith in such a time as this.

The Bible is not written so that we can survive; it is written so that we can thrive in this life, no matter what this life might be.

And so, today we're going to look at making the very best of the situation. And I think for many of us the quarantine has probably shown already our best attributes and some of our worst failings. In other words, we're coming to terms with maybe who we really are. And obedience --- it's not about doing right, it's about having the right heart. It's about becoming the right person, not just making the right choices.

And how does that happen? How do you become the right person? Well, the Bible says, in contrast to every other book of literature or even counseling you might receive, is you have to have a change of heart. For you to have a change of conduct, you have to change a person, you have to have a change of heart. And only God's grace can do that. Only God's grace can transform us.

And so now, probably those of you who are perfectionists have hit your wall, haven't you? Those of you who sulk – people are growing tired of that sulking. And those of us that surrender to passions, now we're doing that without much of a fight. And this is bringing out parts of us that we thought maybe we could keep under wraps for a while, maybe we could keep hidden. But not in this quarantine. No sir.

Let me show you what's happening graphically on this board here. *[Matt moves to whiteboard.]* When we're going this way, this is going to be time, age, and I don't know where you were when you had a knowledge of Christ, came to a knowledge of Christ – let's say twenty. And then when you're thirty, forty, and Jesus is kind of staying the same there, the same amount of faith, the same amount of understanding about who He is. And the reason that doesn't work -- - people with this kind of experience with Christ where it's the same faith that they had in their twenties, that happens in their thirties and forties --- they'll say things like, *Ah, it's not growing - - It didn't work for me – It's growing boring – It's just not kind of the fun I used to have.*

And here's why. Because as you grow, and I would say this --- boy, it's not the even numbers, it's the fives. It's the fifteen and the twenty-five and the thirty-five and the forty-five and the fifty-five – and let me tell you what happens over life. Life doesn't stay the same. That's the problem. Life doesn't stay the same. And so, Jesus, your faith, can't stay the same. Because when you're twenty or fifteen, that much Jesus is all you need. And then you're going to need more from twenty-five. Life gets harder still at thirty-five. Still harder at forty-five. And then fifty-five. So, you have to have a faith that's growing. You have to have a faith that's growing with the decades.

And this quarantine is bringing that out. How do you grow a faith? Here's how. Very insightful – I saw this a number of years ago. That up here is awareness of God's holiness – an increasing awareness of God's holiness. *[On an age timeline Matt draws a line sloping upwards as age increases.]* And then down here – what's going on down here is an increasing awareness of my sinfulness. *[Matt draws a second line sloping slightly downward underneath the first, so the distance between the two lines increases over time.]*

The gospel is this: We are more sinful than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.

--Tim Keller

So how does Jesus grow over decades? Tim Keller has built a career on almost this single expression of understanding. And he says this: “We are sinful beyond our wildest imagination. And we are accepted into God’s holiness beyond our greatest hopes. “

As life progresses, if we’re not growing in our self-awareness, if we’re not growing in our awareness of the holiness of God, growing in our awareness of our own personal sin, then our faith doesn’t grow. This is something to fear right here, this phrase right here: that God is only as big as you allow Him to be. The power of the Spirit is only as strong as much as you surrender to Him.

So, you’ll see people growing in their faith as they go through the decades because one of these fives rattles them and each time they have an experience of a new awareness of the holiness of God, or a new awareness of their own personal sin, or both.

And that’s what’s happening in some of our experiences in our time during this virus. We’re getting exposed to our awareness of sin. I’ve had two experiences where I read books and the holiness of God was made new to me and I thought, *Wow!* --- three times, actually – but mostly, it’s coming to a fuller awareness of my sinfulness. This gap is growing in faith. This gap is what we’re trying to strengthen here. And what we’re going to look at today is that very thing, grasping the holiness of God.

Leviticus: God Is Holy

God’s formal introduction is found in the Pentateuch. And as we’ve been going through those books, you’ve probably seen that. In the Book of Exodus, it is God’s formal introduction to mankind, to strangers. Then in Leviticus, it is God’s formal introduction to His family, His chosen people. In Leviticus He tells us that He is holy.

Holiness is its goal. Holiness is its character: The LORD is holy; his sanctuary is holy; its vessels are holy; the garments of the priests are holy; the sacrifices are most holy to the LORD; and all who approach him whose name is “Holy” – whether the priests who minister or the people who worship – must themselves be holy. It is as if throughout Israel’s holy place was the earthly echo of that angelic song in the courts above that never ceases to proclaim “holy, holy, holy.”

Here’s a wonderful quote I found about God’s holiness: “Holiness is the very nature and character of God. YHWH is holy; His sanctuary is holy; His vessels are holy; the garments for the priest are holy; the sacrifices are most holy to YHWH; and all who approach Him must use His name as “Holy” – whether it is the priests who minister or the people who worship – they must themselves address Him as holy. It is as though Israel’s holy place on earth is to echo the angelic song that goes, “Holy, holy, holy.”

It’s in the Book of Leviticus that He introduces himself formally to His chosen people as holy. And you can see in Leviticus chapter 10, for example, that people that take that mildly or with superficiality – it costs them. A lesson is to be learned. It doesn’t matter who.

The first family, the royal priesthood of Aaron – Aaron is the great high priest in this part of the story and his two sons are delegated as part of that family line. And they are taking for granted burning some incense. They get a little lighthearted with that. And they are struck dead by the justice of God – the holiness of God kills them. And listen – when Moses hears from God about it and he must address his older brother, he says this to Aaron: “Aaron, you can’t grieve for these boys. They should know better. They are young men who were trained in the art of being a priest to a holy God and they took Him lightly. And so, not a hair out of place, not a teardrop down your cheek. And if you do, you’ll lay there with them. Our camp is moving out now and we’ll leave them behind.”

And all of Israel must have heard of that rumor, thinking, *Oh, my, that’s the royal family. God has no favorites. He has no preferences. Everyone must address Him and approach Him as utterly and perfectly holy.* They must have had the throbbing heart of panic when they were relating to the holiness of God.

Leviticus: How Can God in His Holiness Be Approached?

Leviticus – that tells us of the nature of God. Leviticus is a wonderful book. As a matter of fact, it's the red-letter book of the Old Testament. You know, in some Bibles the teachings of Jesus are in red letter – He said this? If you look at the Book of Leviticus, with the exception of a few words where it says, “And then the Lord spoke to Moses” --- other than that it's a dictation. This is from God to us about what He's like and how to approach Him.

... it is no exaggeration to claim the Book of Leviticus has had more impact on Judaism than any other book of the Old Testament. Traditionally it was the first book taught to Jewish children, and over half the commentary of the Talmud is concerned with understanding its contents.

Here's a wonderful quote on the Book of Leviticus and its power. “It is no exaggeration to claim that the Book of Leviticus has had more impact on Judaism than any other book of the Old Testament. Traditionally it was the first book taught to Jewish children, and over half the commentary in the Talmud is concerned with understanding the contents of Leviticus.”

The point of Leviticus is how can we approach or even, more particularly (which we'll look at today), how can the most-high priest approach the royal throne room of the great King? How do we approach the royal throne room of the great King?

And the theme is God is holy. It says “holy” or “holiness” in Leviticus 119 times. It says to stay away from dirty things or common things another 100 times. It's about the purity of the nature of God. And sin and common things, simple things, are like dust in a clean room, like a germ in an operating room. They're not to be there. And the holiness of God quenches them.

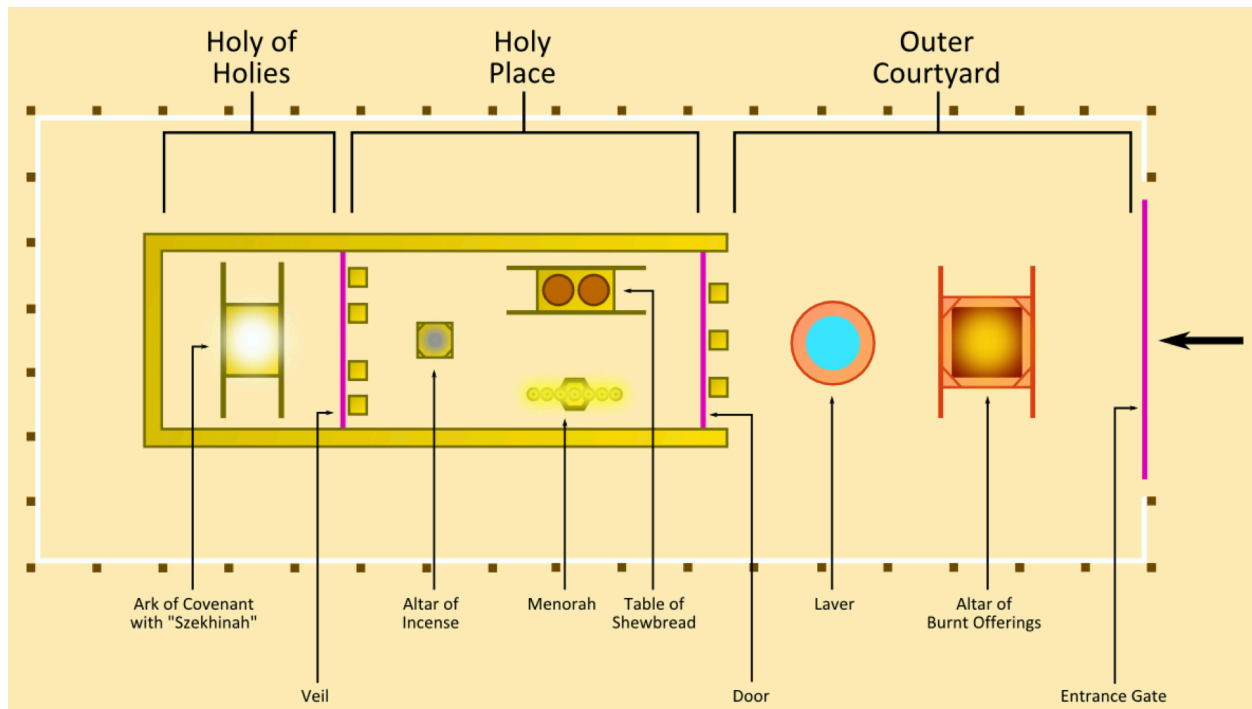
We're going to look today at Leviticus chapter 16 together. And Leviticus chapter 16 is the high point of the book itself. All the chapters leading up to it are pointing to chapter 16, and everything after that are pointing back to chapter 16. And it is a wonderful book. You've probably heard the expression that a picture's worth a thousand words? Leviticus chapter 16 – it's a word that's worth a thousand picture. And the word is “atonement.”

Atonement

Atonement is the paying for the cost of sin. It is the covering of sin. It is the expulsion of sin. And that's what we're going to learn about today. Because Leviticus chapter 16 tells us how to do the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement is the most sacred holiday in all of the Jewish calendar. It is the time when the high priest comes and he cleans the tabernacle and cleanses it from the stench of sin, and then gets rid of sin itself. That's the ritual.

And today, because I'm in this outfit here, it is to represent me being that great high priest. And I'll try to show you what Leviticus chapter 16 looks like. Feel free to read that for part of your homework when you can do that sometime this week. But watch and enjoy. I'm going to show you how this goes.

Tabernacle Overview



Let me first give you an overview of the tabernacle itself, which will later become a temple. Everything outside our worship center would be the outside world. And then the tabernacle would be a tent-walled area. And the quote "Outer Court" would be, for our sake,

down here *[Matt walks down the stairs from the stage and indicates the seating area]*, down here on the floor where you guys usually sit. And on the Outer Court there would be a big altar for sacrifices and a basin right here filled with water for the priests to wash their hands with.

Now normally, on any other day, this would be filled with priests and with people who have sacrifices to offer to God on their behalf. Not this day. It's all cleared out -- only the high priest and one helper.

As you go in there's a tented area, a giant tented area, and that's called the holy place. *[Matt walks back up the stairs to the stage.]* And in the holy place – that will our stage for this morning's time together – and in the holy place we're going to look at some various things, but there will be a little altar of incense, a table for showbread, and a menorah. And then, right here at the back *[Matt indicates the back area of the stage]* would be a curtain, a veil. And behind that veil it's called the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. It's a four-inch thick curtain. It blacks out everything. The word in Hebrew for this veil means “to shut off.” We are shut off from the presence of God because in that Holy of Holies is the Ark of the Covenant.



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And in the Ark of the Covenant there are three things inside. There is a jar of manna which shows God's provision for Israel during their time in the wilderness. There is the walking

staff of Aaron who was in charge and represented leadership that God provided for their protection. And lastly there are the ten laws, the ten rules, the ten words, the Ten Commandments, the tablets that Moses made and that God wrote on. God's handwriting is on those tablets. And on top of that box, that ark of the covenant, is what's called the holy seat. And that holy seat has two cherubim, or what we would say is angels. And they're looking down at those three items in there, God's provision, God's protection, and God's laws. And those angels look down and see how desperately mankind fails. We do not submit to authority that God put over us. We bicker and moan and whine about His provisions for us. And we do not take His commandments seriously. And so, it represents the greatness of God and the frailty of man.

That's kind of the regions there, to make sure that we understand.

The Preparation of the High Priest

Cleansing of the Priest and His Family: 16:4-14

And then on this one day what's going to take place, this Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the high priest will come in and he'll clean this place for the year. And the way he's going to do this is he's going to bring in five animals. He's going to bring in one bull, two goats, and two rams. It starts like this. He prepares himself for a week. He stays up the night before praying. And then on that day he has this royal garment on because he is the great high priest and he talks to mankind about God. And because of that, his garment looks very ornate, and it would take your breath away if you would see that.

But on this day, he's not talking to man about God. He's talking to God about man. He's going into the presence of God and he won't have this jacket on. So, he'll take off his priestly robe [*Matt takes off his white blazer and places it on the back of a chair*] and he will go to God as a common man. From dust he came and from dust he shall return. And he'll put it down. He'll bathe himself and then he'll put himself in a linen shirt. This is a linen shirt. He'll have linen pants on and a linen belt and a linen hat. He's preparing himself for this event.

And what he'll do is he'll come down here with these five animals and the first thing he'll do is he'll take the life of that bull. He'll cut its throat and he will take a bowl full of this

bull's blood back now so that he might enter into the Holy of Holies. He'll take it up here, he'll go around the curtain. But before he enters -- he can't look upon His holiness -- so he takes a bit of the incense on this incense altar that's right there in the Holy Place -- not in the Holy of Holies, but in the Holy Place. He'll take some of that incense and he'll put it behind the curtain and fill the room with smoke so that if he were to gaze at the ark he wouldn't see it clearly. He'd have to see it behind the veil or cloud of this incense.

And when that room was filled with enough incense he could take that bowl of blood and he would go back there to the Holy Place, to the Holy of Holies, and on the Ark he would sprinkle seven times, on the mercy seat, on the seat of mercy, seven times, as to cleanse his own life and the family of the high priest. He had to make himself clean before he could clean up anything else.

Cleansing of the Tabernacle 16:15-19

Then after that takes place he puts the bowl down and goes back down. And he takes the two goats and they cast a lot. And there's one goat that will be used later and the one that's called the Lord's goat. And the Lord's goat is sacrificed. He fills another bowl with blood and he comes up again. And now he's going to take an atoning sacrifice for the people. This is for the people. And he'll go back again for the third time -- this is the last time he'll go -- the only time in all the year that he gets to go to the Most Holy Place -- and he goes in and sprinkles that seven times on the holy of holies, on the Ark of the Covenant, trying to cover over those sins with blood.

Then as he comes into this place, the Holy Place, he's going to start cleansing the various pieces of utility here and cleaning that Holy Place up. Then he'll take the blood of the bull and the blood of this goat and mix those together and he'll come down to the Courtyard and cleanse the basin there and cleanse seven times the altar that's used for sacrifices. He's cleansed everything now.

And the idea here is this: that sin has a stench to it. It has a smell. Transgressions, rebellion, inactivity, doing the wrong things are not doing the right things -- and this is a putrid smell. But now it is the smell of atonement, of payment.

The Sin Itself Is Dealt with: 16:20-22

Now we need to deal with sin itself. So, he takes that other goat and he puts his hands on that goat. And this is what's called the scapegoat. And the scapegoat is only used in this section of Scripture in all of the Bible. And it's interesting – the word itself means to be cast out completely. It means to be sent away – complete destruction, entire removal. And the high priest would put his hands on that scapegoat and confess the sins of the nation upon its head. And then, as tradition unfolds, they would get a red cloth and tie it around the horns and mark that goat. And then they would hand that goat off to some other man and he would take it outside the Outer Courtyard and they would take that goat as far away as possible. They would send it as far as possible from the people of Israel. In other words, the sin is leaving them.

And then as traditions progressed, they didn't want the goat to show up again and they would throw the goat off a cliff. They would destroy the goat. They took him out of the presence of Israel.

That's one of the reasons that people will say that Jesus was taken outside of Jerusalem when He was sacrificed. He was the scapegoat. He was taken outside to be dealt with so that He would represent sin that way.

Burnt Offerings: 16:23-28

Now the tabernacle is clean. The sin is gone. Now the great high priest can enjoy worship again. So, things are better. He goes back, he bathes, he puts on his royal garment [*Matt puts on the white suit jacket*], he will speak to the people for God now. He will offer sacrifices for them. And he'll take those two rams and he will sacrifice the one and put it on the sacrificial altar there. And that's for him and his family. And then he'll take the other ram and slit its throat and sacrifice that ram and put it up on the altar as well. And it will be burned up as a fragrant aroma to God and His holiness.

Cleaning Up: 16:26-28

And when that takes place, all things are good. And it is at this point that everything needs to be cleaned up and prepared for another year when we can offer sacrifices to the Lord to appease the wrath of His justice and His holiness. And so, the priestly garb that I was wearing

before when I was doing the day of atonement, it's stacked up over here and it's dealt with. The person who took the scapegoat out to the netherworld has to come back and outside of the city there's a cleansing period taking place where all the material that was being used is taken out there. And so, my material is taken out there, the carcasses for the bull and the single goat and the two rams are taken outside of the city. And all of the remains of those carcasses and some of the clothes that were used and involved in this are burned outside the city. Everything is extinguished. It's gone. It's clean now. We're ready for another year.

Leviticus Points Towards the Future

When you look at this story you think, *Is it overkill?* I mean, that's kind of a pun, right? Is it overkill?

If you look at this chart, the point of Leviticus and the point of the Day of Atonement is the point of this chart. It's awareness of the holiness of God makes us aware of our own sin. And as we progress in our life with Christ we start realizing, *Wait a minute. This Day of Atonement is making more and more sense to me.* Because as Tim Keller says, "We are far more sinful than we ever dared to imagine, and yet God loves us and accepts us in His holiness more than we could ever hope for – dare to even hope for."

The point of Leviticus – and I think people read Leviticus wrong -- because it's not hard to read Leviticus and say, *Look at all I have to do for God.* But the point of Leviticus is a future tense saying that this is all that God's going to have to do for you.

The festivals – this is one of the festivals of Israel – this is the highest festival. But "festival" in Hebrew also means "rehearsal." And the point of all of this is to give us hope of future things – no, no, even better, a clue for what to look for later.

Hebrews 10:1

The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves.

Look what it says in Hebrews chapter 10 about these things, Hebrew 10, verse 1: "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming – not the realities themselves."

With Jesus as High Priest, Three Things Are Different

And so, Leviticus is a word with a thousand pictures. This event was to lead us up to understanding of what Jesus was going to represent. He was the great high priest. Except he's a different kind of high priest. He's not from the lineage of Aaron. He's from a whole different lineage. He's from a lineage that has no sin.

Jesus Has No Sin – No Bull Needed

Hebrews 7:26-27

**Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.
²⁷ Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered himself.**

And so, if you remember the way this ritual started was that Aaron had to pay for his sins and the sins of his family with that bull. There is no bull to be sacrificed with Jesus being our high priest. Look what it says in Hebrews chapter 7: “Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, He does not need to offer sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered himself.”

Jesus offered himself as that sacrifice. He was perfect and blameless. He came from a different tribe. That's why He could be the great high priest that didn't need that first bull to be sacrificed.

The Veil

Three things that are different when Jesus comes as the great high priest. One, He doesn't have to provide a sacrifice. Two, the veil, this veil that separated us from the Holy of Holies – four inches thick – when Jesus died on the cross it was torn. Not from the bottom up like two men tearing it, hoping to have access to God, but from the top down it tore. God said – this curtain that means shut out from the presence of God is now opened up. Now it's opened up.

Jesus Sits Down

Hebrews 10:11-12

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.

And then finally, after this has all been done, it says this. It says that Jesus sat down. [*Matt sits down on the chair on stage.*] Look what it says in chapter 10, verses 11 and 12: “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never really take away sins.” It just pays the interest – it doesn’t pay the principle. But when Jesus comes, things are different. “But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.” So, when Jesus served as the high priest, He did something that had never been done before. He sat down. And why? Why did He sit? Because this sacrifice was sufficient to quench the wrath of the holiness of God. And that’s why Jesus said, “It is finished.” We’re done with this. The metaphor, the analogy, the hope, the clue, was always pointing to Jesus. And Jesus satisfied that need for holiness. It was quenched. It was done. It was finished.

God himself, gave himself, to save us from himself.

- John Stott

John Stott said this: “God himself, gave himself, to save us from himself.” That’s the Day of Atonement as it’s realized in Jesus Christ.

We Can Hope Well and Be Confident

That changes the way we live in this circumstance, in this context. And here’s why: because it gives us a different kind of hope. We have a hope that’s not a shaky hope, not a hope upon hope, but this bold and courageous, stalwart hope.

Aristotle said, “Hope is a living dream.” This is a waking dream. Look how the writer of Hebrews said, *This is how to hope right. This is how to have a strong hope.*

Hebrews 6:19-20

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,²⁰ where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

In chapter 6 it says, “We have this hope as an anchor for our soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain” – into the holy of holies – “where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” – in the storyline of Melchizedek.

We have this confident hope. Before we read this next section in Hebrews, I want you to be looking for the confident boldness in the faith that we have. Sure, we’re progressively learning more about our own personal sin, and in that, His holiness. But in this progressively building gap we’re finding that we have more to be grateful for and to be confident of.

Hebrews 10:19-22

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Here’s the confidence here, chapter 10, verses 19-22: “Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence in entering the Most Holy Place” – the Holy of Holies – to meet with God – we can go there because of “the blood of Jesus, and by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain.” He tore the curtain open. And the curtain was His body that was torn apart. “And since we have this great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart with the assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed pure.”

The smell of sin is gone. The stench of sin has forever left.

This is kind of strange relationship I had with one a friend of mine. He's a big, hulking guy who fought in mixed martial arts for years. And whenever he would see me, he would grab me and hug me and pull me up off the ground. And he would smell me and he'd say, "Matt, you smell awesome." Now he did that because he could do that. And he could do whatever he wanted. But whenever he would put me down, I would say, "You know what? I didn't know that, but I smell awesome."

When angels pass us by, they smell a putrid death. And then the blood of the high priest covers us. And what it says here is now we are grabbed and held up and we smell like life. We smell like the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And we have faith, we have confidence, in that. Because He took care of all that.

So, we should hope right – not just that we're clean and that we smell like the righteousness of God, but also that sin is gone and all of its shame. The point of Jesus being the scapegoat here is that He's been taken out of the city walls. He's been killed. He's been buried. He's gone. So, stop looking for it. Stop looking for the shame in your life. Stop living your life around what happened yesterday or five years ago or ten years ago. If you've taken responsibility for those things, if you've done as much as you possibly can to make things right to the right type of people, at the right time for them – what are you doing? Are you looking in the wilderness for some scapegoat, looking for a goat with a little red ribbon around its horns with your name on it? The Bible says that Jesus in His atonement has separated our sins from us like east is from the west. It's a metaphor. These two directions never touch. They go on and on forever.

Let me put it another way. Your guilt, your shame, that goat is gone. The goat has left the building. It's lost. Leave it lost. Leave it alone. That's what the Day of Atonement is teaching us. And now when we live this way, as we progress in our awareness of God's holiness, as we become more aware of our own sin, how do we then live? We live gratefully. The Christian life is not duty-driven; it's grace- and gratitude-driven. Not gratitude like the emotion of gratitude. That wears out. It's the overflowing understanding that God's grace transforms us. We're not doing the right things; we're becoming the right people because of our awareness of His holiness, because of our awareness of our sin. And because of those two types of awareness, we're realizing that God's grace is bigger and better than we thought. And that gives it power,

more power than it had when we were twenty-five, to transform our hearts. It's changing our souls. We're not just doing the right thing, we're becoming the right people.

And so that shows up in all kinds of expressions. I can think of two that come to mind. One might be generosity. We become generous with our lives in every aspect of our lives, we want to be givers. We received in overflowing ways and so we want to give in overflowing ways.

The other way that comes to mind readily is confession of sin. Why wouldn't we, as we progress, as we work our way down the chart, find ourselves confessing our sins more and more and more. Not less and less because we're becoming better people – no – because we're becoming more aware of our sin and we're becoming more aware of the gap that God has filled for us with the atoning sacrifice. So, there's no shame in it. There's no embarrassment. There's no loss of status. We have status as the children of God. And so, the mark of a growing Christian that's growing in their faith and the power of the Spirit working in their lives is it's becoming easier to confess sin. The smaller sins are becoming more apparent in their life, and in those realizations, in that awareness, we can't wait to keep short lists with the people that we know and love and with perfect strangers on the street. That's what it looks like to grow in our life with Christ.

That's what the Book of Leviticus has been trying to teach us. And here's my prayer – that we would live that way in this context. For such a time as this, Grace Covenant. I mean, survive? We thrive. We thrive here. We come to a new understanding of the abundance of the forgiveness that God gave us in Jesus Christ as the atoning sacrifice. And so, we wake up tomorrow morning with a new appreciation of our sin, and many other people probably do, too. But we also have a new awareness of the beauty of Jesus Christ and His obedience to the Father so that we could have the Spirit to empower us to live a righteous life.

Let's pray to that end.

Lord, when I look at this Book of Leviticus, I am overwhelmed with the perfectionism that is required to have an audience with You. And it is past laborious. It is beyond comprehension and it's impossible. And in the context of that impossibility You send Your Son Jesus, and He submits to Your will, and He lives a perfect life. He becomes a high priest that doesn't need a sacrifice. And He takes our place.

Lord, I'd ask that You would help us appreciate anew again that truth. And there are people right now listening that have never understood this. Lord, I'd ask that they would receive this great high priest, this scapegoat, this Lord's goat, as an offering of payment for sin and shame in their lives. And that they would receive You entirely based on what Jesus did for them.

Lord, I'd ask that You would progressively tell us and reveal to us, that Your Spirit would reveal to us, Your holiness and our sinfulness, so that we might enjoy the life change that comes when we appreciate the fullness of Your grace. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.