

The Life is in the Blood  
Leviticus 17  
Leviticus Series #13  
September 5, 2022

### PreSermon Remarks

- Next Sunday (9/11) on sexuality, can you help serve in kids min?
- Today, final section of Leviticus: the “holiness code”

### Prayer

### Introduction | The Seriousness of Blood

- We sure do talk about blood a lot in church | Not common in other spheres of life
  - When blood enters the chat, it’s usually because something is wrong
    - Church softball game, Hadley’s injury

**Dr. Paul Brand** Although modern worshippers may feel uncomfortable with the fact, the Christian faith is inescapably blood-based. Old Testament writers spell out the details of blood sacrifices, and their New Testament counterparts overlay those rituals with theological interpretations. And daily, weekly, monthly (or whenever, depending on denomination), we are called upon to commemorate Christ’s death with a ceremony centered in his blood. I admit at the outset that I sometimes find the associations of the blood symbol distasteful...[But] I wonder: Has something been lost over the centuries, something foundational? ...Medically, blood signifies life and not death. Blood feeds and sustains every cell in the body with its precious nutrients. When it seeps away, life falters. Has our modern use of the symbol, [primarily focused] on death, strayed so far from the original meaning?

(big idea) Blood is important, because blood is life

### False Sacrifice

**Leviticus 17** <sup>1</sup>The Lord spoke to Moses: <sup>2</sup>“Speak to Aaron, his sons, and all the Israelites and tell them: This is what the Lord has commanded: <sup>3</sup>Anyone from the house of Israel who slaughters an ox, sheep, or goat in the camp, or slaughters it outside the camp, <sup>4</sup>instead of bringing it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to present it as an offering to the Lord before his tabernacle—that person will be considered guilty. He has shed blood and is to be cut off from his people.

• This is not just about hunting, or preparing a nice meal for the family, it’s about worship <sup>5</sup>This is so the Israelites will bring to the Lord the sacrifices they have been offering in the open country. They are to bring them to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting and offer them as fellowship sacrifices to the Lord. <sup>6</sup>The priest will then splatter the blood on the Lord’s altar at the entrance to the tent of meeting and burn the fat as a pleasing aroma to the Lord. <sup>7</sup>They must no longer offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons that they have prostituted themselves with. This will be a permanent statute for them throughout their generations. <sup>8</sup>“Say to them: Anyone

from the house of Israel or from the aliens who reside among them who offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice<sup>9</sup> but does not bring it to the entrance to the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to the Lord, that person is to be cut off from his people.

- Here, the fuller picture has emerged. People were sacrificing to false gods, “goat demons”
  - God is saying, “don’t misuse life like that,” “don’t offer lifeblood to some spiritual being who is not the author and source of life”

### **Powerful Lifeblood**

<sup>10</sup>“Anyone from the house of Israel or from the aliens who reside among them who eats any blood, I will turn against that person who eats blood and cut him off from his people. <sup>11</sup>For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have appointed it to you to make atonement on the altar for your lives, since it is the lifeblood that makes atonement. <sup>12</sup>Therefore I say to the Israelites: None of you and no alien who resides among you may eat blood.

- Parallel to Genesis 9, after the flood, God gave this command to Noah before the Torah
- Parallel to Acts 15, after Jesus, Gentiles are held to this commandment
  - No eating or drinking blood (Note: not about a medium rare steak) **more in a minute**

### **Hunting**

<sup>13</sup> Any Israelite or alien residing among them, who hunts down a wild animal or bird that may be eaten must drain its blood and cover it with dirt. <sup>14</sup> Since the life of every creature is its blood, I have told the Israelites: You are not to eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it must be cut off.

- Treat the animals that you eat humanely, respect the blood

### **Roadkill**

<sup>15</sup> “Every person, whether the native or the resident alien, who eats an animal that died a natural death or was mauled by wild beasts is to wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will remain unclean until evening; then he will be clean. <sup>16</sup> But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, he will bear his iniquity.

### **No Drinking Blood**

Question: who is going around drinking blood?

Logic: I want more life, so I’m going to drink the life of this creature. But God says, “no”

- Substitution | *instead of demanding your life, God allows a substitute*
- Atonement | *repayment, cleansing, everything can be made right*
- Life from God | *don’t ingest blood trying to get more life, it doesn’t belong to you. Come to God*

(big idea) Blood is important, because blood is life

- Shifting gears: what do we mean by life?

### **Life at Three Levels**

- Spiritual | Existence, nature, breath, blood

- Practical | Provision, shelter, clothing, food
- Personal | Relationships, emotions, meaning

- I would argue (1) that all three layers are present in Lev. 17

1. Spiritual - tabernacle worship, not sacrificing to goat-demons
2. Practical - I'm hunting for food, or found some roadkill
3. Personal - native vs. foreign, how to be a specially chosen holy people, "cut off..."

- I would also argue (2) that these ancient Israelites did a better job of connecting all three

- If somebody asks, "tell me about your life?" we are most likely to go layers 2 and 3
- In the remaining time today, I want to help us reintegrate all three layers

### Jesus and Practical Life

**Matthew 6** <sup>25</sup> "Therefore I tell you: Don't worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food and the body more than clothing? ...

- *You're focused on layer 2, but isn't there more than just your job, your food, clothing?*
- Jesus goes on to talk about how God knows what we need, he faithfully provides

<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you.

- Not a difficult passage to understand, just a super difficult passage to live out
- Connected to Lev. 17: *don't just grasp all the lifeblood you can, trust it to God*

### James and Practical Life

**James 4** <sup>13</sup> Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— <sup>14</sup> yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

- Don't be so certain, driving about your business matters. "If the Lord wills"

### Jesus and Personal Life

**Mark 8** <sup>37</sup> The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup> And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup> Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it.

- Some people will say "my whole life is my family" | Of course, no violating 4th command
  - But family cannot be "your life" | "Lose your life"

### Paul and Personal Life

**Galatians 1** <sup>13</sup> For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. <sup>15</sup> But when God,

who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me...

- Parallel to Phil. 3, "my whole life was study, being smart, making my ancestors proud"
- That personal sense of identity and meaning got completely reoriented when I met Jesus

### Jesus' Shocking Metaphor

**John 6** <sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. <sup>54</sup> The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, <sup>55</sup> because my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. <sup>56</sup> The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

- Is Jesus contradicting Lev. 17? No. But he is showing us what it was pointing to: him
  - Don't drink the blood of a lamb, drink the blood of *the* Lamb

**Dr. Paul Brand** That same evening Jesus used another metaphor... "I am the vine; you are the branches," he declared. "If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, echoing the wording of John 6:56). Surrounded by the vineyard-covered hillsides that ringed Jerusalem, the disciples could more easily comprehend this metaphor. A grape branch disconnected from the nutrients of the vine becomes withered, dry, dead, useless for anything except kindling. Only when connected to the vine can the branch bear fruit. Even in the doom-shrouded atmosphere of that last night, at the meal from which the sacrament derives, the image of life wells up. For the disciples, the wine would symbolize Jesus' blood, which could vitalize them much as the sap does the grapevine.

- **Gospel - Jesus' blood shed, Jesus resurrection life on display**

(big idea) Jesus is important, because Jesus is life

*When you leave here, what will your life consist of? What will give you meaning? What will you focus on?*

### Abiding in Christ's Life

1. Prioritize the spiritual | so easy to dive into emails, dinner prep, house projects
2. Practice gratitude in the practical | praying for meals? Bills, gas tank, clothing,
3. Prayerfully submit the personal | You are not your own, your life is hid with Christ