

# PLENTY OF SIN TO GO AROUND

LEVITICUS 5:1-13

GOD GIVES US SPECIFIC WAYS TO DEAL WITH SIN

## I. OCCASIONS FOR SIN (VS 1-4)

***Even A Casual Self-Examination Should Reveal How Sinful We Really Are.***

- A. Lack of Concern for Community (1)
- B. Lack of Concern for God (2-3)
- C. Lack of Self-Control (4)

## II. OCCASIONS FOR REPENTANCE (VS 5-6)

***Repentance Means To Agree With God's Definition Of Sin And His Method To Deal With It.***

- A. Understanding Guilt (5a)
- B. Confession (5b)
- C. Accepting the Consequences (6a)
- D. Making Things Right (6b)

## III. OCCASIONS FOR ALL PEOPLE (VS 7-13)

***Obedience Is A Sure Sign Of True Repentance.***

- A. For the Working Poor (7-10)
- B. For the Poor (11-13)
- C. For Us

# Plenty of Sin to Go Around

## Leviticus 5:1-13

Last time we were together, we talked about how devastating sin is to individuals, to family and friends, and to the church community. There is no such thing as personal sin. Sin affects everybody around us. We concluded last week by saying that we need to take sin more seriously.

In today's text we will see that everybody sins. And further, ignorance is no excuse. We incur guilt whether we are aware of our sin or not. The important thing is that we remain humble, take responsibility for our sin, and follow the steps God requires of us to rectify the problem.

For those of us who have been raised in the modern day culture, we find excuses for all our failures. It's always somebody else's fault. We have a bunch of friends who like to get together and talk about contemporary culture. One guy told me this story about his wife. He said, "My wife was driving through a school zone when a policeman pulled her over for speeding. As the policeman was writing her the ticket, she looked at me and said, 'If I was a pretty young thing, I would have gotten off with a warning.' Then she turned to the policeman and said, 'How come I always get a ticket, and all the young women get warnings? It's my face, isn't it?' 'No ma'am,' the police officer responded, 'It's your foot.'"

I don't know how we got to this point in our culture, but it seems as if when we get caught doing something, or when we fail at something, we always want to shift the blame to someone or something else.

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It is not very common anymore to acknowledge our own responsibility for our failures. The sad thing is that this idea has found its way into the church. We always find excuses for our sin. We want to blame all our sin and failure on others. And further, we really don't ever want to acknowledge the damage our sin and failures cause others. That is sad, because the Bible teaches that there is only one way to deal with sin. And that is the main idea of this morning's text. **GOD GIVES US SPECIFIC WAYS TO DEAL WITH SIN.** If we want to call ourselves Christians, that means that we are willing to submit to the will of God. God lays out specific things He expects of us. When we break our faith with Him by sinning, He lays out steps in which we can get right with Him. We cannot make up our own rules.

## I. OCCASIONS FOR SIN (VS 1-4)

### *Even A Casual Self-Examination Should Reveal How Sinful We Really Are.*

In verses 1-4 we see that there are plenty of occasions for sin in our lives. The Bible clearly states that we are all sinners. We have all fallen short of God's standards and expectations. The point of this section is clear. **EVEN A CASUAL SELF-EXAMINATION SHOULD REVEAL HOW SINFUL WE REALLY ARE.** Last time we were together, we talked about a type of sin that was classified as unintentional. There is a lot of debate as to whether this section now describes unintentional sin, or if this is another category. In Leviticus 4, I said that it seems to me that the Bible describes only two types of sin: intentional and unintentional. Further we said that intentional was described in the bible as sinning with a high hand. In other words, people who did not care for God at all. They would say, "God says this but I don't care. I will do what I want." I think that most of us sin unintentionally. By that I don't mean that we don't

make a conscious decision to sin. What I mean is that we let other things confuse our thinking. We sin, but our intent is not to deliberately rebel against and disobey God. However, saying that, there is two points about this. First of all, if you look at verses 2, 3, & 4, you will notice that ignorance is no legitimate excuse for sin. Whether we are aware of our sin or not, we are still guilty according to God's system of justice. So sin, whether we are aware of it or not and whether it is done with some sort of intentionality or not, still makes us guilty in the eyes of God and requires atonement.

### **A. Lack of Concern for Community (1)**

The first type of sin described in verse one is the lack of concern for community. During this past year, there has been a lot of public discussion about the kind of morality rap music teaches. In addition to degrading women and promoting violence as a way of life, rappers have been publicly saying that they would not call the police even if they were witnessing a crime. What that means is that if you or I were being beaten and robbed, in the type of society they are proposing, no one would call the police on our behalf.

Here again, the bible points out how narcissistic our society has become. Here in verse one, people were responsible to ensure that justice had a chance to prevail. In other words, if an individual had information that could convict or exonerate someone, they were responsible to bring forward the information.

In verse one, the person may have been afraid to come forward or didn't want to come forward because the information he had may convict a friend. The purity of the community depended on each person's intentional contribution. The concern here is that everyone in the community be treated fairly.

Our society has certainly perverted justice. There is no doubt about that. However, as believers, we must always work for justice when we can. Keep this in mind. Since sinful behavior affects us all, we must be diligent in confronting one another and looking out for the less fortunate. As Christians, we are not individuals whose actions only affect us. We belong to the community known as the Body of Christ. Our actions affect others. The goal is to keep the community pure, just, and fair.

### **B. Lack of Concern for God (2-3)**

Secondly, verses 2-3 describe sins that show a lack of concern for God. We will see later that Jews were not supposed to touch dead animals, or certain types of animals that were declared by God to be unclean. We will also see that humans can become religiously unclean in several ways also. If someone were to become unclean by touching an unclean animal or an unclean person, he would be prohibited from participating in the worship service until he was restored.

One of the biggest problems the modern church faces is the infiltration of society's values into the church. In other words, many people come to church, claim to be Christians, but then live by what the society says is right and wrong. Let me give you one of the most common examples of this.

The Bible clearly tells believers neither to date nor to marry unbelievers. However, one of the most romantic themes of our society is when young lovers cast aside their religious beliefs, fall in love, and get married. That is a pretty powerful social message. The world says that human love can even triumph over religion. Listen, the Bible is clear that believers should not date nor marry unbelievers. And yet, many Christians accept society's values, date and marry non-Christians regularly. These things almost always have disastrous results. Society is very clever. It paints this in same broad stroke as prejudices.

For example, Christians would say it would be wrong to discriminate against interracial marriages. It would be wrong for parents to forbid their children from marrying people from different countries. And then society puts faith in this category as well. Society says that we

should encourage and support interfaith marriages. Satan, the world, and our own lust are very clever at fooling us.

Here is the point. We must constantly ask ourselves who we love more. Do we love the world and our own desires more than we love God? We could prevent ourselves from a multitude of sin if we were concerned primarily with loving God first in our lives.

### **C. Lack of Self-Control (4)**

But as verse 4 points out, we are often led into sin because of a lack of self-control. Verse 4 kind of describes someone who was perhaps drinking a little too much and started making promises to God, or making all sorts of statements that were bound to contain some false statements. Again, for our society, self-control is not something that is taught or encouraged. We are taught from a very young age to go for what we want.

Television teaches us that we are entitled to please ourselves. And that is why we live in such a sexually immoral country. We live in a country with people seeking pleasure without concern for people they are hurting. We really do live in a self-centered, out of control society. People easily lie, cheat, and use other people. There is no concern for the good of the community. The sad thing is that attitude has found its way into the church as well.

It seems to me that we as believers should be living radically different from non-Christians. We should be almost freaks to our non-Christian friends. For the Hebrews, it was abstaining from unclean foods. They kept Kosher. For us, the issues in our time should be sexual purity, holy living, the concern for justice for the less fortunate, and commitment to the church community.

The Bible is our guide for life; not our friends, not the television, not the movies, not radio, not newspapers, not magazines. Since we live in such a perverted world and in such a perverted society, we ought to spend a lot of time in bible reading, prayer, and reflection. **EVEN A CASUAL SELF-EXAMINATION SHOULD REVEAL HOW SINFUL WE REALLY ARE.** All of us struggle against sin. Some struggle with addictions. Some struggle with sexual purity. Some struggle with anger, hate, and bad attitudes. Whatever sin we find ourselves up against, we must remember that sin separates us from God and it separates our family, friends, and our church from God.

## **II. OCCASIONS FOR REPENTANCE (VS 5-6)**

### ***Repentance Means to Agree with God's Definition of Sin and His Method to Deal with it.***

That's why verses 5-6 are so important in providing us with occasions for repentance. As we have pointed out several times over the years, repentance does not simply mean saying I'm sorry. **REPENTANCE MEANS TO AGREE WITH GOD'S DEFINITION OF SIN AND HIS METHOD TO DEAL WITH IT.** I love the biblical words for repentance. In Hebrew *repentance* means to turn around, to change direction. In Greek, *repentance* means to change one's mind. It's almost as if when we sin, we get off the track. We start heading down a dead end road. If we want to repent, we must turn completely around and head back for the right road. We must change our physical, spiritual, and emotional direction. We must change our minds, our hearts, and our souls.

### **A. Understanding Guilt (5a)**

The first half of verse 5 explains that understanding guilt is the first part of repentance. The word for guilty here is *asham*. The root word has to do with incurring liability. In other words, the semantic range of this word has to do with sinning, the damage it does, and then finding a

way to make restitution. Later on in the book of Leviticus, we will see how people are to make restitution. But true repentance starts by understanding that when we sin, we hurt and offend God. And further, our sin has consequences that affect others.

If we are truly repentant we will desire to understand the full damage our sin has caused. Unless we are willing to sit down and fully absorb and understand how much our sin has hurt and offended God, and how much damage we have caused to others and the church, we cannot repent. I have counseled married couples where the husband would say, "I'm sorry," but had no clue as to what he had really done wrong. There can be no healing or forgiveness in this case. We modern day Christians are ready to say I'm sorry when we are caught in a sin or even when we are convicted of a sin. However, we almost never take time to reflect on how horrible our sin is. Until we take time to acknowledge what we have done, who we have hurt, and the damage we have caused, there can be no repentance. All we can offer is a very pathetic, "I'm sorry."

## **B. Confession (5b)**

In the second half of verse 5, we can see that this reflection and acknowledgement of the full extent of our sin, naturally leads to confession. In Hebrew confess means to make known. In other words, confession is the verbal and public statement that we have sinned against God and harmed others. In fact, in this sacrificial system, when the worshiper walked her lamb, cow, or goat to the temple, presented the animal, and laid her hands on it, she was publicly confessing her sin. Further, she would have to tell the priest what her sin was in order to offer up the proper type of sacrifice. I know that we are not a Roman Catholic Church so we don't confess to a priest. However, in the New Testament book of James, James instructs us to confess our sins one to another. Christians ought to be open, humble and transparent. Especially if we have wronged someone, we should be willing to make that known to them that we are truly sorry and willing to make restitution.

In the Greek, the word for confess is *homologein*. This is a fascinating word. We are all familiar that *logos* means "word". To the Greeks, *logos* had a wide range of meaning. It meant the word, reason, instruction, or even a guiding principle. In the Gospel of John, the Apostle John uses the *logos* to refer to Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus is the word of God made flesh. Jesus is the rational explanation of God's truth to human beings. Through both word and deed, Jesus made it perfectly clear what God expects from us.

Now let's examine the first part of the word. It is *homo*. It means to be the *same*. Therefore the word *homologein* that we translate confession literally means to say the same thing. In other words, true confession means to say the same as Jesus. We often sugar coat our sin. We call them mistakes or indiscretions. Jesus says that those thoughts, words, and actions are what caused Him to be crucified on the cross. Therefore, when we come to understand the consequences of our sin and all the damage our sin has caused, confession means that we acknowledge that before God and all relevant others publicly and verbally.

As I said last week, in the past we have not made leaders who have been sexually immoral or unethical publicly confess their sins. However, in the future, that will not be the case. They have caused a great deal of damage to the church. That acknowledgement should be made public. Confession, as far as possible should be made to all people the sinner has damaged.

## **C. Accepting the Consequences (6a)**

The next step is accepting the consequences as described in the first half of verse 6. True repentance manifests itself in action. For the Hebrew community, that meant bringing a sacrifice. Later we will see that it also requires restitution. The sacrifice here is taken from the root word for sin. The sinner, once they have understood their guilt, and once they had acknowledged that through confession, now had to bring a female lamb or goat. Like the other sacrifices we have described, the worshiper would have to lay his hands on the sacrificial

animal, signifying the transfer of guilt to the animal, and then slit the animal's throat. The sinner should realize that this horrible death and the spilling out of blood should have been his.

Let me suggest this one more time. Take some time in prayer and meditation thinking about how many times you have sinned against God. Think about how much you have hurt other people, and think about the damage and consequences of your sin. Then take some time to pop in the DVD "The Passion of the Christ." And tell yourself, "This has happened because of what I have done." I know that when I confess my sin, I forget what it cost God for me to be able to say that. I try to take the Lenten period to remember that, but I forget it more times than I remember.

I think it would be appropriate to respond to a misconception that I have heard circulating over and over in this church for years. Every time I talk about the consequences of our sin and the damage it does, people are very ready to point out to me the life of David. The common notion put to me is that David was a man after God's own heart. Even though he committed adultery and murder, God forgave him and allowed David to move on with his life. That is simply not true. Please go back and read your Bibles because I'm not sure that you are reading the same Bible that I am.

After this incident, David's life goes totally down the toilet. Pick up David's story after the incident with Bathsheba in chapter 11 of 2 Samuel, and read from there. Let me just hit some of the highlights. The unborn baby dies at the hand of God. David's son raped his half-sister. David's son Absalom killed his half-brother. Absalom then started a rebellion against David and David actually had to run from Jerusalem. Absalom then had sex in public with David's concubines. Ultimately David's General had to hunt Absalom down and kill him. David then took a census of the number of his fighting men that angered God. God brought a curse on Israel for this. As a result of David's new sin, more than 70,000 Israelites died. So before we talk about grace and restoration, at least know the whole story. Yes, God forgave David, but please never miss the consequences. These words were spoken to David through the prophet Nathan:

*<sup>9</sup>Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. <sup>10</sup>Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'*

*<sup>11</sup>"This is what the LORD says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. <sup>12</sup>You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"*

*<sup>13</sup>Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."*

*Nathan replied, "The LORD has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.*

*<sup>14</sup>But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the LORD show utter contempt, the son born to you will die" (II Samuel 12:9-14 / NIV).*

Moses, the guy who so faithfully and humbly served God, a man that God loved dearly, angered God by striking a rock twice instead of once. That was a seemingly little offense. God forgave him, but forbid him from entering the Promised Land. If there is to be any repentance, we must understand that we must accept the consequences and unfortunately, those consequences often affect those around us: family, friends, and the church community.

#### **D. Making Things Right (6b)**

And the second half of verse 6 reminds us that Jesus is constantly making things right for us. For the Hebrews, the priest would sprinkle and pour out the blood on the proper places. He would burn up on the altar the proper portions of the animal. In doing this, the worshiper would receive atonement. I think it is necessary to continue to define religious words that we

use. The word atonement literally means to be covered, to be forgiven, and to be reconciled. In other words the idea is this. Because of our sin, we have offended God and separated ourselves from Him. We cannot possibly pay for the damage we have caused to others and in most cases we can never go back and fix it. We stand before God dirty, filthy, guilty, and condemned. We have already said that the only possible responses from God are that He kill us on the spot or withdraw from us and leave us in all our filth and guilt.

However, because of His incredible love, Jesus volunteered to be our sacrifice. By allowing Himself to be humiliated and crucified, He can now apply His blood to our lives. Let's keep this in mind. It is not our feeling bad or saying I'm sorry that cleanses us from our sin and restores our relationship with God. It is the precious blood of Jesus that makes atonement for our sin. It is the blood of Jesus that covers and cleanses our sin. It is the humiliation and death of Christ that restores our broken relationship with God. It is Jesus Who makes things right. Yes, we must understand the guilt we have incurred. We must confess our sin. We must accept the consequences and make restitution. However, it is only the humiliation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ that makes things right. **REPENTANCE MEANS TO AGREE WITH GOD'S DEFINITION OF SIN AND HIS METHOD TO DEAL WITH IT.**

### **III. OCCASIONS FOR ALL PEOPLE (VS 7-13)** ***Obedience Is A Sure Sin Of True Repentance.***

We started off this sermon by stating that everybody has sinned. Everybody deserves to be judged by God. Sin gets hold of the rich and the poor, men and women, children and adults, educated and uneducated. Nobody escapes. Everybody needs a way to be forgiven by God. Verses 7-13 illustrate God's desire to make an occasion for all people to be reconciled with Him and to receive forgiveness. From our perspective, we are all left without excuse. **OBEDIENCE IS A SURE SIGN OF TRUE REPENTANCE.** We have already described the particular sin offering required for the normal person. But what if you happened to be poor, didn't have a goat or lamb, didn't have any money to buy one, and could never be able to afford one? Would you have to die unforgiven and spend an eternity in hell?

#### **A. For the Working Poor (7-10)**

In verses 7-10, God makes a way for the working poor. These people could purchase two birds. One of the birds would be killed and used as a burnt offering. The second bird would have its head twisted off and the blood would be spilled out on the altar for the forgiveness of sin.

#### **B. For the Poor (11-13)**

But what about those who couldn't even afford the two birds? Verses 11-13 describe the way God made for the poor. The very poor were only required to bring less than a gallon jug of fine flour. The point was that God considered every Hebrew a member of the community: rich, poor, male, female, young, old, etc. No one was excluded. Yes we have already seen that the more one had, the more God required. The higher up on the religious or social scale, the more seriously God counted the sin and its consequences. But the point here is that no matter how poor or disadvantaged someone was socially, God made a way for them to be right with Him.

#### **C. For Us**

What does this all mean for us? We have a wonderful message to give to the world. Yes the bad news is that all have sinned and that all stand condemned to spend eternity in hell as enemies of God. But the incredibly Good News is that He has made a way for everyone in the

world to be reconciled. And further, everyone can access this forgiveness and a direct, personal, passionate relationship with God.

In our study through the book of Galatians, we hammered this way home. We can receive forgiveness for our sins, a restored relationship with God, a family of brothers and sisters in Christ, and eternal life by placing our faith and trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross on our behalf. When we surrender our lives to Christ, we instantly become His family. But again, this may be misleading. It sounds easy and it is. However, like the Hebrews, it costs more for the wealthy and for those who are more advantaged than for those who have nothing.

What we are saying and doing when we give our lives to Christ is this. We are acknowledging that everything we have and all that we are really belongs to Him. We place ourselves and all that we have at His disposal to do with as He pleases. You can see that poor, disadvantaged people don't really have that much to give up. Listen to how hard it is to really accept this. Let's listen in to a conversation between Jesus and a young man Jesus really loved:

*"<sup>21</sup>Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

*<sup>22</sup>At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

*<sup>23</sup>Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:21-24 / NIV).*

Those of us who have achieved a lot in life have a very difficult time surrendering to God in faith. It seems that the more success we experience, the more we achieve, the more education we have, the more money we make, the higher we climb socially and in our careers, the harder it becomes to surrender everything to God. Even for those who are not so powerful and successful, it becomes hard to give up the things we have come to want. It is hard to give up that non-Christian girlfriend or boyfriend. It is hard to be sexually pure, honest, humble, and forgiving. It really is hard to give up our own ideas and to be obedient to God. However, **OBEDIENCE IS A SURE SIGN OF TRUE REPENTANCE.**

## IV. EPILOGUE

When I was young, people knew their Bibles. They read them from cover to cover. Today, not many Christians have a healthy understanding of Christianity because not many of us seriously read, study, and memorize the Bible. And as a result, we make up our own versions of Christianity. One of my hopes as we study through the book of Leviticus is that the vision of God's holiness scares us so much that we commit ourselves to reading, studying, memorizing, and obeying God the way He has laid it out in the Bible. The point of this morning's message has been that **GOD GIVES US SPECIFIC WAYS TO DEAL WITH SIN.** We are not free to be creative and we are certainly not free to change God's methods. In his book *Who Speaks for God?*<sup>1</sup>, Charles Colson tells this story:

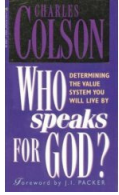
*"Many remember Mickey Cohen, infamous gangster of the postwar era. One night Cohen attended an evangelistic meeting and seemed interested. Realizing what a dramatic impact his conversion could have on the world, many Christian leaders began visiting him. After one long night session, he was urged to open the door and let Christ in, based on Revelation 3:20. Cohen responded.*

*But as the months passed, people saw no change in his life of crime. When confronted, he responded that no one had told him he would have to give up his work or his friends. After all, there were Christian football players, Christian cowboys, Christian politicians; why not a Christian gangster?*

*It was only then that he was told about repentance. And at that point he wanted nothing to do with Christianity?"*

I'm afraid that many of us who claim to be Christians are just like Mickey Cohen. We want to live our own way and make up our own rules. My hope is that I have clearly warned us that true repentance is necessary in order to be an authentic Christian. And being an authentic Christian is what it takes to be saved. Where exactly do we find ourselves this morning?

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<sup>1</sup>“Who Speaks for God?” by Charles Colson, September 1994. Tyndale House Publishers ISBN-10: 0842380337, ISBN-13: 978-0842380331