Dear friends,

Life is full of instructions, isn’t it. There are road signs, instructions to follow at work or school, cooking instructions, and instructions for putting a bike or furniture together. And sometimes we don’t really need the instructions but at other times they are absolutely essential.

Well, it will be clear to all of us by now that Leviticus is a Book of Instructions. And last week we began the section of instructions for the priests about the five offerings. And we saw that these instructions were not optional; they were absolutely essential, because these offerings were holy or sacred.

So we started with the burnt offering and we learned some lessons from instructions about handling holy **fire**. But today we continue to the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, and the peace offering, and any new details that are emphasized here. And we will continue with the same theme in relation to the instructions about handling holy **food**, holy **blood**, and holy **communion**.

And as we have done throughout, more than anything else we want to see how these instructions explain aspects of who Jesus is and what He *has* done and *continues to do* for us. But we also want to see any other principles in these instructions that are relevant for us as New Testament believers.

1. So our first section today is vv14-23, which is about the grain offering. And because the grain offering is described in this section as a food offering, our interest here is the lessons to be learned from instructions about **Handling Holy Food**.
	1. Verses 14-18 are about the grain offering of the people. And we see again that the priests were allowed to what was left of the offering after some had been burnt on the altar. It was part of how the Lord’s people provided for the needs of their ministers. And then we get that interesting line about the food offering in verse 18: “*Whatever touches them shall become holy*.”
		1. And this is the same point that is repeated, over and over again, in this section – God’s people had to be very careful to recognize the distinction between sacred and common. Back in their homes, grain was grain; you could crush it, eat it, plant it, do whatever you liked with it. But once it became part of a food offering it was holy – set apart to the Lord, sacred, and it had to be handled carefully.
		2. And with all of the offerings, there were two sides, if you like; the **giving** side and the **receiving** side. The people were on the giving side; as sinners they needed to give offerings so that their sins could be forgiven. On the receiving side of the offering was the Lord. And because the priests represented the Lord on the receiving side of the offering, they were allowed to eat a portion of the offering; they could partake of the holy. But the people were not to touch or eat what had been offered to the Lord.
		3. And this was one more way that the Lord impressed upon the people that they were different than the surrounding pagan nations. It was common in those other nations for people to eat whatever leftovers there were from the offerings. But that was not to be the case in Israel.
		4. And it is not spelled out here, specifically, but if you look ahead to **7:20-21**, it says there that if an unclean person ate of the Lord’s peace offerings, he or she would be “*cut off from his people*.” And this means put to death! So the people were not to eat any part of the grain offering.
	2. And then, in **verses 19-23**, we read something new about the grain offering. For here we see that alongside the grain offerings of the people, the priests also had to present a grain offering to the Lord. So from **verse 20**, beginning from the day that the High Priest was anointed, he had to offer a grain offering to the Lord, “*half of it in the morning and half of it in the evening.*” And he did this, every day, on behalf of himself and the priests. Now, as we just noted, the priests were allowed to eat some of the grain offerings of the people. But they were not allowed to eat any of their own offerings; look at the end of v22, “*The whole of it shall be burned*.” Why this difference? Well, think back to that ‘offering equation’ we noted earlier – on one side is the giver and on the other side is the receiver. And here, with their own offerings, which needed to be presented because of their own sin, they were on the giving side of the offering. On the receiving side of this offering was the Lord alone. And so, as givers, it was not right for the priests to eat a part of it.
	3. And we don’t need to try and figure out how this pointed to Jesus Christ because it is the exact point of **Hebrews 7:27**. For there it says that unlike all of the Old Testament High Priests who had to offer sacrifices for their own sins, Jesus did not need to because He was without sin! So this detail emphasizes the purity and perfection of Jesus. He is more than *every* priest and *every* offering that ever was, because He offered Himself as the one-time, all-sufficient sacrifice for your sins and mine. And we keep hearing this in this sermon series because we need to hear it, over and over. Every day our sins and our guilt rise up and threaten to overwhelm us, right? But in Jesus our sin and guilt is removed and we are made perfect in God’s eyes!
2. So that’s the lesson from instructions about handling holy **food**. The next section, verses 24-7:10 are about the sin offering, which we called the purification offering, and the guilt offering, which we called the reparation offering. And what is emphasized in both sets of instructions is how the blood of the animal was to be handled. So here we are looking for lessons in the instructions about Handling Holy **Blood**.
	1. Now, some of you have said to me in recent days that you were happy to be finished with chapters 1-5 and all the blood. And that is perfectly understandable. But there is more blood in this section, and as horrific as it is to think about how much animal blood was shed every day, I trust it has made you think about the sinfulness of sin and the extent of what Jesus suffered to make us clean in God’s eyes.
	2. Well, before we consider what this section says about how the blood was to be handled by the priests, we first need to see why anything to do with the blood of the offerings was holy.
		1. If you look over at **7:27**, it says there, “*Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut of from His people*.” And we saw similar words in **Leviticus 3:17**: “*It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, in all your dwelling places, that you [do not] eat … blood*.”
		2. And if you flick over to **17:14** you will seean explanation for this prohibition: “*For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life. Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off*.” So blood equaled life; blood was the source of life. That is why the people of Israel were forbidden from eating blood and had to drain every drop of blood out of the meat before it was cooked.
		3. And this prohibition became such a deep-seated part of ceremonial life in Israel that it became part of the very first synod or general assembly of the New Testament church, which is recorded in **Acts 15**. The meeting was called to deal with Jewish Christians who were telling Gentile Christians that they had to believe in Jesus and observe all of the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. And this was a serious matter because it was about the gospel – are we saved by grace alone or also by our works? And the gospel is salvation by grace alone. So at the end of the meeting, the apostles wrote a letter to all of the churches making it clear that Gentile believers did not have to observe the ceremonial law because it was fulfilled in Christ. However, out of love for their Jewish brothers and sisters, and because of the uniqueness of this crossover time from Old Testament to New Testament, the Apostles asked Gentile Christians not to do four things, one of which was eating blood. So the gospel freedom that you and I have today, which is to enjoy a rare steak, was just too big a deal for the Christian Jews of that time to handle, because of this Old Testament prohibition.
	3. So, it was because blood was viewed as life, and therefore, holy, that it was not to be eaten. And this helps us understand what we read in **verses 27-28**. Sacrificial animals were killed by having their throats cut. And it was the priest’s duty to catch the blood that spurted out in a bowl. And we learned in chapter 4 that the priest then took the blood and sprinkled it inside the tabernacle and on and around the altar for burning offerings. So the blood was a **holy cleaning agent**, if you like, a sort of sanctified soap that removed uncleanness. And ideally, it took every drop of blood from each animal to remove the uncleanness that the offering was about. And that is why one drop of holy blood that inadvertently splattered on the priest’s clothes or that stayed in the meat and only came out while it was cooking, was not used for its intended purpose. And so, that item of clothing had to be washed clean within the holy confines of the tabernacle courtyard. And a clay pot used to boil the meat, which would inevitably absorb some blood into the clay, had to be broken and discarded after the meat was cooked, and a bronze pot, which did not absorb blood, had to be thoroughly cleaned before it could be used again.
	4. And I don’t know if you have ever seen or read about **pagan rituals** from ancient times or today but the priests and the people drink blood and smear it over themselves, and do all sorts of disgusting things with it. But that was not how it was to be with the Lord’s people; the blood was holy and it was not to be treated casually or carelessly, because its sole purpose was removing uncleanness.
	5. And this leads us into the major point of application for us who live on this side of the cross, which is once again spelled out clearly in the Book of **Hebrews**. Turn to **10:26-29**. There we read: “*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?*”
		1. Now, so that we are clear, the particular sin that is in view here is the sin of **apostasy**, which is to profess faith, knowing what you are doing, and then to deliberately and intentionally reject Christ. Hebrews was written to Jewish people who had professed faith but were thinking of abandoning Jesus and going back to being regular Jews. So anyone who professes faith and then rejects Jesus tramples on Him and treats His blood as unholy, and can close the door on the possibility of salvation.
			1. And if this sounds like you, like what you have done, but there is even the smallest ounce of grief in your heart over your sins, and right now you can say, Jesus is the Son of God and He died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins, then I say to you: Leave your life of sin and humble yourself before the Lord before it is too late and you are completely hardened to the gospel.
		2. But there is a wider application here also to those who have not walked away from the church and openly renounced Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, but who are ***deliberately* and *repeatedly* and *unrepentantly* living in sin**.
			1. In the hymn, ‘Rock of Ages,’ which we will sing after the sermon, our prayer is that the water and the blood, which flowed from Jesus’ side, would “be of sin the double cure; save from guilt and make me pure.” And by “double cure” is meant justification and sanctification.
				1. So the blood of Jesus washes away the guilt of sin and makes us righteous in God’s eyes; that’s justification – the one time event at the beginning of the Christian life – God declares us righteous.
				2. But “make me pure” is about sanctification; the process that continues until we die or Jesus returns, by which we are made more and more pure; more and more like Jesus.
			2. So we may not deliberately and repeatedly and unrepentantly keep on sinning, and think that it is well with my soul. And if this sounds like you, then you are trampling on Jesus and treating His blood as unholy. So I urge you to repent and resist and seek counsel now, before you too are completely hardened in your sin.
		3. But finally, on this point, I hasten to speak also to those among us, perhaps many of us, who hear these words and are conscious of their sins, perhaps the same sins that you keep falling into, again and again, which you struggle with and you know are displeasing the Lord and you have confessed to Him, many times. These words in Hebrews 10 are not about you! You are not trampling on Jesus and treating His blood as unholy. Keep struggling. Keep confessing your sin and resolving not to fall into it again. As it says in **Hebrews 12:1-2**, “*Lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith*.” And remember what Jesus said in **1 John 1:8-9**, “*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*.”
3. So those are the lessons from the instructions about handling holy **blood**. And that brings us, thirdly and lastly, to **verses 11-38** and the peace offering, which is where we find lessons in instructions about Handling **Holy Communion**.
	1. And you will remember from our study of the peace offering in chapter 3 that after a portion of the animal had been offered to the Lord on the altar, and after a portion of the carcass was given to the priests as payment for their ministry, the worshiper and his family received the rest of the carcass back and were to eat it as a feast celebrating peace with God and all His blessings. And individuals and families were expected to invite others, and especially the poor, to join this feast. And so we noted the obvious parallels with the Lord’s Supper. Jesus offered Himself on the cross to secure peace with God for us. And we receive His body and blood, by faith, in the bread and wine of the Supper. And we enjoy this celebratory feast with others.
	2. So there are just two new details or principles in these instructions about the peace offering that I want us to note today.
		1. The first comes from **verses 15-18**.
			1. For there we see that the flesh of the peace offering for thanksgiving was to be eaten on the day of the sacrifice. You could not keep any of it for the next day.
			2. But if it was a peace offering for a vow or a free-will peace offering, it could be eaten the *next* day, but anything left on the third day had to be burned up with fire. And if anyone ate the meat on the third day, **verse 18** says, their offering was not accepted by the Lord, and they were “*tainted*,” which means corrupt or unclean again.
			3. And surely there is an allusion here to the death and burial of Jesus, our perfect peace offering. For His body did not remain on the cross over night but was buried the same day. And in **Acts 2**, Peter spoke about Jesus rising on the third day and noted that “*He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption*.”
			4. So even these minute ceremonial instructions reinforce the truth and perfection of what Christ accomplished for us!
		2. And the second principle comes from **verses 19-27**.
			1. In **verse 20**, anyone ‘with uncleanness on them’ who ate the flesh of the Lord’s peace offerings was to be cut off from the Lord’s people. And in **verse 21**, anyone who touched an unclean thing and then ate the peace offering was to be cut off from the Lord’s people. And in **verse 25**, anyone who ate the fat of a food offering was to be cut off from the Lord’s people. And in verse 27, anyone who ate blood was to be cut off from the Lord’s people. And as I explained near the beginning of the sermon, this meant being put to death! So some were ‘worthy’ partakers of the offering and others were ‘unworthy’ partakers, who incurred serious guilt that was punishable by death.
			2. And the New Testament picks up this same language in relation to the Lord’s Supper: **1 Corinthians 11:27-30**: “*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died*.”
				1. So this is why we read a **preparatory form** on the Sunday before Lord’s Supper, as a reminder to us all to examine ourselves rightly before the Supper.
				2. It is also why we do our best as elders to make sure that **guests** at church understand what the Lord’s Supper is about.
				3. And it is also why we **bar from the Lord’s Supper table** and eventually excommunicate, or ‘cut off,’ those who live in unrepentant sin, lest they eat and drink judgment on themselves.
			3. And I should add here that none of this is to suggest that we are worthy to come to the Lord’s Supper table in and of ourselves. No one comes to the table because they have their sins under control. We do not even know all of the sins that we commit! We come because we are not living in deliberate, unrepentant sin, and because we have confessed our sins and are resolved not to sin, and because we trust that all our sins are forgiven because of the sacrifice of Jesus!

Well, there we have several lessons from instructions for the priests and the people about handling holy things. And again and again we are seeing that we are great sinners who have in Jesus a great Saviour! Amen.