

## Devotion 6:

### **Our Father Demands Holiness and Perfection**

Leviticus 1—27

Ninety-nine percent of the book of Leviticus is our Father's instruction to Moses on Mt. Sinai. To our eyes and ears today, it contains some of the earthiest, grossest passages in the entire Bible--unclean animals, skin sores, animal blood, sexual relations, and bodily discharges—ugh! A Jewish man and woman had to be so vigilant daily, even hourly, remembering what they touched or didn't touch, to maintain purity. It is an understatement to say it must have been a hassle and a never-ending battle, one that was frequently lost.

If an earthly parent today resembled our heavenly Father as depicted in Leviticus, the parent would be labeled with obsessive-compulsive disorder. There is no break, no exception, no winking and looking the other way by our Father. From our bedroom activity to how we conduct business at work, our Father has expectations—and they are high. Very high. Death was a frequent punishment for violating some of His commands. And it didn't matter if you sinned unintentionally or were unaware that something was sinful; you were still guilty. (4:13, 22, 27; 5:17)

Now the one thing most people will readily acknowledge without argument is this: no one is perfect. We all have flaws. We all have weaknesses. We all have failed at something. Doesn't our Father realize this about us? Aren't His expectations a bit unrealistic? If it is so obvious that none of us are perfect or even close to it, then why does He demand holiness and perfection from us?

I believe we find the answer in Leviticus 19:1-2: *“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.’”* He continues in 19:26: *“You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.”* In other words, these are essential qualities in our Father. He is holy. He is perfect. And He wants us to be like Him.

So what does it mean to be “holy”? One Bible dictionary offers this definition: *“separation; set apart; separation from all that is sinful, or impure, or morally imperfect; moral wholeness.”* God, however, is not subject to some external standard or law of moral excellence; rather His very nature is the root and ground of all that is holy and perfect.

Furthermore, to enter our Father's presence we likewise must be holy and perfect. *“You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.”* (15:31) Hebrews 12:14 tells us, *“without holiness no one will see the Lord.”* But that pinpoints a BIG problem. How then can we ever get into His presence? For *“we have all sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23)

Are you ready for some really good news? Five times in Leviticus we read these sweet words: *“I am the Lord, who makes you holy.”* (20:8; 21:8, 23; 22:9, 32) Our Father will do for us what we can’t!

How does He plan to do that? We need to have our sin removed, to be forgiven, and to be cleansed. The predominant repetitive theme in Leviticus is the precise directions for an acceptable sacrifice that could make atonement for sin and bring forgiveness: *“a male without defect.”* (1:3; 10; 3:1, 6; 4:3, 23; 5:18; 6:6; 9:3; 14:10; 22:19-21; 23:12, 18) The explicit directions go beyond the sacrifice itself to include those offering the sacrifice, especially the priests.

*“For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. No descendants of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the offerings made to the Lord by fire.”* (21:16-21)

Our Father sent the ultimate acceptable sacrifice, a male without defect, a priest without defect—His only Son, our Lord. He poured out the only cleansing agent for our sinful stain, His pure blood, so we could enter the presence of our Father both now and for eternity. *“We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”* (Heb. 10:10, 14) *“But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.”* (Col. 1:22)

What does all this mean for us today? It means this:

*“Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them (us!) brothers.”* (Heb. 2:11)

*“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them (us!), but they (we!) will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”* (Rev. 20:6)

Our Father’s holiness and perfection means everything.