

A Pleasing Gift to God

The Grain Offering

Leviticus 2:1 When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour. He shall pour oil on it and put frankincense on it

² and bring it to Aaron's sons the priests. And he shall take from it a handful of the fine flour and oil, with all of its frankincense, and the priest shall burn this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

³ But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

⁴ "When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil.

⁵ And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil.

⁶ You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering.

⁷ And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil.

⁸ And you shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar.

⁹ And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.

¹⁰ But the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings.

¹¹ "No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey as a food offering to the LORD.

¹² As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the LORD, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma.

¹³ You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

¹⁴ "If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain.

¹⁵ And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering.

¹⁶ And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD.

(Lev 2:1-16)

A Unique Contribution

One of the **unique contributions** the Reformed tradition has brought to the broader Christian world is a few centuries worth of **thinking very deeply about worship** as New Testament people. I'm not talking about thinking ascetically or philosophically about worship, as others have sometimes done that better. Rather, I'm talking about thinking about it from the perspective of the Bible. What does God's word say about worship? Does it tell us how and what he wants in his worship?

As they Reformed, some probably threw out some traditions that were morally neutral yet chalked full of

theology and of a certain kind of value. At their worst, some **confused law and gospel** such that it became the duty that mattered more than the heart. Worship turns cold and icy when hearts are not warmed by the blazing fire of Christ's fellowship in it. When **legalism** sets in, that is inevitable.

But at their best, they gave us a way of thinking about worship that probably hadn't really been considered to this degree since the days maybe of Ezra. What has God commanded? What does he want? How do we know?

In this regard, they held out **a tension**, two things as simultaneously and equally true. As **Deuteronomy 11:1** puts it, **"You shall therefore love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always."** Loving God from the heart has to be the basis for obedience; but obedience is not expendable just because you love God. In fact, it is love of God that drives acceptable obedience. Acceptable obedience happens because you love God.

From this was formed the Regulative Principle of Worship. The RPW teaches us that what God wants in his worship is only that which he commands, nothing more, nothing less. As he says only a chapter later, **"Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with**

you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God ... Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it” (Dt 12:28, 31).

Now, we live in NT times, and are no longer under things like the Levitical covenant with all of its many offerings and sacrifices. Yet, there is **continuity of principle** that remains, even if the activities today are different. But the principle of the matter was as true prior to God even creating Israel as it is all these centuries after Christ’s death. Otherwise, there would be no sacrifices in the world until Moses.

Today, we will look at **the *minchah* offering**, or what is translated as the “grain” or sometimes a “meal” (older translations have “meat”) offering. Like the burnt offering, which we saw goes back at least to Noah, the *minchah* offering does not have its origin here in the Levitical law.

In fact, it is the oldest of all offerings, going back to **Cain and Abel**. The story goes, “In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering (*minchah*) of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering (*minchah*), but for Cain and his

offering (*minchah*) he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell” (Gen 4:3-5). Each man brings a unique contribution. But there has always been a difference of opinion over what the problem was with Cain.

At the very least, Hebrews tells us that he did not offer his *minchah* by faith (Heb 11:4). But many took notice of the order. In God’s deliberation, first he mentions each man’s name and then he mentions each man’s *minchah*. Calvin comments on the former. “Here, the order observed by Moses must be noted, for he does not simply state that the worship Abel presented to God was pleasing to him, but he begins with Abel’s person. This signifies that no works will find favor with God unless the doer of those works has already found favor and been approved by him” (John Calvin on Genesis 4:4). This is the first part—the heart. You have to come to God by faith.

Because of this, many have just thought that Cain’s *only* problem was his heart. His sacrifice was fine, but his heart was in the wrong place. Yet, the text says, “... and his offering.” And a little later, sounding just like Deuteronomy 12:31, it says, “If you do right, will you not be accepted” (Gen 4:7). So it wasn’t just his heart, it was what he did. Thus, Luther goes after the second part. “At this point the

question is raised whether they had a word or command to sacrifice. I answer yes. For all the sacred accounts give proof that by His superabundant grace our merciful God always placed some outward and visible sign of His grace alongside the Word, so that men, reminded by the outward sign and work or Sacrament, would believe with greater assurance that God is kind and merciful” (Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis 4:3*).

What’s so curious about the story is that Abel is a shepherd, so he brings an animal *minchah*; Cain is a farmer, so he brings a grain *minchah*. Abel’s is accepted; Cain’s is not. But in Leviticus 2, despite what the KJV says about a “meat offering” (see below),¹ it is very clear that the *minchah* in mind has no animal offering to it at all. It is, as the ESV puts it, the grain offering. From this, one might think that Cain’s was the obedient sacrifice, not Abel’s! So what’s going on here? To answer that, and to see better what Cain and Abel were doing, we need to look at our passage and get an understanding of the *minchah*.

¹ Andrew Bonar says it is “so called by our translators because the greater part of it was used for food.” Andrew A. Bonar, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus, Expository and Practical* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851), 38.

The *Minchah*

Right away, we can see that a new offering is in mind. It begins, “When anyone brings a grain offering as an offering to the LORD...” (Lev 2:1). The burnt offering is now out of the picture, yet, like the burnt offering, the present one is voluntary—God does not command this particular offering, but you do it because you want to. “Whenever.” We will see reasons for this as we go along.

The way the ESV reads, you can hear that the offering is of a specific kind, even if you don’t know the Hebrew. You bring a grain offering *as an offering*. But you should know that there are two Hebrew words being translated as “offering” here. *Qorban* came up in Lev 1:2-3. This was the word that differs from “sacrifice” that we talked about. Now the *minchah* also appears. *Qorban* is a more general term for any kind of offering. The verse tells you what kind of *qorban* is being given; it is of grain. So more literally it reads, “When a person (literally a “soul,” *nephesh*) brings an offering (*qorban*) of offering (*minchah*) to the LORD, and his offering (*qorban*) to the LORD is of grain...”

“Offering of offering” is rather meaningless, so we need a better word for the *minchah*. It isn’t that a *minchah* is

necessarily a grain offering, as the translation might lead you to believe. It is true that in this chapter (and throughout Leviticus) it is, which is why they give it this translation. But technically speaking, not all *minchahs* are of grain. Abel's was from **the flock** (which is they the KJV could translate it as a "meat offering," even though there isn't any meat in the entire chapter of Leviticus 2). The word itself means a **tribute** or **gift** or **present**. Hence, it is translated as "gift/present" in **Genesis 32:14, 19, 21, 22**, etc.² So we can now say "when a person brings an offering of gift (or a gift offering) to the LORD, and his offering is of grain..." The *minchah* then tells us that the offering is a *gift*.

This gives a very important **context** to the chapter. The worshiper here is coming to the LORD with a gift! This is like Jacob who sent a *minchah*-gift of hundreds of goats and rams to Esau (**Gen 32:14-15**). So the idea is that you are coming to God with a present and that has to be part of actual makeup of the offering.

It then expounds on what all is supposed to take place. We have several objects in the chapter.

² The LXX translates it as a "gift" (*doron*).

Fine Flour. The first is “fine flour.” This refers to wheat or *grits*,³ hence it is sometimes called a “*cereal offering*.” So, you go out to your field, you gather up your wheat, you do something to it to get the finest part, and then present it to God as a gift.

Oil. The second is oil. “*He shall pour oil on it.*” In the chapter, this could take place in one of five ways: *pouring* (vs. 1), *mixing* (4), *smearing* (4), *frying* (7), or *adding* (15). It is probable that the oil is used because it is *combustible*, hence it also went into the candle in the Holy Place. Oil is also symbolic. It is associated with *joy* (Isa 61:3; Ps 45:8; Prov 21:17) at festive meals (Ps 34:5; 92:11; 104:15), but it was avoided in times of mourning (2Sa 14:2; Dan 10:3). This reinforces the picture of the purpose of this offering as a gift. It is a gift *you give out of joy!* Who wants, as an old pastor of mine used to call it, “dutiful roses” from a husband, given because he has no choice because he’s done something stupid that the flowers are a bribe?

Frankincense. The third is frankincense. “*... and put frankincense on it.*” Frankincense was an outrageously

³ The following discussion is from *Jacob Milgrom, Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 3, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 179ff, and his shorter *A Continental Commentary: Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 25–27.

expensive spice throughout most of history, which is why it was one of the gifts brought to the baby Jesus. But it is native to southern Arabia, which is precisely where Israel is at when they are receiving this law ([Gal 4:25](#)). This spice would have [added to the aroma](#), which is important because the whole point of this offering was that it was to be [cooked](#).

Thus far, it is the offeror who does all the work. But next, he is to take this prepared grain offering and give it to Aaron's sons the priests ([Lev 2:2](#)) who then takes a handful of the flour and oil and all the frankincense and “[burn\[s\] this as its memorial portion on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.](#)” So, like the burnt offering, this gift to God pleases him. He smells it.

However, unlike pagan offerings of the same sort, the whole thing was [not left to the god to eat it.](#)⁴ Rather, “[the rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD's food offerings](#)” (3). In other words, the utility of this offering is that it sustained the priests. It was to be their food. The gift to God became the food for the priest to live.

⁴ For a great old story about this very kind of thing, albeit with a different kind of offering, read the short Apocryphal addition to Daniel called Bel and the Dragon.

So far, the grain is brought **raw**. But in **vv. 4-10**, it can be baked, toasted, or fried. **Baking** it appears in **vs. 4**. “When you bring a grain offering baked in the oven as an offering, it shall be unleavened loaves of fine flour mixed with oil or unleavened wafers smeared with oil.” **Toasting** it is **vv. 5-6**. “And if your offering is a grain offering baked on a griddle, it shall be of fine flour unleavened, mixed with oil. You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering” (**5-6**). **Frying** it is **vv. 7-9**. “And if your offering is a grain offering cooked in a pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. And you shall bring the grain offering that is made of these things to the LORD, and when it is presented to the priest, he shall bring it to the altar. And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.” But, like before, “The rest of the grain offering shall be for Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the LORD’s food offerings” (**10**). God doesn’t need it, so the priests get it.

Besides **making you hungry** when you read it, what is the purpose of this? Here are three things to think about. **First**, it follows the offering of the birds in the burnt offering, most likely for a reason. This was **a poor-man’s offering**.

Through the grain offering, all Israelites had access to God in his home. In fact, this was the belief around the ANE. For example, one ancient text reads, “The widow makes her offering to you [plural] with cheap flour, the rich man with a lamb.”⁵ You might say, but what about the Frankincense? That’s expensive! But notice that this spice is only used if the wheat is brought uncooked. The requirement was waved after **vs. 3**. You could cook it yourself, no frankincense needed.

Second, this extremely common kind of offering throughout the ancient world was always totally burnt up on altars. It belongs wholly to the gods. But it is actually forbidden to burn all but a portion of it here. This is because God is not like the gods. He does not demand that you just destroy your stuff for his sake. Instead, he **cares about his people and his priests**.

Third, it was given on **happy occasions** (or because you want the outcome to be happy), freely, because you wanted to. There was no obligation. This was how you entered into a more personal relationship with the LORD at his home. This was, like the present you might bring when visiting a friend for dinner, something brought to retain good will. If

⁵ **Jacob Milgrom**, *A Continental Commentary*, 25.

you had done something wrong, it could be an act of peace-making. If you hadn't, it could be an act of friendship.

Leaven, Honey, and Salt

But we are not finished with the text. From here, it goes out of its way to mention three additional ingredients.

Leaven. The first is leaven. “No grain offering that you bring to the LORD shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven...” (Lev 2:11). What is leaven? You would put things like yeast into the bread to make it rise.

The word here is *hamets* and it comes from an Acadian word that means “fermentation.”⁶ Think of beer. Beer is fermented grain, which is exactly what we are dealing with in this chapter. Now, fermentation could be looked at in both positive and negative ways. But when it came to a food offering or sacrifice, it was negative (you could have wine as a drink offering). As Heiser puts it, “They saw leaven as a sort of ‘altering’ the natural order process ... something you added to affect a change in something that you wouldn’t otherwise normally get.”

⁶ Michael Heiser, Naked Bible Notes on Leviticus 2.

It is more than this though. Fermentation is associated with **death** because it causes the natural product to start to decay and become corrupt from its original state. For this reason, it was not allowed on the altar (the altar could be used to bring about the death of an animal, but it could not be profaned by something already decaying; this would be akin to bringing a diseased animal as a sacrifice; this is holy space!). Everyone thought this way about it. Plutarch said, “Leaven itself comes from corruption, and corrupts the dough with which it is mixed ... and in general, fermentation seems to be a kind of putrefaction” (Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 109). We find the same in the Scripture.

Honey is the second thing. You could not bring leaven “nor any honey” (Lev 2:11). Why not? Some scholars are **cautious** and say we don’t really know why.⁷ They usually speculate anyway. Some think it is because honey was so often **offered to the gods**, and Israel couldn’t be like them. Yet, Israel did other things that pagans also did in their sacrifices. Some think it is because **honey also ferments**, and this one is more plausible. Heiser argues that it is because honey is actually an **excretion** that comes out of a bee, and excretions

⁷ Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 12.

are, throughout Leviticus, considered unclean (even though, again, they are not immoral).

Maybe it is because Canaan is the **land flowing with milk and honey** and to therefore offer it on a fire would be to demean that image. In fact, the next verse shows us that both leaven and honey could be offered to God; it just couldn't be burnt. “**As an offering of firstfruits you may bring them to the LORD, but they shall not be offered on the altar for a pleasing aroma**” (**Lev 2:12**). There was something about burning them that was not pleasing to the LORD, but if you wanted to bring them as the firstfruits of your harvest in a bowl or something, that would be just fine.

In fact, the chapter ends with three verses discussing the firstfruits. “**If you offer a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering. And the priest shall burn as its memorial portion some of the crushed grain and some of the oil with all of its frankincense; it is a food offering to the LORD**” (**Lev 2:14-16**).

Firstfruits (*re'shit*) is an ambiguous term. It can mean the **earliest** or the **choice**, the best of your offering. As this is an

offering given freely, it probably refers to the best of what you have. This follows exactly God’s own heart towards them, “All the best of the oil and all the best of the wine and of the grain, the firstfruits of what they give to the Lord, I give to you. The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it” (Num 18:12-13). If he has given you the best, why would you bring a joyful gift to him that wasn’t the same?

Salt. The third ingredient is salt. “You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt” (Lev 2:13). Why is this so important? It is almost certainly because salt is the **preserving agent** par excellence in the ancient world. There was no *propyl paraben* or *butylated hydroxytoluene* or *sulfur dioxide* to preserve your food (there still shouldn’t be, but that’s for another time). There was salt.

“In ancient times people who shared salt were bound together as a group by mutual obligations.”⁸

⁸ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 81.

A neo-Babylonian letter speaks of “all who tasted the salt of the Jakin tribe” (*ABL* 747, r. 6), referring to the tribe’s covenantal allies. Loyalty to the Persian monarch is described as having tasted “the salt of the palace” (Ezra 4:14). Arab. *milḥat*, a derivative of *malaḥa* (“to salt”) means “a treaty” (G. B. Gray 1903: 232). “There is salt between us” implies among Arab bedouin a treaty stipulating mutual aid and defense (R. Smith 1927: 270). The Greeks likewise salted their covenant meals and referred to salt as “holy” (*Iliad* 9.214; *Heliod.* 4.16). Thus it is likely that in Israel as well salt played a central role at the solemn meal that sealed a covenant (e.g., Gen 26:30; 31:54; Exod 24:11).¹⁴

Notice what salt is connected to here. “The salt of the covenant with your God.” It’s a very similar idea. In other words, the point is, the salt is explicitly pictured as an analogy of the covenant that the very sacrifice presupposes. This covenant was to be binding, lasting, for all generations. In other words, it was to be preserved. Salt was deliberately added so that the worshiper would remember that he or she

ABL R. F. Harper, ed., *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum*

¹⁴ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 122.

was in covenant with God, that he had come to them first, that he had taken them to be his treasured possession, that he loved them, and that this was the context for any attempt they might make to bring an offering to him.

A Minchah Then; A Minchah Now

When I think about all of this in light of Cain and Abel, and I consider the scant evidence the Scripture gives for that story, it isn't hard to figure out what was going on. We have to **presuppose** that they knew what they were to bring. Luther was quite right about this. God has never let his people just do whatever they want, let alone for no transcendent or purposeful reason. He clearly told them, which is why it says both to Cain and to Israel, “**If you do what is right**” it will be well with you.

Clearly, Cain didn't offer his offering by faith. Hebrews says as much. But if he didn't offer it by faith, then it has to have been by duty. It couldn't have been a joy and therefore couldn't have been a gift. But this is precisely the opposite of what this kind of an offering is all about. This is exactly **Thomas Watson's** explanation of Cain's problem. “**A musician is not commended for playing long, but for playing**

well; it is obeying God willingly is accepted ... the Lord hates that which is forced, it is rather paying a tax than an offering. Cain served God grudgingly; he brought his sacrifice not his heart.”⁹

Hebrews also says that Abel’s offering was “**better**.” Was it better purely because of his **heart**? Certainly, in the *minchah*, the heart is actually part of the offering. Was it better because he sacrificed something expensive while Cain brought the **poor-man**’s offering? It is certainly possible that Cain was being a cheapskate. Was it better because Cain did something like put **leaven** in it? Cain is attributed to being of the evil one (**1Jn 3:12**). The fact that Cain’s offering is not said to be the **firstfruits** while Abel’s is, might be telling. A possible translation is, “**But Abel brought some of the firstborn of his flock— even the fattest of them**” (**Gen 4:4** New English Translation). In other words, Cain should have offered the firstfruits.

We don’t know exactly what was wrong with his offering, although as we have seen, there are plenty of things he could have done wrong. He did do something wrong, the text says as much. The most important could be what Bonar

⁹ **Thomas Watson**, *The Select Works of the Rev. Thomas Watson, Comprising His Celebrated Body of Divinity, in a Series of Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, and Various Sermons and Treatises* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), 266.

discusses when he says that this offering “was generally, or rather always, presented along with some animal sacrifice, in order to show the connection between pardon of sin and devotion to the Lord.”¹⁰ The whole point seems to be that Cain paid no regard to the Christ who spoke to him, to faith in the coming of Seed-Messiah, or even to the sacrificial clothing of Christ given to his parents just a few verses earlier. Abel’s offering is in line; Cain’s is not. Abel’s offering contains blood; Cain’s does not. And so many, and this includes myself, have concluded that, “Cain’s offering ... might have been acceptable ... if it had been founded upon the slain lamb, and had followed as a consequence from that sacrifice.”¹¹

In this way, we see the vital need that all of our worship be done accurately and in accordance with God’s word, because if we don’t, we will miss the vital point, which is how that worship points us to the only hope we have—Jesus Christ. In this way, you should consider how Christ fulfills this offering. Note, in this case, there is no death. It is an

¹⁰ Andrew A. Bonar, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus, Expository and Practical* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1851), 39. MacDonald concurs. “It is questionable whether the minchah, under the Law, was ever offered without such an accompaniment.” J. A. MacDonald in *Leviticus*, *The Pulpit Commentary*, ed. H. D. M. Spence-Jones (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1910), 32.

¹¹ Bonar, 39.

offering of bread. Christ is the Manna, the Bread, come down from heaven. This offering was eaten. Whoever eats of Christ's flesh will live forever (**John 6:50; 54**).

You might consider also, as Bonar does, that “**He is the ‘fine wheat,’ pure, unspotted; yet also ‘baked,’ because subjected to every various suffering.**”¹² Christ's life was a living offering to his Father, and it was through the testing and tempting, yet without sin, that he came through the fires as a pleasing aroma to his Father. “**What an example for each of his people! Let us behold our pattern, and give up ourselves, body and soul and substance, to the glory of our God.**”¹³

That takes us straight on through to us today. In thinking about the *minchah* for new covenant people, perhaps the first thing to notice is that the one who brought it is called “**a person**” (*nephesh*). It is better translated as a “**soul**.” It is not a man, but anyone—male or female. There was no exclusion on the one who could bring this offering. In the same way, in the new covenant, as all members of Christ's body, we all offer ourselves to the LORD.

¹² Bonar, 41.

¹³ Bonar, 42.

We do this as “living sacrifices,” Paul says. In this offering, nothing dies. Nothing is killed. In fact, as we have seen, anything that even smacks of death and decay is to have no place in it. His whole statement is, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom 12:1-2).

The mercies of God are all those things the Father has given and done for us in Christ. At the heart, this includes his own offering and sacrifice to his Father that was accepted as perfect. In light of this, we present our bodies as living sacrifices, especially since we are the body of Christ. They are to be holy and acceptable to God, a spiritual act of worship.

What does this mean? Here are a few thoughts that fit our chapter. “The Christian’s speech is not to be corrupting, but edifying. ‘Let your speech be always seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man’” (Col. 4:6).¹⁴ You are not to boast. “Your boasting is not

¹⁴ MacDonald, 26.

good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened ... not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil” (1Co 5:6-8). Stay away from hypocrisy. “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known” (Luke 12:1-2).

Currid gives a very interesting one, which I think Paul himself implies. He says,

Another important lesson the church might learn from this passage is the importance of God’s people taking proper care of their ministers. When I do guest-preaching I sometimes take the opportunity to encourage the congregation to make certain that they are caring materially for their pastor—he is dependent on the congregation for his sustenance, and this must be done in the right way. The old prayer regarding the pastor, ‘Lord, you make him humble and we’ll make him poor,’ is unbiblical! The priests in Leviticus were given the best of the grain, and Christians should take equally good care of their shepherds.¹⁵

¹⁵ John D. Currid, *A Study Commentary on Leviticus*, EP Study Commentary (Darlington, England; Webster, New York: Evangelical Press, 2004), 44.

Where does Paul imply this? He tells the Philippians, “I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God” (Php 4:18). The language of a gift is the very language of a *minchah*. The minchah is a fragrant offering, and this seems to be Paul’s type-antitype application of this ceremonial law. Remember, it isn’t that ceremonial law ceases in the new covenant; rather it is transformed to fit the new covenant realities of a new temple and new people in light of the once-for-all sacrifice and work of Jesus Christ.

Some of you may not think you can do because you think it is beyond your means. But remember, this is the *poor-man’s* offering! The offering was simply a meal for the priest to consume. It wasn’t a huge thing, but like the widow’s mite, it was richly accepted by the LORD. Everyone has it in them to carry this out.

Remember, in all of this, the point of the *minchah* is that you are paying homage to the LORD by offering him such a gift. This is the principle of the thing that continues. Leviticus is just as relevant to today as it ever was! Your life should be your best gift to him, as he commands, as he

desires. You are showing him your loyalty, loyalty that presupposes his own goodness to you through his permanent covenant of salt in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But Kierkegaard noticed that it is unusual for people to follow Christ's example of self-sacrificing love:

Christ required “followers” and defined precisely what he meant: that they should be salt, willing to be sacrificed, and that a Christian means to be salt and to be willing to be sacrificed. But to be salt and to be sacrificed is not something to which thousands naturally lend themselves, still less millions.¹⁶

Roy Gane gives the most important application of all to this. “Why is this? Before becoming ‘salt’ to benefit others, a Christian must experience the enduring, assuring ‘salt of the covenant’ of his or her God. Stable, long-term ‘saltiness’ of moral preservation, tact, and social solidarity in the human sphere has its source in the divine-human covenant relationship. Without this relationship, the ‘salt’ has lost its

¹⁶ S. Kierkegaard, *Attack Upon “Christendom,”* transl. W. Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), 34.

‘saltiness’ (Matt 5:13; Mark 9:50; Luke 14:34); it has nothing to give.”¹⁷

Therefore, you must be certain before you leave here that you have tasted of the saltiness of the permanent covenant of God in Christ. “Taste, and see that the LORD is good!” He has done all that can be done and needs to be done to offer a perfect sacrifice that will please God on your behalf. He has done this on your behalf so that as you hear that message, you might take hold of it and believe! So turn to him and accept his offering on your behalf by faith. Know that he has done it, it is finished. Then, you will be able to offer yourself as a living sacrifice everywhere you go, so that when people taste of your offering in work, in your family, and everywhere else, they might know that this is flavor of a good God who has sacrificed all for his people.

¹⁷ Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 83–84.

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