LEVITICUS

Chapter 5

**“ ‘If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible. 2 “ ‘Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean—whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground—even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty. 3 “ ‘Or if he touches human uncleanness—anything that would make him unclean—even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty. 4 “ ‘Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil—in any matter one might carelessly swear about—even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty. 5 “ ‘When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned 6 and, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to the Lord a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin. 7 “ ‘If he cannot afford a lamb, he is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the Lord as a penalty for his sin—one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. 8 He is to bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one for the sin offering. He is to wring its head from its neck, not severing it completely, 9 and is to sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the side of the altar; the rest of the blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering. 10 The priest shall then offer the other as a burnt offering in the prescribed way and make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven. 11 “ ‘If, however, he cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, he is to bring as an offering for his sin a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He must not put oil or incense on it, because it is a sin offering. 12 He is to bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the Lord by fire. It is a sin offering. 13 In this way the priest will make atonement for him for any of these sins he has committed, and he will be forgiven. The rest of the offering will belong to the priest, as in the case of the grain offering.’ ”**

**5:1–13** These offerings fit into a category known as a graded sin offering. Sacrificial offerings were made to cleanse the offerer of his sin in four categories: failure to respond to a public oath to testify (v 1); touching an unclean thing (v 2); touching human uncleanness (v 3); or uttering a careless oath (v 4). (TLSB)

**5:1–4** Four examples of the unintentional sins (see 4:2–3, 13, 22, 27) the sin offering covers. (CSB)

**5:1** It is sinful not to testify when called to do so. (TLSB)

*adjuration*. A placing under oath. (TLSB)

**5:2** *ceremonially unclean.* See note on 4:12. (CSB)

*guilt*. Ritually unclean people were unfit for God’s presence. (TLSB)

**5:3** *human uncleanness.* See chs. 11–15. (CSB)

Any person with a skin disease (14:2, 19) or a bodily discharge (15:2, 16, 19), or anyone who had handled a corpse (Nu 19:14–16). (TLSB)

**5:4** *rash oath*. Oath made in haste that may include bargaining with God (e.g., “Lord, if You do this, I will be more faithful in worship attendance”). (TLSB)

**5:5** *confess.* The offerer had to acknowledge his sin to God in order to receive forgiveness. (CSB)

Sins were confessed publicly at the altar before God and His priest. We are called to confess our sins as well (1Jn 1:8–10). (TLSB)

**5:7** *two doves … pigeons.* See note on 4:23. (CSB)

**5:11** *fine flour.* See note on 4:23. Although no blood was used with a flour offering, it was offered “on top of the offerings made to the Lord by fire” (v. 12). Heb 9:22 may refer to such a situation. (CSB)

*frankincense*. Too expensive for the poor. In this case, God wanted the unsavoriness of this sacrifice to remind the sinner not to relish sin. (TLSB)

**4:1–5:13** God, who abhors all sin, distinguishes sins of error from those of intent. Because of sin, God could no longer dwell with the Israelites as He desired. To this end, God gave the sin offering for the deliverance of those who inadvertently sinned against Him (cf 4:20, 26, 31, 35). Just as God’s OT people publicly confessed their sins during divine worship, God’s people today confess, “We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone” (*LSB*, p 151). Jesus Christ is the sin offering for all sins, for all time (1Jn 2:2; 4:10). • How wonderful it is to hear the words of Absolution: “Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins.” Amen. (*LSB*, p 151) (TLSB)

*The Guilt Offering*

**14 The Lord said to Moses: 15 “When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the Lord’s holy things, he is to bring to the Lord as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering. 16 He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priest, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven. 17 “If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the Lord’s commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible. 18 He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven. 19 It is a guilt offering; he has been guilty of wrongdoing against the Lord.”**

**5:15** *shekel of the sanctuary*. Weight of this shekel was set by the priests and may have varied in weight from the common shekel. (TLSB)

*guilt offering.* See further priestly regulations in 7:1–6 (see also Isa 53:10). Traditionally called the “trespass offering,” it was very similar to the sin offering (cf. 7:7), and the Hebrew words for the two were apparently sometimes interchanged. The major difference between the guilt and sin offerings was that the guilt offering was brought in cases where restitution for the sin was possible and therefore required (v. 16). Thus in cases of theft and cheating (6:2–5) the stolen property had to be returned along with 20 percent indemnity. By contrast, the sin offering was prescribed in cases of sin where no restitution was possible. The animal sacrificed as a guilt offering was always a ram. (CSB)

An individual was required to present a sacrifice to compensate God for his or her sacrilege. The guilt offering, also called a reparation offering, required a ram of acceptable value. Precious metals valued at one-fifth of the animal’s value were weighed and given to the priest (cf 6:5). (TLSB)

**5:19** *incurred guilt before the Lord*. Offenders suffered divine retribution for instances of unrepented sin. (TLSB)