

Fifth Installment of Reading thru the Bible for Heritage Family:

February 10, 2012

On Monday, February 13, 2012 we begin Leviticus. I hope you had a great time with Exodus as God gave birth and nurtured the infant Israel. One thing I noted was that even though there was judgment and justice in Exodus I hope you saw the mercy and grace. For those forty days that Moses was on the mountain getting the instruction and who to do what with and what to build, the people did what people do: they went their own way and got into big trouble. Yes when God sent Moses back there was judgment but there was repentance and a fresh start. As you think about the people there was to be a sacrifice of a lamb each morning and each evening to atone for the daily sinfulness and mistakes as this little baby Israel was learning to have strength to sit up, then scoot, then crawl and final begin to toddle. As we enter Leviticus its SCHOOLING time. This is the Preschool and Elementary years.

In Leviticus we will see ourselves. Really? Yes, Really! One of the stubborn enduring habits of humanity is that we insist on domesticating God. We are determined to make him in our image, what we want God to look like. We work hard to reduce God to a size that conveniently fits our plans, ambitions and tastes. But the Scriptures are even more stubborn in telling us that we can't do it. We can't use God. He is not a tool or an appliance or a credit card.

A word we will see much in Leviticus is "Holy". "Holy" is a word that sets God apart. God is above our attempts to enlist him in our wishes, fantasies or our schemes for making our mark in the world. "Holy" means that God is alive on his own terms, alive in a way that exceeds our experience and imagination. "Holy" refers to life burning with an intense purity that transforms everything it touches, because the core of all living is God and God is a holy God. We require teaching and training for living in response to God as he is and not as we want him to be.

Eugene Peterson in his introduction to Leviticus tells us that it is a narrative pause in the story of our spiritual ancestors as they are on their way out of Egypt to settle in the promise land. It is a kind of extended timeout of instruction, a detailed and meticulous preparation for living "holy" in a culture that doesn't have the faintest idea what "holy" is. The moment the Hebrew people enter Canaan they will be picking their way through a lethal minefield of gods and goddesses that are designed to appeal to their god-fantasies. That fantasy is this "Give us what we want when we want it on our own terms." What these god-fantasies in fact do is cripple or kill, then as today. Leviticus is a start at the "teaching and training" that continues to be adapted and reworked in every country and culture where God is forming a saved people to live as he created them to live-holy as God is holy.

The first thing that strikes me as I read Leviticus in this light is that this holy God is actually present with us. Virtually every detail of our lives is affected by the presence of this holy God. Nothing in us. Nothing in us, our relationships, or environments is left out.

The second thing you should look for as you read is that God provides a way (sacrifices and feasts and Sabbaths) to bring his people into his holy presence. Their lives are transformed in the fiery blaze of the holy. It is an awesome thing to come into his presence and we, like ancient Israel, stand in

his presence at every moment. Our Lord is not dwelling in a tent or house in our neighborhood, but he makes his habitation in us and among us as believers and says to us, "I am holy; you are holy!"

Once we realize this, the seemingly endless details and instructions of this book become signposts of good news to us. God cares that much about the details of our lives, willing everything in and about us into the transformation that Paul will later commended:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life, your sleeping, eating, going to work, and walking around life, and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you." (Romans 12:1-2, the Message).

If you are behind, or have stopped, Let Monday, February 13, 2012 be a new beginning. As you are thinking of Valentine's, opens God's love letter to us and let him change your heart.

In His Grip,

Pastor Chuck