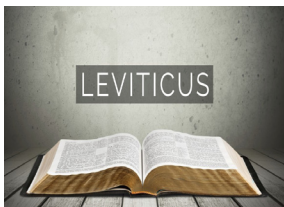


American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts August 2020

Mildew and the Cost of Sin

By: Kevin Gardner



The book of Leviticus is probably not the most widely read book in the Bible. With its pages of laws that seem so foreign, it can feel tedious to read. ...

Without Leviticus, we cannot truly understand Christ. For example, He fulfills the office of the priesthood, which is instituted in Leviticus 8–9 (see Heb. 4:14–10:18). He fulfills the Day of Atonement, the procedure for which is detailed in Leviticus 16 (see Heb. 9:12). And He fulfills the year of Jubilee, a time of celebration and freedom mandated in Leviticus 25:8–22 (see Luke 4:16–21).

Perhaps the most opaque sections of Leviticus are the laws regarding uncleanness in chapters 11–16. One passage in par-

ticular I have always found interesting. It's the procedure for cleansing a house of a case of "leprous disease," or what the old NIV called a "spreading mildew" (14:33–53). The priest was to examine the house and to have the affected stones and plaster removed. If that didn't solve the problem, then the house was to be destroyed.

What's fascinating is that when God begins to lay out the procedure for dealing with the "spreading mildew," He says, "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a case of leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession. . . ." (v. 34). God is taking responsibility for a situation that could end in the loss of someone's house. We might wonder why He would do such a thing.

The answer is twofold. First, God is asserting His comprehensive sovereignty over all creation. Nothing just happens; everything is under His providential control. ...

Second, this law, like the others regarding uncleanness, was an object lesson on sin. The Israelites were about to settle in the promised land and would have God Himself dwelling among them. God is perfectly holy and cannot look upon sin. Sin is a pernicious disease, and it must be rooted out and destroyed. Otherwise, the sinner will be destroyed.

There is a cost to be paid for sin. It could cost someone his house. It could cost someone his life. God wanted the Israelites to understand the cost of sin, so He demanded that they deal with the uncleanness among them. ...

As Christians, we can look at passages such as this one and be reminded of the cost of sin. But praise be to God, that cost has been paid by Christ on the cross. May we never forget and fail to be grateful that He has paid the cost on our behalf so that we are not destroyed but instead have God among us.

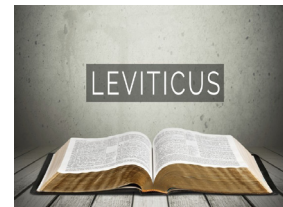
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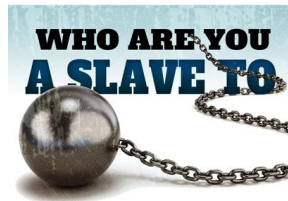
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The Thrill of Transgression

By: Kevin Gardner



As children grow into adulthood, they often are tempted to rebel. Young children push their parents' limits—refusing to eat or get dressed—trying to see how far they can go. Teenagers, of course, rebel—breaking curfew or talking back, for instance—in an attempt to assert their independence.

We may think that these acts are performed for their own sake. But the truth is that it is often not so much the act that is enjoyed but that the act crosses a boundary. It is the transgression that thrills.

In his autobiography, *Confessions*, Augustine of Hippo writes of an incident from his adolescence. He and some friends steal some pears from a neighbor's orchard. As he reflects upon this incident years later, Augustine is filled with shame. He recalls that he had no need

of the pears, and in fact, he had access to better pears. Indeed, he threw away the stolen pears and feasted "only on the wickedness" of the act.

Sometimes we think we can get the thrill without the transgression, because the rules do not apply to us.

In Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, the character Raskolnikov thinks this way. He sees himself in the mold of Napoleon, a great man who will do great deeds. His greatness puts him beyond good and evil. But he is a poor man, so he hatches a plan to murder and rob a crusty old pawnbroker. But upon being discovered, he is forced to murder the pawnbroker's sister as well. His guilt then gnaws at him through the course of the book.

Examples like those of Augustine and Raskolnikov bear out the truth of the Bible's teachings. When we sin, we like to think that we are our own master. But the very act of sin shows that we are not.

Our sin shows that we are under authority. The Apostle Paul says the law of God is written on every heart, and our conscience testi-

fies that everyone knows the law (Rom. 2:14–15). Everyone knows also the One who has issued the law, the God whose invisible attributes are plain to us in creation and conscience, the knowledge of whom renders us without excuse (1:18–20).

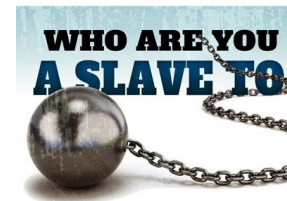
When we break a law for the enjoyment of it, we witness to the fact that we are under that law, for otherwise there would be nothing to transgress. When we claim we are not under God's law, our guilt demonstrates our folly.

Our conscience is a gift from our holy God to show us our sin and drive us to Him. The good news is that there is forgiveness in Christ, who paid the cost for our sin—for our childish outbursts and our raging rebellion. Let us give thanks to God for the gift of conscience and for forgiveness through faith in Christ when we transgress.

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