

THE PATTERN OF MAN

by Ray C. Stedman

This book of Leviticus, the close of which we are now rapidly approaching, is a revelation of basic humanity -- our basic human needs and the basic proper behavior of man operating as God intended him to operate. It reveals what is possible to us through the Spirit of God.

When I was in Dallas a few days ago I spoke on Leviticus 23 at a home meeting. There were a number of teenagers and other young people among the many people there. At the close of the meeting a college girl came up to me and said, "You know, I've been receiving your printed messages on Leviticus by mail, and I've been so interested in reading them because I've never understood what that book had to say. What is so fascinating to me is that I'm enrolled in a psychology course and we have recently finished studying what the basic, fundamental needs of a human being are. They are exactly in line with what you brought out in the first chapters of Leviticus. The difference is that Leviticus gave me the answer as to how to meet them, but I never got that in my class."

That is what this book, in fact the whole Bible, is about -- how to understand man -- what he is and how he lives, how he thinks, and what God has done to meet his needs. And the key to the understanding of man is a building called the tabernacle because this building was built to represent man. All the functions which went on here are revelations of what is intended to go on within man, within our human spirit and soul and body. This building was reproduced later in the temple. That is why there is such tremendous emphasis upon the tabernacle and the temple throughout the Bible. It is to teach man truth about himself, because the key to the understanding of the tabernacle is that it was built according to the pattern of man.

The pattern for the tabernacle was part of the great revelation God gave Moses upon the mountain top when he was with him for forty days and forty nights as all Israel waited at the foot of the mountain. Therefore it is an extremely important revelation, on a par with the Ten Commandments. God meticulously and carefully laid out for Moses the exact plan for constructing this building and for carrying on the functions within it. Moses was very obedient and fulfilled precisely what God had said. What was the pattern that God showed Moses? Well, we never really learn until we come to the New Testament book of Hebrews where we are told that the tabernacle was designed to be the house of God, and that we are that house. That is, man is the intended dwelling place of God, and the building was built to show us what man is like.

The tabernacle had three divisions, just as man has three divisions: First there was the outer court which corresponds to the body of man, to which even the Gentiles could come. It is the body which puts us in touch with the material universe in which we live. Then the structure of the tabernacle itself had two divisions. There was the holy place and, hidden behind a veil in a secret area, the holy of holies. This corresponds exactly to the divisions within us. There is the soul, the conscious life, the realm of ideas, of knowledge, of rationality, of emotion, of choices, of conscience, and of memory all these functions take place in the soul. But there is also that mysterious realm hidden deep within each of us, a realm of mystery to most of us, where all the deep urges and fundamental drives and hungers of our life arise. This is the spirit, designed as God's dwelling place, just as in the tabernacle the Shekinah glory, the light which represented God, dwelt in the holy of holies.

In the opening part of Chapter 24 we have a marvelous description of the functions which went on in the "holy place" of the tabernacle. This is merely a summary of truth taught elsewhere in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, but it is very revealing. It deals with the furniture that was in this place which corresponds to the soul, or the conscious life, of a human being.

There were three pieces of furniture:

- The golden candelabra with its seven branches, of which we all have seen pictures and which is still such a fundamental symbol among the Jewish people;

- The solid gold table, upon which was to be displayed the twelve loaves of show bread that was the food of the priests; and
- The golden altar of incense, which stood right against the veil which separated the holy place from the holy of holies and where the fragrant frankincense was burned before God as an offering by fire.

Those pieces of furniture are a remarkably accurate picture of how the three major functions of our soul -- the mind, the emotions, and the will -- are intended to operate as the soul is filled with the Spirit of God.

The specific commands regarding the candelabra are first, Verses 1-4:

The Lord said to Moses, "Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil from beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning continually. Outside the veil of the testimony, in the tent of meeting, Aaron shall keep it in order from evening to morning before the Lord continually; it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. He shall keep the lamps in order upon the lampstand of pure gold before the Lord continually." {Lev 24:1-4 RSV}

Notice the elements of this passage:

Pure olive oil brought by the people was to be the fuel which produced the light of the candelabra. It was to burn continuously and was never to go out. Especially was it to be burning at night. From evening to morning Aaron was especially responsible to keep the light going because then, of course, this was the sole illumination of the tabernacle.

And the light was to be placed on the golden candlestick. What does all this mean?

If you are familiar with these beautiful symbols of the Old Testament you can easily interpret the passage.

There is a function within our conscious life which is designed to give us light. What is that? Well, we speak of light as truth. You might say, "Could you give me some light on this problem?" and then, "Oh, now I see the light." You mean, "Now I understand it, now I grasp it. I see reality, I understand the truth." So light is continually a symbol of truth. And which of our human functions is designed to lay hold of truth? It is the mind, isn't it? God has given us a mental faculty, a rational ability to think, to explore, to search out, to investigate, to study and correlate and relate one aspect of life to another. The whole functioning of the mind is designed to produce truth.

But notice that the light is produced by the oil, and oil is forever, in Scripture, a symbol of the Holy Spirit. So here is truth produced and made known by the Holy Spirit; in other words, truth revealed by God. That is to be the governing faculty in man. That is where we are to get our basic understanding of who we are and where we are, of what life is all about and what the world is here for and how the universe functions. All this is to come from the mind illuminated by the Spirit.

The light is to be held up by the golden candlestick, and gold is always the symbol of Deity. So it is the divine life within us which sustains this light, shining in the darkness of the world's night.

All this is a marvelous picture of how believers are to function in the world. We are to start with the mind taught by God to see life as God sees it. Most of the problems which come into our lives originate because we don't do this. The danger of having services on Sunday is that we all tend to come and sit and listen to truth from the word of God which explains what life is like, how people are to live, what we are to do, and how we are to react to the situations which confront us, and we all pay attention and are helped and stirred and nod our heads in agreement, but on Monday morning we go back to our business, our shop, our kitchen, our homes and family relationships -- the ordinary circumstances of life -- and we forget all about it! We revert to natural thinking and start acting again like everybody else around us. We believe all the illusions which those who are not taught of God believe, and we start acting and reacting the same way they do, and then we wonder why we have problems! But the whole purpose of these meetings is that we might be governed not by natural thinking but by a mind illuminated by the truth which God reveals about life -- which is the way it really is.

This is the problem highlighted by that little story in the gospels about the time when Jesus came into the home of Mary and Martha. They had been to the synagogue together and evidently Jesus had taught there. They must have had an exciting morning when Jesus began to open the Scriptures. I have often wished that I could have been there when Jesus began to teach. But when Mary and Martha came home with him for dinner Martha went into the kitchen and forgot all about what she had learned. She began to stew and fret about how to get dinner ready. She bustled around and couldn't find things and spilled the coffee and scorched the potatoes and burned her fingers. She got all upset and distracted and then finally came bursting into the living room and blamed the whole mess on Jesus. "Lord, why didn't you tell my sister to come out and help me? It's all your fault!" {cf, Luke 10:40}. Remember how Jesus replied. "Martha, Martha, you are full of care. You've gotten everything out of perspective. Life is out of focus for you, and you've let these insignificant little trivialities mount up to a tremendous problem. But only one thing is necessary," {cf, Luke 10:41-42}. What is that? What is the one fundamental thing which is necessary? Why, it is to see things the way they are! It is to face reality and to deal with things realistically. If that is not the basis of your operations in your business world or in your family life or anywhere else, then you are wrong to start with. Of course everything is going to go awry! "Mary has chosen that good portion. She has taken the time to sit and listen and get her perspectives straight, to put things back into focus, and I'm not going to take it away from her," Jesus said {cf, Luke 10:42}.

I don't know of anything more desperately necessary for Christians today than that we personally and individually expose our minds and thoughts to the revelation of God's truth and consistently practice looking at life as he tells us it is, not as the world or our feelings say it is -- and that we take his teaching seriously. To fail to do so is what gets us all confounded and confused.

I had lunch earlier this week with a dear man who is pastor of a church. He was raised with a totally liberal orientation. He never knew anything about the evangelical view of life or of the Bible, and he was pastor of a liberal church. He understood nothing of the gospel nor of the truth revealed in Scripture but was primarily concerned about social issues and all the other things emphasized in liberal philosophy. But through a chain of circumstances he discovered the bankruptcy of that view. Out of a desperate need in his own life he was driven at last to God and he became a Christian. He cast himself upon the redeeming, saving grace of Jesus Christ and was born again. Now he is in the process, very wisely and gently and yet very definitely, of turning that whole church into an evangelical, Bible-centered, Bible-teaching church.

He told me how he had felt when, as a liberal without any particular conviction of the truth of the Bible, he nevertheless was driven to God by the desperate need of his own heart. He said,

"I was prepared to do anything, if only God would meet me! I was prepared to give up anything, pay any price, and I thought I would have to. I thought, for one thing, that to be an evangelical Christian I would have to put my reason into cold storage, and I was ready to do it! But one of the delightful discoveries of my life has been that after I really found Jesus and knew him as my Lord and my Redeemer, my Savior, my mind has been challenged by the Scriptures more than it has ever been challenged before. I am discovering that becoming an evangelical doesn't mean that you have to hang your intellect up in the closet. Rather, it challenges you to search out the truth about life in a deeper way than ever before!"

Some years ago we had with us a then young instructor in nuclear physics at Stanford University, Dr. John McIntyre, who is now a professor and director of the atomic particle accelerator at Texas A & M. He said that the thing which impressed him about the Bible when he became a Christian was that it was built just like nature. He investigated the world of nature all the time, and he said that nature, on the surface, looks rather simple. But the more deeply you probe it the more complex and difficult it becomes, until it staggers the intellect. And he said, "I have found the same thing about the Bible. On the surface it looks simple even a child can believe it. But as you begin to investigate it and search out its relationships and go deeper and deeper into it, the fuses of your mind begin to blow, until you stand absolutely amazed and astonished before God."

That is the import of that passage in the book of Job where Job stands at last before God, and God begins to ask him some questions. Job hangs his head and says, "I can't answer a one. I've flunked the course completely." He was humbled before the greatness and the wisdom of the mind of God, revealed in his truth.

The next piece of furniture brought before us is the table of show bread, Verses 5-9:

"And you shall take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes of it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, upon the table of pure gold. And you shall put pure frankincense with each row, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion to be offered by fire to the Lord. Every sabbath day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord continually on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant for ever. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the offerings by fire to the Lord, a perpetual due." {Lev 24:5-9 RSV}

On the table of show bread was spread every sabbath day a freshly baked series of twelve loaves of bread made of fine flour and, as we are told elsewhere, without any leaven. These were to be displayed there for a week with frankincense spread on top of them. At the end of the week the frankincense was offered on the golden altar of incense and the bread was consumed by the priests as part of their diet. What is the meaning of all this?

The twelve loaves are a picture of the twelve tribes of Israel -- in other words, of all the people of God. Fine flour, as we have seen before, is a picture of redeemed humanity, because it is fine flour, without any lumps or coarseness. (Our natural humanity would have to be pictured by something like coarse oatmeal with a lot of chaff mixed in). And this fine flour is without leaven, without sin, as is the new nature within us, the Spirit of God imparted to us, the life of Christ by which we live. And the unleavened fine flour is all mixed up together, is in communion, representing a sharing together. So this is a beautiful picture of the realm of relationships with other believers which involves the whole range of emotions -- joy, sorrow, tears, love, peace, grief, elation -- all shared together. To put it in one phrase, this is body-life -- bearing one another's burdens, confessing our faults one to another, admonishing, rebuking, exhorting, restoring one another, ministering to each other with our spiritual gifts, being sensitive to one another's needs, responding to the heartbreak or the rejoicing of others. All of this commonality of life is depicted in the show bread, revealing here the need of the people of God to have fellowship with one another with God in their midst, not out of the flesh but in the Spirit.

The frankincense was burned on the altar of incense which was the third piece of furniture in the holy place. God always insisted that it be frankincense and no other kind.

Remember that the two older sons of Aaron got into trouble which cost them their lives because they burned another kind of incense before God. Why? Because frankincense yields its fragrance only when it is burned.

This is a picture of fragrance coming out of suffering. It is this which is offered unto God as a fragrance before him. This represents the third activity of the human consciousness in which we all engage -- the exercise of the will, the making of choices. So here is a picture of the obedient heart, the heart which responds to the truth perceived by the mind illuminated by the Spirit, which shares in the emotions of a common life within the body of Christ, and thus decides to walk before God in obedience. That is a fragrance in the nostrils of God. Jesus' life was a continual sweet smell before God because of his obedient spirit. He did what the Father said to do. And the will is the human faculty by which that ultimate choice is made.

So when these factors -- the knowledge and understanding of the mind, and the feeling of the heart -- gather together to be expressed in an action which is in line with what God has said, that is a fragrant life lifted up before God. That is a life which honors and glorifies God. It doesn't make any difference what the action is. It might be lying flat on the back in a sickbed, or it may be intense activity. It isn't the activity which is glorifying God; it is the character of the life which is behind it. That is what God depicts so beautifully here for us.

Do you remember that crucial moment of David's life when he had fallen into terrible evil and had broken up a man's marriage and then murdered the man in order to cover it up? When all this came home to his heart and he saw what he had done he cried out before God in the beautiful words of the fifty-first Psalm. He speaks of the forgiveness and the cleansing extended by God, and then he says,

**"For thou desirest not sacrifice;
else I would give it; thou delightest not in burnt offering.
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." {Psa 51:16-17 KJV}**

That is what honors God -- a broken spirit and a contrite heart. That is a sweet-smelling fragrance in God's sight.

Now, to return to the bread momentarily, it was to become the food of the priests. Priesthood, as you know, is always a picture of ministry and service by believers. So the interesting thing this suggests is that as we fellowship together and share our lives with one another, are open and transparent with each other and bear one another's burdens, we are thus strengthened and motivated to minister to others. I don't think anything has been more demonstrative of this than the new sense of sharing which has come into our own midst here in the last few years and which is expressed in our Body Life services. As we have learned to begin really to love each other, really to listen to one another's problems and to want to do something about them, to act on them and really try to help one another, there has come a far greater expression of life and love to the whole community around us. People have started taking others into their homes and reaching out to the drug addicts and the drunks and the lonely and the depressed and others in need. You see, out of the sharing of the bread, the eating of the bread of common life, comes the strength for ministry.

The closing part of the chapter is a picture of that which threatens this kind of life. An interesting story begins in Verse 10:

"Now an Israelite woman's son, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the people of Israel, and the Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel quarreled in the camp, and the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, [the name of God] and cursed. And they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. And they put him in custody, till the will of the Lord should be declared to them." {Lev 24:10-12 RSV}

Why is this put in such sharp juxtaposition to this account of the operation of the inner life of man? It is because this portrays something which threatens and imperils the relationship which has just been described to us. It is vividly demonstrated in this story of a young man whom we would term a "half-breed," half Egyptian and half-Israelite. There must have been hundreds of young men and women in the camp of Israel who had that background. This doesn't mean there is anything inherently wrong with that. But this person is picked out and highlighted for us because his life typifies a spiritual conflict. In the Scriptures Israel is a picture of the Spirit at work within us, of the new life, the redeemed life, while Egypt is always a picture of the world, of the old life. And here is someone who, in type, is trying to mix the two -- trying to live halfway between. He pictures someone who is still trying to conduct his business affairs, perhaps, by the laws of Egypt, by the ways of the world, and is also trying to mix in the world view and outlook of God. And this always gets you into trouble.

This young man had gotten into a quarrel with somebody in the camp and, in the heat of anger and passion he blurted out what was deep down within his thoughts but which he had hidden before. There is a Latin phrase: *In vino veritas*, i.e., "In wine there is truth." It is also true that in anger there is truth. When they are angry people will say something that they would never say otherwise. Usually it is something they would like to have said but didn't dare.

That is what happened here. This young man had been thinking what he said for quite a long time. Finally someone stirred him up -- we don't know what the quarrel was about -- and he got mad. And he didn't merely get angry at the man he was quarreling with; he cursed the Name. He didn't say, "God damn you," as we hear so often today; he said, "God be *damned!*" That represented the outlook of his heart, the settled conviction of his heart that it was all God's fault and that he didn't want anything to do with God.

So they brought him to Moses, and Moses said, "I don't know how to handle this. Take him to God. Let's let God decide what to do." So we read,

And the Lord said to Moses, "Bring out of the camp him who cursed; and let all who heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. And say to the people of Israel, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him; the sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death." {Lev 24:13-16 RSV}

There is the judgment of God in this case. He says this not because he has been offended by this man, not because he is vindictive and retaliates. God is not that kind of person. He is a patient, loving God who could in long suffering have borne this affront for centuries, as he has our cursing and bitterness. But he prescribes immediate death because this sentence is designed to teach a truth. The truth is that a man who curses God, who rejects God, has denied himself the very basis of life. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," {cf, Matt 4:4}. And if a professed believer denies God, he has denied the basis of his life, the only way he can live. So God makes it obvious, makes it clear. He says that the man has lost the right to live, has denied himself that right. And his life was taken away so that the truth might be vividly demonstrated to all.

Thus we know that this is what happens to us, spiritually. We don't need to point the finger at this young man, do we? How often do we do this very thing! We get angry with God and we shake our fists at him, just as Martha did with Jesus. She blamed the whole thing on him, and we do it, too. We say, "It's your fault! Get lost, God, I don't need you anymore." And when we take that attitude, God says, our life is ended. Our spiritual life is stopped right there. We are not "lost." This doesn't mean that we have lost our salvation; it means that his supply of life to us to live by day by day is ended -- until we see what is wrong -- and his grace restores us. Then we can begin again.

There are other things listed here in the closing part of the chapter for which the penalty is the same, Verses 17-22:

"He who kills a man shall be put to death. [If you injure a neighbor or ruin his reputation you will find that the same thing happens to you. Spiritually you cannot live at that level.] He who kills a beast shall make it good, life for life. When a man causes a disfigurement in his neighbor, as it has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has disfigured a man, it shall be disfigured. He who kills a beast shall make it good; and he who kills a man shall be put to death. You shall have one law for the sojourner and for the native; for I am the Lord your God." {Lev 24:17-22 RSV}

What does this mean? Well, it is simply the putting into practice, in a vivid and visible way, of what Jesus said later in the Gospels: "Judge not that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you mete to others it shall be measured back to you again," {cf, Matt 7:1}. The way you treat another person is the way you are going to be treated. If you don't like the way you are being treated, take a look at what you are doing to someone else. They are only giving you back what you are giving to them. It is strange -- we all want to live by a double standard, don't we? We all want to have people treat us right, but we reserve the right to treat them differently. We want to be able to be sharp and sarcastic to others, but we don't think that they have the right to be sharp and sarcastic to us. We want to take advantage of somebody else by being lazy and letting them do the work and not taking our fair share of the load, but we don't want them to do that to us.

But God says that we can't live that way. The way you treat another is the way it is going to come back to you, so don't complain. That is a basic law of life. The only way it can be conquered is by a change in you. When you change, then others will be changed by that. This is one of the wonderful discoveries we can make. For years we may struggle with a problem in our relationships to others, and we think, "If I could just get these people to change!" Then suddenly we discover that it was we who were causing the problem, and we change. And to our amazement the other people all change too!

"So Moses spoke to the people of Israel; and they brought him who had cursed out of the camp, and stoned him with stones. Thus the people of Israel did as the Lord commanded

Moses." {Lev 24:23 RSV}

How accurate these Scriptures are! How they search us out and find us. And yet how marvelous are the possibilities when our mind is under the control of the Spirit and we look at every problem in life not according to the way we were taught in school nor the way our family has done it for centuries but the way the word of God says it is, and when we relate to one another with openness and genuineness and thus our ministry is strengthened, and when we offer to God the fragrance of an obedient heart. That is life as God intended it to be lived!

Prayer:

Teach us, our Father, how to live this way by the power of your Spirit within us. Help us to understand that it isn't our dedicated, consecrated effort which is going to do it. It is our understanding that we can't do a thing without you, that you must enable us if we are going to be what you want us to be. Little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept, please make that come clear to us, Lord, because we are tired of living defeated lives, lives filled with conflict and pressures unresolved, and anxieties and hostilities and resentments and bitterness. We want to be your men and women, as you designed us to be. Thank you for the possibilities in Jesus Christ. In his name we pray, Amen.

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