

Homiletics Analysis: Leviticus 7

Content & Intent

Broader Unit: Leviticus 7 belongs to the larger sacrificial law section of Leviticus 1–7, which together constitute the complete manual of offerings given to Israel at Sinai. Chapters 1–5 present the offerings from the perspective of the worshiper (what you bring and why); chapters 6–7 largely repeat and supplement those same offerings from the perspective of the priests (how they are handled, who receives what portions, and under what conditions). Leviticus 7 closes this entire unit, completing the priestly regulations for the guilt offering and peace offering, then summarizing the entire sacrificial system in a formal colophon (vv. 37–38). The chapter cannot be read in isolation from this broader unit, but it does make its own specific claims that merit careful analysis.

This Text — Content: Leviticus 7 opens with supplemental regulations for the guilt offering (vv. 1–10), specifying its most holy status, the priestly portions allocated from it, and the distribution rules for various other offerings. The chapter then expands significantly on the peace offering (vv. 11–36), the most complex and communal of the sacrifices. Three varieties of peace offering are distinguished — the thanksgiving offering, the vow offering, and the freewill offering — each with its own regulations for the accompanying bread, the timing of consumption, and the portions reserved for priests and worshipers alike. Two prohibitions are embedded within this section: against eating fat (vv. 22–25) and against consuming blood (vv. 26–27), both under penalty of being cut off from the community. The priestly portions — the breast (wave offering) and the right thigh (contribution offering) — are formally designated as a perpetual ordinance (vv. 28–36). The chapter concludes with a formal colophon (vv. 37–38) summarizing the entire sacrificial system as commandments given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai.

This Text — Intent: God intends this chapter to accomplish two related effects. First, He is *ordering* the worship life of the covenant community with precision — the sacrificial system is not a spontaneous, improvised devotion but a carefully structured gift from God to His people, complete with regulations designed to preserve holiness, sustain the priesthood, and govern communal participation. Second, and more deeply, God is *demonstrating* that approach to Him is neither casual nor self-designed — that the gift of access to God is wrapped in requirements that make holiness visible, that distinguish between the holy and the common, and that point forward to the One in whom all these requirements would be finally and fully met. The elaborate ordering of portions and prohibitions is not bureaucratic legislation — it is the shape of a holy God’s hospitality.

Subject Sentence: God orders the sacrificial system with precision, showing that approach to Him is governed by His holiness, not human preference.

Primary Claim: God's meticulous regulation of the sacrificial offerings declares that access to Him is a gracious gift that arrives on His terms — structured, holy, and pointing forward to the one Mediator who fulfills every requirement worship demands.

Interpretive Evaluation

The Relationship Between Law and Gospel in This Chapter: The dominant interpretive challenge in Leviticus 7 is what to do with chapters like this in Christian preaching — chapters that appear to be pure legal regulation with no obvious narrative or christological hook. The Lutheran tradition handles this through a hard Law/Gospel distinction: the sacrificial regulations function as Law, confronting the worshiper with the impossibility of self-generated holiness and driving them to grace. This reading contains genuine insight — the prohibitions on fat and blood, and the “cut off” penalties, do expose the seriousness of approaching a holy God. However, the Lutheran reading tends to flatten what is going on in this chapter into accusation alone, missing the fact that the sacrificial system is itself gospel-shaped: it is God's provision for access, not merely God's demand for perfection. The right reading acknowledges Law/Gospel movement but refuses to reduce the chapter to Law alone.

The Peace Offering and Its Varieties — Thanksgiving, Vow, and Freewill: A significant interpretive question concerns why three varieties of peace offering are distinguished and what the distinctions signify. Some traditions (particularly Baptist and broadly evangelical) read these as distinguishing motivations for worship — gratitude (thanksgiving), obligation (vow), and spontaneous generosity (freewill) — and apply them as categories for types of Christian giving or stewardship. This is a qualified reading: the categories are genuinely present and the motivational diversity is real. However, the primary force of the distinctions lies not in classifying worshiper psychology but in governing the communal and priestly economy of worship. The time-limit regulations (eat the thanksgiving offering the same day; the vow or freewill offering may be eaten the next day but not the third day) are hygiene and holiness regulations, not merely motivational distinctions. Application that dwells too long on the three types as a worship typology misses the holiness-ordering function.

The Fat and Blood Prohibitions: The prohibitions on eating fat (vv. 22–25) and blood (vv. 26–27) have attracted diverse interpretive attention. Some traditions read these as moral regulations still binding on Christians (appealing to Acts 15:20, where abstaining from blood is included in the Jerusalem Council's letter). The Reformed reading distinguishes between the ceremonial law (which is fulfilled and abrogated in Christ per Westminster Confession 19.3–4) and the moral law, placing the fat and blood prohibitions in the

ceremonial category whose positive regulations no longer bind the Christian, while acknowledging their typological significance. The blood prohibition is particularly weighty: blood is the life, and the life belongs to God — it is this principle that underpins the atonement theology of the entire sacrificial system and finds its fulfillment in the blood of Christ shed once for all (Hebrews 9:22; 10:4–10). The Reformed reading refutes any reading that treats these as still-binding dietary regulations for Christians, while insisting on their profound typological and theological force.

The Colophon (vv. 37–38) and Its Canonical Function: The closing colophon is sometimes treated as a mere editorial summary, but it functions as a canonical claim: this entire sacrificial system was commanded by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, in the wilderness. This locates the entire chapter within the covenant given at Sinai, not as human religious invention but as divine institution. Dispensational readings sometimes use this colophon to sharply separate the Sinai economy from the new covenant economy, effectively distancing the regulations of Leviticus from any direct application to the Christian. The Reformed reading acknowledges the discontinuity (the ceremonial law is fulfilled) while insisting on the continuity of the theological principle: God’s holiness has not changed; the need for mediation has not changed; only the shadow has given way to the substance in Christ. To read the colophon as terminating the theological relevance of the chapter is to miss the typological richness that the New Testament writers themselves mine extensively from the Levitical system.

Reformed Verdict: Leviticus 7 is best read as the meticulous completion of God’s ordered provision for covenant worship — not bare Law that only accuses, and not merely antiquarian legislation without theological freight, but the gracious structure through which a holy God granted His people access on terms that preserved His holiness and pointed forward to the priestly work of Christ. Every regulation in this chapter is a sermon about holiness, access, mediation, and grace.

Key Canonical Support

- **Hebrews 9:1–14** — The writer to the Hebrews explicitly interprets the Levitical sacrificial system as a shadow pointing to Christ’s superior high-priestly work; the regulations of chapters like Leviticus 7 find their fulfillment and abrogation in His once-for-all sacrifice.
- **Hebrews 10:1–10** — “It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” — the very repetitiveness and elaborateness of the Levitical system (seen in Leviticus 7’s multiple offerings and regulations) testifies to its provisional character, pointing forward to the body prepared for Christ.
- **Psalms 50:7–15** — God declares He does not need the sacrifices of bulls and goats; what He desires is the sacrifice of thanksgiving and keeping of vows — precisely the peace offering categories of Leviticus 7, reframed as the heart behind the institution.

- **Romans 12:1** — Paul’s appeal to offer bodies as “living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God” as “spiritual worship” is the NT fulfillment-application of the sacrificial system: the whole life offered to God in Christ is the reality the Levitical offerings prefigured.
- **1 Peter 1:18–19** — The blood prohibition of Leviticus 7 (blood belongs to God, as it is life) finds its ultimate referent in the “precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” — the blood God reserved from human consumption because He was reserving it for atonement.

Aim: To show that Leviticus 7’s meticulous ordering of worship is not religious bureaucracy but the shape of a holy God’s hospitality — and that every regulation points forward to the one Mediator who meets every requirement so that we may draw near.

Content Table

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
1–2	The guilt offering is declared “most holy”; it is to be slaughtered in the same place as the burnt offering	“Most holy” designation signals direct approach to God’s holiness; no casual handling permitted
3–5	The fat portions (tail, covering fat, kidneys, lobe of the liver) are burned on the altar as a food offering to the LORD	These are the portions belonging to God; parallels Leviticus 3 and 4
6	Every male among the priests may eat the guilt offering; it is to be eaten in a holy place	Priestly portion established; the most holy offering restricts access even among those who minister
7	The guilt offering and sin offering follow the same rule: the officiating priest receives the skin	Priestly income derived from the offerings; God’s provision for those who mediate
8	The priest who offers the burnt offering keeps the skin	Extends priestly entitlement across offering types
9–10	All grain offerings baked, griddle-made, or pan-cooked belong to the offering priest; dry vs. oil-	Priestly economy is carefully ordered; no priest is left without provision

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
	mixed grain offerings are distributed equally among Aaron's sons	
11–12	Introduction to the law of the peace offering: if offered as thanksgiving, it is accompanied by unleavened loaves mixed with oil, wafers, and well-mixed fine flour cakes, plus leavened bread	The thanksgiving variety is the most elaborate; the leavened loaves are added here uniquely
13	Leavened bread accompanies the thanksgiving peace offering along with the unleavened bread	An unusual inclusion of leaven — the meal is communal and includes ordinary bread alongside the holy
14	One portion of each bread offering is lifted as a contribution to the LORD and goes to the priest who sprinkles the blood	The priest receives from every part of the offering
15	The flesh of the thanksgiving peace offering must be eaten the same day — none may remain until morning	Urgency and freshness required; the gift is not to be hoarded
16–17	The vow or freewill peace offering may be eaten over two days; anything remaining on the third day must be burned	Slightly relaxed time limit; but the third-day prohibition is absolute
18	If any of the peace offering is eaten on the third day, it is rejected — it will not be accepted, and the one who eats it bears iniquity	The “piggul” (abomination) principle — stale worship is not worship; holiness requires immediacy
19–21	Meat touching anything unclean must be burned; only the clean may eat; anyone who eats the peace offering while unclean is cut off from the people	Cleanness required of the worshiper — the offering and the offerer must both be in proper condition

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
22–23	Direct address to Israel: you shall eat no fat, whether of ox, sheep, or goat	Fat belongs to God; this is a stated prohibition
24	Fat of a dead animal or torn animal may be used for other purposes but not eaten	Practical application of the prohibition
25	Whoever eats the fat of an animal whose offering is made by fire to the LORD shall be cut off from the people	Penalty = exclusion from the covenant community; this is a serious offense
26–27	No blood shall be eaten in any dwelling place; whoever eats blood is cut off from the people	Blood prohibition restated and universalized — this is not just a Temple regulation but applies wherever Israel lives
28–29	The worshiper who offers the peace offering must bring the contribution to the LORD with his own hands — the fat with the breast	The offerer personally presents the offering; participation is required, not merely observance
30	The breast is waved before the LORD as a wave offering and belongs to Aaron and his sons	The waving ritual enacts presentation to God and reception back from Him
31	The priest burns the fat on the altar; the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons	God receives the fat; the priesthood receives the breast
32	The right thigh is given to the priest as a contribution from the peace offering	The choicest portion of the meat goes to the officiating priest
33	The son of Aaron who offers the blood and fat of the peace offering receives the right thigh as his portion	The personal connection between ministry and provision is explicit
34	The wave breast and contribution thigh are taken from the people of Israel and given to Aaron and his sons	This is not an ad hoc arrangement — it is a permanent covenant allocation

Verse(s)	Content	Notes
35–36	as a perpetual due This is the portion of Aaron and his sons from the LORD's food offerings; established from the day they were consecrated, as a perpetual statute	The priesthood's provision is grounded in God's own appointment, not human generosity
37–38	Formal colophon: this is the law of the burnt offering, grain offering, sin offering, guilt offering, ordination offering, and peace offering, which the LORD commanded Moses on Mount Sinai	The entire sacrificial system is divinely instituted, Sinai-grounded, and complete as a system

Divisions Table

Division	Verses	Label
1	1–10	The Guilt Offering: Most Holy, Priestly Portions, and the Economy of Ministry
2	11–21	The Peace Offering Varieties: Thanksgiving, Vow, Freewill — and the Holiness of Timing
3	22–27	The Twin Prohibitions: No Fat, No Blood — What Belongs to God Alone
4	28–36	The Priestly Portions: Wave Breast and Right Thigh as Perpetual Covenant Allocation
5	37–38	The Colophon: God's Complete Sacrificial System, Divinely Commanded at Sinai

Subject Sentence & Primary Claim (*restated*)

Subject Sentence: God orders the sacrificial system with precision, showing that approach to Him is governed by His holiness, not human preference.

Primary Claim: God's meticulous regulation of the sacrificial offerings declares that access to Him is a gracious gift that arrives on His terms — structured, holy, and pointing forward to the one Mediator who fulfills every requirement worship demands.

Applications (Five)

1. Worship is not self-designed — it is received. (Mind/Belief) Modern Christianity operates with a pervasive assumption that worship is primarily an expression of the worshiper's preference, personality, and creativity. Leviticus 7 confronts this assumption at every line. God specifies which portions belong to Him, who may eat, when it must be eaten, what may not be consumed, and who receives what. The worshiper does not invent the terms of approach — God does. This does not make worship cold or impersonal; it makes it safe. To draw near to a holy God on His terms rather than your own is not an imposition — it is mercy. The Christian should regularly examine whether their approach to God in prayer, Scripture, and gathered worship reflects God's revealed terms or their own curated preferences.

2. The “cut off” penalty exposes how seriously God takes unauthorized approach. (Mind/Belief) The repeated phrase “cut off from the people” — applied to eating fat (v. 25), eating blood (v. 27), and eating the peace offering while unclean (v. 21) — is not religious bureaucracy. It is God's declaration that uninstructed, careless, or presumptuous access to Him carries the gravest of consequences. The Christian who has been granted access through Christ by the Spirit should not conclude from their freedom that approach to God is now casual. The blood of Christ that has opened the way for access is the same blood that demonstrates how costly that access was. The penalty paid for us was exclusion and death — borne by Christ so that we would not be cut off. Draw near with confidence, but never with carelessness.

3. The thanksgiving, vow, and freewill peace offerings call for specific, responsive worship — not generic gratitude. (Affections/Worship) The three varieties of peace offering are distinguished by what prompted them: thanksgiving for a specific act of deliverance, fulfillment of a specific vow, and spontaneous generosity. Each calls for a particular kind of response to a particular kind of grace. The Christian's worship life should have this same texture — not a generic background hum of “thankfulness” but specific, traceable responses to specific gifts of grace. What deliverance has God wrought in your life that has not yet received a thanksgiving offering? What vow made in crisis has gone unfulfilled in comfort? What prompts genuine, unprompted generosity in your heart toward God right now? Worship that cannot answer these questions has become generic, and generic worship is not the worship Leviticus 7 envisions.

4. The priest's provision coming from the offerings teaches that those who minister the gospel have a rightful claim on the community's support. (Will/Behavior) The elaborate priestly economy of Leviticus 7 — the skin of the burnt offering, the grain offerings, the breast and right thigh of the peace offering — exists because God designed the priestly ministry to be sustained by the worshiping community's offerings. Paul quotes this principle directly in 1 Corinthians 9:13–14: “those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” The Christian who benefits from faithful preaching, pastoral care, and theological teaching is participating in the same economy Leviticus 7 describes. Tangible, generous, and deliberate support for those who minister the word is not optional generosity — it is covenant obligation dressed in New Covenant clothing.

5. The “stale offering” principle (vv. 16–18) warns that delayed obedience becomes no obedience at all. (Will/Behavior) The third-day prohibition is striking: what was acceptable on day one becomes an abomination (piggul) on day three. The offering doesn't change — the timing does. God does not accept the worship He has not received in its proper season. This principle has direct application to the life of obedience: the act of repentance, confession, or reconciliation that is perpetually deferred does not remain neutral — it curdles. The word you know you need to say, the sin you know you need to confess, the wrong you know you need to make right — these do not get better with delay. God is calling for a same-day response to the grace He has extended. Do not let what is good today become an abomination by neglect.

Theological Importance

Theological Importance: Leviticus 7 teaches that God is holy in a way that generates structure, not chaos — that His holiness does not repel worshipers but rather orders the terms by which they may draw near. The elaborate regulations of this chapter reveal several important things about God's character: He takes the distinction between the holy and the common with complete seriousness (the “cut off” penalties); He provides for those who minister before Him (the priestly portions); He accepts multiple motivations for approach — thanksgiving, obligation, and spontaneous generosity — showing that He welcomes the full range of human response to His grace; and He claims the fat and blood as His own, asserting ownership over the life of His creation. All of this coheres in a God who is simultaneously unapproachably holy and graciously accessible — a tension resolved only in the gospel of Christ.

Reformed Theological Significance

Reformed Theological Significance: Leviticus 7 is a chapter of the ceremonial law that the Westminster Confession describes as “abrogated” in its positive regulations under the New Covenant (WCF 19.3), yet whose theological substance perdures with full force. The Reformed tradition has always insisted that the Levitical system is not merely ancient

Israelite religion to be discarded, but a pedagogical instrument (Galatians 3:24) that preaches Christ in shadow and type. The guilt and peace offerings regulated in this chapter find their fulfillment in Christ's once-for-all sacrifice — His blood not eaten but shed; His fat not burned on an altar but His whole self given as the offering that the Father accepted completely. The priestly portions point to Christ as the great High Priest who is both the one who offers and the offering itself. The colophon's declaration that all of this was divinely commanded at Sinai grounds the Reformed insistence that the covenant of grace — administered differently in each age — is one covenant, not two, and that what God was accomplishing through the Levitical system was always moving toward the same goal: access for sinners to a holy God through the blood of the one true Mediator.

Main Takeaway

God is not improvising your access to Him — He has ordered it down to the last detail, and in Christ, every requirement of that order has been perfectly and permanently met. You are not approaching God on your own terms, your own timing, or your own merit. You are approaching Him through a Mediator who has satisfied every regulation this chapter contains and a thousand more. Draw near — but draw near knowing that the God who was meticulous about burnt fat and priestly thighs is just as meticulous about the holiness required to stand before Him, and that holiness is now yours, in Christ alone.

Preaching/Teaching Pitfalls

- **Treating this chapter as unpreachable or merely historical.** The most common error with Leviticus 7 is skipping it, summarizing it, or preaching a single “background” sermon on “Old Testament sacrifice” that uses the whole of chapters 1–7 as a prop. This chapter has specific content and specific claims that deserve their own exposition. The temptation to treat Leviticus as background material for “real” preaching elsewhere in the canon should be resisted. Every word of God is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16), including the regulations about wave breasts and priestly thighs.
- **Preaching it as mere typology without attending to what it meant to Israel.** The opposite error is rushing so quickly to the christological fulfillment that the chapter's own claims are never allowed to speak. Israel worshiped God through these offerings in real time — these regulations shaped their covenant life. The preacher should let the chapter first do what it did for Israel (order their approach to a holy God) before showing how that order is fulfilled and transformed in Christ. Typology that bypasses the literal-historical meaning does not illuminate the antitype; it obscures it.

- **Moralizing the priestly portions into a stewardship sermon and stopping there.** It is easy to preach the priestly economy of verses 7–10 and 28–36 as a straightforward text about giving to support ministry, and while that application is legitimate (Paul makes it in 1 Corinthians 9), it does not exhaust the passage. The priestly portions also teach something about the nature of mediation, about God’s provision for those who stand between Him and the people, and ultimately about Christ as the High Priest who receives His inheritance from the Father. Don’t harvest the stewardship application and leave the Christology on the ground.
- **Ignoring the “cut off” penalties as if they were primitive and embarrassing.** Preachers in contexts shaped by therapeutic assumptions will be tempted to soften or skip the “cut off from the people” language. This would be a significant loss. These penalties are the chapter’s starkest revelation of God’s holiness — the clearest signal that access to God on unauthorized terms is not merely ineffective but catastrophic. The Christian preacher should use these penalties to magnify both the severity of God’s holiness and the wonder of the atonement: we deserved to be cut off; Christ was cut off for us (Isaiah 53:8; Galatians 3:13).
- **Reading the fat and blood prohibitions as dietary regulations still binding on Christians.** The appeal to Acts 15:20 (the Jerusalem Council’s prohibition on blood) sometimes leads expositors to treat these prohibitions as permanently binding. The Reformed reading recognizes these as ceremonial regulations fulfilled and abrogated in Christ, while insisting on their theological significance: blood is life, life belongs to God, and the atonement is made through blood — a principle that reaches its apex in the blood of Christ. Preach the theology, not the diet.
- **Missing the “stale offering” (piggul) principle as a live word.** The third-day prohibition in verses 16–18 is one of the more striking and practically applicable principles in the chapter, but it is easily lost in the mass of regulatory detail. The preacher should surface it deliberately: God does not accept worship that has curdled through delay. This is a live word about the urgency of obedience, confession, and response — and it deserves explicit treatment rather than being submerged in the surrounding regulations.