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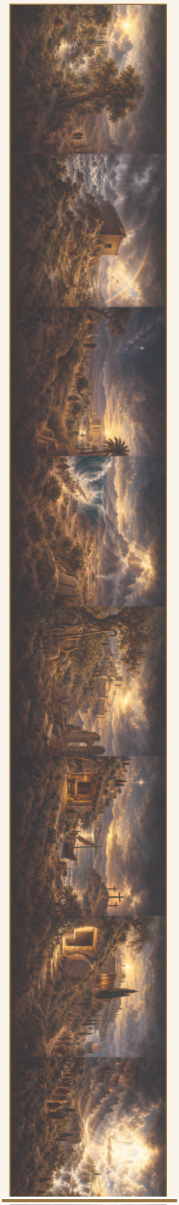
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



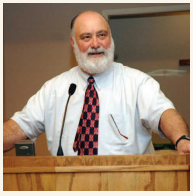
I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.

LEVITICUS 10:3, EXCERPT

Worship is not made acceptable simply by human intention. John Weaver considers the biblical warning of strange fire, the authority of God's commands, and the danger of replacing obedient reverence with self-directed religious practice. These messages ask readers to examine how they approach God and whose standards govern that approach.

“Strange fire is anything that the Lord has not commanded in His worship and service.”

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Strange Fire

Part One of Two

Introduction to the Sin of Nadab and Abihu

Leviticus chapter 10. The message is entitled “Strange Fire.” We read the first three verses:

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

Many have read these verses and wondered concerning the sins as well as the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. What exactly did their sins include, and what are the implications of those sins? Why was the punishment death, and especially death by fire? Why was Aaron told to hold his peace? What are the implications of the whole incident?

Is it possible to offer strange fire today? In what areas did Nadab and Abihu fail? What was the essence of their failure? Were they spurious priests? Were they pretenders?

The answer is absolutely not. They were real, genuine, true sons of Aaron. The vessels of their ministry and their priestly garments were holy and correct. Moreover, these two young men had just finished seven days of absolute purification. So what was their sin? Did they stain the veil and the holiest of all with human blood? Or did they do something that you and I would call extremely vile and wicked? Were they like the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, whom the Bible declares committed fornication even before the door of the tabernacle? The answer is absolutely not, at least not as far as we are told. What we are told is that their sin was simply this.

They offered strange fire before the Lord. We must undertake to see the significance and the greatness of this sin if we are to comprehend the instantaneous and immediate deaths of Nadab and Abihu, which God inflicted upon them supernaturally and miraculously by sending fire and consuming them. Initially, there are several general explanations as to the essence of their sins. I keep saying sins, plural, because although the Bible says they offered strange fire before the Lord, which we would count as one sin, there were other sins included in that.

General Explanations of Their Sin

But you have to ask this: How do most people explain this? Let me give you several generally accepted explanations. The first generally accepted explanation is that some say the sins of Nadab and Abihu were connected with drunkenness, and that this was why they offered strange fire before the Lord. Since we are in Leviticus 10, look at verse 9. In fact, we will read verse 8: “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou nor thy sons with thee, when you go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.”

Simply because that prohibition was given in the same few short verses, including the sins of Nadab and Abihu, some would assume that somehow drunkenness was connected with this. Understand,

however, that although wine and strong drink were prohibited to the priests as they served, they were certainly not prohibited at any other time. The priests always lived from the portions of the sacrifices given by the people. Whether you are aware of it or not, one of the things God required in the sacrifices was wine. Hold Leviticus 10, but look back to Exodus 29:40, where God speaks of what was to be included in the sacrifices: “And with the one lamb, there must be a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil and the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering.”

In Leviticus 23:13, God says, "And the meat offering, or the meal offering, thereof shall be two-tenths deals of fine flour mingled with oil, and an offering made by fire unto the Lord for a sweet savor, and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin." So in all of these sacrifices, God demanded that wine was to be given. Therefore, all of these priests would have a portion of that wine, just as they had a portion of the flour, the lamb, the ox, or whatever was being sacrificed.

The point I am trying to make is that when you read verse 9 in Leviticus chapter 10, the appearance of that prohibition could have been a coincidence. It does not necessarily have to be related to the sins of Nadab and Abihu. It could have been; I do not know for sure. In fact, no one can say with absolute certainty, because the Bible does not say one way or the other.

But let me point something else out. In verses 6 and 7 of Leviticus chapter 10, there was also a prohibition for Aaron and his family to mourn the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. Leviticus 10:6 says, "And Moses said unto Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, those were the two brothers that were left, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest you die, and lest wrath come upon all the people. But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled. And you shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest you die: for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses."

Here is the prohibition for them to even mourn for the deaths of Nadab and Abihu.

Some have stated that God struck Nadab and Abihu with fire because they used fire in offering the incense that had not been supernaturally lit by God. The word strange here could also be referred to as common or unauthorized. In fact, the word for strange is the Hebrew word zur, translated in our Bible as a stranger or a foreigner. The word is also used to describe a prostitute, who would be a stranger or a foreigner to the family relationship. So when God says that they offered strange fire, it could be that they were offering not simply a common fire but an unauthorized fire.

It is undeniable that God sent the original fire, consumed the sacrifice on the altar, and lit the altar. In Leviticus 9:24, after all the offerings were on the altar, "there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat, which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces." The supposition is that these boys then kindled a fire themselves or took fire from a different source other than the altar. Thus their strange fire would have been unauthorized fire.

Look in Leviticus 16:12, because God is forbidding strange incense: "And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense, beaten small, and bring it within the veil." God specifically says that the fire is to come from the altar. It was the fire that had been supernaturally kindled by God when He consumed that first sacrifice.

The fire and the sacrifice were to be continual because they had to sacrifice both morning and evening. The second explanation is clear and certainly scriptural, but I do think that there were other sins involved, other than simply offering an unauthorized fire.

For instance, go back in your Bibles to Leviticus chapter 9 and verse 24. Look what happens when God sends that supernatural fire, ignites the altar fire, and consumes the sacrifice: "And there came a fire from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat, which when all the people saw, they shouted and fell on their faces." So when all the people saw the fire fall, they gave a shout and fell on their faces.

Undoubtedly, this was a very exciting moment. It was a very awe-inspiring time. Would you not think that two young men, when they saw the fire fall and the reaction of the people—how they shouted and fell on their faces—might, in the excitement of the moment, want to exalt their persons and their positions? Nadab and Abihu were young men, and they evidently got excited. They not only got excited; they forgot who they were and their positions.

Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Does not pride haunt all of us? And if the answer is yes, I never will forget one of my favorite cartoons. It showed two monks in monks' robes walking side by side. They had their hands up there in the robe, and one of them looked at the other and said, "You know, it kind of makes you proud that we're so humble, doesn't it?"

Do you realize that the duty of offering incense belonged to Aaron alone and not to them as yet? So here is the thing: without any instruction, without any direction, Nadab and Abihu grabbed fire from a strange source, grabbed incense, and ran into the holiest of all, which no one was to do but Aaron. Only one priest could go in there at a time, in his proper order, doing his proper role.

Regarding the tabernacle and the temple, God ordered everything in minute detail. There was absolutely nothing left out. Leviticus 16:1–2 records what God said to Aaron: "And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the Lord and died. And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not. For I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat."

Notice what He said: You cannot come in whenever you want to come in. You only come in when God directs you to come in, when the cloud is upon the mercy seat. Not even Aaron, who was the high priest, could go in and out as he pleased. He was limited by God, because God spelled out everything in detail. The command concerned Aaron himself and governed his access to the holy place.

Luke 1:8–9 records the role of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, as a priest: "And it came to pass while he," that is Zacharias, "executed the priest office before God, in the order of his course,

according to the custom of the priest office, his lot was to burn incense when he went to the temple of the Lord." There was one priest, out of his order, in his time, who could do this. No one else could do it. The priestly service was assigned according to the order and custom of the office.

John Gill gives a summary of the sins of Nadab and Abihu: "These young men assumed an office which had been committed to Moses, or if it were sometime afterwards, it was encroachment on the duties which devolved on their father alone as the high priest."

But the offense was of a far more aggravated nature than such a mere informality would imply. It consisted not only in their venturing unauthorized to perform the incense service, the highest and most solemn of the priestly office, and not only in their engaging together in a work which was the duty of only one, but in their presuming to intrude into the Holy of Holies, to which access was denied to all but the high priest alone.

In this respect, they offered strange fire before the Lord. They were guilty of a presumptuous and unwarranted intrusion into a sacred office which did not belong to them. But their offense was more aggravated still, for instead of taking the fire which was put into their censers from the brazen altar, they seem to have been content with common fire. Thus they perpetrated an act which, considering the descent of the miraculous fire they had so recently witnessed and the solemn obligation under which they were laid to make use of that which was specially appropriated to the service of the altars, betrayed a carelessness and irreverence of one faith most surprising and lamentable. A precedent of such evil tendency was dangerous. It was imperatively necessary, therefore, both for the priests themselves and for sacred things, that a marked expression of divine displeasure should be given for doing that which God commanded them not. And what God did was send fire down and consume them.

If you will look in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 30 and verse 9, you will see that God forbade strange incense. If strange incense was forbidden, very obviously, strange fire was also forbidden. In verse 8, God says, “And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your

generations. You shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt offerings, nor meat offerings, neither shall you pour drink offering thereon." So no strange incense thereon. If there was no strange incense, there should be no strange fire as well.

Obviously, what these boys had done was not only take common fire, or strange fire; they also intruded into that aspect of the priestly office into which they had absolutely no authority to go. They performed an act which they had no authority to perform, and they did so irreverently. They did that which God commanded them not.

Just because someone is holding a high office does not mean that individual can do whatever he wants to do. Here is an excellent illustration of that in 2 Chronicles 26, concerning King Uzziah, who was one of the better kings. He reigned fifty-two years. "And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings to cast stones. And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows, and great stones withal. His name was spread far abroad, for he was marvelously helped till he was strong."

Here was a man who was very inventive, very cunning, and very considerate of his people. He wanted the best in defending his people. But notice his last phrase in verse 15: "For he was marvelously helped till he was strong." Then verse 16 says, "But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction."

"For he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." Azariah the priest went in after him. Thank God, here was one man who had a little courage. With him were fourscore eighty more priests of the Lord that were valiant men. They withstood Uzziah the king and said of him, "It appertaineth not to Uzziah to burn incense in the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense. Go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed, neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God."

Then Uzziah was wroth. "I'm the king, boy, don't you know who I am?" He had a censer in his hand to burn incense. While he was wroth with the priest, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before

the priest and the house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked upon him, and behold, he was leprous in the forehead. They thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper until

"the day of his death and dwelt in a several or separate house being a leper for he was cut off from the house of the Lord and Jotham his son was over the king's house judging the people of the land." So here was a man who was a king, basically a good king until his old age. Then he became haughty, arrogant, high, and lifted up. He intruded in the priest's office, and God smote him with leprosy.

We have to comprehend the fullness and sufficiency of the Word of God. When God gave direction to Moses, Aaron, and his sons concerning what should be done and what should not be done, there was absolutely no room left for man to determine what would be desirable or expedient.

Nadab and Abihu thought it desirable and expedient to grab common fire and incense, run into the holy place, and do what they wanted to do. No. What the Lord commanded was what they were obligated to do, and that was quite sufficient. God made it exceedingly plain to Moses, Aaron, and the sons exactly what was to be done. Nothing was required of man except explicit obedience to divine command.

By the way, the same is true today. I want you to understand that there is a curse necessarily attached to anyone who adds to or takes from the Word of God. Hold Leviticus 10, but turn to Deuteronomy 12, verse 32. Then we will go to the book of Revelation, with which you are quite familiar. Look what God says: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it. Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.” Here is what God said: Just do what I tell you. You do not have to think; you simply obey. It is just that simple. That is what He told the priests, and that is what He tells us.

Revelation 22:18–19 says, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book.”

God is telling us that He has given us everything that we need. We simply need to obey. We have the privilege of doing that which God commands. We do not have the privilege of adding to what He commands, subtracting from what He commands, or changing what He commands.

Do you realize, especially when it comes to worship—and that is what this was all about in Leviticus chapter 10—that God knows what is pleasing and acceptable unto Him? We do not do in God’s worship that which we think is pleasing, acceptable, beautiful, aesthetic, or thrilling to us. Have you ever stopped to think about this? Worship is really not for us. It is for God. God knows what pleases Him and what is acceptable unto Him. Therefore, all we have to do when it comes to worship is simply obey.

The Specific Sins of Nadab and Abihu

The sins of Nadab and Abihu consisted not only of offering strange fire—that is, fire taken from the altar which God did not like—but also of lifting themselves up in pride, rushing rashly into the holy place, and assuming a duty which only Aaron their father was obligated to perform. Thus, what they were doing was adding to the worship of God and acting in plain disobedience to the commands of God. Now here is my question.

The Failure of the Levitical Priesthood

What are we to learn from Leviticus chapter 10? How do the deaths of Nadab and Abihu apply to us? What principles from this entire situation are applicable to us today? Romans 15:4 tells us, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” First Corinthians 10 also speaks of everything that

happened in the Old Testament and says that what happened to them "were written for our examples." God is telling us that we must learn from everything in the Old Testament.

So what are we to learn from the deaths of Nadab and Abihu and this entire incident? Let us go back to Leviticus chapter 10, beginning with verse 1. Here is the first thing we are to learn: We have to see the failure of the Levitical priesthood at its inception.

Lesson 1: The Failure of the Levitical Priesthood

"And Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before Moses."

Now turn back to Leviticus chapter 8, verse 33, and consider what had happened before Leviticus chapter 10. Moses tells Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar—the four sons of Aaron: "And you shall not go out of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, in seven days, until the days of your consecration be at an end, for seven days he shall consecrate you. As he hath done this day, so the Lord hath commanded to do, to make an atonement for you. Therefore shall you abide at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, day and night, seven days, and keep the charge of the Lord, that ye die not, for so I am commanded. So Aaron and his sons did all things which the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses."

Seven days previous to chapter 9, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar were consecrated. For seven days they obeyed. Look in chapter 9, verse 1: "And it came to pass on the eighth day." That was the very day their consecration ended. Seven days, and then the next day, the eighth day, Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel. He said unto Aaron, "Take thee a young calf for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering without blemish and offer them before the Lord."

When you read all of chapter 9, you find that they did everything they were supposed to do, laying all the sacrifices upon the altar. Then, in verse 24, "there came a fire from before the Lord, and

consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat, which all the people saw. When they saw, they shouted and fell on their faces."

For seven days, they had been purified and consecrated. On the eighth day, they put all the offerings on the altar. That same day, God sent fire and consumed the burnt offering upon the altar, lighting the fire on the altar. The same day, Nadab and Abihu grabbed their censers, put strange fire in them, ran into the holiest of all, and God killed them. So, on the very first day of their service, the very first day they served in the tabernacle, they sinned against God. Two of the original five priests were struck down supernaturally by the power of God—the very first day.

Look in Leviticus chapter 10, verse 6: "And Moses said unto Aaron, and to Eleazar, and to Ithamar his two sons that are left, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest you die, and lest wrath come upon all the people." They could not sympathize with their sons. They had done wrong. "But let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled."

As soon as the Levitical priesthood was established, we see its failure—the very first day. What are we being taught? We are being taught that perfection is not by the Levitical priesthood, nor by the sacrifices of bulls, calves, sheep, and oxen. What we are shown here in the very beginning is the absolute need of another priesthood and of a greater priest.

Hebrews 9:6 says, "Now, when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God." That is the first room; they could always enter there. "But into the second went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people." The Holy Ghost was signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing. What was that first tabernacle?

It "was a figure" or a type "for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience," and which stood only "in meats and drinks and divers washings and carnal

ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation." You have a failure of the priesthood at the outset.

All this signified that the way to God was not yet made manifest, perfected, or available. But verse 11 says, "But Christ, being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of bulls and goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered once in the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

SCRIPTURE READING - Hebrews 10:1-7 (KJV)

Here he is saying that there was a failure of the Levitical priesthood for a reason:

"For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered, because that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

"Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body thou hast prepared for me, and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. For then I said, Lo, I come in the volume of this book, it is written of me to do thy will, O God."

So I want you to see the picture that God is showing us in the Old Testament. When Nadab and Abihu are killed on the very first day of the service of the tabernacle, we are to see the feebleness, the helplessness, and the uselessness of man in determining what is holy and what is not holy; what is acceptable to God and what is not acceptable to God; what is the correct way to approach God and what is not the correct way to approach God. That is not for man to say. It is God who determines all of that. So, on the very first day of the Levitical priesthood, it comes short of the glory of God. On that first day, Nadab and Abihu are consumed by fire.

Hebrews 7:11 says, “If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, for under it the people received the law, what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident for that after the similitude of Melchizedek there arises another priest who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment but after the power of an endless life for he testified about our priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

What are we to see? The failure of the Levitical priesthood indicates that there must be another priesthood and a greater High Priest—one who did not spring from Levi, but from Judah. Hebrews 4 teaches us that Jesus Christ is indeed our great High Priest.

Any longing or desire to return to the types, shadows, and emblems of the Old Covenant is a denial of the priesthood, perfection, and work of Jesus Christ. All these Old Testament types picture Him. He is truth; He is reality.

Lesson 2: Knowing One's Place and Responsibilities in Authority

Here is the second lesson for today, the second truth that we must learn: those in positions of authority should not only know their places, but their responsibilities as well. Sinful, arrogant, and ignorant men assume that once they are in office, they may do whatever they please.

Now, if you don't believe that, just look at modern-day politicians. Most politicians believe that they are not bound by the law of the land. They believe that they pass laws and make laws for the peasants, while they themselves are above the law. That's why they steal with impunity, sometimes murder with impunity, and do everything else with impunity. They're like the Pharisees our Lord described in Matthew 23:4: "For they bind heavy burdens and

grievous to be born, and lay them upon men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

They want to make laws for the peasants while doing what they please. Let me make a statement: Like Nadab and Abihu, today's politicians do not know their place, their limitations, their responsibilities, or their constituents. I will tell you quite frankly, today's politicians—and I'm not talking about our congressman; I'm talking about our judicial system, the executive offices, and even that fourth arm of government, the administrative—do not know their place or their responsibilities. They're completely and totally out of touch, not only with reality but with their constituents as well.

Do you realize that in the beginning we did have statesmen? Statesmen understood that they were servants and not masters. Turn in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 17. I want you to see why God demanded that the kings of Israel have their own personal copy of the law of God and required them to read in that law continually. Beginning in verse 18, God says: "And it shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them. Watch, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

One of the reasons the king had to read in the law of God was that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren. He had to read, meditate, consider, and apply. Why? That his heart not be lifted up. He had to realize that he himself was a servant—not just a servant to God, but a servant to the people as well.

This is true of the king. You remember what those elders told Rehoboam when the people came and said, “Make our burdens lighter”? The elders of Israel said, “Look, if you will serve this people, they'll serve you forever.” And Lord, if you take the attitude of a servant and serve them, they will serve you. But what did he do? He refused the advice and counsel of the old men and went to the young

men. They told him to say, “Your little finger is going to be thicker than your father's loins. While he beats you with whips, you're going to beat him with scorpions.” Every ruler, civil or spiritual, is to be a servant.

A tyrant in the pulpit is just as bad as a tyrant on the throne. God's preachers have authority, and civil rulers have authority, but that authority has been delegated to them by God. It is always limited and must be applied as God has directed.

Peter writes, “The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind, neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”

I would have no authority as a pastor to look to Robert and say, “Robert, you ought not to wear that color shirt. I don't like that shirt. Don't wear it anymore. That upsets me.” I have no right to tell him that. I do like the shirt, by the way.

If he is doing something unbiblical, unscriptural, and ungodly, I have every bit of God's authority to come to him and say, “My brother, you should not be doing this. Here is what God commands you to do.” There is a difference between a man demanding that you submit to what God says and demanding that you submit to what he thinks. There is a big difference.

Scriptural authority is not given for the sheep's destruction, but for their edification. In the Bible, confrontation, rebuke, admonishment, and church discipline, as heavy as they are at times, are given for the sheep's edification and benefit, not for their destruction.

I don't suppose that you could get any more authority than that which the Apostles had. In 2 Corinthians 10:8, the Apostle Paul said, “For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I

should not be ashamed." Paul said, "I've got authority. But that authority is given for your edification, not for your destruction."

Then, in 2 Corinthians 13:10, he says, "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present, I should use sharpness according to the power which the Lord had given me to edification and not for destruction."

Let me tell you the problem that Nadab and Abihu had. They did not know their place, and they did not know their responsibilities. They acted rashly, irresponsibly, and arrogantly, and it cost them their lives. Now here is my question: How many civil rulers and spiritual rulers will have to die, judged by God, before we learn our places and our responsibilities? I don't care what position you are in the body of Jesus Christ. I don't care what authority you have in the church or in the civil government. You must know your place and your responsibilities.

Applications for Today

God will never use you in a position of authority until you learn to be in submission to His authority. He will never use you to rule over others until you learn to be ruled over by God. This is the first application.

Anytime we devote our lives to serving, living, and worshiping types, shadows, and emblems instead of Christ and the reality we have in Christ, we are sinning against God. Anytime our service or worship terminates upon man, even one of the Levitical order, we are denying Christ and His superiority.

As separated, purified, and consecrated as Nadab and Abihu were, they were still just men, and they failed in their service. If you look to men, you will be disappointed. If you look to me merely as a man, you will be disappointed, because I am a man, a sinner, and will eventually fail. I am not perfect. I never will be perfect. I never have been perfect. I fooled Alice once.

I probably could not do it again. But you understand what I am saying. I have my failings and shortcomings. Everyone does. If you look to man, you will always be disappointed. This teaches us to look to Christ, the God-man, who is absolutely perfect and will never fail

us. Even Aaron, the great high priest in the Old Testament, the first one, took a tool and formed that molten calf and got the people to sin in Exodus 32. You cannot look to man.

If you follow man, you must learn to do what the Apostle Paul said. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 16, "Wherefore I beseech you, brethren, be ye followers of me." Was Paul telling people to follow him? Yes, he did. But Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 1, "Be ye followers of me even as I am a follower of Christ." It is all right to follow men as long as they follow Christ. When they cease following Christ, you cease following them. You follow only Christ alone. Men will always disappoint us; Christ will never disappoint us.

Consider how much rebuke, admonishment, education, and reinforcement not only should be, but must be, administered to rulers, both civil and spiritual. We have erred so greatly, traveled so far in the wrong direction, violated so many trusts, and sinned so much that it is almost impossible to find a civil or spiritual ruler who really knows his place, responsibilities, and authority.

May I remind you of the founding of this country? There was no civil ruler—not one, in any state—who could assume office without sitting and hearing an election sermon preached to him from the Bible. The preacher told the civil ruler his duties before God and explained the duties of the people at the same time. Those preachers, at the founding of this country, made sure that both rulers and the people knew their positions.

Thirdly, Nadab and Abihu should be examples of those authorities that they should not do that which they have no authority to do. And what do we have on every hand? We have men doing everything they have no authority to do. Look at how they're trying to destroy the 2nd Amendment, the 4th Amendment, the 1st Amendment, any of them. And the truth is this: God judged Nadab and Abihu, and He is still the judge of all the earth, and He will still judge the wicked today.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee this day. We thank You for Your truth. Help us to learn and make sure in our lives that we know our place in the body of Christ, our responsibilities,

and the authority that we possess, using it all according to Your Word for Your honor, Your glory, and the good of Thy people. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Strange Fire

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

This is the second part of the message I began last week, entitled Strange Fire. Most of the points will be considered today. In Leviticus 10, we read of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron: "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace."

We have been looking at the deaths of Nadab and Abihu and considering the implications of their sins when they offered strange fire unto the Lord. Last week, I pointed out that the word strange is the Hebrew word zur, which literally means strange or foreign. The word is even used for a prostitute in the Old Testament, who would

be a stranger or foreigner to the family relation. The word strange could also be understood as unauthorized fire.

I tried to summarize for you last week the sins of Nadab and Abihu. Their sins included offering strange fire—that is, fire that was not taken from the altar which God Himself had miraculously and supernaturally kindled. They got a common fire, but they also lifted themselves up with pride. They rashly rushed into the holy place where only Aaron was to go. They assumed a role and responsibilities that were not theirs. They added to the worship of God, and all of this was in plain disobedience to the very specific command of God.

So I began to ask this question: What are we to learn from Leviticus chapter 10? I answered only two points last week. The very first one is this: We have to learn and see the failure of the Levitical priesthood from its very inception. I took you back to Leviticus chapter 8 and showed you there that Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu—particularly Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu—along with Ithamar and Eleazar, had just spent seven days being sanctified and consecrated.

When you get to chapter eight, you have the eighth day, where everything is laid out. Chapter nine is where the sacrifices are given. That is the eighth day: they are laid out upon the altar. In the very last passage of Leviticus chapter nine, God sends fire from heaven, consumes the sacrifice, and ignites the fire on the altar. When you get to chapter ten, you have the deaths of Nadab and Abihu. So, on the very first day that Nadab and Abihu served as priests, that very same day God killed them.

We therefore see the failure of the Levitical priesthood at its inception. I read a number of passages from the book of Hebrews. Let me read one again from Leviticus 10, verses 1 through 4. Here the Bible says this: “For the law, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they have ceased to have been offered; because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a

remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

We see, on the one hand, the uselessness and, on the other hand, the failure of the Levitical priesthood, because it could not bring anyone to perfection. It really could not bring anyone to God. What it did do, in all of those sacrifices and ceremonies, was point to the one true and living God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God, who does indeed take away our sins.

The second point that I made last week is this: We were to learn and observe that those in positions of authority should not only know their places, but also their responsibilities. Nadab and Abihu, although they were priests, were not the high priest. They did not know their place or their responsibility, and consequently God killed them. How many tyrants, both civil and spiritual, must fall before individuals realize that they are not God? They cannot do as they please. They are required by God to be under authority themselves and to do only that which God has given them authority to do.

Rebellion in Lawfully Ordained Offices

One of my favorite passages is found in Psalm 82, verses 6 and 7, a passage directed to the judges. God says, "I have said, you are gods and all of your children, the most high, but you shall die like men and fall like one of the princes." God is saying that those who are in positions of authority, and who abuse that position, will fall. They will die like men.

Thirdly, we want to consider another fundamental truth that is often ignored: rebellion may exist in lawfully ordained offices and in lawfully appointed individuals. Nadab and Abihu were real, genuine priests. They genuinely held an office, and it was given to them.

It is imperative for us to remember that when I use the word government, I am not necessarily talking only about civil government, but about all kinds of government. Whether we speak of self-government, family government, church government, or civil government, we have to understand that government is covenantal in nature. Because government is covenantal in nature, God has ordained it, and God holds all parties responsible.

We are singling out civil government and spiritual government, but think about 2 Kings 11:17. Jehoiada, who was the high priest, made covenants: “And Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people, that they should be the Lord’s people; and between the king and the people also.” There were two covenants. In the first, the king agreed to be God’s king, and the people agreed to be God’s people. In the second, the king agreed to rule faithfully, and the people agreed to obey him as long as he did.

You find the same truth in 2 Chronicles 23:16: “And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, that is God, and between all the people and between the king that they should be the Lord’s people.”

Those who are in positions of authority, whether a spiritual ruler like Nadab and Abihu or a civil ruler like any king, president, or congressman, may rebel in his relationship either to God or to the people, because these are two distinct covenants. Rebellion may be found in the lawfully appointed individual either in relationship to God or to the people. Likewise, the people may rebel in their relationship to God or in relationship to their ruler.

You remember that in 1 Samuel chapter 8, Israel was demanding a king, and God eventually gave them Saul to be king. Hold Leviticus 10; we are coming back there. But turn over to 1 Samuel chapter 12, and let us begin looking at verse 24. Samuel is speaking to the people, and he says this: "Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if you shall do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king." Now, if both the king and the people may be consumed, it means, therefore, that they both may do wickedly and both may be guilty of rebellion or treason.

What we tend to forget is that our rulers are sinners, that our rulers are really wicked. In fact, the Bible emphasizes that those who are in positions of authority have a greater tendency to rebel than those who are not in positions of authority. Psalm 2 elucidates this. Look at Psalm 2, beginning with verse 1, and notice the questions asked at the very beginning: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" Very obviously, the people can imagine a vain thing. The people can rebel. The people can transgress.

But watch verse 2: "The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords away from us." What are the rulers saying?

We do not want to be bound by God, limited by God, or under God's authority. We want to be our own authority and do our own things. Civil rulers may rebel to the extent that they become a god to themselves and thus a rival to the one true and living God. They can become so wicked that Psalm 94 and verse 20 asks this question: “Shall the throne of iniquity, that is, a wicked civil government, have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by law,” or makes sin legal? Will a wicked, civil, reprobate, rebellious government or ruler have fellowship with God when it makes legal that which God has said is wicked and wrong? The answer, of course, is no. It is not in fellowship with God, nor can it be.

Whether or not an individual agrees with the establishment of the United States Constitution, one thing is certain: in its establishment, it was supposed to be the document that bound down the federal government. Listen carefully to Article 6 and Paragraph 2: “The Constitution, this Constitution, and the laws of the United States, which shall be made in pursuance thereof, and all treaties which shall be made under the authority of the United States”—and the authority of the United States is the Constitution—“shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every state shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any state to the contrary notwithstanding.”

The point is very simple: the federal government is to be bound by the Constitution. It was Thomas Jefferson who said, “Bind them down with the chains of the Constitution.” I know that only the Lord can fix our problems, and that our problems are primarily spiritual. But have you ever stopped to think? If our government and rulers actually obeyed the Constitution and were actually limited according to it, I am not saying that we would be problem-free.

We certainly would not be. But we would have a whole lot fewer problems than we have today because there would be a limitation. You may have a lawfully appointed office, and there may be a lawfully elected individual in that office. Yet that lawful office and

lawfully elected individual may act unlawfully and thus become a tyrant, a traitor, and treasonous, because that individual swore an oath to uphold the Constitution before taking office. All civil rulers who violate the Constitution are traitors and treasonous individuals; they are violating the oath they took. Likewise, any spiritual leader who violates the Word of God is violating an oath in that sense of the word.

The third point is clear and simple from Scripture: a lawfully elected office and a lawfully appointed individual may act rebelliously and treasonously and be classified as a traitor before God and before man.

Here is the fourth point. One of the main sins of Nadab and Abihu consisted in what I would call will worship. In my introductory part of the first message, I asked, "Is it possible to commit the sin of offering strange fire today?" The answer is yes. Strange fire is anything that the Lord has not commanded in His worship and service.

Will Worship as Strange Fire

What did Nadab and Abihu do? They offered strange fire. Their strange fire was their own innovation and invention. They did not use that which God supernaturally ignited; they obtained a common, unauthorized fire. They did not see anything wrong with it. Fire is fire, is it not? That was their reasoning. Will worship signifies a mode of worship that man chooses for himself, independently of the revelation God has given. Will worship, therefore, is strange fire—that which God has not commanded.

Will worship is the will of man dictating in spiritual things, which few have ever really considered to be a sin, but yet that is exactly what it is. The apostle Paul writes, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Why would anyone want to worship angels? Why would anyone want to worship anything other than what is revealed in the Word of God? The answer is because someone has decided, "This is the way I think folks ought to worship." Instead of listening to God, it is will worship.

Paul says that these things have “a show of wisdom in will worship and humility and neglecting of the body, not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.” Will worship, then, always leads to a false humility and neglect of the body. Will worship is that which goes beyond the Word of God. Will worship is that which man adds to the Word of God.

What he thinks is aesthetic and beautiful and nice and pleasing—that is what he wants. Will worship is trying to worship God in your own way. It is you trying to prescribe the correct way to worship God for yourself, or what you think would be pleasing to God. To reject God’s plain commands and substitute what you desire and what you want for God’s worship is treason in the highest order. It is idolatry, because you are elevating yourself above God and saying, “God, I do not really care what You have directed in this area. I want this, and I think this is pleasing, and I think You should accept this.”

God has never left such an important matter to man. God has always prescribed the way that He is to be worshipped and the way He is to be served. The presence of God must have full power and full sway, and flesh must be solid before Him. We cannot attempt to worship God or serve God in any way that we please. We must worship Him and serve Him in the way that He has ordained. When we fail to do so, we are rebelling against God. We have to remember that worship is for Him.

It is not necessarily for us. When we begin to innovate, invent, and bring into God's worship that which we please and like, we are signing our own death warrant, just like Nadab and Abihu, who brought destruction upon themselves.

Consider King Saul. He was a man who did something he had no authority to do, especially in relationship to the worship of God. As the account records in 1 Samuel 13:8-14:

“And he tarried seven days according to the set time that Samuel had appointed. But Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him from Saul. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he, king Saul, offered the burnt offering. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end

of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came, and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash, therefore said I, The Philistines will come down upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication of the Lord. I forced myself, therefore, and I offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly. Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord by God, which he commanded thee. For now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever, but now thy kingdom shall not continue. The Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over a people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord God commanded thee."

Saul, like Nadab and Abihu, lost not only his position; he lost his kingdom and ultimately his life. Why? Because he wanted to worship God in the way he wanted to worship God. Instead of waiting for Samuel, Saul had absolutely no authority to do what he did.

Saul began to invent an emergency: "I've got to do this. Samuel's not here." Saul was simply wiped out. Do you realize, like Saul, Nadab and Abihu not only lost their lives; they lost their progeny? Twice it is recorded in Scripture that Nadab and Abihu had no children.

Numbers 3:1–4 says: "These also are the generations of Aaron and Moses in the day that the Lord spake with Moses in Mount Sinai. And these are the names of the sons of Aaron, Nadab the firstborn, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. These are the names of the sons of Aaron, the priests which were anointed, whom he consecrated to minister in the priest's office. And Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord, when they offered strange fire before the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children. And Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father." Note that they had no children.

Now 1 Chronicles 24:2 says, "But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children: therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office." God not only cut off Nadab and Abihu;

He cut them off before, if they were married, children were born. Twice God emphasizes that they had no children.

Do you realize that God frequently makes sure the wicked do not reproduce? Oftentimes He cuts them off in the prime of life. Psalm 55:23 says, “And deceitful men shall not live out half their days.” What does that mean? It means God cuts them down in the prime of life.

Look at Jeremiah 22 and notice what God says concerning Coniah, a wicked, ungodly man. Coniah was a king, Jeconiah. Beginning at verse 28: “Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? Wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.” What did God do? God not only wiped out Coniah; He wiped out his posterity.

Just as He did Nadab and Abihu, God may wipe out those in lawfully elected office who themselves rebel against Him. Those in lawfully elected spiritual or civil office may be guilty of will worship, and God wipes them out.

A Holy Office Cannot Sanctify an Unholy Man

We must learn from the deaths of Nadab and Abihu that a holy office will not sanctify an unholy man; neither will it save or sanctify his unholy children. There is no ruler, no position of authority, that will be protected by his office or position. Certainly, if anyone would ever have been protected by an office or position, it should have been Nadab and Abihu. They were not only sons of Aaron, the high priest; they were also the nephews of Moses.

Moses was a unique individual. Did you know that Moses held three offices, just like our Lord? Moses was prophet, priest, and king. The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 32:5, speaking of Moses, that he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. Thus God identifies Moses as a king. In Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses said, “The Lord by God will raise up

unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee by brethren like unto me, and to him shall ye hearken."

Moses was a king and a prophet, and he was the one who sanctified and consecrated Aaron and his sons. Moses was a Levite; he offered the sacrifices for Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Thus Moses was prophet, priest, and king. Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron and nephews of Moses, who held three offices. If anyone was ever going to be sanctified or saved because of his office or because of some ruler in office, it should have been Nadab and Abihu. But they were not saved.

We must learn that there is absolutely nothing parents can do to save their children, even when those children are grown. We may teach them, pray for them, and do our best to guide and direct them, but the truth is that we cannot save them. There is not one of us who can save his own child. We cannot make our children believe, have faith, or do what is right. Aaron's sons were not only grown; they had been instructed and taught.

Moreover, these boys had been set aside for special service unto God. They had gone through seven days of consecration and sanctification. They had seen the miracles of God, and Nadab and Abihu had heard the voice of God. Yet they died in God's divine displeasure.

I frequently tell people that the two most difficult lessons I have learned in nearly fifty years of preaching are these: You cannot help everybody. You want to help them, but some people refuse to be instructed, helped, or corrected. They refuse to listen and obey. There are simply some people you cannot help. The second lesson is even more difficult: sometimes those you cannot help are your own family. I dare say that probably everyone in this assembly has family members who are unconverted and unsaved, what we would call black sheep.

You may witness to them, talk to them, and endeavor to help them, but it is like water off a duck's back. My children, my in-laws, and my grandchildren will not be saved because I am a pastor, nor because I am endeavoring to live a holy, godly, obedient life. They must personally repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If they

refuse, there is absolutely nothing I can do for them. Moreover, they must live a life of obedience, but if they do not, I cannot make them. Only the grace and mercy of God can save them, and only the grace and mercy of God can make them obedient.

Do you pray for your family? Of course I pray for them. I try to do what I can to influence them, but I cannot save them, and neither can you save your own. If any office, or any religious leader in an office, could help or save anybody, surely it would have been Aaron and Moses helping to save Nadab and Abihu.

No office can save or sanctify an unholy man. There is no godly man who can save or sanctify his unholy children. It is absolutely impossible. We need the grace and mercy of God. That is exactly what we are being taught in Leviticus chapter 10.

Sixthly, Aaron was compelled to acknowledge the righteousness of God's judgment upon his sons. Look in Leviticus chapter 10, beginning in verse 3: Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me. And before all the people all be glorified, and Aaron held his peace. And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel, the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near and carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they went near and carried them in their coats out of the camp, as Moses said.

The Law of Retribution

Acknowledging God's Righteous Judgment

Moses said unto Aaron, and to Eleazar and to Ithamar, his sons, “Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes, lest ye die. And lest wrath come upon all the people, but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled. And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the Lord is upon you.” And they did according to the word of Moses.

What do I mean when I say that Aaron was compelled to acknowledge the righteous judgment of God upon his sons? God said, in effect, “Aaron, you cannot mourn for them. They were

wicked. I judged them. I destroyed them." Here is another hard lesson: when God judges our children, we must always side with the Lord. As difficult as it may be, as grieved as we will be, and as humiliated as we shall be, we must always confess and acknowledge that the Judge of all the earth does right.

Lot was Abraham's nephew. When God revealed to Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham began to intervene for his family. Abraham asked whether the Judge of all the earth would do right. Of course, the Judge of all the earth will do what is right. God only does that which is right and holy.

We should never complain of or criticize His judgments, even when His judgments affect our children and families. Aaron was compelled to acknowledge that God was righteous in taking his sons. It is simply God's mercy that He has allowed any of us, and any of our children, to live. We should be thankful for the days and times God has given us with our children.

Lex Talionis: The Law of Retribution

Seventhly, the destruction of Nadab and Abihu is an example of the lex talionis of Scripture. Lex talionis is Latin for the law of retribution. Nadab and Abihu sinned by fire; God judged and destroyed them, and they died by fire. In Exodus 21:24–25, God says, "An eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

What God was demanding was that the punishment be made to fit the crime. God is a God of justice, and He always makes the punishment fit the crime. That is why He says in Galatians 6:7–8, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Do not be surprised that you reap exactly what you sow.

The lex talionis is not only in the Old Testament; it is in the New Testament as well. Galatians 6:7–8 is an example of the lex talionis, the law of retribution, by which God makes the punishment fit the

crime. We always reap exactly that which we sow. Those boys sinned by fire, and they died by fire.

Holiness Required for Nearness to God

We must learn that the closer we get to the Lord, the more holy we must be. Leviticus 10:3 says, “Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me.” Nadab and Abihu were almost as close as they could get to the Lord at that point in time. Aaron was the closest; he was the high priest. Nadab was the eldest son, which meant that when Aaron died, Nadab would have been next in line.

These boys should have been more holy than they were. God will be sanctified in those who serve Him. Hebrews 12:14 tells us, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” As you mature and grow in your Christian life, you should become more holy, more godly, and more obedient. The closer you get to the Lord, the more holy you must be, because God is holy, and He will be sanctified in those who come near Him.

If we want to be close to our Lord, we must be holy, godly, submissive, and obedient individuals. The more holy we are, the closer our connection with Him. He is the one who makes us holy. The more closely we get to the Lord, the more holy we should be.

God's Word as a Two-Edged Sword

Ninthly, lastly, it should be evident from this passage in Leviticus 10 that God's sword has two edges. That means it cuts in two ways. In Hebrews 4:12–13, God says, “For the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to dividing asunder of joints and marrow in the soul of the spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart. Is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do?” The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword. If I swing this way, it will cut you; if I come back this way, it will cut you as well.

God supernaturally lit the fire on that altar and consumed the sacrifice. I think the fire that was acceptable unto God, the fire that sanctified the sacrifice, sanctified the service, and sanctified Aaron as well pleasing to God, was also the same fire that God sent and consumed His sons because they failed to sanctify the Lord in their hearts and took upon themselves a self-willed worship.

Consider what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:14: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ. We always triumph. And make it manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.” Then he says, “For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish. To the one where the savor of death unto death and to the other, the savor of life unto life and who is sufficient for these things.” God always makes us triumph in Christ. We are a savor of life unto life to those that believe, but we are also the savor of death and the death of those who do not believe.

Do you realize the same gospel that draws sinners will also drive centers away? The same sun that melts the wax will harden the clay. God's Word is a double-edged sword. It will either draw you to Christ or drive you farther away because of your sin, rebellion, and wickedness. Go back to Leviticus 10 and look again at verse 3.

Then Moses said unto Aaron, “This is that that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me. And before all the people, I will be glorified.” And Aaron held his peace. Those whom God saves will redound to His grace and mercy. Those who fail to believe and fail to repent will redound unto God's righteousness and justice. God's going to be glorified either in salvation or damnation, but He will be glorified. Aaron could say nothing because he knew that Moses spoke the truth. God is glorified in the salvation of the righteous, and God is also glorified in the condemnation of the wicked. Do you remember in Revelation chapter 19 what the saints said when the wicked were judged? “Hallelujah for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” God will be praised in life and in death.

Applications and Warnings

One application is this: people ask, “How could God kill Nadab and Abihu just for bringing in strange fire?” First, their sins included far more than just strange fire. But what you may determine to be minor in your eyes may not be minor in the eyes of God. We are not the determiners of minor and major sins; God is the determiner of minor and major sins. Bishop Hall said it like this: “It is a dangerous thing in the service of God to decline from his own institutions. We have to do with a God who is wise to prescribe his own worship, just to require that which he has prescribed, and powerful to revenge that which He is not prescribed.” That is true. In the lives of Nadab and Abihu, we also have an excellent example of the truth of Proverbs 29 and verse 1: “He that being often reproved and hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy.”

I do not know how often or how frequently Nadab and Abihu were instructed. I do know that they were instructed and instructed well. For seven days, they probably went over everything time and time again before that eighth day when they had to offer the sacrifices. And what did God do? God cut them down quickly and suddenly.

Nadab and Abihu did not have time to cry out, beg God for mercy, or even say, “Lord, forgive me.” They died in the very act of their sin. They were struck instantly, divinely, supernaturally, miraculously. They had no time to cry for mercy and ask the Lord for forgiveness. It is true that God is long suffering to us word.

But sometimes He does make quick work with sinners, and sentences are executed speedily. Presumptuous sinners bring upon themselves a quick and sudden destruction, and God justly and righteously does not even allow them space to repent.

I have heard so many people say, “Here is my plan. My plan is to live my life the way I please, do what I want to do, and pursue what thrills me. Right before I die, I am going to ask the Lord to save me.” You may die like Nadab and Abihu. You may never get to cry for mercy.

Now is the time to repent. Now is the time to believe. Now is the time to serve Christ. Now is the time to live for Him. God gave us the

example of Nadab and Abihu not only for our instruction, but for our warning.

Let us pray. Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask for Your divine help. Give us understanding. May we be warned, instructed, and challenged, and, Lord, may we become more holy, more godly, and more obedient. Make sure, Father, that we give Thee that which Thou dost require and demand in Your service and worship. We praise Thee as the sovereign, holy, righteous God that Thou art, and we ask, Father, for Your grace in our lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

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