

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**

**Leviticus 10:1-3**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we are going to read Leviticus Chapter 10, and today we will read verses 1-3.

Leviticus 9 records the first service of the priestly system, which is a pivotal development in the relationship between God and men. Before this, God, in each generation, called one or two particularly spiritual individuals to follow Him, and through these particularly spiritual people, He revealed His will and works to the world. But now, God had obtained a nation, and through the service of the priestly system, He could bring the entire nation before Him. This opened up a new era.

In the first official service of the priestly system, we see Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's sons carefully and reverently following God's commands to Moses. They first offered the sin offering and the burnt offering for Aaron, the high priest; and then they offered the sin offering, burnt offering, grain offering, and peace offering for the entire congregation of Israel. Finally, Aaron, as the high priest, blessed the congregation of Israel and completed the offerings.

After that, Aaron came down from the altar, and Moses led him into the sanctuary for the first time, which was a completely new experience for Aaron. Moses was probably introducing him to the various items in the sanctuary and the things that the priests must pay attention to during their service. When Moses and Aaron came out of the sanctuary, they once again blessed the people, and at that moment, the glory of the LORD appeared to the people. Fire came out from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar, showing that God had fully accepted the offerings made by the priests for the people. The people shouted for joy and fell on their faces to worship God.

This is a very joyful and glorious picture: God fully accepted a nation and celebrated with this nation. Yet in the midst of this joyful and celebratory background, a

terrifying tragedy occurred. Through this event, God wanted to tell people that when serving Him, they must follow His revelations and laws, otherwise, His discipline would be extremely severe.

**Verse 1: "Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them."**

At the beginning of this verse, the Chinese Union Version translation omits a conjunction word that is present in the KJV, which starts the verse with "and." This indicates that this event immediately followed the end of chapter 9, when fire from heaven came down to the altar. From that moment on, the fire on the altar was not to be extinguished because the source of the fire was from God. This fire was holy, purifying, testing, and even a fire of judgment. This fire was different from ordinary fire, which was used by people for cooking. In the tabernacle, wherever fire was required, it had to be fire from heaven.

Aaron had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Nadab and Abihu were the eldest and second sons, and they were priests, set apart to serve God. Aaron's sons had never entered the sanctuary before, and they were likely filled with curiosity about it. So, Nadab and Abihu took their censers, filled them with fire, and added incense, entering the sanctuary and coming to the golden altar to burn incense before the LORD.

The Bible specifically points out that they offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. This means they acted on their own initiative to burn incense before God. At first glance, it may seem like they were zealous in their service, doing something that God had not commanded, and merely using the wrong fire. It might seem that their zeal in service should be met with leniency. But unexpectedly, they were severely punished by God.

If we look deeper, we can see that every step they took was wrong. God's revelations are progressive. Up until this point, God had only revealed to the priests

the need to offer sacrifices for the people to resolve the issue of sin, moving from being sinful to having sin covered. However, this alone did not constitute the conditions for them to come to the altar of incense to burn incense before God. Coming before God requires more than just having sin covered; people must also be set apart from the common, dedicated to God, meaning they must be holy.

Following this, from chapters 11 to 15, God would reveal to the congregation of Israel through Moses the laws of diet and bodily purification, showing that the people of Israel, in their daily lives, also needed to avoid defilement and be set apart to God. After these revelations were given, they would lead into Leviticus 16, which speaks of the sacrifices for the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16:1 mentions that Aaron's two sons were struck down by God for not approaching Him in the proper manner, and in verses 11-13, it explains how to properly burn incense before God.

Let's look at Leviticus 16:11-13. To properly burn incense before God, the high priest Aaron had to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar. Remember, the fire on the altar came from God, so it was not ordinary fire. Aaron was to take a handful of finely ground incense, which was made according to the instructions in Exodus 30:34-38. There, it was revealed that the incense was most holy, and people were not to make it for themselves or even to smell it. Aaron was to bring the censer and the incense into the sanctuary, place the coals on the golden altar, and then put the incense on the coals before the LORD. The smoke of the incense would cover the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant, allowing the high priest to be accepted by God and to serve in the sanctuary. God's instructions were this detailed, and His requirements were this strict.

Let's look back at Nadab and Abihu and examine exactly what mistakes they made:

First, God had not commanded them to burn incense because the time had not yet come; they went ahead of God. Second, burning incense was the duty of the high priest, meaning only Aaron was qualified to do it. Third, they should have used the high priest's censer, but instead, they used their own censers. Fourth, they were supposed to use fire from the altar, as this fire came from God, but they offered profane fire. Fifth, they had to use the specially prepared incense, which only the

high priest was allowed to use, and it was only to be burned on the altar in the sanctuary.

Here we see that everything they did was wrong from beginning to end, which is why God specifically pointed out that they offered "profane fire." God didn't just point out a procedural mistake—they had the wrong mindset. They acted presumptuously, offering something profane and common to God. This not only displeased God but also gravely offended Him.

Dear brothers and sisters, when it comes to serving God, zeal alone is entirely insufficient. Beyond having a heart to serve God, every step must follow God's instructions in order to be accepted by Him. Today, many churches have become worldly and weak, and it's hard to find people willing to serve. As a result, anyone with a heart for service is considered a rare find, and churches often allow these individuals to serve using their natural, worldly methods. But this is extremely offensive to God. Serving God must follow His ways, and the church must never resort to "any means necessary" to achieve its goals. Every step must align with God's will.

**Verse 2: "So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD."**

Nadab and Abihu, whether out of zeal or curiosity, carelessly offered profane fire before God. As a result, fire came out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Just a few hours earlier, fire had come out from the LORD and consumed the burnt offering on the altar. That fire was the fire of acceptance, the holy fire. Now, fire came out from the LORD again, but this time it was the fire of judgment. Nadab and Abihu were immediately judged and died before the LORD.

Here we see that God's requirements for the priests were strict. They were responsible for leading the people in worship and sacrifices before God. If they could not follow God's commands, how could they help the people make offerings? As a result, God did not delay His judgment, and Nadab and Abihu were struck down

on the spot. What was meant to be a day of joy and celebration ended in tragedy, showing how serious and exacting God truly is.

When God begins a new phase of leadership, He often handles violations very severely to set a good example and reveal His truth. However, as time goes on, God seems to show more tolerance, giving those who err the opportunity to repent. A similar situation occurred in the early church.

The church in Jerusalem was the first church God established on earth, and at the beginning, it was very holy, glorious, and thriving. The saints who had been saved sold their properties and lived communally, sharing everything. In Acts 5:1-11, we read about a couple who also sold their properties, but they secretly kept part of the proceeds while pretending to give all of it, laying the rest at the apostles' feet. As a result of Peter's rebuke, the couple immediately fell dead—a very severe punishment. Today, however, similar instances of hypocrisy are often seen in churches, and even more corrupt things happen frequently. Yet, God seems to show more tolerance now.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must understand that God's patience is meant to lead us to repentance, to return to God's will, and to follow His instructions. On the other hand, if we refuse to repent and God continues to be patient, it may eventually result in God giving us over to our desires, which means He no longer disciplines us. The greatest punishment God can give is to leave us to ourselves, and when that happens, our end will be far worse than if we were immediately struck down.

**Verse 3: "And Moses said to Aaron, 'This is what the LORD spoke, saying: By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.' So Aaron held his peace."**

Aaron, having just lost two sons, must have been deeply grieved. Moses immediately stepped in and seized this teachable moment. He told Aaron, "This is what the LORD meant when He said, 'I will show Myself holy among those who come near Me.'" Those who approach God must be holy, especially the priests who

are set apart to serve Him. They can draw near to God, but they must be holy, for God is holy. If the priests approach God's service carelessly or without holiness, they will face severe consequences from God.

The same principle still applies today. Each of us, as saints serving in the church, must not take our service lightly. While physical death may not occur immediately, spiritual death is certain if we neglect God's commands. This means our spiritual growth will stagnate and come to a halt.

In the modern church, we see countless examples of churches adopting worldly methods, pursuing worldly prosperity and influence. As a result, church leadership is continually plagued by scandals, defiling God's church. Therefore, for those of us who desire to serve in the church, we must hold fast to one principle: the church's growth must be according to God's way, so that God can be glorified among the people. Earthly wealth and glory are worthless in God's eyes. No matter how large the ministry, how beautiful the building, how excellent the music, or how moving the preaching, it all pales in comparison to a small group of saints who sincerely love the Lord, pursue holiness, and wholeheartedly offer themselves to God to glorify Him.

Moses' words might seem harsh to some, but Moses put God first, and he required Aaron, as the high priest, to do the same. Aaron, recognizing this, held his peace. God's severe discipline surely left a deep impression on Aaron, and may it leave the same impression on us as well.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for once again reminding us that it is a great honor to serve the saints in the church and to serve You. This is not something to be taken lightly. You have always sought a group of people who will serve the church according to Your heart. Help us to value Your Word, to lay aside our natural tendencies, our zeal, and our own methods, and to come before You with pure hearts. May we serve the saints around us according to Your revelation and Your instructions. We do not seek greatness or influence; we only seek to please You. Bless the church I belong to, that it may be a church after Your heart. I pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.