

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

Leviticus 19:1-8

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 19, and today we will read verses 1-8.

Regarding the statutes and ordinances for maintaining holiness in Israel's daily life, God first addressed sexual immorality, especially warning Israel not to follow the evil practices of the Canaanites. It was precisely because of the Canaanites' corruption, including incest, the sacrifice of children to Molech, acts of male prostitution and temple prostitution, homosexuality, and bestiality, that they defiled themselves and the land of Canaan. Therefore, God wanted to punish the iniquity of that land and called Moses to lead Israel to enter Canaan and drive out its inhabitants. Because the land of Canaan was defiled, it would vomit out the Canaanites. God also warned Israel that if they, after entering Canaan, imitated the Canaanites' evil practices, the land would also vomit them out.

In Chapter 19, God continued instructing Israel to observe moral statutes in their daily lives. This chapter can be viewed as the application of the Ten Commandments in everyday life. The Ten Commandments provide overarching principles, corresponding to God's divine attributes, and are easy to remember. When applied in daily life, these commandments generate various ordinances. These ordinances may seem trivial at first glance, here a little and there a little; however, their purpose is consistent—to lead Israel to live a holy life.

In Chapter 19, the statutes recorded in verses 1-2 form a summary, and the following passages can be divided into five sections according to their subject: verses 3-8 concern God, verses 9-18 concern people, verses 19-25 concern property, verses 26-32 concern oneself, and verses 33-37 encourage people to imitate God's love and righteousness. There are exactly five sections, and we can read one section per day. Today, let us read verses 1-8.

Verses 1-2: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.’”

These two verses serve as the summary of Chapter 19. Israel was to be holy because the LORD God is holy. In this chapter, the phrase “I am the LORD” appears 16 times, and often “your God” is added. Here we see God repeatedly reminding Israel to be mindful of Him and of their relationship with Him. Whenever God says, “I am the LORD your God,” it tells Israel that they must understand that they are God’s people and belong to Him. God is holy, and therefore His people must also be holy.

The Chinese Union Version translates this as “聖潔”, but the Hebrew word is “qadosh”, and the English translation is “holy”. The original meaning of this Hebrew word is “of God” or “set apart unto God,” which implies belonging to God or being consecrated to God. Therefore, a better translation might be simply “holy” or “divine,” without the added “潔” (clean). The word “聖潔” narrows the focus to the moral aspect, confining the entire meaning of holiness to morality. It suggests that if a person does not sin or follow the flesh, they are holy; however, this standard of holiness does not necessarily reach God’s standard.

Holiness describes a person who is entirely God’s, separated and consecrated to God—not only pure in nature but also entirely submissive to God in sovereignty. However, as everyone is accustomed to the Chinese Union Version, we will continue to use the term “聖潔”. Nonetheless, I must remind the saints that the biblical meaning encompasses not only moral purity but also complete belonging to God.

Verse 3: “Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.”

Honoring one’s parents is the fifth commandment, and keeping the Sabbath is the fourth commandment. This verse places these two commandments together, and they are the only two positive commandments among the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment is to remember the Sabbath day, and the fifth is to honor

one's parents. The other eight commandments all begin with "you shall not," such as "You shall not make for yourselves a carved image," "You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," and so on.

God is proactive, putting before us the things we should do. "Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father"—parents are the source of each person's life, and respecting one's parents is to honor one's source. And God is the source of all things, because all things were created by Him. A person who honors his parents is also one who respects God. Therefore, honoring one's parents is placed in the fifth commandment, on the same tablet as the first four commandments. The first four commandments concern the relationship between people and God, and honoring one's parents is also a way to honor the source, which is connected to God. Honoring one's parents relates to respect of God, the source of all life.

Exodus 20:12 says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." This is a commandment with a promise. Those who honor their parents will have a long life on the land God has given them. How God desires for Israel, after entering Canaan, to be blessed with health and peace. Therefore, God first mentions this commandment with a promise. Following this is the fourth commandment—to keep God's Sabbath.

In the beginning, God created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, in six days. On the seventh day, God rested and set that day as the Sabbath. Man was created on the sixth day, so the first day after man was created was the Sabbath. This reveals God's intention, which is for man to first enjoy rest. On the Sabbath day, no work is to be done. The first two things God mentioned were to honor one's parents so that one may live long on the earth, and to keep the Sabbath so that people may enjoy rest. This is God's good will for man. Then God endorsed His words, adding the phrase, "I am the LORD your God."

Verse 4: "Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I am the LORD your God."

This verse combines the first and second commandments in the Ten Commandments. The first commandment is to have no other gods before Me. Therefore, you must not turn to “worthless idols.” The term “worthless idols” in the original meaning actually refers to idols, and the NIV translates it as “do not turn to idols.” Jehovah is the only true God; all others are worthless and empty, unreal. We must place the LORD God in the first position. Any person, thing, or matter that is placed before the LORD God becomes an idol for us, and God will tell us not to turn to idols.

The second commandment is not to make for oneself carved images; here it says, “nor make for yourselves molded gods.” John 4:24, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” God is Spirit, whom you cannot see or touch, and the manifestation of God is Jesus Christ. If you want to know God, you should read the four gospels of the New Testament carefully, where you will know Jesus as a person, His life, His conduct, and what He had done for us. The Bible also tells us that Jesus had no beauty or majesty to attract us, like a root out of dry ground; there was nothing in His appearance that we should desire Him. Here God says not to make molded gods for yourselves, not even an image of Jesus, let alone of Mary. Because God is Spirit, He wants us to remember Him in spirit, not by making molded gods.

Especially today, the Holy Spirit dwells in the saints; in the spirit, we can communicate with God and follow God without needing a physical intermediary. In this verse, God once again emphasizes, “I am the LORD your God.” God has many purposes in emphasizing this. First, it means these words are spoken to you by Me; second, you must obey the words I have spoken; third, if you cannot obey, come before God, who can supply you with strength to enable you to obey. So God patiently and repeatedly says, “I am the LORD your God.”

Verse 5: “And if you offer a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, you shall offer it of your own free will.”

Here, God suddenly turns to the peace offering, which is indeed thought-provoking. Earlier, He mentioned not turning to idols and not making idols for yourselves. Because God knows that people need God, need to be connected with God, need to have fellowship with God. For when God first created man, He placed this need within man. Ecclesiastes 3:11, "He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, He has put eternity in their hearts." The term "eternity" can also be translated as "forever," so when God created man, He placed eternity in man's heart, and this eternity is actually the spirit of man. Only eternal things can satisfy the needs of the human spirit. Therefore, as long as a person exists, there will be a desire to seek God.

In the process of seeking, if a person cannot remove their own desires, they can easily be deceived by those gilded, shiny idols. The best way to reject idols is to offer a peace offering to God. Because the peace offering is initiated by man, it can be an expression of gratitude to God, a fulfillment of a vow, or simply an offering made freely and willingly. The peace offering is a sacrifice that is shared by the person, the priest, and God, a communal celebration that allows people to remain in a peaceful fellowship with God.

Here, God says that even in offering a peace offering, we should pay attention to offer it in a way that pleases God. Being willing to offer to God, we must also do so according to God's command; only then can the offering be pleasing to God. Here God reminds us that we must submit to God's authority and offer sacrifices in the manner God prescribed. When Cain offered his sacrifice in his own way, it was not pleasing to God. His brother Abel, on the other hand, offered his sacrifice according to God's revelation, and it was pleasing to God. Cain, in his jealousy of Abel, ended up killing Abel. Here we see that offering sacrifices in a way that does not please God can have very serious consequences.

Verses 6-7: "It shall be eaten the same day you offer it, and on the next day; and if any remains until the third day, it shall be burned in the fire. And if it is eaten at all on the third day, it is an abomination. It shall not be accepted."

This refers to the regulations for the peace offering, as stated in Leviticus 7:15-17, "The flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offering for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day it is offered. He shall not leave any of it until morning. But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow or a voluntary offering, it shall be eaten the same day that he offers his sacrifice; but on the next day the remainder of it also may be eaten; the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day must be burned with fire." This is God's command. Basically, we shouldn't ask why; we should simply submit to God's sovereignty. However, to deepen our impression of God's command, we may speculate on God's intention.

The sacrificial animal was originally common, and however you ate it did not concern God as long as it complied with dietary regulations. But if it was offered as a peace offering, the sacrificial animal became holy and must be handled according to God's regulations: its blood should be sprinkled around the altar; the fat should be burned on the altar, belonging to God; the breast that was waved and the thigh that was heaved should be given to the priest; and the remaining meat should be eaten by the offeror and the friends and family they invited, in joyful fellowship together.

The spiritual condition of the offeror is reflected in their reason for offering. If the peace offering was given out of thanksgiving, the offeror's spiritual capacity could only sustain a day's worth of fellowship; therefore, whatever could not be finished should be burned with fire and not kept until the next day. This signifies that we need to experience God's new grace each day, and God will surely provide abundantly. If the offering was a vow or a voluntary offering, the offeror's spiritual capacity was more abundant, so it could be eaten on the second day, but anything leftover had to be burned with fire and could not be kept until the third day. Eating on the third day was an abomination, and it would not be accepted. This signifies that on the third day, we must experience God's new grace. Three is a number of death and resurrection; on the third day, we must experience resurrection and not remain in the old condition.

Verse 8: “Therefore everyone who eats it shall bear his iniquity, because he has profaned the hallowed offering of the LORD; and that person shall be cut off from his people.”

Anyone who eats the peace offering on the third day must bear their own iniquity because they did not follow God’s regulations; they have profaned God’s holy offering, and the consequence is that they shall be cut off from among their people. Here, punishment is added, making this a statute. We see that God’s punishment is very serious. Dear brothers and sisters, eating the peace offering should not be left until the third day. How should New Testament saints apply this? Would we be cast out of the church for enjoying the grace of accomplishments? The peace offering speaks of joyful fellowship among saints and with the Lord because of the Lord’s rich provision, bringing peace and joy.

In the New Testament application, the best example should be in John 1:19–2:11. This passage, recorded by John, a disciple of Jesus, describes how Jesus began to find His first disciples at the start of His ministry. Initially, John was following John the Baptist. Let us look closely at the sequence of days recorded in this passage. One day, John the Baptist introduced Jesus to the people as the coming Messiah. In John 1:29, it says, “The next day,” when Jesus came among them, John the Baptist publicly testified of Jesus. Then in John 1:35, it says, “Again, the next day,” when John and Andrew, who had been following John the Baptist, saw Jesus and followed Him, staying with Him. Andrew even brought his brother Simon to meet Jesus, and Jesus renamed Simon as Peter. The few disciples enjoyed joyful fellowship with Jesus. Then in John 1:43, it says, “The following day,” when Jesus found Philip, and Philip brought his friend Nathanael, who also followed Jesus. Jesus even revealed to them that He Himself was the ladder that connected heaven to earth. Here, we see “the first day,” “the next day,” “again, the next day,” and “the following day.” It implies many “second days,” yet there is no mention of a “third day.”

But in John 2:1, the third day appears: “On the third day,” Jesus took His disciples to the wedding in Cana. There, in the presence of His disciples, He performed His first miracle, turning water into wine, which symbolized the transformation of death into life—a testimony of resurrection. This passage describes a scene full of joy.

When we gather together and have intimate fellowship with the Lord, it is truly a scene like the peace offering.

Therefore, for the New Testament saints, we have encountered Jesus and experienced the grace of Christ, meaning we are always in the “second day,” then “the next day,” “again, the next day,” and “the following day” until, one day, on the “third day,” we experience the transformation of water into wine. This is entirely a new grace, where, at this wedding feast, we enjoy a greater, more joyous peace-offering banquet. Thus, we need not worry about being cast out of the church for enjoying the old grace. However, we should indeed long for the third day, to experience the peace offering feast of water transformed into wine. We hope that every Lord’s Day will be a gathering where water is transformed into wine.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Through the moral statutes You gave to the Israelites for their daily lives, You help us recognize God’s sovereignty. Grant us grace and strength to submit to God’s authority, especially in enjoying the peace offering. On one hand, grant us a thankful heart to frequently offer the peace offering to God; on the other hand, on the third day, may You grant us the grace of water turned into wine. Help us have a renewed, richer, and more transcendent experience so that our lives may continuously grow, reaching the full stature of Christ’s beauty. Bless us. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.