

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

Leviticus 19: 26-31

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus 19:26-31.

The Ten Commandments are intended to guide us in living a holy life. Each person has many aspects of their daily life, and God addresses every one of these areas. We have already studied laws related to our relationship with God, our dealings with others, and the management of property, which together form the full scope of daily living. It is crucial to handle our relationship with God, our interactions with people, and our engagement with our environment properly. Beyond these, we must also be holy in ourselves. Today, we will explore the statutes that guide personal holiness.

Verse 26: "You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying."

Personal holiness begins with obedience to God's commands, especially concerning what we eat. Leviticus 11 already outlines dietary laws, indicating what is clean and permissible for the Israelites to eat and what is unclean and prohibited. Building upon these dietary guidelines, when consuming clean animals, they must still ensure not to eat with the blood. Leviticus 17:11 states, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

This verse connects eating with God's redemption, meaning every aspect of daily life must be redeemed by God so that we may be holy. The verse also warns against practicing divination or observing omens—these are methods used by pagans to predict the future through divination, fortune-telling, or astrology. The Israelites are called to set themselves apart in daily life, dedicating themselves solely to God.

The same applies to New Testament believers. Our future is in God's hands, and we do not need to rely on pagan practices to foresee what lies ahead, nor should we follow the ways of idol worship. The Bible clearly reveals the world's direction and ultimate fate, and as for when these things will happen, Jesus plainly told His disciples, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only." (Matthew 24:36, NKJV). Our responsibility is to live a holy life, trusting that God loves us and will surely protect us.

With this assurance, we can face a turbulent world that is heading toward destruction. In God's appointed time, Christ will return, redeeming our bodies and establishing a kingdom of righteousness on earth—a shared hope among all blessed saints.

Verse 27: "You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard."

Shaving the sides of the head while leaving the top hair intact was a pagan custom at that time. It was said that this was a way of dedicating one's hair to their gods. Jeremiah 9:25-26 says, "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.'"

The prophet Jeremiah described the Edomites, Ammonites, and Moabites as those who shaved the sides of their heads. Here, God commands the Israelites not to follow the customs of the pagans.

The same principle applies to New Testament believers. Paul instructs in Romans 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." God's will is for us to be set apart from the world. 1 John 2:15 says, "Do

not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We must not follow the trends of the world.

Moreover, the prohibition against damaging the edges of the beard signifies that the Israelites' beards represented their dignity, and shaving it off would bring them shame. 2 Samuel 10 recounts how the king of Ammon, upon his father's death, mistreated David's servants by shaving off half of their beards and cutting their garments, exposing their bodies. 2 Samuel 10:4-5 says, "Therefore Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away. When they told David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, 'Wait at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return.'" David's servants felt deeply ashamed because their beards were shaven, signifying disgrace.

For New Testament believers, this principle implies that we should avoid anything that brings shame. Christians must maintain a good testimony before others—not only refraining from following worldly trends but also possessing a sensitive conscience. Shame is like a warning light installed by God in our conscience to keep us from crossing moral boundaries. If you feel ashamed in your conscience, you must stop immediately and not proceed further; otherwise, you risk going beyond the boundary and bringing shame upon yourself.

Verse 28: "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord."

Cutting the flesh for the dead or tattooing the living were practices associated with idol worship among the Gentiles at that time, and the Israelites were commanded to abstain from these customs. For New Testament believers, God's instruction is even more direct. As stated in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV): "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." This teaches us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and do not belong to us, as Jesus has

purchased us at a high price. Therefore, before making any marks or adding any adornments to our bodies, we must first consult the indwelling Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit agrees, then we may proceed, as He should have authority over our bodies.

Some churches, in an effort to attract young people, have pastors who dress like the youth, wearing torn jeans and tattoos on their arms. If this is the leading of the Holy Spirit for them, we cannot say much, as their goal is to win over the youth. However, one thing is certain: if the leaders themselves follow worldly trends, how can they guide young people not to follow the ways of the world?

Verse 29: “Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.”

In those times, women had no social status, and their future largely depended on their fathers. If a father was unwilling to invest in his daughter’s future, she might have no means to live and eventually fall into prostitution. This not only led the daughter into sin but also caused the whole land to fall into moral corruption, which is considered a grave evil. Some scholars interpret this verse as referring to the practice of dedicating daughters to Molech, causing them to become temple prostitutes, thereby defiling the land.

In modern civilized societies, the social status of men and women is almost equal. Therefore, responsible parents should properly teach their children, whether boys or girls, to have good moral behavior in line with the conduct of the saints. They should also equip them with skills to become independent. Children are indeed God’s gift to parents, entrusted to their care for about 20 years, after which they must be able to follow God on their own and be accountable to Him directly.

Verse 30: “You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the Lord.”

The command to observe the Sabbath was already mentioned in verse 3, but here it is reiterated in the context of personal holiness, with an added emphasis on reverencing God's sanctuary. The Israelites were not only to set apart time for God by keeping the Sabbath but also to honor the tabernacle within their camp, where God's presence dwelt. For New Testament believers, this dual instruction translates into the necessity of attending church on Sundays to worship God together.

We should not only set apart our time for God but also dedicate ourselves entirely to Him. The church is formed by the gathering of the saints, and if even one person is missing, the church is incomplete, and its collective worship is diminished. Therefore, believers must not think that their absence is insignificant. Each individual's salvation is as precious as the lost sheep that Jesus left the ninety-nine to find. In the Lord's eyes, every person is exceedingly valuable. Let us, during this Sunday's worship, look around and notice who is missing, and strive to bring each one back to God's house, so that our worship to God may be complete.

Verse 31: "Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God."

This section on personal holiness begins with prohibitions against sorcery and divination and concludes with the command to avoid mediums and spiritists. The essence of personal holiness lies in maintaining a close relationship with God. No one knows what the future holds, which is why the Gentiles sought out mediums, fortune-tellers, and astrologers in their desire to know the unknown. Regardless of whether these practices were effective, God instructed the Israelites to not even entertain the idea of consulting such individuals, lest they become defiled. God added a reminder, "I am the Lord your God," emphasizing that He, as their God, would take responsibility for their future.

This is even more true for New Testament believers, who are more blessed than the Israelites under the Old Covenant because we have the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit understands God's will and helps us obey it. Therefore, we must abstain from fortune-telling, divination, astrology, or anything related to evil spirits.

Having the indwelling Holy Spirit is more than enough, for He can lead us on the path of peace.

When we face difficulties and are unsure how to proceed, we should not hastily seek solutions from external sources. Instead, we should quiet our hearts, humbly come before God, and pray, laying ourselves bare before Him. Perhaps we will not receive an immediate answer, but God will surely grant us peace, guarding our hearts and minds. Only when our hearts are anchored in peace, looking solely to God, can we begin to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. This requires practice; in the beginning, we may not be experienced and might not hear or understand the Holy Spirit's guidance. That's okay—as long as we have peace, it is sufficient. We must first stand in the realm of peace to walk on the path of peace. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, help us to live a holy life. Grant us grace in our daily experiences so that we may find rest before You. Knowing that You love us, we trust that every trial we face is within our ability to endure. Help us, Lord, that when we do not know which way to go, we do not seek solutions from outside sources but instead come to You through the Holy Spirit. May we understand Your guidance and be willing to obey it. May God bless us that each day of our lives may be pleasing to You. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray.