

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

Leviticus 20:1-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Following our schedule, this week we should read Leviticus 20, and next week, we will read chapters 21 and 22. Since this week's passage isn't long, we'll read chapter 20 along with the first 15 verses of chapter 21, about one and a half chapters. Today, we'll read Leviticus 20:1-8.

Leviticus 18-20 contains the laws of holiness for the daily lives of the Israelites, and chapter 20 serves as the conclusion to this section. The laws mentioned in this chapter were already addressed previously, and no new laws are introduced. The only difference is that each law now includes a prescribed penalty, detailing what punishment should be applied to any Israelite who violates these laws.

We previously discussed that the Ten Commandments represent the main principles, and their application in daily life has led to many statutes. These statutes cover various situations that the Israelites would encounter in daily life—some are directed toward God, some toward other people, some toward one's property, and others toward foreigners or outsiders. These statutes focus on defining what should and should not be done, but when judgments are attached to them, they become ordinances.

In Chinese, it is not easy to see the difference between "律例" and "典章", but it becomes clearer in English: "statutes" and "judgments", or perhaps "precedents" would be a more accurate term. Chapter 20 applies judgments to the previously mentioned statutes, making them judgments or precedents. Before we get into the text, let us first explore God's purpose in adding penalties. God is a holy, righteous, and glorious God, and when people sin, they fall short of God's holiness, righteousness, and glory. However, in these chapters, which discuss laws and judgments for daily life, God repeatedly emphasizes His holiness. Since God is holy, the Israelites must also be holy.

Therefore, God added penalties to these statutes not because people had sinned and violated His righteousness, and that He had to uphold His righteousness by punishing the offenders; nor because people's sins diminished His glory, and that He needed to punish them to display His glory. When we offend God's righteousness and glory, God actually covers our sins through the blood of sacrificial animals sprinkled on the mercy seat, and when the time was fulfilled, God sent His only begotten Son to accomplish redemption and forgive our sins. God's purpose in adding penalties was to help the Israelites maintain their holy identity and position, setting them apart as His own.

Here we see that holiness is not only an individual matter but also a communal one. When a dead cockroach falls into a pot of rice, it makes the whole pot unclean. Similarly, if a practice that conforms to the world is introduced into the church, it defiles the entire church. Therefore, to maintain the holiness of His people, God added penalties to the laws of holiness. This was to alert the Israelites to remove any unholiness from among them, thereby preserving the holiness of God's people.

Verses 1-2: “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Again, you shall say to the children of Israel: Whoever of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.’”

Any Israelite or stranger living among them who offers his children to Molech shall be put to death. The punishment here is severe—death. Molech was the god of the Ammonites, likely originating from Sodom, a city so corrupted that God had to come in judgment, raining down fire and brimstone to destroy the entire city. Offering children to Molech involved sending them to Molech's temple at a young age, where they would grow up to become temple prostitutes and serve in a form of worship that combined immorality with religion. This act not only violated the first commandment—having no other gods before the Lord—but also thoroughly degraded human value.

Because humans are created by God, He has given us an honorable position and tasked us with the glorious mission of representing Him to manage His creation. Sending children to Molech's temple utterly destroyed their value. Can such parents still be called parents? God set a severe penalty for this—death by stoning, carried out by the people of the land. Here we see that God wanted the Israelites to participate in enforcing the death penalty, impressing upon every Israelite how much He detests such inhumane behavior.

Verse 3: “I will set My face against that man, and will cut him off from his people, because he has given some of his descendants to Molech, to defile My sanctuary and profane My holy name.”

Not only did God decree that the offender be stoned to death by the people of the land, but He also personally set His face against that person. We may think that a death sentence is the most severe punishment, but Scripture tells us, “As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” The judgment carried out by the people of the land applies to this life, but God’s turning His face away is eternal. God will no longer consider such a person one of His people, and they will forever lose their status among God’s people.

Then God says, because this person gave his children to Molech, he defiled God’s sanctuary and profaned His holy name. This may be hard to understand—since he went to Molech’s temple to make the offering, why does God say that he defiled His sanctuary and profaned His holy name? This is because this person originally lived among the Israelites, sharing in their daily life, eating, drinking, and worshiping the Lord with them. However, he also gave his children to Molech, making himself unclean while still living among the Israelites and participating with them in sacrifices and worship. His presence defiled God’s sanctuary and profaned His name.

Dear brothers and sisters, this principle remains the same in the New Testament. Once we are saved by grace, we become part of God’s family with all the saints. We must understand that we are no longer alone. We are members of the church, parts of Christ's body, and family members in God’s household. If we remain tainted and

come to participate in church worship without being cleansed, we defile the church and profane God's holy name. Therefore, when we sin and become aware of it, we must immediately apply the blood of Jesus Christ to maintain our holiness so that we do not unwittingly defile the church. This is a very serious matter.

In our daily lives, there will always be sins committed unintentionally, even ones we ourselves may not realize. Therefore, we should develop a habit of examining ourselves in prayer each night before bed. Let us consider the day and confess any acts we feel have offended God. At the same time, let us ask God in His grace to forgive our unintentional sins, so that our consciences may remain holy before Him.

Believing in God's grace will make our conscience increasingly sensitive, and we will also be more sensitive to things that are filthy and unclean. Even if it is not an issue of moral sin, when we are stained by the dust of the world, God will make us feel that we are no longer fresh, and we will need to repent before Him because to be without God is sin.

Verses 4-5: "And if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, when he gives some of his descendants to Molech, and they do not kill him, then I will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut him off from his people, and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech."

If anyone offers their children to Molech and the people of the land pretend not to see it, do not deal with it, and do not kill him, God will personally come out to judge. God will set His face against this person and his family, and He will cut off that person and everyone who committed harlotry with Molech from among the people. Holiness was a common pursuit for the Israelites; therefore, God wanted the Israelites to quickly deal with anything defiling in their midst. If the Israelites did not deal with it, God would personally deal with it.

Some might think, "Since God will handle it, let's leave it to Him so we won't offend anyone by dealing with it ourselves." However, we must understand that God's way

of dealing with things is usually slow yet very thorough. In other words, God initially permits it because He always gives people a chance to repent on their own. If people do not repent, the defiling influence will spread, and the corruption will expand until it reaches a point where God has to step in. When He does, His dealings are always complete; He will cut off that person, along with all those who acted with him in harlotry, from among the people.

Dear brothers and sisters, in the New Testament, God's principle of dealing with issues remains the same. Therefore, if there is corruption and uncleanness in the church, the saints who are aware must inform the elders; the elders must address it immediately, lest this defilement and corruption spread and worsen within the church. The elders' handling of such matters is the first line of defense in maintaining the church's holiness, reducing the number of people affected. But if people refuse to deal with it and wait for God to act, the matter will become extremely severe, beyond human ability to handle, and God's judgment will be the most severe. Who can bear it when God comes to judge?

Verse 6: "And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people."

This verse should follow the previous one, expanding the scope from offering children to Molech to consulting mediums and practicing witchcraft. The result is the same: the Israelites followed the Gentiles in harlotry, provoking God's anger. Likewise, God hopes the Israelites can handle it themselves, but if they do not, and wait for God to deal with it, He will set His face against those who commit harlotry and cut them off from the people.

Verse 7: "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God."

God wants people to set themselves apart to become holy. This was true for the Israelites back then, and it is true for today's New Testament church as well. God hopes that every saved saint will walk on the path of sanctification, setting themselves apart from the world, from the common, from the old, and from the flesh, to become holy unto God. Because I am the Lord, your God. Here, God tells us the reason to be holy: because He is our God, He is holy, and we must also be holy. He is God, and we are His people; therefore, we must be like Him, holy.

Verse 8: "And you shall keep My statutes, and perform them: I am the Lord who sanctifies you."

God once again commands us to keep and perform His statutes. In chapters 18-20, God has already given His statutes and judgements for holy living to His people, and our responsibility is to carefully obey them. Often, we see God's requirements and realize we cannot meet them, and at such times, God tells us, "I am the Lord who sanctifies you." God knows we cannot fulfill them, so He reminds us that He is the One who sanctifies us.

Not only in salvation, where we could do nothing and relied entirely on God's grace, but also in sanctification, where it is God who makes us holy. All we need is a willing heart, willing to come before God often. God, who works all things together for good, can make us holy and pleasing to Him.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. You not only gave us statutes but also judgements, telling us that not following Your statutes and judgements will lead to corresponding punishment. This is a good protection for us and the church. Help us to know You, for after being saved, we are no longer alone; we are members of God's family. We can no longer walk our own way willfully and get defiled; if we do, we not only fail to please You but also defile the church. Help the church to always maintain an atmosphere of holiness so that everyone who comes knows they must be holy. When they sin, may they learn to confess and ask for God's forgiveness. We ask God to bless our church to be a holy church, a church that pleases Him. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.