

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

Leviticus 20:8-21

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for us to read the Bible again. We will continue to read Leviticus chapter 20, and today we'll read from verses 8 to 21.

Leviticus 20 is the conclusion of the moral laws that applied to the daily lives of the Israelites. These laws are derived from the principles of the Ten Commandments and are extended into specific statutes for daily application. In the preceding chapters, we have already read many of these laws, but this chapter concludes with detailed punishments, forming ordinances or judgments. These judgments were established based on the societal needs of that time. As society evolves, the severity of the punishments could be increased or decreased. However, the principles of the laws remain unchanged.

Yesterday, we read about the judgment concerning offering children to Molech. From verses 9 to 21, the focus is on the statutes regarding family ethics. These laws have already been introduced earlier, and now, with the addition of penalties, they can be read through quickly.

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

God repeatedly reminds the Israelites to keep and perform His statutes. These statutes govern the holiness of Israel. Because God is holy, His people must also be holy. Of course, God knows that the Israelites cannot achieve holiness on their own. What God hopes for is a willingness to obey. As long as one is willing, God can sanctify them.

An example from Genesis is Jacob. Jacob valued the birthright and God's blessings, even though his nature was deceitful and grasping, reflecting the meaning of his name, "Jacob," which means "to grasp." Because Jacob valued the birthright and God's blessings, God was able to transform him—from someone who grasped for himself into Israel, someone who extended blessings to others.

For New Testament believers, this principle applies even more. God is not afraid of our sinful nature; He is concerned if we lack a willing heart. "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Luke 11:10). Thus, as long as we desire and pursue holiness, God can work in us. The indwelling Holy Spirit can, through His anointing, produce the fruit of the Spirit in us, as described in Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." These fruits are the beautiful characteristics that grow during the sanctification process of Christians.

Verse 9: "For everyone who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother. His blood shall be upon him."

The translation of "curses" here is not entirely accurate. The original text refers to "uttering curses" against one's parents. While "cursing" might involve an outburst of anger or yelling, which could be unintentional, "uttering curses" stems from an inner hatred expressed outwardly. Parents are the source of life and hold authority derived from life itself. As children, they must show gratitude and submission to this life-given authority. Even if parents are at fault, children should communicate with them in humility rather than harbor hatred and curse them.

Here, the punishment is severe: "shall surely be put to death, and his blood shall be upon him." The term "blood" in the original text signifies that his blood guilt is upon him. When someone is executed, their blood does not fall upon the executioner but upon the guilty individual. The phrase "his blood shall be upon him" appears repeatedly, emphasizing that the punishment is God-ordained. The executioner bears no guilt; instead, the offender is fully accountable for their crime.

In the context of family ethics, God first commands honoring one's parents, which is the fifth commandment and the only commandment with a promise (Exodus 20:12). In Leviticus 20, the judgment on cursing parents is introduced first. Those who curse their parents not only forfeit the promise but also their lives because they rebel against the life-given authority established by God.

Verses 10–21 deal with inappropriate sexual relationships. Sexual relationships form the foundation of family ethics. When such relationships become chaotic, they destroy the structure of ethics, leading to the collapse of families. The family occupies a special place in God's plan of salvation. The Bible repeatedly shows us that God's salvation often operates on a family level. For instance, in the time of the flood, God saved Noah and his family of eight. Later, when Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, he declared before his death, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). Service to God is again seen as family-centered.

In the New Testament, the gospel began with the Jews and then extended to the Gentiles. In Acts 10, Peter was sent by the Holy Spirit to Cornelius' household, where the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles. Later, during Paul's second missionary journey, the gospel reached Europe for the first time. In Philippi, Paul ministered to the jailer, who asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul responded, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:31). Again, we see that God's salvation operates at the family level. Because God values the family so highly, inappropriate sexual relationships that harm the family's structure are severely condemned.

In this chapter, each statute is accompanied by detailed punishments. From verses 10 to 16, we see that those who commit certain sins must be put to death. From verses 17 to 19, we see that those who sin are to be cut off from among the people. From verses 20 to 21, the punishment for sin is that the offenders will have no descendants, no children. Having this general understanding, we will now read through the verses one by one. Since we have already read these statutes earlier, we will not delve into much development; rather, we will simply read through the Scripture directly.

Verse 10: "The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death."

Committing adultery with a neighbor's wife violates the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), and the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife" (Exodus 20:17). Such an act destroys two families at once. God's response is severe: both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death, and their guilt is upon them.

Verse 11: "The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."

This describes someone within his own household who lies with his stepmother, thereby dishonoring his father. Both the man and the woman are to be put to death, and their blood guilt is upon them.

Verse 12: "If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them."

The previous verse dealt with a downward relationship (child to parent); this verse addresses an upward relationship (parent to child). In both cases, the family's ethical structure is violated. If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, it is a perverse act, and both individuals must be put to death, with their blood guilt upon them.

Verse 13: "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."

This verse addresses homosexuality. Whether it involves male-to-male or female-to-female relations, Scripture leaves no ambiguity. It describes such acts as abominable because they violate the natural order established at creation. Therefore, they must be put to death, and their guilt shall be upon them.

Verse 14: "If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you."

The translation "marries" here is not entirely accurate. The original text refers to having sexual relations with both a woman and her mother. This is a grave sin, and all three individuals must be burned with fire to purge such wickedness from the community.

Verses 15-16: "If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal. If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them."

This passage condemns bestiality. Whether committed by a man or a woman, it is a violation of the principle of "according to its kind" established at creation. Both the human and the animal involved must be put to death.

From verses 10 to 16, the punishment prescribed is death because these actions gravely violate God's natural laws and disrupt the fundamental structure of family ethics. God establishes the most severe penalty to uphold the sanctity of life and morality.

Verse 17: "If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing. And they

shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness. He shall bear his guilt."

This verse addresses sexual relations between siblings, whether they share the same father or the same mother. This is improper because of their familial connection. Such individuals must be cut off from the Israelite community, meaning they can no longer live among the people of Israel.

Verse 18: "If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people."

A woman is considered unclean during menstruation, as established by God's natural laws. During this time, God intended for women to have appropriate rest. Violating this natural order results in the offenders being cast out of the community of Israel.

Verse 19: "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister nor of your father's sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt."

This addresses improper sexual relations with one's aunt, whether on the father's or mother's side. Though there may be a degree of kinship, such behavior is considered improper. Offenders bear their guilt, which likely means they are cut off from the community.

Verse 20: "If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless."

Although the uncle's wife is not directly related by blood, there is an ethical relationship of rank and familial propriety. Lying with her brings dishonor to the uncle. The punishment is that the offenders will bear their sin, and God will render them childless.

Verse 21: "If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless."

This is similar to the previous verse. While there is no direct blood relation, such an act dishonors the brother. God pronounces the punishment of childlessness upon those who commit such an act.

We have stated that statutes are applications of the Ten Commandments in daily life to instruct people on right and wrong. Judgments are statutes supplemented with detailed punishments. In these passages, we see three levels of punishment: the most severe is death, the second is being cut off from the community, and the least severe is punishment directly from God, such as childlessness.

The severity of punishments was related to the societal context of the time. How, then, should such matters be handled in the New Testament? Let us look at how Jesus taught on this subject. In John 8:3-11, it is recorded that the scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman caught in the act of adultery, seeking to test Him and see how He would handle the situation.

They said to Jesus that, according to the Law of Moses, a person caught in adultery should be stoned to death, and then they asked Him how the woman should be dealt with. We have just read Leviticus 20:10, which states that both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death. Since this was a case of being caught in the act, there should have been two individuals, and both should have been stoned. Why, then, was only the woman brought forward? Where was the man? Therefore, they were not following the Law of Moses correctly. Additionally, at that time, the Jews were under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire and did not have the authority to carry out the death penalty.

It is evident that they intended to trap Jesus. If Jesus condemned the woman to death, He would be violating Roman law; if He did not condemn her, He would appear to disregard the Law of Moses. They sought to place Jesus in a dilemma. However, Jesus said nothing and instead used His finger to write on the ground. The Bible does not tell us what Jesus wrote, but we might speculate that He wrote the Ten Commandments or perhaps the statutes in Leviticus 20 concerning adultery. As they persisted in questioning Him, Jesus finally stood up and said to them, as recorded in John 8:7: "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

Jesus did not abolish Moses' law but reminded them of their own sinfulness. If any among them was without sin, they could execute the law. Perhaps what Jesus wrote on the ground reminded them of their own guilt. One by one, from the oldest to the youngest, they left. Only Jesus remained with the woman. He asked her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more'" (John 8:10-11).

Jesus, being sinless, was the only one qualified to condemn her, but He chose to forgive her because He would bear the penalty for her sin. He told her to leave her life of sin. This shows us that in the New Testament, Jesus approaches sinners with grace, taking their punishment upon Himself while calling them to repentance.

Dear brothers and sisters, this should also be the church's attitude toward sin under the New Covenant. Sin violates God's holiness, glory, and righteousness, which God abhors. Yet Jesus bore the punishment for sin on the cross. Those who confess their sins will be cleansed by His blood. As believers, washed by the blood of Christ, we are gathered together as the church. Let us encourage one another to turn from sin.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for revealing Your will through the statutes and judgments in Leviticus. You are holy, and You call us to holiness. Where we fall short, You bear our sins and call us not to sin again. Help us, Lord, to pursue holiness daily and to learn its lessons in every aspect of life. May Your church be a holy

church. Bless my church and our church life. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.