

Approaching Holiness

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Leviticus 10

Stories of “potential greatness” that suddenly falls short of expectations abound. We see them regularly.

- Sports – a promising young athlete falls into the wrong crowd descending into drugs, alcohol, and sexual sin.
- Business – an entrepreneur attempts a shady deal and ends up in prison with a forever soiled reputation.
- Government – an official makes reckless personal decisions and loses public trust.
- Christianity – a person professes faith in Christ is tempted and drifts away, far away (Solomon)

Entry is given only to those with the proper credentials. Entry to God’s presence is not a casual thing.

Notice, entry was not withheld, even to Moses, as the Tabernacle was completed. (Exodus 40:34–38, *Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.* (Atonement was necessary – Leviticus 1:1-9; and through chapter 8)

A week later, we have the culmination of the giving of the offerings at the tabernacle. (Leviticus 9:1, *On the eighth day Moses called Aaron and his sons and the elders of Israel,*

- Completed tabernacle construction & assembly
- Received instructions for offerings, sacrifices to make atonement
- Consecration of the Priests (Aaron and sons)
- Inaugural worship completed **Leviticus 9:23**, *the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people.*

Symbolically, the priests bore the sins of the people and provided atonement through ritual sacrifice: they “bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the Lord.” Leviticus 10:17

- This was a foreshadowing of Christ, Who, Isaiah prophesied would be the Suffering Servant who “*bore the sin of many*” (**Isaiah 53:12**). Because Jesus is the perfect High Priest and sacrifice who “*bore our sins in his body on the tree*” (**1 Peter 2:24**), he guaranteed the heavenly acceptance of all who put their trust in him (**Colossians 2:14**).
- **Hebrews 9:11–12**, *But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.*

After the high points of Leviticus 9 and much like the stories of great promise, chapter 10 takes us back down.

- Aaron draws near to offer atonement that the glory of God may appear to Israel. (**Leviticus 9:6–7**, *And Moses said, “This is the thing that the Lord commanded you to do, that the glory of the Lord may appear to you.” 7 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the Lord has commanded.”*
- When the atonement for sin is offered God’s presence is made known. (**Leviticus 9:23–24**, *And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. 24 And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.*
- **Leviticus 10** is the story of God’s manifested judgment. **Leviticus 10:1–2**, *Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. 2 And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.*
- How we approach God matters. When we approach God as if He is a man like us, we make a grave, if not deadly mistake.
 - King Uzziah (**2 Chronicles 26:19**) Ananias & Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-11**) Uzzah (**2 Samuel 6:7**)

“How different is the God of Scripture from the ‘god’ of the average pulpit.”

Arthur Pink

I. We Must Approach God Reverently as Almighty (Leviticus 10:2)

- A. **Leviticus 10:2-3** reminds us that God is in charge. End of story.
 - 1. God defines for man how He will be worshipped.
- B. The Psalms declare four times, “*The Lord reigns...*”
 - 1. **The Bold Declaration** – The Lord reigns (Refutes any “joint” reign with man, Satan, superstition, karma, luck, or another ruler). God will not be overruled.
 - 2. **The Present tense Declaration** – ever moment of every day God reigns!
 - a) **Unrivaled by any spiritual adversary- Psalm 93:1, *The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.***
 - b) **Over all the Earth - Psalm 97:1, *The LORD reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many coastlands be glad!***
 - c) **Over Every Nation - Psalm 96:10, *Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”***
 - d) **Over Every Person - Psalm 99:1, *The LORD reigns; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!***
 - 3. **1 Timothy 6:15, *Which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords,***

II. We Must Approach God Humbly as Holy (Leviticus 10:3)

- A. The word “**holy**” means to be “set apart,” “separate,” “different.”
- B. God’s holiness and transcendence from man, matter, time is not a matter of degree, God is other, separate from us. He is God, we are human. He is Creator, we are created.
 - 1. A.W. Tozer wrote, “*We cannot grasp the true meaning of the divine holiness by thinking of someone or something very pure and then raising the concept to the highest degree we are capable of. God’s holiness is not simply the best we know infinitely bettered. We know nothing like the divine holiness. It stands apart, unique, unapproachable, incomprehensible and unattainable. (The Knowledge of the Holy, 111)*
- C. When we fail to treat God as holy, we treat Him as if He were like us. Psalm 50 brings this to mind (**Psalm 50:21, *These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. (Ecclesiastes 8:11, Isaiah 57:11).*** Nadab and Abihu failed to treat God as holy and paid with their lives.

III. We Must Approach God Respectfully as Glorious (Leviticus 10:3)

- A. Moses was “checked” when God came down (**Exodus 40:35, *And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.***
- B. God is glorified before His people. (His glory – the weight of His godliness, attributes, essence, and “goodness.”) This glory “weighs heavily upon; be heavy; honored.”

IV. We Must Approach God Knowledgeable as Judge.

- A. God’s judgment of Nadab and Abihu stopped a pattern of sin from continuing and increasing.
 - 1. Uzzah did not treat the ark as Holy (**2 Samuel 6:1-7**)
 - 2. Ananias and Saphira lied to the Holy Spirit (**Acts 5:1-11**)
 - 3. King Uzziah treated the offering and temple as ordinary (**2 Chronicles 26:19**)
- B. The disciplining of our children is illustrative of God’s mercy in judgment (prevent future proliferation).
 - 1. In each case the Holiness of God was underestimated as well as the sinfulness of man.
 - 2. If offended, it is simply we do not understand God’s holiness, justice, sin and grace.

V. We Must Approach God Honestly in Truth

- A. Followers of Christ are referred to as a “royal priesthood” (**1 Peter 2:9, *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.***
- B. Our responsibility as a believer is to treat God as holy and obey Him representing Him in truth.
 - 1. Eternally God; Trinity, Son of God; Virgin Born (Son of Man; Nation of Israel; Tribe of Judah; Family of David; Town of Bethlehem; Sinless Life; Vicarious Death; Bodily Resurrection; Glorious Ascension; Coming Again and Reigning forever.)
 - 2. If we are wrong on Christ, nothing else matters!