

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 11
LEVITICUS
CHAPTERS 18, 19 & 20**

INTRODUCTION

The basic concept of sanctification is separation from all the things that are morally impure or unholy. The standard and motivation of moral purity is the holiness of God (Leviticus 20:7 So set yourselves apart to be holy, for I, the LORD, am your God).

The Word of God through Moses to the children of Israel is also for us Christians today. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, snatched out from the chains of darkness and set free into the marvellous light of God's truth. Our love and devotion come, not out of compulsion, but out of a joyous heart to lift up the holy name of the LORD our God.

These three chapters tell us of the holy character of God and the standard He expects of His children. Our Almighty God, Creator and Redeemer wills that we should be like Him and He will enable us to be so if only we let Him.

OUTLINE

A. The Laws Pertaining to Marriages (18:1-18).

1. The Introduction (vv.1-5)

- a. The LORD gave the commandments through Moses to the children of Israel (v.1).
 - b. The basis for obeying the commandments (v.2).
 - c. The injunction against following the practices of the Egyptians and the Canaanites (v.3).
 - d. The call to obey God and keep His laws (vv.4-5).
2. Sexual Relationships within the Family (18:6-18).
- a. The general rule: no sexual relationship with relatives (v.6).
 - b. No sexual relationship with a man's (vv.8-18):
 - mother (v.7)
 - stepmother (v.8)
 - sister or half-sister (v.9)
 - granddaughter (v.10)
 - stepsister – same father (v.11)
 - aunt (vv.12, 13)
 - aunt by marriage (v.14)
 - daughter-in-law (v.15)
 - sister-in-law – brother's wife (v.16)
 - stepdaughter (v.17)
 - step-granddaughter (v.17)
 - sister-in-law – wife's sister (v.18).

- B. Other Instances of Chastity and Warning (18:19-30).
1. Other Instances of Chastity (18:19-23).
 - a. No sexual relationship during the woman's period (v.19).
 - b. No sexual relationship with a neighbour's wife (v.20).
 - c. No human sacrifice of one's children to a pagan god (v.21).
 - d. No homosexuality (v.22).
 - e. No sexual relationship with animals (v.23).
 2. Warnings (18:24-30).
 - a. Do not defile yourselves with the forbidden things already mentioned (vv.24, 25).
 - b. To keep the Lord's commandments and not commit the sexual immoralities (vv.26, 27).
 - c. The land would not endure such sinful practices (v.28).
 - d. The ex-communication of those who sinned (v.29).
 - e. The call to obey God's commandment completely (v.30).
- C. To Be Holy As God is Holy (19:1-37).
1. The Commandment of the LORD to Moses to speak to the children of Israel (vv.1, 2a).
 2. The basis for Israel to be holy (v.2b).
 3. The rules for practical holy living (vv.3-37).
 - a. Honour parents (v.3a).
 - b. Keep the Sabbath (vv.3b, 30).
 - c. Do not turn to idols (v.4).
 - d. Make the peace offering of your own free will (vv.5-8).
 - e. Remember the poor and the strangers (vv.9, 10).
 - f. Do not steal (v.11a).
 - g. Do not lie (v.11b).
 - h. Do not swear falsely (v.12).
 - i. Do not cheat (v.13).
 - j. Do not curse the deaf nor stumble the blind (v.14).
 - k. Do not be partial in judgment (v.15).
 - l. Do not be a talebearer (v.16).
 - m. Do not hate your brother (v.17a).
 - n. Love your neighbours (vv.17b, 18).
 - o. Do not breed cattle with a "diverse" kind (v.19).
 - p. On sexual relationship with a slave woman (vv.20-22).
 - q. On planting trees and their fruits (vv. 23-25).
 - r. Do not eat blood (v.26).
 - s. On hair cutting and sideburns (v.27).
 - t. Do not tattoo your body (v.28).
 - u. Do not prostitute (v.29).
 - v. Do not associate with "divination" and wizards (v.31).
 - w. Respect the elderly (v.32).

- x. Be hospitable to strangers (vv.33, 34).
 - y. Be just in all your dealings (vv.35, 36).
4. The Call to Keep All the Commandments (v.37).
- D. The Penal Code (20:1-27).
1. The Penalty of Death for Sins of Idolatry and Divination (vv.1-6).
 - a. The LORD gave the penal code to Moses (v.1).
 - b. On worship of other gods (vv.2, 3)
 - c. On the failure to prosecute the idolater (vv.4, 5).
 - d. On consulting mediums and spirits (v.6).
 2. The Exhortation to Holiness (vv.7, 8).
 3. Severe Punishment for Sins Within the Family (20:9-21).
 - a. Cursed parents (v.9).
 - b. Committed adultery (v.10).
 - c. Sexual relationship with the step-mother (v.11).
 - d. Sexual relationship with the daughter-in-law (v.12).
 - e. Homosexuality (v.13).
 - f. Sexual relationship with a woman and her mother (v.14).
 - g. Sexual relationship with an animal (vv.15, 16).
 - h. Sexual relationship with his sister (daughter of his father or his mother) (v.17).
 - i. Sexual relationship during a woman's monthly period (v.18).
 - j. Sexual relationship with an aunt (mother's sister or father's sister or uncle's wife) (vv.19, 20).
 - k. Sexual relationship with a sister-in-law (v.21).
4. The Exhortation to Holiness (20:22-26).
 - a. The call to obey the LORD (v.22).
 - b. The reminder against behaving like the other nations (v.23).
 - c. The LORD reaffirmed His promise to Israel (v.24).
 - d. The need to make a distinction between the clean and the unclean (v.25).
 - e. The basis for being different and holy (v.26).
5. The Punishment of Death to Those who Divined (v.27).

COMMENTARY

Being Different

God reminded the Israelites that He is the LORD their God. The Israelites must remember that the LORD had delivered them from bondage in Egypt. The personal possessive pronoun "their" is significant. It speaks of the vital relationship they had with God the Creator and LORD. They belonged to Him and had certain responsibilities and duties.

In their creed and conduct, they must not be like the Egyptians to whom they were previously enslaved. And

when they entered into the Promised Land of Canaan, they must not imitate its inhabitants (18:3). Instead, they must obey God's commandments and laws because God is the LORD their God. They must be separated (be different) from the other nations. They must always remember that they belong to God and they must be like God. That is sanctification, to be holy as He is holy.

Sexual Relationships Within the Family

God gave a list of sexual relationships within the family that were forbidden. The prohibition in Leviticus 18:8: "*The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness*" reminds us of an incident that happened in the church in Corinth, where a member of the church had sexual relationship with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1). The idiom "to uncover her nakedness" (occurs 24 times in chapters 18 and 20) denotes sexual intercourse in prohibited situations. The word nakedness also means "shame." Paul chided the church for being proud of such behaviour and called on them to remove the evil from the church. Another was the sad history of Jacob who married two sisters, Leah and Rachel. It was against the command (18:18): *Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.* The divine wisdom for such prohibition is to avoid unhealthy rivalry, jealousy, and troubles within the family.

Other Perversions

In Leviticus 18:21, God forbade the giving of their children to the Canaanite god Molech. The burning of children as sacrifices to pagan gods was not

uncommon among the heathen nations (Deuteronomy 12:31).¹ However, in 18:21, the phrase "through the fire" is not recorded in the Hebrew text, and in view of the context, the prohibition refers to the giving of the children to the priests of the pagan temples of Molech to become temple prostitutes. This was also a pagan religious custom in honour of their gods. A breach of this commandment is tantamount to profaning the name of God. Such acts bring disgrace and dishonour to the name of God and are serious sins.

Homosexuality is clearly condemned. In the New Testament, this perverted sexual behaviour is also condemned (Romans 1:26-27).² Today there is a large combined movement of gays and lesbians who have some sympathetic support to claim the rights to their own lifestyle. A popular argument runs like this: how can it be evil when two persons who love one another decided to share their lives together. Another argument in support is: gays and lesbians are natural. These points are so subtle and persuasive, but nothing can erase the fact that God, who is holy, condemns it.

God solemnly warned the children of Israel not to imitate the abominable

¹ In modern history, Indian Hindus practice "suttee." The wives of Hindu husbands who died were burned alive when the bodies of their husbands were cremated.

² Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

customs of the other nations. They must keep themselves undefiled and holy for the LORD is their God.

Loving God and Our Neighbours

The spirit of the Ten Commandments permeates Leviticus 19 (see if you can spot them). All of the commandments, except for the first, are clearly referred to. Although there is no direct reference to the first commandment, its essence is strikingly implied by the statement, "I am the LORD your God," which runs throughout the whole chapter beginning with verse 2. This, in fact, is the central theme of the whole chapter.

How appropriately therefore that the practical demands of our personal holiness should be followed with the commandments to fear our parents, and to faithfully keep the sabbath (v.3).

Idolatry is strictly forbidden by God (v.4). It includes all forms of occult practices and consultation of mediums or diviners (v. 26, 31).

An interesting and important principle can be drawn from the regulation concerning the planting of all kinds of trees and plants for food (v.23-25). In the first three years, the fruits were not to be eaten. In the fourth year, the fruits were to be offered as a praise offering to the LORD. The people could only eat of the fruits of their labour in the fifth year. The interesting and wonderful part of this injunction is the promise God gave to them—"that it may yield unto you the increase thereof" (v.25b). The children of Israel were called to work for five years before they could enjoy the fruits of their labour. They must offer the fruits to the LORD before they could enjoy them. This was a very hard rule to obey, but if they did obey, the LORD promised a good reward in return. This

corresponds with the principle in Matthew 6:33: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* Honour the LORD God first, and He will bless you! Sadly, very few of God's people truly internalise and practise this in their lives.

The LORD laid great emphasis on the conduct of social relationships -- to be righteous and just. The Israelites must consider the poor and the helpless strangers. They must not take advantage of the defenceless (v. 9, 10, 13). They should be impartial in all their dealings and transactions (v.14, 15, 35,36). Thus a key to social well-being is "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (v.18). Surely this is a better philosophy in life than that of hatred and selfish greed.

The Penal Code

Leviticus 18 and 20 have much in common. While chapter 18 describes the sins that are abominable to God, chapter 20 focuses on the penalties imposed on those who broke these laws. Although the focus is on the penalties of various sins, two other features stand out. God called His people to sanctify themselves and promised them His power to keep the commandments (20:7-8). Also, God wanted His people to be distinctively different from all the other nations (20:22-26).

The various kinds of sins that invoke punishments include idolatry (the worship of Molech, v. 1-5), spiritual occultism (consulting mediums, v. 6, 27), disobeying parents (v. 9), adultery (v.10), incest (v. 11-12, 14, 17, 19-21), homosexuality (v.13), bestiality (v. 15-16), and sexual intercourse during a woman's monthly period (v.18). God's

judgment of these sins was radical and severe. While many of us may view the punishment as very harsh, we must understand the setting at the time. For example, a person who had sexual intercourse with his father's wife was put to death (v. 11). But in the time of the Apostle Paul, such a person in the church was ex-communicated, and if he repented, he was received back into fellowship in the church (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, cf. 2 Corinthians 2:5-8).

The punishments listed in Leviticus include: stoned to death (v. 2); "cut them off" (v. 3); burned to death (v.14); die childless (v.20). These punishments reveal one paramount truth, and that is, God will not tolerate sin. The sinner must be punished. The penalties for these sins serve as a deterrent for the purpose of maintaining the well-being of the community as a whole.

God called on the people to be holy as He is holy. They must keep and obey His laws, for He is the LORD their God. They would be empowered to fulfil His commandments. If God require something of us, He will empower us. The empowering to do His will still holds today (Philippians 2:12-13): *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

God intended that His chosen people be distinct and different from the other nations (v. 25-26). Indeed, if God's people kept His laws, they would be a healthy, happy, morally pure and spiritually powerful community. But sadly, the people chose not to obey God but rebelled instead.

PRACTICAL VALUE

What do all these mean to Christians today? As the blood bought children of God, we learn about the will of God. We learn what He abhors, what He desires and what He requires of us.

We ought to refrain from the sins listed, not as a means of salvation for no one can be saved by good works, but in order to be holy as He is holy. As His children, we must honour and glorify Him. How? Obey Him.

God is with us every moment of every day. If we conduct ourselves with that in mind, our burdens will be lighter, our obstacles will be smaller, and our challenges will be more easily overcome.

As Christians, our lifestyle individually and corporately must be distinct and different from non-believers. In other words, the Church of Christ must be a showcase so that others will desire to know Christ and be led to the saving knowledge of the gospel of salvation. Every time we disobey God, we profane the name of God and bring disgrace to Him. We have to watch what we say and what we do because our adversary Satan seeks whom he may use to destroy and disgrace the name of God.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Leviticus 18:1-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

Tuesday: Leviticus 18:19-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

Wednesday: Leviticus 19:1-19; James 2:1-17.

Thursday: Leviticus 19:20-37; Ephesians 1:3-6; Colossians 1:21-23.

Friday: Leviticus 20:1-27; 1 Peter 3:8-16.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the basis of moral purity for Israel then, and for Christians today?

2. In what way was Israel to be different from the Egyptians and the Canaanites?

3. What do you think is the divine wisdom in prohibiting marriage within close family ties?

4. How was the name of God being profaned by the Israelites? What does it mean to profane the name of God?

5. What is God's view of homosexuality? Do Christians lack love and understanding in condemning homosexuality?

6. What central theme runs through the whole of chapter 19? What does this mean?

7. How should the people of God treat the poor?

8. What is the key to righteous social relationships?

9. What principle of giving and reward can be drawn from 19:23-25?

10. God called on Israel to sanctify themselves (v.7). What is the basic concept of sanctification?

11. What are the four radical judgments of God against those who committed the more serious sins mentioned in this chapter?
