

Leviticus 10

[we might make an application here: the consuming fire against God's people as recorded in ch 10 could refer to the guilty conscience, a fire from the indwelling Spirit that consumes the body over a period of time. for our god is a consuming fire against presumptuous sinners

We will start with Gill's introduction:

This chapter begins with the sin and punishment of two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, #Le 10:1-5 for whose death Aaron and his sons are commanded not to mourn, nor to depart from the tabernacle, #Le 10:6,7 and an order is given, prohibiting the priests from drinking wine when they went into it, #Le 10:8-11 the law of eating holy things, both those that were more, and those that were less holy, is enjoined, #Le 10:12-15 and the flesh of the sin offering not being eaten, but burnt, Aaron's sons are blamed for it, for which he makes an apology to the satisfaction of Moses, #Le 10:16-20.

Vv. 1, 2.

The strange fire was fire that was not part of the fire that had just been sent from heaven: fire that the boys kindled, not the Lord. The fire that killed them was not a normal fire; it was from the Lord. It simply killed them, not burning their bodies nor their clothing, v. 5.

Lev 9:23, 24, the Lord accepted the offering by sending fire out to consume the burnt offering. The people saw the Lord's actions, and fell on their faces. The very next verse, though, tells of two young men, sons of Aaron, who offered strange fire, unauthorized fire, before the Lord. The Lord again sent out fire, but this time to kill the two presumptuous men.

But Keil says that it had not yet been commanded by the Lord, in fact, never was, to take fire from the altar. Keil says the sin was in the fact that the boys offered the offering at the wrong time, contrary to the time that had been given by the Lord. Keil develops the timing of the offering: The offering had been made and accepted by the Lord in chapter 9. The people fall down and worship the Lord. The next step that had been ordained by the Lord was eating the remaining meat by the family of the priests. But the boys, v. 1, were overcome with emotion, and, instead of waiting for the next phase of the offering as commanded by the Lord, *i.e.* eating the meat (10:16ff.), they made an incense offering. Keil sums it up:

They fire of the holy God (Ex. xix. 18), which had just sanctified the service of Aaron as well-pleasing to God, brought destruction upon his two eldest sons, because they had not sanctified Jehovah in their hearts, but had taken upon themselves a self-willed service; just as the same gospel is to one a savour of life unto life, and to another a savour of death unto death (2 Cor. ii. 16)... (*Keil-Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes*, v. 1, p 351. 1986 reprint by Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan.)

Thus the boys took it upon themselves to make an offering that was not according to the *commanded* of them by the Lord. The type of fire, *i.e.* from the altar, might be implied, but the primary violation of the *command* of the Lord was in the timing: The next order of events was eating the meat by the priests' family.

Barnes' Notes (Cook, editor) says the same thing: The sin was improper timing. On the other hand, Oehler uses the death of the boys in Lev 10, to assume that their *strange fire* was fire not from the altar that had been sent from above:

All fire for the offerings of incense had to be taken from this sacred fire on the altar of burnt-offerings,—a thing which indeed, expressly commanded in the law, but was set forth practically by the heavy punishment inflicted on the sons of Aaron, who approached the Lord in offering of incense with strange fire (Lev. x). (*Theology of the Old Testament*, by Dr. Gustav Friedrich Oehler, p 282. Originally published by T. & T. Clark, 1873. Klock and Klock reprint, 1978. Notice he *assumes* that the proper fire was to be from the altar.)

John Gill holds to the same thing: the fire was strange because it was not from the fire that had come down from heaven in the preceding chapter:

which he commanded not; yea, forbid, by sending fire from heaven, and ordering coals of fire for the incense to be taken off of the altar of burnt offering; and this, as Aben Ezra observes, they did of their own mind, and not by order. It does not appear that they had any command to offer incense at all at present, this belonged to Aaron, and not to them as yet; but **without any instruction and direction** they rushed into the holy place with their censers, and offered incense, even both of them, when only one priest was to offer at a time, when it was to be offered, and this they also did with strange fire. This may be an emblem of dissembled love, when a man performs religious duties, prays to God, or praises him without any cordial affection to him, or obeys commands not from love, but selfish views; or of an ignorant, false, and misguided zeal, a zeal not according to knowledge, superstitious and hypocritical; or of false and strange doctrines, such as are not of God, nor agree with the voice of Christ, and are foreign to the Scriptures; or of human ordinances, and the inventions of men, and of every thing that man brings of his own, in order to obtain eternal life and salvation. (OnLine Bible, Lev. 10:1. Emp added.)

Gill points out, properly, that Nadab and Abihu moved “without any instructions and direction” to make the offering. Then Gill rightly compares such movement with acting on “human ordinances, and the inventions of men.” He concludes that those who act thusly in hope of obtaining eternal life and salvation will die.

The Geneva note for v. 3, is:

I will punish them that serve me in other ways than I have commanded, not sparing the chief, that the people may fear and praise my judgments.

Which he commanded them not. *Nadab and Abihu* died before the Lord because they, evidently with good intentions based upon 9:23, 24, rushed to do something which they were not specifically commanded to do. Has the law changed that much that man can today do those things not specifically commanded of them by the Lord for his redemption? Anything other than faith in the finished work of Christ will result in his death.

...they were guilty of a presumptuous and unwarranted intrusion into a sacred office which did not belong to them. (*Jamieson, Fausset, Brown, A Commentary*, v. I, p 453. 1976 reprint by Eerdmans.)

WITH THE ABOVE COMMENTS IN MIND, and they could well be right, we probably should consider what the passage says. After the sons are killed by the Lord and after the Lord through Moses forbids Aaron from mourning as the natural man would do [for he was anointed high priest at this time, fulfilling the duties of the office before the Lord], we are told what took place, **vv. 8-11**:

V. 9, forbids wine & strong drink in the tabernacle of the congregation. By the way, would not this forbid wine, or strong drink from being used at the Lord's table? Note what we are told in these four verses:

First, this is the first time the Lord spoke directly to Aaron: He spoke directly a total of four times, 1) Nu 18:1, *the LORD said unto Aaron*, 2) Lev 10:8, *the LORD spake unto Aaron*, 3) Nu 18:8, *the LORD spake unto Aaron*, and 4) Nu 18:20, *the LORD spake unto Aaron*. Evidently, the other times the Lord spoke through the *Urim and the Thummin*, 8:8.

This command shows us that the boys were under the influence of strong drink when they rushed in to make the sacrifice, for strong drink was not yet forbidden in the Lord's service until this point in time. Why did not the Lord forbid the strong drink before the boys were killed? I can think of at least one reason: The Lord wanted the people to see the effects of strong drink before He placed His prohibition against it. I think Gill makes a good point here, v. 9:

in imitation of this, Heathen priests were forbid wine, and abstained from it, particularly the Egyptian priests; at whom it is said {r}, some of them never drink any wine, and others taste but a little of it, because it is said to harm the nerves, to fill the head, or make it heavy, to hinder invention and excite to lust...

Thus the pagans knew and know better than to drink strong drink because it harms the nerves, clouds the mind, hinders concentration and leads to uncontrolled passions. **PERSONAL NOTE:** Though unsaved and making no profession of any desire for the Lord, one of the most "well-to-do" men in our county, Bill Corey, told me that he does not drink because it clouds the mind. He knew strong drink would hinder his ability to control the situations, and he was not going to take such a chance.

Second, the Lord's speaking directly to Aaron establishes Aaron's authority to speak for the Lord.

Third, the subject of the Lord's first command to Aaron is very significant: It had to do with strong drink and the trouble it caused Aaron's sons. The strong implication, accordingly, is that the sons brought the death upon themselves.

Fourth, Aaron must now make a choice: Side with the Lord in their deaths, or follow his emotions and side with the sons who acted rashly and foolishly while inebriated. Will he excuse the drunkenness, or will he lay the blame where it belongs, upon the sons?

This passage implies that their drunkenness had several effects:

1) caused them to rush in with no regard for the commands of the Lord, nor to common since, we will add. The drinking sons were controlled by their emotions rather than by the command-word of God. There are several passages that fit well here:

A) Pr 31:4, 5 *[It is] not for kings, O Lemuel, [it is] not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.*

Though not totally forbidding strong drink, the mother told the son that as king he had no business even drinking strong drink: She preached to him TOTAL ABSTINENCE. Clearly, we are warned that those who desire to retain control of their emotions AT ALL TIMES must stay away from strong drink. Let me add: Are we not kings and priests to our God, Rev. 1:6. Therefore, would not the laws of holiness given to the priests serving the most high and holy Jehovah God of heaven and earth also apply to the believer who is a priest continually in the service of the Lord God?

I believe Pro 31:6 bears this idea out: **Pr 31:6** *Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts.* In other words, strong drink causes one to forget the reality of his situation, and the priests of the most high God are never to be in such a condition, Lev 10:7.

Is it any wonder that strong drink plays such an large role in decision making meetings today? Strong drink places one party at the mercy of the other. Andrew Bonar comments on v. 9:

A priest must have his soul calm, clear, steady. He is to be "filled with the Spirit," not with "wine, wherein is excess" (Eph. v. 18). In a holy frame, discerning between clean and unclean, ready to teach others also, he is to enter the tabernacle. In two things he is to be the opposite of Nadab and abihu : he is not to be excited with any false, vain desire ; and then he is to be exactly observant to the Lord's statutes (ver. 11), so that he may be ready to teach others also to keep them. Hence, he must keep away from every indulgence and every appearance of evil ; from every tempting object, and every form of excitement not drawn from Him whom he is approaching. [*A Commentary of Leviticus, The Banner of Truth Trust, p 200.*]

The Lord says that those who teach God's Word in such a manner as to allow people to follow after their lustful desires will have many people following them.

Micha 2:11 *If a man {m} walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, [saying], {n} I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.*

(m) That is, show himself to be a prophet.

(n) He shows what prophets they delight in, that is, in flatterers, who tell them pleasant tales, and speak of their benefits.

The obvious conclusion is, hence, that there will be far more "Prophets for Profit" who appeal to the natural appetites of man than there will be true prophets of God.

Even pagans realize the influence of strong drink; it moves to "harm the nerves, to fill the head, or make it heavy, to hinder invention and excite to lust..."

Hab 2:15 *Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to [him], and makest [him] drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!* [See also Gen 9:22, Ex 32:25.]

The Nov/Dec 1995, issue of *IDEASOURCE*, [Communications Resources, 4150 Belden Village Street, Canton, Oh 44718.] gives us an inside view of the *Willow Creek Community Church* in suburban Chicago, which runs 15,000 in attendance. Under the heading, LISTENING TO YOUR NEIGHBOURS—**Ask and ye shall learn**, we find:

Before Will Creek Church was launched, the core group conducted a neighborhood door-to-door survey — NOT to invite people to come, but to learn what the new church should be like. They asked people if they went to church. If the householder said "yes," the callers replied, "Great. Keep going." But if the person said "no," the callers asked, "Why not?" and then listened carefully. When several people said, "The sermons are irrelevant," the church planters committed themselves to making the sermons interesting. And hearing frequently that "The church always asks for money," the team decided they would save the money appeals for core groups of Christians who were already committed to give as part of tier response to God. Even if you are not planning a new church, this listening approach can help you **design services and miniseries** that meet the needs of the people in your area. [Emp added.]

IDEASOURCE included in there 12 page examination of *Willow Creek* this side bar explaining *Willow Creek's* "seekers service":

Seeker-sensitive ministry includes services **designed especially** for outsiders, people who are willing do consider the faith but who aren't yet ready to make a commitment. Based on the insight that most unchurched people can't relate to much of what goes on in the average church service, seeker services avoid the usual worship elements. Instead, they move through contemporary presentations of Christian music, drama, video and multimedia, all built around a central theme to be explained in the message – a basic explanation of biblical teachings, tied to concerns of people's lives and presented in language free of traditional faith gargon... [Emp added.]

IDEASOURCE explains *Willow Creek's* youth ministry seeker service thusly:

Even if you're not ready to try seeker services for adults — and the Willow Creek staff is the first to admit not every church should — you may still want to consider letting your high-schoolers try it. Willow Creek Church was actually launched when a high-school ministry decided to spin off a Bible study from its successful music and drama program. (Someone dubbed the original seeker service as "youth ministry for adults.") **Design a program** that your teens will be comfortable attending — these days that usually means sports competitions and loud contemporary music — but include some Christian teaching as well. Willow Creek offers an additional separate program for teens who are already committed Christians, but we suspect most churches will need to do all there youth ministry in a single weekly event. Make it one any kid will want to attend. [Emp added.]

DESIGNER CHURCHES

Someone has called churches that pattern their ministries after what people want, **DESIGNER CHURCHES**. They are designed after the lustful desires of fallen men. Let me ask, who is to design the church, men's ides and desires or the Word of God. What is the purpose of the church: to attract the unsaved pagans or to instruct the saints in the faith? Paul clearly tells us in Eph 4:1-16 that the purpose of the preaching of the Word of God in the assembly is to instruct and strengthen the saints. Hence we ask a couple question of those drawn to **DESIGNER CHURCHES**: First, where is the Scriptural justification to design the Biblical message of Christ to attract the unsaved pagans? Second, where, may we ask, will **DESIGNER CHURCHES** draw the line as they "design services and miniseries" to appeal to the flesh: topless dancers, male strippers, mud wrestlers,

“happy hour”?

DESIGNER CHURCHES present the Word of God in such a way as to allow the people to follow after their lustful desires will have many people following them. I find it interesting that *Willow Creek Community Church* provides a choice: Those who want to be more *committed* are given the option: “As seekers grow in faith, they **can** progress into other appropriate study groups.” [Emp added.]

Of course, once people commit to the Christian life, they need more than “Christianity for beginners.” That's what Willow Creek's midweek worship services are for. There, people gather for more usual church services that include the standard elements of Christian worship.

DESIGNER CHURCHES! This designer church designs for the pagans and for the Christians, if such a thing were possible. Was and is not the purpose of “Church Letters” to attest to the faithful observance of the Biblical faith by the candidate for fellowship of another Christian assembly? When **DESIGNER CHURCHES** design for both pagan and Christians, then a “Church Letter” from such a pagan assembly would simply say that the person was a consistent pagan Christian or consistent Christian pagan, depending upon how much he progressed up the ladder from paganism.

Micha 2:11 If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

The **DESIGNER CHURCH** is designed to appeal to and attract the pagans. Thus they have the 15,000 in attendance, for they appeal to the natural appetites under the name of God.

Ps 37:1-7 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the LORD, and do good; [so] shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring [it] to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Ps 73:1 Truly God [is] good to Israel, [even] to such as are of a clean heart. 2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. 3 For I was envious at the foolish, [when] I saw the prosperity of the wicked... 7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. 8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly [concerning] oppression: they speak loftily... Behold, these [are] the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase [in] riches. 13 Verily I have cleansed my heart [in] vain, and washed my hands in innocency. 14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning... 16 When I thought to know this, it [was] too painful for me; 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; [then] understood I their end. 18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction... 24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, [not in the counsel of the ungodly on how to design a church; see also Ps 1, ed] and afterward receive me [to] glory... 26 My flesh and my heart faileth: [but] God [is] the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. 27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. 28 But [it is] good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

The abounding worldly wealth, splendor and prosperity of the **DESIGNER CHURCHES** is there for all to see. My! how tempting for those of us with small, struggling churches to seek and to walk in the counsel of the ungodly and give the pagans something that appeals to their flesh.

Even pagans realize the influence of strong drink; it moves to "harm the nerves, to fill the head, or make it heavy, to hinder invention and excite to lust..."

Hab 2:15 Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to [him], and maketh [him] drunken also, that thou mayest look on

their nakedness! [See also Gen 9:22, Ex 32:25.]

2) were not able to distinguish properly between right and wrong, *between holy and unholy, and between unclean and unclean*, v. 10.

3) destroyed their abilities to teach the Word of God.

Vv. 3-7, Aaron was forbidden to mourn for his sons, Nadab and Abihu: Not only was Aaron serving his turn as high priest, but the sons brought the wrath of the Lord upon themselves.

A VERY IMPORTANT POINT here is that though the sons were drunk, the Lord held them accountable for their actions. The obvious application for our day is that the drunk who damages live and/or property is totally responsible for what he did. He is to be held accountable as though he had not touched a drop of alcohol.

1 Tim 3:3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous...
8 Likewise [must] the deacons [be] grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre...

Note the different wording: V 3 is worded as though the *bishop* is totally forbidden wine, while the *deacon* is permitted a little.

Those I have checked say that v. 3 refers to overindulging in wine, and they say the same about the second. But why the different wording in v. 3 and v. 8?

Vv. 3-7.

Aaron was no doubt greatly hurt to see his two boys consumed by the fire from the Lord. He might have even thought that since they were priests, that should not have happened. Regardless, Aaron was going to respond in some way because Moses spoke up, telling Aaron to keep quiet.

Moses calls for two men to come carry away the dead bodies. Moses also told the family not to mourn for the boys.

V. 3, *I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me...* In this case, the Lord is *sanctified* in His swift move against sin and the subsequent death of the two men.

glorified when His worship is carried on in His house according to His commands, when He is revered in the assembly of His saints, when His divine justice is carried out in, in this case, public punishment of sin. [Gill] 1 Cor 5 applies what took place here to the new church.

We should point out here that sin cannot be separated from the sinner: The Lord killed the sin by killing the sinner.

Aaron was quiet, content that the Lord God was glorified.

V. 3, the Lord promises that He will punish all, even the chiefest of persons, who serve him in ways other than He has commanded.

Thus we are confronted with a very powerful statement: NOT ONLY DOES THE LORD COMMAND MAN TO SERVE HIM, HE ALSO COMMANDS MAN TO SERVE HIM IN THE WAY GIVEN IN HIS WORLD.
THE END NEVER JUSTIFIES THE MEANS.

These boys, and even those watching, might have said, "Why would the Lord do that? They were serving the Lord, were they not?"

Note two supernatural deaths at the hand of the Lord:

First, these two boys, Nadab and Abihu.
Second, Ananias and Sapphira.

First, the two boys thought that all that mattered was that one serve the Lord, while they ignored the manner in which they were to serve Him. They offered fire according to the law, but they offered their own fire.

Second, Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5. They lied to the Spirit of God, and their deaths caused the fear of God to descend over the new church.

We should note that these deaths took place after a new thing was instituted by the Lord: the offerings, the sabbath and the church. All three deaths caused the people to fear the Lord, and thus they established that particular law of the Lord.

V. 5, apparently, their clothing remained unharmed.

V. 6, Aaron, and those who were performing the office of the priest, was forbidden to mourn as a family member would be inclined to mourn. Moses did, however, tell *the whole house of Israel* to *bewail the burning which the Lord hath kindled*. *Bewail*, weep, cry, shed tears... In other words, express deep sorrow **over the burning, not over the boys who died**.

Weep, cry, shed tears over the fact of sin, not over the persons, Moses tells the people.

V. 7, they were commanded to keep the outward actions under control.

Vv. 8-11 are covered above.

Vv. 12-20.

Moses commands Aaron and his family to eat of the meat of the offerings given by the people. It was commanded of the priests as *a statute for ever*, that is, until Christ came, putting an end to "the Jewish age and economy." [Gill]

Vv. 16-18, the two sons of Aaron, Eleazar and Ithamar, left an offering uneaten that was to be eaten, burning it instead, for it could be eaten by none except those to whom it was appointed. Moses rebukes them instead of Aaron, having respect to Aaron's grief. [Gill]

Vv. 19, 20, however, Aaron points out that he was in no condition to eat the meat and bear the sins of the people because of what just took place with his two boys.

Moses hears Aaron, and is content.

Obviously, the death of the two as recorded in this chapter would have struck the fear of God in the hearts of the priests, the line of Aaron, and in the hearts of the people. It showed beyond any doubt the seriousness of the sacrifices and offerings: They were not something to be taken lightly; rather, they were a matter of life and death.

Of course, human nature soon forgets the lessons of the past, and each generation seems to think it will be the exception.