

Leviticus 19

Introduction.

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Pet. 1:15, 16. See also Lev. 11:44, 20:7, 26, Mat. 5:48, Eph. 1:4 & 1 Thes. 4:7.)

When I mention that the above passage and, therefore, its Old Testament context belongs to God's people since Christ, the Gospel Church, I receive letters saying that though the Apostle Peter wrote those words for the Church, he could not have meant them according to their obvious Old Testament context. That is, because Peter wrote to Christians, his words must stand alone with no thought of their Old Testament usage. The reason being that because the Old Testament passage was given by Moses to God's people, national Israel, in the wilderness, Moses' context can not apply with Peter's usage.

The only reason I can see for people saying that is they have not studied the Old Testament from where Peter took the words. Or it could be that they despise the law of God as given through Moses so much that anything found in the five books of the law is anathema to them, regardless of what those books contain. Chapter 19 opens with, *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying.* (Please note that I am not even hinting that law can save a person, for that is only *by grace through faith* in the finished work of Christ. However, a saved person will have the good works as defined by God's moral laws as given through Moses.)

Peter's words are found in the introduction to Leviticus 19 (v. 2):

Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy. (Lev. 19:2, 20:7, 1 Pet. 1:15, 16.)

Leviticus chapters 19 and 20 contain basic laws of holiness—holiness as defined by God. A well-known verse is:

Can two walk together, except they be agreed? (Amos 3:3.)

Yet how many try to claim this Old Testament passage while disagreeing with God over his moral laws as given through Moses?

I really do not understand the complaint of those who reject the Old Testament context of Peter's words, for the laws mentioned in Leviticus 19 and 20 are clearly developed in the New Testament, and are some of the most practical laws in Scripture.

This chapter is easily broken into sections, which we will do. Observe:

Lev 19

(Remove from mailing) This chapter contains various laws, ceremonial and moral, tending to the sanctification of men, in imitation of the holy God, #Le 19:1,2; as concerning the reverence of parents, and observing the sabbaths, #Le 19:3; against idolatry, #Le 19:4; about offering and eating of peace offerings, #Le 19:5-8; concerning harvest and gleaning of fields and vineyards, #Le 19:9,10; respecting the breach of several of the commandments of the law, as the eighth, ninth, and third, particularly, #Le 19:11-13; and others relating to the ill usage of the deaf and blind, and having respect to persons rich or poor in judgment, and acting the part of a tale bearer among people, #Le 19:14-16; and bearing hatred and ill will to any of their neighbours, #Le 19:17,18; and others forbidding mixtures in the generation of cattle, sowing fields, and wearing apparel, #Le 19:19; and concerning the punishment of a man that lay with a bondmaid, and the offering he should bring for his atonement, #Le 19:20-22; then follow certain laws concerning fruit trees, when the fruit of them should be eaten, #Le 19:23-25; and concerning eating with blood, using

enchantments, and observing times, and managing the hair of the head and beard, and avoiding to make any marks, prints, and cuttings in the flesh for the dead, #Le 19:26-28; a caution not to prostitute a daughter to whoredom, and to observe the sabbath, and reverence the sanctuary of God, and pay no regard to wizards and familiar spirits, #Le 19:29-31; to show reverence to ancient persons, and not to vex and distress strangers, #Le 19:32-34; and to do no injustice in weight and measure, #Le 19:35,36; all which instructions are to be carefully observed, and put in execution, #Le 19:37. (Gill)

Vv. 1-8

Vv. 1, 2, *And the Lord spake unto Moses...* The following laws are the Word of the Lord; I honestly do not understand how folks can miss the fact that these various laws are God's words given not only to his people, but for the well-being, life, of all mankind *which if a man shall do, he shall live.* (Lev. 18:5.) And the civil government has the responsibility to enforce some of these laws. The authority to give these requirements and expect obedience to them is clearly established: *the Lord spake..., I the Lord your God... Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy.* Therefore, this chapter contains laws to make one holy even as the Lord is holy. V. 3 is very interesting, but I will put it off until the next chapter, Lev 20.

V. 3, contain the two precepts that are the summary of the whole law: the duty of man in all his relations to God and to his fellow man. This verse clearly tells us that the respect one has towards his or her parents is the respect he or she has toward God and man.

V. 3's *fear* is used in some interesting places: The usages can be basically divided up into two sections, positive and negative, *e.g.*,

Ps 3:6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set [themselves] against me round about.
Ps 23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [art] with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Ps 27:1 <<[A Psalm] of David.>> The LORD [is] my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD [is] the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
Ps 27:3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this [will] I [be] confident.

Then:

Ps 33:8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
Ps 34:9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for [there is] no want to them that fear him.

Thus the only thing on this earth we are called upon to fear is our parents. The same fear, though, is to be given to the Lord God. In other words, proper fear and reverence for God in heaven Whom we cannot see is learned toward our parents whom we can see.

V. 18, *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.*

This chapter defines *love*, and it is not emotional, but practical as it works itself out.

V. 4, forbids any man-made image representing God. See 1 Cor 10:14, 1 Jo 5:21.

Chapter 18 dealt primarily with private sins; now the Word of the Lord deals with public sins. Does our public life honour God before all men? Are we led by God or mammon? Does the fear of Jehovah God control our actions? Remember, *covetousness* is *idolatry*.

Perhaps there is emphasis in each clause. *"Turn not,"* or look not to. The gay attire of idol-worship was attractive, like Popish splendour, to the natural eye; therefore, do not cast even a glance on it. And perhaps there is ridicule in the other clause, *"molten gods"*--castmetal gods! It is a Divine sarcasm on Idolatry, as

Trappe supposes there is in the name..., as if it were "Deunculi," or "Deastri," little gods! (Andrew Bonar [1810-1892], *Leviticus*, Banner of Truth.)

Vv. 5-8, the free will offering. Evidently, the person here loved God and felt a need to offer something to Him. But though the offering was freely given, no one forced nor commanded the offering, it was strictly regulated. All service, even free will service, to the Lord God must follow strictly prescribed rules laid down by the Lord God.

Vv. 9, 10. Also included in the law of holiness is care for the widow, orphan and the stranger in the land. Thus part of holiness before God involves social activity and spending. It involves even going out of our way to assist others in their need, *e.g.*, *The Good Samaritan*, Luke 10.

This law was meant to check selfishness and greediness; to encourage brotherly kindness and liberality; and to condemn covetous, avaricious, griping tendencies in the people of Israel. (*Ibid.*)

This law requires that God's people be free with what the Lord has provided for them not only with fellow Israelites, but also with all who dwelt among them, *i.e.*, *the stranger*. Boaz is an excellent example of this law in action.

Basically, Christians must live what they profess.

Vv. 11-18

Vv. 11, 12, is also interesting:

V. 11 forbids false dealings deceptive practices with one's neighbor. It forbids cutting corners in business dealings. V. 12 forbids using the Lord's name improperly. In other words, this section condemns professing to be something, a Christian, to our neighbour and then not acting like it to him, *i.e.* live what we profess to be, or we profane the name of the Lord.

Glorify God, therefore, by a jealous integrity, and by a noble uprightness. Cast reproach on the world's meanness, and shew that you carry God's presence with you into every place, and at every hour, and in all engagements. Write "*Holiness to the Lord*" on the bells of the horses. (*Ibid.*, Zec. 14:20.)

V. 13 forbids defrauding, misleading or promising something we do not deliver, the neighbour.

Far from defrauding, or withholding what is due to thy neighbour, thou shalt not even *delay* giving him what he is entitled to. This precept is directly pointed against incurring *debt*. Fraudulent bankruptcies, and pretexts for withholding payments, are condemned by it; but willingly remaining in debt to any one is also pointed condemned. "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." (Rom. 13:8, *ed.*) In James v. 4, this is spoken of as a sin of *the last days*. [Bonar]

Vv. 14-18, deals with protecting the helpless. V. 15, love thy neighbour as thyself...

V. 14, *the deaf*. This includes speaking against someone "behind their back," out of hearing range. *I m the Lord* Who hears and sees all. Both public and private sins bring the Lord against sinners. Also included is bad counsel.

The Lord abhors the meanness that would take advantage of a neighbour's defects, instead of aiding that neighbour in supplying the want he feels. (*Ibid.*)

V. 15, "Causes must be heard, not *persons*." The judge must be impartial, for the eyes of the Lord, the Righteous Judge, are upon him. The human judge actually stands in place of the Lord, and judges in the Lord's stead, Rom 13. Therefore, the judge must judge righteously, for he will one day answer for his judgments to the impartial, righteous Judge.

Lev 19:16-18, is one of the most pointed sections, *i.e.*, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*.

The laws here given express that love toward one's neighbour, and they are clearly repeated in the New Testament. Notice Christ's words in Mat 5:43, 44:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

He **DID NOT** change anything: He said, *Ye have heard*; He did not say, *It is written*.

The New Testament usages of this passage are so obvious and numerous that we will not repeat them here.

However, there is an overlooked point in this passage, Lev 19:16-18,

Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. {and...: or, that thou bear not sin for him} Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

Love for one's neighbour is here defined as, *thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him*.

Love toward a person is expressed by not covering grudges and talebearing, but by rebuking him where needed.

The *love* that is a true reflection of *God's love to us* is described as giving no quarter to a brother's sin (1 Cor. xiii. 6). [Bonar]

Thus, any and every ground for anger is to be dealt with by going to the brother and straightening it out. Christ applied this law in Mat 18:15ff. Paul dealt with it in Gal 6.

More often than not, gossip, idle talking and meddling with our neighbour--Christian brother or sister--is a result of secret sins and hard feelings toward that person.

The law of God is clear; He wastes no words as He gives the law many times over throughout His word,

If a brother defame us, or slight us, or give us cause for grief and anger, we are to tell it to the person face to face. There must be no self-satisfaction, as if you were in this better than he. Even for his sake, the evil must not be left on him. [Bonar]

Notice how the Lord closes this difficult to follow law: *I am the Lord*. Thus He clearly tells us, 1) His authority to command vv. 16-18, and 2) the standard by which we are to do vv. 16-18, *i.e.*, if He forgave us for Christ's sake though we were and are terminable sinners against His holiness, then how much more are we without excuse for not doing the same to our fellow man?

Note the alternate reading, *that thou bear not sin for him*.

Certainly, love suffers long, 1 Cor 13, but Godly love will not overlook sin that needs to be dealt with in a Scriptural manner.

Vv. 19-29.

V. 19, *Ye shall keep my statutes*. is followed with not mixing one breed of cattle with another. Really, the only

livestock this would apply to would be the ass and the horse, for they only can coss breed. Also included in mixing different seeds and different cloths.

The general teaching here is that God's people "are to abstain from every action that seemed to exhibit a mingling and confusing of opposite things." [Bonar] God used common things to teach spiritual truths. The Lord is thus against mixing Christian and pagan practices, especially under the name of Christianity. He is against mixing Christians and pagans, commanding Christians not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, *for what fellowship do they have with Belial?* 2 Cor 6:15.

This law could also be the basses for Christ's parable about the wheat and tares, Mat 13:24.

Vv. 20-22, the woman is scourged, but not put to death. **She is scourged...** evidently, she had a measure of say in what took place. The man is let off the hook, only having to make a trespass offering to the Lord for his sin. Of course, the woman was a bond-woman, and may have had little choice. The man may have been the one she was in bondage to.

This law probably assumes some things: 1) those involved were not married, for then it would be adultery, punishable by death. See Deut 22:23, 24. 2) the one doing the seducing was the master of the one seduced. 3) the one seduced was betrothed to another bond servant.

The general teaching is against a superior taking advantage of one under him or her. The woman, or man for that matter, could be overwhelmed by the one in authority, and she, or he, then seduced--taken advantage of.

Vv. 23-25, God's law of holiness includes instructions concerning fruit trees.

Could this be a reference to the tree Adam could not contain himself from? Also, is this law the basses for Christ's parable of the barren fig-tree, Luke 13:7? The owner came for three years seeking fruit, finding none. The dresser ask for another year to try to make it bare fruit. Evidently, the fourth year the Lord got the fruit.

The general teaching is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, Mat 6:33.

I am the Lord. Man may not see the actions nor "punish" them--he may not have the authority to punish, but the Lord sees, knows and rewards accordingly. The standard is always the Lord.

Vv. 26-28 deals with acting like a pagan: It deals with diet, witchcraft, and haircuts-God's people are not to follow the pagan's hair styles; their hair should be neat and well kept, but they are not to be controlled by the pagans, *e.g.* boys cutting designs in hair because the pagans do it. Bonar gives these four points:

- 1) even in hunting, or in times when their food was hastily procured, they must stand still and witness for God in the manner of their eating.
- 2) they must not use any superstitious means, common among the pagans, to direct their lives.
- 3) they were forbidden from adopting any fashions in dressing their hair and beards in a manner to flatter or please the heathens among them or who they found themselves among as foreigners. Even their hair and beards were to be a wetness to the true God.
- 4) undue, extravagant grief was forbidden at funerals. Tears, certainly, may flow, "but grief must not be distracting nor inconsolable." Christians are forbidden to grieve as do the non-Christians.

V. 29, parents were not to sell their daughters into immorality, nor place them in immoral situations. OT times saw parents selling their daughters for maids [bond maids].

- 1) could refer to Israel adopting the wicked pagan practice of women prostitutes in the heathen temples, as was

common in Corinth.

2) could refer parents preventing their daughters from gadding about like Dinah, who fell into trouble with Shechem.

3) could refer to parents developing the beauty and natural qualities of their daughters so the daughters will draw the attention of the rich and noble, marrying them well--high--in society

4) could refer to parents actually causing the daughter to be a whore, a prostitute, providing income for the family. This is quite a common practice in many foreign nations: I know it was common in Spain and Portugal, both strong Roman Catholic countries. Moreover, from what I have heard, it was also a common practice in Viet Nam, and probably is in Mexico.

An interesting point about v. 29 and men is found in *Fathers*, Clement of Alexandria. See the mo file on the feminization of men.

This verse clearly tells us that parents are responsible for the purity of their daughters, as well as their conduct.

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Vv. 30-37.

V. 20, not only does this verse forbid common business on the sabbath, the Lord's day, but it requires honest worship of the Lord on that day.

Sitting in the barber shop the other day, I heard an older man, maybe in his late 60s, recall how when he was a boy, he remembers a big community fight over thrashing on Sunday. He said that everyone went to church, so when a farmer decided to harvest on Sunday, it caused a great community commotion.

All immorality, and all manner of evil, will attend upon the neglect of the Sabbath. Take away yon river that waters the roots of the tree, and soon you will see the leaves wither and the sap dry up. [Bonar]

And it did. We should also mention, however, that most of the "churches" today are best avoided: If one goes, he will only hear how great socialism is and how the sodomites are accepted by God, among many other antichrist teachings.

I am the Lord, and we can be assured He will reward accordingly.

V. 31, follows v. 30's command to not forsake the public assembly of believers. V. 31 tells us that those who speak not according to the Word of God are to be ignored. And the Lord will reward both the false teacher and the faithful worshiper.

The message you get in the Word and sanctuary, on the Sabbaths, or at other times, should be sufficient to satisfy you as to providence and the ways of god. Fellowship with God is incompatible with a seeking after communication with devils, who may aid those that give themselves to them. *Persons that spoke as if inspired...* females and men who pretended to, and may have god, *singular knowledge* of unseen things from Satan, are here meant.

Thus forbidden is any kind of dealings with spirits; also, the requirement to avoid those who speak falsely in the name of the Lord. *I am the Lord*.

V. 32, requires reverence toward those with grey hair. *I am the Lord*,

By the sight of it, [grey hair, ed] the Lord would solemnise (sic) us in the midst of our pursuits. Lo! the shadow of eternity! for one cometh who is almost already in eternity. His head and beard white as snow,

indicate his speedy appearance before the Ancient of Days, the hair of whose head is as pure wool. [Bonar. See my note with Clement, manliness.]

It also requires honesty in judgments.

Vv. 33, 34, twice in these laws toward man we are told to love our neighbour. We are warned twice about wizards, v. 31, 26, *i.e.*, using the world's methods to control or influence our neighbour rather than obeying God's word toward him, the law of love called in the NT, the law of Christ.

The stranger, the non-Israelite, chose to dwell in the land, so he is to be treated with the same respect as a native born Israelite: He is a reminder that they were strangers also in Egypt.

We might mention that these laws concerning the stranger and inner personal relationships are being given soon after departure from Egypt. Thus the experiences in Egypt and coming out of Egypt was fresh in the minds of the people. They, accordingly, would have had no problem connecting what the Lord gave in these laws with what they had just come from. They could have easily seen the connection with what He said and the life they had lived for so many years.

God thus moulded (sic) His people into a pitying and kindly frame of soul, and undid their selfishness. And thus, too, foreigners were likely to be attracted to inquire regarding *Jehovah*, when His people were known as merciful, and kind, and sympathizing. Even as now, believers must exhibit kindness and gentleness for the very end of gaining men to Christ. [Bonar]

1 Thes 5:15 *See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.* Gal 6:10 *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Again, the NT placed no new requirement upon man.

Vv. 35-37,

The Lord is a God of justice--unbending, holy rectitude. It is thus that He will himself deal with us in judgment; hence He prefaced it by saying, ver. 35, "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment," *i.e.*, nothing which would be reckoned unjust if the case were tried.

If God requires righteous judgment in the smallest areas, *e.g.*, weights and measures, how much more does He require in our lives, Dan 5:27? Secret dealings will be found out, and *I am the Lord* will find out.

Judgments--weights, measures--reflect God's justice against sin as seen in Christ. God will hold man responsible! Christ paid the just due against sin, but still ever man will answer for every deed done in the flesh, 2 Cor 5:10.

Bonar points out that just justice and judgment was withheld from Christ as was required by this law:

But, at all events, their awful perversion of all law and equity towards the Righteous One is set before us in full relief: "In His humiliation, from judgment (the sentence He was entitled to) was he taken away." The Judge of Israel, who shall yet sit on the great white throne, was hurried away out of sight of justice and equity. Oh, how fearfully deep the descent our Surety made! But thus it was He drew us from the miry clay.