

**Leviticus 10:1** ¶ And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.

**Leviticus 10:2** And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

**Leviticus 10:3** ¶ Then Moses said unto Aaron, *This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.*

It seems that it never takes long for man to think that he has a better way to honor God than what God has told us honors him. It was this type of thinking that resulted in Cain murdering Abel. It is this type of thinking that will result in so many going to hell rather than accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior by faith as the only way to enjoy dwelling in the presence of God for eternity.

Two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, decided to ignore God's instructions and use "strange" fire to offer incense before God. The Hebrew word for *strange* is a statement of something foreign and profane and references committing adultery. The source of the fire was evidently not from the consecrated place of the altar. The picture of adultery is that of joining the holy with the unholy; God forbids this. It is this principle that is in focus in Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

*2 Corinthians 6:14–17 "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you...."*

The judgment of God was immediate. Just as surely as His fire consumed the sacrifice on the altar in the previous chapter to show His acceptance and pleasure of their action, so that same fire was used to pass judgment and declare His rejection of actions outside His will in the holy place of His presence. The fire of purification can just as readily serve as the fire of judgment as will soon happen when the fires of the tribulation period wreak vengeance on the wicked as they also serve to purify a remnant of the nation of Israel to fulfill God's covenant with Abraham and Jesus.

*Galatians 3:16 "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."*

Moses immediately reminds Aaron that these events were in accordance with God's word. He had declared that those who come before Him in service must be sanctified according to His command. Those who are honored to serve Him so publicly are accountable to glorify Him before His people. To whom much is given much is required. Luke records the teaching of Jesus according to this principle.

*Luke 12:47–48 “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:”*

**Leviticus 10:4 And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.**

**Leviticus 10:5 So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.**

**Leviticus 10:6 And Moses said unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons, Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes; lest ye die, and lest wrath come upon all the people: but let your brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning which the LORD hath kindled.**

**Leviticus 10:7 And ye shall not go out from the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: for the anointing oil of the LORD is upon you. And they did according to the word of Moses.**

Moses instructs two of their cousins, Misahel and Elzaphan, to come and take the bodies of the dead priests outside the camp. We are told that they carried them by their coats or tunics, so we know that there was a difference in the effect of God’s fire from its contact with the sacrifices on the altar. This fire killed, but did not destroy.

Aaron and his remaining two sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, were commanded not to give a public display of mourning; if they did, it would result in their death and an expression of God’s wrath on all the people. That is an important truth about sin; its consequences affect more than just the sinner.

I think it is interesting to note Moses’ declaration from the LORD that the people mourn the fire of God’s judgment. The emphasis seems to be on mourning the disobedience that resulted in God’s judgment rather than for the death of those that disobeyed. I think this is one of the identifying characteristics of the true child of God—he/she mourns how God is so dishonored by those for whom He gave His life.

Again, note is made that all was done according to the word of Moses [as God’s representative].

**Leviticus 10:8 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,**

**Leviticus 10:9 Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:**

**Leviticus 10:10 And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;**

**Leviticus 10:11 And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.**

I think it is interesting to note that the LORD speaks directly to Aaron instructing that neither he nor his sons throughout his generations were to drink wine or strong drink when serving in the tabernacle. If they did, they would die. The purpose—to put a difference between what is holy and what is unholy, between what is clean and what is unclean. They were to teach the people of Israel all that LORD had spoken unto them by “the hand” of Moses—a reference to the written record of these instructions. I think it is universally understood that the effectiveness of what we teach is directly related to whether our lives reflect that we truly believe what we teach.

Some commentaries noted that from the context in which this instruction is given it is possible that Nadab and Abihu’s sin was committed while intoxicated. It is scientifically proven that alcohol impairs judgment. Self-discipline and clear thinking are necessary character traits for those in spiritual leadership. I have personal family experience as to how alcohol can destroy lives and relationships. My thinking—why take the chance.

Isaiah identified the use of alcohol in direct disobedience to this instruction as one of the reasons for the lack of spiritual leadership that resulted in judgment upon the nation.

*Isaiah 28:7 “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.”*

**Leviticus 10:12 ¶ And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat offering that remaineth of the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it is most holy:**

**Leviticus 10:13 And ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it is thy due, and thy sons’ due, of the sacrifices of the LORD made by fire: for so I am commanded.**

**Leviticus 10:14 And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for they be thy due, and thy sons’ due, which are given out of the sacrifices of peace offerings of the children of Israel.**

**Leviticus 10:15 The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave offering before the LORD; and it shall be thine, and thy sons’ with thee, by a statute for ever; as the LORD hath commanded.**

Moses instructed Aaron and his two remaining sons to eat the meat that remained from the offerings that was designated as their portion; it was to be eaten without leaven at the holy place by the altar because God considered it as most holy. He goes on to say that they were allowed to eat the wave breast and heave shoulder from the peace offerings in a designated clean place, and they were allowed to share these portions with their family. Again, this instruction was to be followed by the succeeding generations of priests.

**Leviticus 10:16** And Moses diligently sought the goat of the sin offering, and, behold, it was burnt: and he was angry with Eleazar and Ithamar, the sons of Aaron *which were left alive*, saying,

**Leviticus 10:17** Wherefore have ye not eaten the sin offering in the holy place, seeing it *is most holy*, and *God* hath given it you to bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?

**Leviticus 10:18** Behold, the blood of it was not brought in within the holy *place*: ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy *place*, as I commanded.

**Leviticus 10:19** And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the LORD; and such things have befallen me: and *if* I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the LORD?

**Leviticus 10:20** And when Moses heard *that*, he was content.

Moses found out that the priests' portion of the meat from the goat had not been eaten as instructed, but burned. Instead of directing his anger toward his brother Aaron (probably in consideration of his loss), he directed it toward the Eleazar and Ithamar. Aaron heard Moses' accusation and intervened on his sons' behalf. He explained that the offerings had been made as instructed, but they didn't have the heart to properly enjoy such fellowship with the LORD. In other words, God knows my heart, and I only want to give Him my best.

Moses was content was he understood there was no intent to dishonor God's instructions. This would have been a private family meal and did not indicate a disregard of God's instruction not to mourn publicly.