

HE DESIRES MERCY

I had an interesting experience one time. An older brother in Christ (and minister) shared an observation of Leviticus 10. We're familiar with Nadab & Abihu. They offered unauthorized fire to God, and He consumed them with fire. These men were given precise instructions regarding worship, but for one reason or the other, they did not obey. This example has been beneficial when discussing authority and respect towards God. Some people aren't familiar with such passages. Yet, in our circles, it's a staple passage. However, when this brother pointed out the rest of the passage, I felt embarrassed because I couldn't remember. We'd always referenced the beginning of the passage. The beginning portion served its purpose. Not that there's anything wrong with focusing on a portion of Scripture. It's a powerful portion. But, I was surprised when, for the first time, I was considering another powerful lesson from the same chapter.

The rest of the story explains the aftermath. The goat for the sin offering was burned up in the day's chaos! Moses was angry with the other two brothers, Nadab and Abihu, for not eating the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary. Its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. Yet, Aaron answered Moses, "Behold, today they have offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, and yet such things as these have happened to me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would the Lord have approved?" And when Moses heard that, he approved.

I found this commentary on point: "10:19–20 Upon Moses' rebuke of the priests, Aaron responded by reminding Moses of the unique circumstance of this day, namely the death of his two sons. Aaron thus suggested that in light of these circumstances it would have been inappropriate for him to enjoy the food of these offerings. When Moses heard this response, he was satisfied that Aaron had responded in the appropriate way. *Aaron's proper response regarding the non-consumption of the sin offering suggested that he was capable of carrying out the priestly mandate of "distinguishing the holy and the profane and the clean and the unclean" (10:10). Aaron was "actually doing the kind of thing that sons of Aaron were responsible for throughout Israel's history." Even though the refusal to eat of the offering was technically a violation of law, Aaron's attitude does not reflect that flagrant disobedience represented by the sin of Nadab and Abihu. Hence, God's response is different. Even though Aaron's sorrow was based on the just judgment of wickedness, God is sympathetic. The Lord comforts those who have lost loved ones even when death comes as a consequence of their own sinfulness.*"

Mark F. Rooker, Leviticus, vol. 3A, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 163.

Yet another commentary articulated no mercy at all. According to their view, Aaron was wrong. They think Moses was gracious but spoke his peace and decided to let it go. But that's not a great response. Moses approved of what Aaron said. God allowed them to live.

See, there was some reasoning on Aaron and Moses' part. They were able to make a decision based on the character of God . . . and it was correct. Sometimes, we get so in the weeds that we overlook things that would have been clear to men, such as Aaron and Moses. Today, we're going to look at men who truly sought out God . . . and God Himself. We will see the God we serve, and I hope it offers a balanced (not one-sided) view of God. I hope it brings you just a step or two closer to Him.

Hezekiah and the Passover - 2 Chronicles 30

- He had a heart to obey and honor God.
 - Who else is doing this? Restoring the Temple, Temple Worship, and the Passover.
- He was doing the best he could, given the circumstances.
 - This is no lukewarm servant.
 - He's calling the survivors of Assyrian captivity. He's seeking restoration for God and His people.
- Several did not keep the sanctuary rules.
 - The Law gave provision to keep the Passover on the second month (Numbers 9:1-14), but you couldn't eat it if you were unclean. That's one of the reasons this instruction was given - for those who couldn't eat it the first month due to uncleanness.
 - They tried but failed. They were unclean.
- They were accepted by God.
 - Why? They had a heart that sought God.
- This does not serve as an example of breaking the rules—that's not the point. Such a person does not share the same heart as Hezekiah. It's an example of God's goodness and patience toward sincere people. Motive does matter.

David and the Showbread - 1 Samuel 21

- David is fleeing from Saul.
 - He's being persecuted unjustly.
- Only the priests could eat the Holy Bread.
 - Leviticus 24:5-9 addresses the Holy Bread.
- David did lie to Ahimelech. Many died because of this.
 - Sometimes deception was indeed used in war, but David lied.
- Did David and Ahimelech get this one wrong? Should he not have eaten the bread?
 - Here comes the rub!

Jesus and the Sabbath - Matthew 12:1-8 (inserts other gospels)

- Matthew 12:1-8 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain (rubbing them in their hands) and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he (*was in need and*) was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, 'I

desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. (*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.*) For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."

- What we can learn:
 - Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6. It seems that love and mercy triumphed over the strict observation that priests only ate the showbread.
 - The Sabbath was a blessing, but the Pharisees turned it into a curse. It was a time for rest and worship.
 - Jesus holds authority. So, we need to be careful with these passages. We need to honor His position while also learning from His actions.
 - Our traditions/standards should not triumph over God's command. Treat God's word with care. Use God's word to establish His desire in our lives, not to justify our own.
 - We need to learn from God. See Him in totality. Be careful before judging too harshly. Don't major in the minor, yet respect Him in every great or small way (Matthew 23:23-24).