

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

5-26-21

Leviticus 19

The General Call To Holiness - Verses 1-2

¹ The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'

19:1-2 The idea behind the word holy is "separate." As it is applied to God, it describes God's apartness. It means that God is different than man and from all other beings in the greatness and majesty of His attributes. He has a righteousness unlike any other; a justice unlike any other; a purity unlike any other - and love, grace, and mercy unlike any other.

The Law To Respect Parents And Against Idolatry - Verses 3-4

³ "Each of you must respect your mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God. ⁴ "Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.

19:3 Honor for parents is an essential building block for the stability and health of all society. If the younger generations are constantly at war with older generations, the foundations of society will be destroyed.

19:4 The word for idols literally means nothings. Idols represent gods that are not real and do not really exist. Israel had significant trouble with the worship of idols until the Babylonian captivity (some 800 years from the time of Leviticus). The attraction was not so much to the molded gods themselves, than as to what they represented - financial success, pleasure, and self-worship.

Laws Regarding Offerings - Verses 5-8

⁵ "When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ⁶ It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. ⁷ If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. ⁸ Whoever eats it will be held responsible because they have desecrated what is holy to the LORD; they must be cut off from their people.

If you offer a sacrifice of a fellowship/peace offering: A peace offering (signifying the enjoyment of peace with God and fellowship) was always to be made by one's own free will. God did not want coerced fellowship from the people of Israel.

It shall be eaten the same day you offer it: Nor did God want stale fellowship with the people of Israel. The meat of a peace offering was considered no good after two days.

Providing For The Poor - Verses 9-10

⁹ "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God.

19:9-10 This law was a protection for the poor and the foreigner and a reminder that God owned the land; the people were only caretakers. Laws such as this showed God's generosity and liberality. As people of God, the Israelites were to reflect his nature and characteristics in their attitudes and actions. Ruth and Naomi were two people who benefited from this merciful law (Ruth 2:2).

19:9-10 God instructed the Hebrews to provide for those in need. He required that the people leave the edges of their fields unharvested, providing food for the poor and for foreigners or travelers. It is easy to ignore the poor or forget about those who have less than we do. But God desires generosity. In what ways can you leave the "edges of your field" for those in need?

Dealing Honestly With Others And Human Compassion - Verses 11-13

¹¹ "Do not steal. "Do not lie. "Do not deceive one another. ¹² "Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. ¹³ "Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. "Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. ¹⁴ "Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.

19:14 **You shall not curse the deaf:** God commanded Israel to not mistreat the handicapped. Cursing the deaf is cruel because they can't hear your curse, though others can. To put a stumbling block before the blind is just mean.

Nor put a stumbling block before the blind: This tells us the kind of people the Israelites were. They had to be specifically commanded to observe such laws of fundamental kindness. This shows what Israel was, and what we are in the flesh.

Laws Regarding Justice And Truthfulness - Verses 15-16

¹⁵ "Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. ¹⁶ "Do not go about spreading slander among your people. "Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.

19:15-16 **You shall do no injustice in judgment:** These were primarily instructions to judges and magistrates, giving them principles for making legal decisions. However, they also are relevant to everyday relations with those around us. Jesus reminded us what this principle is all about: We should only judge others with the standard we are willing to be judged by because God will apply that same standard to us (Matthew 7:1-2).

The command to love one's neighbor - Verses 17-18

¹⁷ **“Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. ¹⁸ “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.**

19:17 You shall not hate your brother in your heart: Love for one's brother is commanded, not only in action but also in heart. Yet if it is not present in the heart, then it should be in one's actions and the heart will follow. But we should not be content to treat others well and have a heart of hatred towards them; God desires to change our hearts to love them.

19:18 You shall love your neighbor as yourself: Some are surprised to see this generous command in what they believe to be the harsh Old Testament; but even the Old Covenant clearly commands us to love others. Unfortunately, many ancient Jews had a narrow definition of who their neighbor was and only considered their friends and countrymen their neighbors. Jesus commanded us to love your enemies (Luke 6:27), and showed our neighbor was the one in need, even if a traditional enemy (Luke 10:25-37).

Laws Of Purity In Response To Pagan Practices - Verse 19

¹⁹ **“Keep my decrees. “Do not mate different kinds of animals. “Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. “Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.**

19:19 “Do not . . .” Some people think the Bible is nothing but a book of don'ts. But Jesus neatly summarized all these rules when he said to love God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself. He called these the greatest commandments (or rules) of all (Matthew 22:34-40). By carrying out Jesus' simple commands, we find ourselves following all of God's other laws as well.

The Penalty For Unlawful Intercourse With A Concubine - Verses 20-22

²⁰ **“If a man sleeps with a female slave who is promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. ²¹ The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the tent of meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD. ²² With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.**

19:20 Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine: This deals with a woman who was a concubine in the sense she was a slave girl, who was eligible to be married.

19:22 And the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him: This is the situation described: A slave girl is engaged to marry a free man, and then a different man has sex with her. Normally, the penalty was death; but because the woman was a slave, and was presumed to be not free to resist (or guarded by a father), the penalty was not death. Yet, she was not marriable to her fiancée, so he must be reimbursed (the punishment mentioned). Then the moral guilt would be settled by sacrifice, and presumably, the man who had sex with her would be obliged to marry her.

Regarding The Fruit In The Land Of Canaan - Verses 23-25

²³ "When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. ²⁴ In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. ²⁵ But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.

19:23-25 God reminded Israel of their ultimate goal - the promised land, the land of Canaan - and told them not to eat of the fruit of the trees they plant there for three years. Then the fruit of the fourth year belonged to the LORD, and the fruit of the fifth year could be eaten.

Laws to insure separation from pagan practices - Verses 26-31

²⁶ "Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it. "Do not practice divination or seek omens. ²⁷ "Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard. ²⁸ "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD. ²⁹ "Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness. ³⁰ "Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD. ³¹ "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

19:26 You shall not eat anything with the blood: Eating blood was a practice in many pagan cultic ceremonies, as was divination and soothsaying. Therefore both are directly forbidden.

19:27 You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard: To do this was to imitate pagan customs of that day; today, Jewish orthodox men are conspicuous by their untrimmed beards and long, curly locks on the sides of their heads.

19:28 Cuttings in the flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: These were also pagan practices God wanted Israel to separate from. The trimming of the hair, the beard, cutting, and tattoos were all connected with pagan rites of mourning.

19:29 Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot: To prostitute your daughter in this context probably means to give her as a ritual prostitute at a pagan temple; this was of course forbidden, though in the eyes of the pagan culture, it was a religious thing to do.

19:30 Mediums and familiar spirits: These were ways the pagans sought to contact the dead or other spirits; this was a doorway into the occult, and strictly forbidden - those who seek after these things are defiled - "made dirty" by them.

Further laws of kindness and justice - Verses 32-37

³² "Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD. ³³ "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. ³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God. ³⁵ "Do not use

dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. ³⁶ Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt. ³⁷ "Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the LORD."

19:32 People often find it easy to dismiss the opinions of the elderly and avoid taking time to visit with them. But the fact that God commanded the Israelites to honor the elderly shows how seriously we should take the responsibility of respecting those older than we are. Their wisdom gained from experience can save us from many pitfalls. How do you show respect and honor to your elders?

19:33-34 How do you feel when you encounter strangers and foreigners, especially those who don't speak your language? Are you impatient? Do you think or act as if they should go back where they came from? Are you tempted to take advantage of them? God says to treat foreigners and strangers as you'd treat fellow citizens, to love them as you love yourself. In reality, we are all foreigners in this world, because it is only our temporary home. View strangers, newcomers, and foreigners as opportunities to demonstrate God's love.