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Preface

There is nothing historical in all this book of Leviticus except the account which it gives us of the consecration of the priesthood (ch. 8-9), of the punishment of Nadab and Abihu, by the hand of God, for offering strange fire (ch. 10), and of Shelomith's son, by the hand of the magistrate, for blasphemy (ch. 24). All the rest of the book is taken up with the laws, chiefly the ecclesiastical laws, which God gave to Israel by Moses, concerning their sacrifices and offerings, their meats and drinks, and divers washings, and the other peculiarities by which God set that people apart for himself, and distinguished them from other nations, all which were shadows of good things to come, which are realized and superseded by the gospel of Christ. We call the book *Leviticus*, from the Septuagint, because it contains the laws and ordinances of the *levitical priesthood* (as it is called, Heb. 7:11), and the ministrations of it. The Levites were principally charged with these institutions, both to do their part and to teach the people theirs. We read, in the close of the foregoing book, of the setting up of the tabernacle, which was to be the place of worship; and, as that was framed according to the pattern, so must the ordinances of worship be, which were there to be administered. In these the divine appointment was as particular as in the former, and must be as punctually observed. The remaining record of these abrogated laws is of use to us, for the strengthening of our faith in Jesus Christ, as *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*, and for the increase of our thankfulness to God, that by him we are freed from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and live in the times of reformation.

Chapter 1

This book begins with the laws concerning sacrifices, of which the most ancient were the burnt-offerings, about which God gives Moses instructions in this chapter. Orders are here given how that sort of sacrifice must be managed. I. If it was a bullock out of the herd (v. 3-9). II. If it was a sheep or goat, a lamb or kid, out of the flock (v. 10-13). III. If it was a turtle-dove or a young pigeon (v. 14-17). And whether the offering was more or less valuable in itself, if it was offered with an upright heart, according to these laws, it was accepted of God.

Verses 1-2

Observe here, 1. It is taken for granted that people would be inclined to bring offerings to the Lord. The very light of nature directs man, some way or other, to do honour to his Maker, and pay him homage as his Lord. Revealed religion supposes natural religion to be an ancient and early institution, since the fall had directed men to glorify God by sacrifice, which was an implicit acknowledgment of their having received all from God as creatures, and their having forfeited all to him as sinners. A conscience thoroughly convinced of dependence and guilt would be willing to come before God with *thousands of rams*, Mic. 6:6, 7. 2. Provision is made that men should not indulge their own fancies, nor become vain in their imaginations and inventions about their sacrifices, lest, while they pretended to honour God, they should really dishonour him, and do that which was unworthy of him. Every thing therefore is directed to be done with due decorum, by a certain rule, and so as that the sacrifices might be most significant both of the great sacrifice of atonement which Christ was to offer in the fulness of time and of the spiritual sacrifices of acknowledgment which believers should offer daily. 3. God gave those laws to Israel by Moses; nothing is more frequently repeated than this, *The Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel*. God could have spoken it to the children of Israel himself, as he did the ten commandments; but he chose to deliver it to them by Moses, because they had desired he would no more speak to them himself, and he had designed that Moses should, above all the prophets, be a type of Christ, by whom God would in these last days speak to us, Heb. 1:2. By other prophets God sent messages to his people, but by Moses he gave them laws; and therefore he was fit to typify him to whom the Father has given all judgment. And, besides, the treasure of divine revelation was always to be put into earthen vessels, that our faith might be tried, and that the excellency of the power might be of God. 4. God spoke to him out of the tabernacle. As soon as ever the shechinah had taken possession of its new habitation, in token of the acceptance of what was done, God talked with Moses from the mercy-seat, while he attended without the veil, or rather at the door, hearing a voice only; and it is probable that he wrote what he heard at that time, to prevent any mistake, or a slip of memory, in the rehearsal of it. The tabernacle was set up to be a place of communion between God and Israel; there, where they performed their services to God, God revealed his will to them. Thus, by the word and by prayer, we now have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, Acts 6:4. When we speak to God we must desire to hear from him, and reckon it a great favour that he is pleased to speak to us. The Lord called to Moses, not to come near (under that dispensation, even Moses must keep his distance), but to attend and hearken to what should be said. A letter less than ordinary in the Hebrew word for *called*, the Jewish critics tell us, intimates that God

spoke in a still small voice. The moral law was given with terror from a burning mountain in thunder and lightning; but the remedial law of sacrifice was given more gently from a mercy-seat, because that was typical of the grace of the gospel, which is the ministration of life and peace.

Verses 3-9

If a man were rich and could afford it, it is supposed that he would bring his burnt-sacrifice, with which he designed to honour God, out of his herd of larger cattle. He that considers that God is the best that is will resolve to give him the best he has, else he gives him not the glory due unto his name. Now if a man determined to kill a bullock, not for an entertainment for his family and friends, but for a sacrifice to his God, these rules must be religiously observed:-1. The beast to be offered must be a male, and without blemish, and the best he had in his pasture. Being designed purely for the honour of him that is infinitely perfect, it ought to be the most perfect in its kind. This signified the complete strength and purity that were in Christ the dying sacrifice, and the sincerity of heart and unblamableness of life that should be in Christians, who are presented to God as living sacrifices. But, literally, in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female; nor is any natural blemish in the body a bar to our acceptance with God, but only the moral defects and deformities introduced by sin into the soul. 2. The owner must offer it voluntarily. What is done in religion, so as to please God, must be done by no other constraint than that of love. God accepts the willing people and the cheerful giver. Ainsworth and others read it, not as the principle, but as the end of offering: "Let him offer it *for his favourable acceptation before the Lord*. Let him propose this to himself as his end in bringing his sacrifice, and let his eye be fixed steadily upon that end—that he may be accepted of the Lord." Those only shall find acceptance who sincerely desire and design it in all their religious services, 2 Co. 5:9. 3. It must be offered at the door of the tabernacle, where the brazen altar of burnt-offerings stood, which sanctified the gift, and not elsewhere. He must offer it at the door, as one unworthy to enter, and acknowledging that there is no admission for a sinner into covenant and communion with God, but by sacrifice; but he must offer it at the tabernacle of the congregation, in token of his communion with the whole church of Israel even in this personal service. 4. The offerer must put his hand upon the head of his offering, v. 4. "He must put both his hands," say the Jewish doctors, "with all his might, between the horns of the beast," signifying thereby, (1.) The transfer of all his right to, and interest in, the beast, to God, actually, and by a manual delivery, resigning it to his service. (2.) An acknowledgment that he deserved to die, and would have been willing to die if God had required it, for the serving of his honour, and the obtaining of his favour. (3.) A dependence upon the sacrifice, as an instituted type of the great sacrifice on which the iniquity of us all was to be laid. The mystical signification of the sacrifices, and especially this rite, some think the apostle means by the doctrine of *laying on of hands* (Heb. 6:2), which typified evangelical faith. The offerer's putting his hand on the head of the offering was to signify his desire and hope that it might *be accepted from him to make atonement for him*. Though the burnt-offerings had not respect to any particular sin, as the sin-offering had, yet they were to make atonement for sin in general; and he that laid his hand on the head of a burnt-offering was to confess that *he had left undone what he ought to have done and had done that which he ought not to have done*, and to pray that, though he deserved to die himself, the death of his sacrifice might be accepted for the expiating of his guilt. 5. The sacrifice was to be killed by the priests of Levites, before the Lord, that is, in a

devout religious manner, and with an eye to God and his honour. This signified that our Lord Jesus was to make his soul, or life, an offering for sin. Messiah the prince must be cut off as a sacrifice, *but not for himself*, Dan. 9:26. It signified also that in Christians, who are living sacrifices, the brutal part must be mortified or killed, the flesh crucified with its corrupt affections and lusts and all the appetites of the mere animal life. 6. The priests were to *sprinkle the blood upon the altar* (v. 5); for, the blood being the life, it was this that made atonement for the soul. This signified the direct and actual regard which our Lord Jesus had to the satisfaction of his Father's justice, and the securing of his injured honour, in the shedding of his blood; *he offered himself without spot to God*. It also signified the pacifying and purifying of our consciences by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ upon them by faith, 1 Pt. 1:2; Heb. 10:22. 7. The beast was to be flayed and decently cut up, and divided into its several joints or pieces, according to the art of the butcher; and then all the pieces, with the head and the fat (the legs and inwards being first washed), were to be burnt together upon the altar, v. 6-9. "*But to what purpose,*" would some say, "*was this waste?* Why should all this good meat, which might have been given to the poor, and have served their hungry families for food a great while, be burnt together to ashes?" So was the will of God; and it is not for us to object or to find fault with it. When it was burnt for the honour of God, in obedience to his command, and to signify spiritual blessings, it was really better bestowed, and better answered the end of its creation, than when it was used as food for man. We must never reckon that lost which is laid out for God. The burning of the sacrifice signified the sharp sufferings of Christ, and the devout affections with which, as a holy fire, Christians must offer up themselves their whole spirit, soul, and body, unto God. 8. This is said to be *an offering of a sweet savour, or savour of rest, unto the Lord*. The burning of flesh is unsavoury in itself; but this, as an act of obedience to a divine command, and a type of Christ, was well pleasing to God: he was reconciled to the offerer, and did himself take a complacency in that reconciliation. He rested, and was refreshed with these institutions of his grace, as, at first, with his works of creation (Ex. 31:17), rejoicing therein, Ps. 104:31. Christ's offering of himself to God is said to be of *a sweet-smelling savour* (Eph. 5:2), and the spiritual sacrifices of Christians are said to be *acceptable to God, through Christ*, 1 Pt. 2:5.

Verses 10-17

Here we have the laws concerning the burnt-offerings, which were of the flock or of the fowls. Those of the middle rank, that could not well afford to offer a bullock, would bring a sheep or a goat; and those that were not able to do that should be accepted of God if they brought a turtle-dove or a pigeon. For God, in his law and in his gospel, as well as in his providence, considers the poor. It is observable that those creatures were chosen for sacrifice which were most mild and gentle, harmless and inoffensive, to typify the innocence and meekness that were in Christ, and to teach the innocence and meekness that should be in Christians. Directions are here given, 1. Concerning the burnt-offerings of the flock, v. 10. The method of managing these is much the same with that of the bullocks; only it is ordered here that the sacrifice should be killed *on the side of the altar northward*, which, though mentioned here only, was probably to be observed concerning the former, and other sacrifices. Perhaps on that side of the altar there was the largest vacant space, and room for the priests to turn them in. It was of old observed that *fair weather comes out of the north*, and that *the north wind drives away rain*; and by these sacrifices the storms

of God's wrath are scattered, and the light of God's countenance is obtained, which is more pleasant than the brightest fairest weather. 2. Concerning those of the fowls. They must be either turtle-doves (and, if so, "they must be *old* turtles," say the Jews), or *pigeons*, and, if so, they must be *young* pigeons. What was most acceptable at men's tables must be brought to God's altar. In the offering of these fowls, (1.) The head must be wrung off, "quite off," say some; others think only pinched, so as to kill the bird, and yet leave the head hanging to the body. But it seems more likely that it was to be quite separated, for it was to be burnt first. (2.) The blood was to be *wrung out at the side of the altar*. (3.) The garbages with the feathers were to be thrown by upon the dunghill. (4.) The body was to be opened, sprinkled with salt, and then burnt upon the altar. "This sacrifice of birds," the Jews say, "was one of the most difficult services the priests had to do," to teach those that minister in holy things to be as solicitous for the salvation of the poor as for that of the rich, and that the services of the poor are as acceptable to God, if they come from an upright heart, as the services of the rich, for he accepts *according to what a man hath*, and not *according to what he hath not*, 2 Co. 8:12. The poor man's turtle-doves, or young pigeons, are here said to be *an offering of a sweet-smelling savour*, as much as that of an ox or bullock that hath horns or hoofs. Yet, after all, *to love God with all our heart, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is better than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, Mk. 12:33.

Chapter 2

In this chapter we have the law concerning the meat-offering. I. The matter of it; whether of raw flour with oil and incense (v. 1), or baked in the oven (v. 4), or upon a plate (v. 5, 6), or in a frying pan (v. 7). II. The management of it, of the flour (v. 2, 3), of the cakes (v. 8–10). III. Some particular rules concerning it, That leaven and honey must never be admitted (v. 11, 12), and salt never omitted in the meat-offering (v. 13). IV. The law concerning the offering of firstfruits in the ear (v. 14, etc.).

Verses 1-10

There were some meat-offerings that were only appendices to the burnt-offerings, as that which was offered with the daily sacrifice (Ex. 29:38, 39) and with the peace-offerings; these had drink-offerings joined with them (see Num. 15:4, 7, 9, 10), and in these the quantity was appointed. But the law of this chapter concerns those meat-offerings that were offered by themselves, whenever a man saw cause thus to express his devotion. The first offering we read of in scripture was of this kind (Gen. 4:3): *Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering.*

I. This sort of offerings was appointed, 1. In condescension to the poor, and their ability, that those who themselves lived only upon bread and cakes might offer an acceptable offering to God out of that which was their own coarse and homely fare, and by making for God's altar, as the widow of Sarepta for his prophet, a little cake first, might procure such a blessing upon the handful of meal in the barrel, and the oil in the cruse, as that it should not fail. 2. As a proper acknowledgment of the mercy of God to them in their food. This was like a quitrent, by which they testified their dependence upon God, their thankfulness to him, and their expectations from him as their owner and bountiful benefactor, who giveth to all life, and breath, and food convenient. Thus must they honour the Lord with their substance, and, in token of their eating and drinking to his glory, must consecrate some of their meat and drink to his immediate service. Those that now, with a grateful charitable heart, deal out their bread to the hungry, and provide for the necessities of those that are destitute of daily food, and when they eat the fat and drink the sweet themselves send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, offer unto God an acceptable meat-offering. The prophet laments it as one of the direful effects of famine that thereby the *meat-offering and drink-offering were cut off from the house of the Lord* (Joel 1:9), and reckoned it the greatest blessing of plenty that it would be the revival of them, Joel 2:14.

II. The laws of the meat-offerings were these:-1. The ingredients must always be fine flour and oil, two staple commodities of the land of Canaan, Deu. 8:8. Oil was to them then in their food what butter is now to us. If it was undressed, the oil must be poured upon the flour (v. 1); if cooked, it must be mingled with the flour, v. 4, etc. 2. If it was flour unbaked, besides the oil it must have frankincense put upon it, which was to be burnt with it (v. 1, 2), for the perfuming of the altar; in allusion to this, gospel ministers are said to be *a sweet savour unto God*, 2 Co. 2:15. 3. If it was prepared, this might be done in various ways; the offerer might bake it, or fry it, or mix the flour and oil upon a plate, for the doing of which conveniences were provided about the tabernacle. The law was very exact even about those offerings that were least costly, to intimate the cognizance God takes of the religious services performed with a devout mind, even by the poor of his people. 4. It was to be presented by the

offerer to the priest, which is called *bringing it to the Lord* (v. 8), for the priests were God's receivers, and were ordained to offer gifts. 5. Part of it was to be burnt upon the altar, for a memorial, that is, in token of their mindfulness of God's bounty to them, in giving them all things richly to enjoy. It was *an offering made by fire*, v. 2, 9. The consuming of it by fire might remind them that they deserved to have all the fruits of the earth thus burnt up, and that it was of the Lord's mercies that they were not. They might also learn that as *meats are for the belly, and the belly for meats, so God shall destroy both it and them* (1 Co. 6:13), and that *man lives not by bread alone*. This offering made by fire is here said to be *of a sweet savour unto the Lord*; and so are our spiritual offerings, which are made by the fire of holy love, particularly that of almsgiving, which is said to be *an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God* (Phil. 4:18), and *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, Heb. 13:16. 6. The remainder of the meat-offering was to be given to the priests, v. 3, 10. *It is a thing most holy*, not to be eaten by the offerers, as the peace-offerings (which, though holy, were not most holy), but by the priests only, and their families. Thus God provided that those who served at the altar should live upon the altar, and live comfortably.

Verses 11-16

Here, I. Leaven and honey are forbidden to be put in any of their meat-offerings: *No leaven, nor any honey, in any offering made by fire*, v. 11. 1. The leaven was forbidden in remembrance of the unleavened bread they ate when they came out of Egypt. So much despatch was required in the offerings they made that it was not convenient they should stay for the leavening of them. The New Testament comparing pride and hypocrisy to leaven because they swell like leaven, comparing also malice and wickedness to leaven because they sour like leaven, we are to understand and improve this as a caution to take heed of those sins which will certainly spoil the acceptableness of our spiritual sacrifices. Pure hands must be lifted up without wrath, and all our gospel feasts kept with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 2. Honey was forbidden, though Canaan flowed with it, because *to eat much honey is not good* (Prov. 25:16, 27); it turns to choler and bitterness in the stomach, though luscious to the taste. Some think the chief reason why those two things, leaven and honey, were forbidden, was because the Gentiles used them very much in their sacrifices, and God's people must not learn or use the way of the heathen, but his services must be the reverse of their idolatrous services; see Deu. 12:30, 31. Some make this application of this double prohibition: leaven signifies grief and sadness of spirit (Ps. 73:21), *My heart was leavened*; honey signifies sensual pleasure and mirth. In our service of God both these must be avoided, and a mean observed between those extremes; for the sorrow of the world worketh death, and a love to the delights of sense is a great enemy to holy love.

II. Salt is required in all their offerings, v. 13. The altar was the table of the Lord; and therefore, salt being always set on our tables, God would have it always used at his. It is called *the salt of the covenant*, because, as men confirmed their covenants with each other by eating and drinking together, at all which collations salt was used, so God, by accepting his people's gifts and feasting them upon his sacrifices, supping with them and they with him (Rev. 3:20), did confirm his covenant with them. Among the ancients salt was a symbol of friendship. The salt for the sacrifice was not brought by the offerers, but was provided at the public charge, as the wood was, Ezra 7:20–22. And there was a chamber in the court of the temple called *the chamber of salt*, in which they laid it up. *Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?* God would hereby intimate to

them that their sacrifices in themselves were unsavoury. The saints, who are living sacrifices to God, must have salt in themselves, for *every sacrifice must be salted with salt* (Mk. 9:49, 50), and our speech must be *always with grace* (Col. 4:6), so must all our religious performances be seasoned with that salt. Christianity is the salt of the earth.

III. Directions are given about the first-fruits. 1. The oblation of their first-fruits at harvest, of which we read, Deu. 26:2. These were offered to the Lord, not to be burnt upon the altar, but to be given to the priests as perquisites of their office, v. 12. And *you shall offer them* (that is, leaven and honey) in the oblation of the first-fruits, though they were forbidden in other meat-offerings; for they were proper enough to be eaten by the priests, though not to be burnt upon the altar. The loaves of the first-fruits are particularly ordered to be *baked with leaven*, Lev. 23:17. And we read of the first-fruits of honey brought to the house of God, 2 Chr. 31:5. 2. A meat-offering of their first-fruits. The former was required by the law; this was a free-will offering, v. 14–16. If a man, with a thankful sense of God's goodness to him in giving him hopes of a plentiful crop, was disposed to bring an offering in kind immediately out of his field, and present it to God, owning thereby his dependence upon God and obligations to him, (1.) Let him be sure to bring the first ripe and full ears, not such as were small and half-withered. Whatever was brought for an offering to God must be the best in its kind, though it were but green ears of corn. We mock God, and deceive ourselves, if we think to put him off with a corrupt thing while we have in our flock a male, Mal. 1:14. (2.) These green ears must be dried by the fire, that the corn, such as it was, might be beaten out of them. That is not expected from green ears which one may justly look for from those that have been left to grow fully ripe. If those that are young do God's work as well as they can, they shall be accepted, though they cannot do it so well as those that are aged and experienced. God makes the best of green ears of corn, and so must we. (3.) Oil and frankincense must be put upon it. Thus (as some allude to this) wisdom and humility must soften and sweeten the spirits and services of young people, and then their green ears of corn shall be acceptable. God takes a particular delight in the first ripe fruits of the Spirit and the expressions of early piety and devotion. Those that can but think and speak as children, yet, if they think and speak well, God will be well pleased with their buds and blossoms, and will never forget the kindness of their youth. (4.) It must be used as other meat-offerings, v. 16, compare v. 9. He shall *offer all the frankincense; it is an offering made by fire*. The fire and the frankincense seem to have had a special significancy. [1.] The fire denotes the fervency of spirit which ought to be in all our religious services. In every good thing we must be zealously affected. Holy love to God is the fire by which all our offerings must be made; else they are not of a sweet savour to God. [2.] The frankincense denotes the mediation and intercession of Christ, by which all our services are perfumed and recommended to God's gracious acceptance. Blessed be God that we have the substance of which all these observances were but shadows, the fruit that was hid under these leaves.

Chapter 3

In this chapter we have the law concerning the peace-offerings, whether they were, I. Of the herd, a bullock or a heifer (v. 1-5). Or, II. Of the flock, either a lamb (v. 6-11) or a goat (v. 12-17). The ordinances concerning each of these are much the same, yet they are repeated, to show the care we ought to take that all our services be done according to the appointment and the pleasure God takes in the services that are so performed. It is likewise to intimate what need we have of precept upon precept, and line upon line.

Verses 1-5

The burnt-offerings had regard to God as in himself the best of beings, most perfect and excellent; they were purely expressive of adoration, and therefore were wholly burnt. But the peace-offerings had regard to God as a benefactor to his creatures, and the giver of all good things to us; and therefore these were divided between the altar, the priest, and the owner. Peace signifies, 1. Reconciliation, concord, and communion. And so these were called *peace-offerings*, because in them God and his people did, as it were, feast together, in token of friendship. The priest, who was ordained for men in things pertaining to God, gave part of this peace-offering to God (that part which he required, and it was fit he should be first served), burning it upon God's altar; part he gave to the offerer, to be eaten by him with his family and friends; and part he took to himself, as the days-man that laid his hand upon them both. They could not thus eat together unless they were agreed; so that it was a symbol of friendship and fellowship between God and man, and a confirmation of the covenant of peace. 2. It signifies prosperity and all happiness: *Peace be to you* was as much as, *All good be to you*; and so the peace-offerings were offered either, (1.) By way of supplication or request for some good that was wanted and desired. If a man was in the pursuit or expectation of any mercy, he would back his prayer for it with a peace-offering, and probably put up the prayer when he laid his hand upon the head of his offering. Christ is our peace, our peace-offering; for through him alone it is that we can expect to obtain mercy, and an answer of peace to our prayers; and in him an upright prayer shall be acceptable and successful, though we bring not a peace-offering. The less costly our devotions are the more lively and serious they should be. Or, (2.) By way of thanksgiving for some particular mercy received. It is called *a peace-offering of thanksgiving*, for so it was sometimes; as in other cases *a vow*, ch. 7:15, 16. And some make the original word to signify *retribution*. When they had received any special mercy, and were enquiring what they should render, this they were directed to render to the God of their mercies as a grateful acknowledgment for the benefit done to them, Ps. 116:12. And we must offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually, by Christ our peace; and then this shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock. Observe,

I. As to the matter of the peace-offering, suppose it was of the herd, it must be *without blemish*; and, if it was so, it was indifferent whether it was male or female, v. 1. In our spiritual offerings, it is not the sex, but the heart, that God looks at, Gal. 3:28.

II. As to the management of it. 1. The offerer was, by a solemn manumission, to transfer his interest in it to God (v. 2), and, with *his hand on the head* of the sacrifice, to acknowledge the particular mercies for which he designed this a thank-offering,

or, if it was a vow, to make his prayer. 2. It must be killed; and, although this might be done in any part of the court, yet it is said to be *at the door of the tabernacle*, because the mercies received or expected were acknowledged to come from God, and the prayers or praises were directed to him, and both, as it were, through that door. Our Lord Jesus has said, *I am the door*, for he is indeed the door of the tabernacle. 3. The priest must *sprinkle the blood upon the altar*, for it was the blood that made atonement for the soul; and, though this was not a sin-offering, yet we must be taught that in all our offerings we must have an eye to Christ as the propitiation for sin, as those who know that the best of their services cannot be accepted unless through him their sins be pardoned. Penitent confessions must always go along with our thankful acknowledgments; and, whatever mercy we pray for, in order to it we must pray for the removal of guilt, as that which keeps good things from us. First *take away all iniquity*, and then *receive us graciously*, or *give good*, Hos. 14:2. 4. All the fat of the inwards, that which we call the tallow and suet, with the caul that encloses it and the kidneys in the midst of it, were to be taken away, and burnt upon the altar, as an offering *made by fire*, v. 3-5. And this was all that was sacrificed to the Lord out of the peace-offering; how the rest was to be disposed of we shall find, ch. 7:11, etc. It is ordered to be burnt upon the burnt-sacrifice, that is, the daily burnt-offering, the lamb which was offered every morning before any other sacrifice was offered; so that the fat of the peace-offerings was an addition to that, and a continuation of it. The great sacrifice of peace, that of the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, prepares the altar for our sacrifices of praise, which are not accepted till we are reconciled. Now the burning of this fat is supposed to signify, (1.) The offering up of our good affections to God in all our prayers and praises. God must have the inwards; for we must pour out our souls, and lift up our hearts, in prayer, and must bless his name with all that is within us. It is required that we be inward with God in every thing wherein we have to do with him. The fat denotes the best and choicest, which must always be devoted to God, who has made for us a feast of fat things. (2.) The mortifying of our corrupt affections and lusts, and the burning up of them by the fire of divine grace, Col. 3:5. Then we are truly thankful for former mercies, and prepared to receive further mercy, when we part with our sins, and have our minds cleared from all sensuality by the *spirit of judgment* and the *spirit of burning*, Isa. 4:4.

Verses 6-17

Directions are here given concerning the peace-offering, if it was a sheep or a goat. Turtle-doves or young pigeons, which might be brought for whole burnt offerings, were not allowed for peace-offerings, because they have no fat considerable enough to be burnt upon the altar; and they would be next to nothing if they were to be divided according to the law of the peace-offerings. The laws concerning a lamb or goat offered for a peace offering are much the same with those concerning a bullock, and little now occurs here; but, 1. The rump of the mutton was to be burnt with the fat of the inwards upon the altar, the *whole rump* (v. 9), because in those countries it was very fat and large. Some observe from this that, be a thing ever so contemptible, God can make it honourable, by applying it to his service. Thus God is said to give more *abundant honour to that part which lacked*, 1 Co. 12:23, 24. 2. That which was burnt upon the altar is called the *food of the offering*, v. 11, 16. It fed the holy fire; it was acceptable to God as our food is to us; and since in the tabernacle God did, as it were, keep house among them, by the offerings on the altar he kept a good table, as Solomon in his court, 1 Ki. 4:22, etc. 3. Here is a general

rule laid down, that *all the fat is the Lord's* (v. 16), and a law made thereupon, that they *should eat neither fat nor blood*, no, not in their private houses, v. 17. (1.) As for the *fat*, it is not meant of that which is interlarded with the meat (that they might eat, Neb. 8:10), but the fat of the inwards, the suet, which was always God's part out of the sacrificed beasts; and therefore they must not eat of it, no, not out of the beasts that they killed for their common use. Thus would God preserve the honour of that which was sacred to himself. They must not only not feed upon that fat which was to be the food of the altar, but not upon any like it, lest the *table of the Lord* (as the altar is called), if something were not reserved peculiar to it, should become contemptible, and *the fruit thereof, even its meat, contemptible*, Mal. 1:7, 12. (2.) The blood was universally forbidden likewise, for the same reason that the fat was, because it was God's part of every sacrifice. The heathen drank the blood of their sacrifices; hence we read of their *drink-offerings of blood*, Ps. 16:4. But God would not permit the blood, that made atonement, to be used as a common thing (Heb. 10:29), nor will he allow us, though we have the comfort of the atonement made, to assume to ourselves any share in the honour of making it. He that glories, let him glory in the Lord, and to his praise let all the blood be poured out.

Chapter 4

This chapter is concerning the sin-offering, which was properly intended to make atonement for a sin committed through ignorance, I. By the priest himself (v. 1–12). Or, II. By the whole congregation (v. 13–21). Or, III. By a ruler (v. 22–26). Or, IV. By a private person (v. 27, etc.).

Verses 1-12

The laws contained in the first three chapters seem to have been delivered to Moses at one time. Here begin the statutes of another session, another day. From the throne of glory between the cherubim God delivered these orders. And he enters now upon a subject more strictly new than those before. Burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, and peace-offerings, it should seem, had been offered before the giving of the law upon mount Sinai; those sacrifices the patriarchs had not been altogether unacquainted with (Gen. 8:20; Ex. 20:24), and in them they had respect to sin, to make atonement for it, Job 1:5. But the law being now added *because of transgressions* (Gal. 3:19), and having entered, that eventually *the offence might abound* (Rom. 5:20), they were put into a way of making atonement for sin more particularly by sacrifice, which was (more than any of the ceremonial institutions) *a shadow of good things to come*, but the substance is Christ, and that one offering of himself by which he put away sin and *perfected for ever those who are sanctified*.

I. The general case supposed we have, v. 2. Here observe, 1. Concerning sin in general, that it is described to be against *any of the commandments of the Lord*; for *sin is the transgression of the law*, the divine law. The wits or wills of men, their inventions or their injunctions, cannot make that to be sin which the law of God has not made to be so. It is said likewise, *if a soul sin*, for it is not sin if it be not some way or other the soul's act; hence it is called the *sin of the soul* (Mic. 6:7), and it is the soul that is injured by it, Prov. 8:36. 2. Concerning the sins for which those offerings were appointed. (1.) They are supposed to be overt acts; for, had they been required to bring a sacrifice for every sinful thought or word, the task had been endless. Atonement was made for those in the gross, on the day of expiation, once a year; but these are said to be done against the commandments. (2.) They are supposed to be sins of commission, things which ought not to be done. Omissions are sins, and must come into judgment; but what had been omitted at one time might be done at another, and so to obey was better than sacrifice: but a commission was past recall. (3.) They are supposed to be sins committed through ignorance. If they were done presumptuously, and with an avowed contempt of the law and the Law-maker, the offender was to be cut off, and there remained *no sacrifice for the sin*, Heb. 10:26, 27; Num. 15:30. But if the offender were either ignorant of the law, as in divers instances we may suppose many were (so numerous and various were the prohibitions), or were surprised into the sin unawares, the circumstances being such as made it evident that his resolution against the sin was sincere, but that he was overtaken in it, as the expression is (Gal. 6:1), in this case relief was provided by the remedial law of the sin-offering. And the Jews say, "Those crimes only were to be expiated by sacrifice, if committed ignorantly, for which the criminal was to have been cut off if they had been committed presumptuously."

II. The law begins with the case of the anointed priest, that is, the high priest, provided he should sin through ignorance; for *the*

law made men priests who had infirmity. Though his ignorance was of all others least excusable, yet he was allowed to bring his offering. His office did not so far excuse his offence as that it should be forgiven him without a sacrifice; yet it did not so far aggravate it but that it should be forgiven him when he did bring his sacrifice. If he sin *according to the sin of the people* (so the case is put, v. 3), which supposes him in this matter to stand upon the level with other Israelites, and to have no benefit of his clergy at all. Now the law concerning the sin-offering for the high priest is, 1. That he must bring a bullock without blemish for a sin-offering (v. 3), as valuable an offering as that for the whole congregation (v. 14); whereas for any other ruler, or a common person, *a kid of the goats* should serve, v. 23, 28. This intimated the greatness of the guilt connected with the sin of a high priest. The eminency of his station, and his relation both to God and to the people, greatly aggravated his offences; see Rom. 2:21. 2. The hand of the offerer must be laid upon the head of the offering (v. 4), with a solemn penitent confession of the sin he had committed, putting it upon the head of the sin-offering, ch. 16:21. No remission without confession, Ps. 32:5; Prov. 28:13. It signified also a confidence in this instituted way of expiating guilt, as a figure of something better yet to come, which they could not stedfastly discern. He that laid his hand on the head of the beast thereby owned that he deserved to die himself, and that it was God's great mercy that he would please to accept the offering of this beast to die for him. The Jewish writers themselves say that neither the sin-offering nor the trespass-offering made atonement, except for those that repented and believed in their atonement. 3. The bullock must be killed, and a great deal of solemnity there must be in disposing of the blood; for it was *the blood that made atonement*, and *without shedding of blood there was no remission*, v. 5-7. Some of the blood of the high-priest's sin-offering was to be *sprinkled seven times before the veil*, with an eye towards the mercy-seat, though it was veiled: some of it was to be put upon the horns of the golden altar, because at that altar the priest himself ministered; and thus was signified the putting away of that pollution which from his sins did cleave to his services. It likewise serves to illustrate the influence which Christ's satisfaction has upon the prevalency of his intercession. The blood of his sacrifice is put upon the altar of his incense and sprinkled before the Lord. When this was done the remainder of the blood was poured at the foot of the brazen altar. By this rite, the sinner acknowledged that he deserved to have his blood thus poured out like water. It likewise signified the pouring out of the soul before God in true repentance, and typified our Saviour's *pouring out his soul unto death*. 4. The fat of the inwards was to be burnt upon the altar of burnt-offering, v. 8-10. By this the intention of the offering and of the atonement made by it was directed to the glory of God, who, having been dishonoured by the sin, was thus honoured by the sacrifice. It signified the sharp sufferings of our Lord Jesus, when he was made sin (that is, a sin-offering) for us, especially the sorrows of his soul and his inward agonies. It likewise teaches us, in conformity to the death of Christ, to crucify the flesh. 5. The head and body of the beast, skin and all, were to be carried *without the camp*, to a certain place appointed for that purpose, and there burnt to ashes, v. 11, 12. This was very significant, (1.) Of the duty of repentance, which is the putting away of sin as a detestable thing, which our soul hates. True penitents say to their idols, "Get you hence; what have we to do any more with idols?" The sin-offering is called *sin*. What they did to that we must do to our sins; the body of sin must be destroyed, Rom. 6:6. (2.) Of the privilege of remission. When God pardons sin he quite abolishes it, casts it behind his back. *The iniquity of Judah shall be sought for and not found*. The apostle takes particular notice of this ceremony,

and applies it to Christ (Heb. 13:11–13), who suffered without the gate, in the place of a skull, where the ashes of dead men, as those of the altar, were poured out.

Verses 13-21

This is the law for expiating the guilt of a national sin, by a sin offering. If the leaders of the people, through mistake concerning the law, caused them to err, when the mistake was discovered an offering must be brought, that wrath might not come upon the whole congregation. Observe, 1. It is possible that the church may err, and that her guides may mislead her. It is here supposed that the whole congregation may sin, and sin through ignorance. God will always have a church on earth; but he never said it should be infallible, or perfectly pure from corruption on this side heaven. 2. When a sacrifice was to be offered for the whole congregation, the elders were to lay their hands upon the head of it (three of them at least), as representatives of the people and agents for them. The sin we suppose to have been some common custom, taken up and used by the generality of the people, upon presumption of its being lawful, which afterwards, upon search, appeared to be otherwise. In this case the commonness of the usage received perhaps by tradition from their fathers, and the vulgar opinion of its being lawful, would not so far excuse them from sin but that they must bring a sacrifice to make atonement for it. There are many bad customs and forms of speech which are thought to have no harm in them, and yet may bring guilt and wrath upon a land, which therefore it concerns the elders both to reform and to intercede with God for the pardon of, Joel 2:16. 3. The blood of this sin-offering, as of the former, was to be *sprinkled seven times before the Lord*, v. 17. It was not to be poured out there, but sprinkled only; for the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ was then and still is sufficiently signified and represented by sprinkling, Isa. 52:15. It was to be sprinkled seven times. Seven is a number of perfection, because when God had made the world in six days he rested the seventh; so this signified the perfect satisfaction Christ made, and the complete cleansing of the souls of the faithful by it; see Heb. 10:14. The blood was likewise to be put upon the horns of the incense-altar, to which there seems to be an allusion in Jer. 17:1, where the sin of Judah is said to be *graven upon the horns of their altars*. If they did not forsake their sins, the putting of the blood of their sin-offerings upon the horns of their altars, instead of taking away their guilt, did but bind it on the faster, perpetuated the remembrance of it, and remained a witness against them. It is likewise alluded to in Rev. 9:13, where a voice is heard *from the four horns of the golden altar*; that is, an answer of peace is given to the prayers of the saints, which are acceptable and prevalent only by virtue of the blood of the sin-offering put upon the horns of that altar; compare Rev. 8:3. 4. When the offering is completed, it is said, *atonement is made, and the sin shall be forgiven*, v. 20. The promise of remission is founded upon the atonement. It is spoken here of the forgiveness of the sin of the whole congregation, that is, the turning away of those national judgments which the sin deserved. Note, The saving of churches and kingdoms from ruin is owing to the satisfaction and mediation of Christ.

Verses 22-26

Observe here, 1. That God takes notice of and is displeased with the sins of rulers. Those who have power to call others to account are themselves accountable to the ruler of rulers; for, as high as they are, there is a higher than they. This is intimated in that the commandment transgressed is here said to be the *commandment of the Lord his God*, v. 22. He is a prince to others,

but let him know the Lord is a God to him. 2. The sin of the ruler which he committed through ignorance is supposed afterwards to come to his knowledge (v. 23), which must be either by the check of his own conscience or by the reproof of his friends, both which we should all, even the best and greatest, not only submit to, but be thankful for. What we have done amiss we should be very desirous to come to the knowledge of. *That which I see not, teach thou me, and show me wherein I have erred*, are prayers we should put up to God every day, that though through ignorance we fall into sin we may not through ignorance lie still in it. 3. The sin-offering for a ruler was to be *a kid of the goats*, not a bullock, as for the priest and the whole congregation; nor was the blood of his sin-offering to be brought into the tabernacle, as of the other two, but it was all bestowed upon the brazen altar (v. 25); nor was the flesh of it to be burnt, as that of the other two, without the camp, which intimated that the sin of a ruler, though worse than that of a common person, yet was not so heinous, nor of such pernicious consequence, as the sin of the high priest, or of the whole congregation. A kid of the goats was sufficient to be offered for a ruler, but a bullock for a tribe, to intimate that the ruler, though *major singulis—greater than each*, was *minor universis—less than the whole*. It is bad when great men give bad examples, but worse when all men follow them. 4. It is promised that the atonement shall be accepted and the sin forgiven (v. 26), that is, if he repent and reform; for otherwise God swore concerning Eli, a judge in Israel, that the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, 1 Sa. 3:14.

Verses 27-35

I. Here is the law of the sin-offering for a common person, which differs from that for a ruler only in this, that a private person might bring either a kid or a lamb, a ruler only a kid; and that for a ruler must be a male, for the other a female: in all the circumstances of the management of the offering they agreed. Observe, 1. The case supposed: *If any one of the common people sin through ignorance*, v. 27. The prophet supposes that they were not so likely as the great men to *know the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God* (Jer. 5:4), and yet, if they sin through ignorance, they must bring a sin-offering. Note, Even sins of ignorance need to be atoned for by sacrifice. To be able to plead, when we are charged with sin, that we did it ignorantly, and through the surprise of temptation, will not bring us off if we be not interested in that great plea, *Christ hath died*, and entitled to the benefit of that. We have all need to pray with David (and he was a ruler) to be cleansed from *secret faults*, the errors which we ourselves do not understand or are not aware of, Ps. 19:12. 2. That the sins of ignorance committed by a single person, a common obscure person, did require a sacrifice; for, as the greatest are not above the censure, so the meanest are not below the cognizance of the divine justice. None of the common people, if offenders, were overlooked in a crowd. 3. That a sin-offering was not only admitted, but accepted, even from one of the common people, and an atonement made by it, v. 31, 35. Here rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together; they are both alike welcome to Christ, and to an interest in his sacrifice, upon the same terms. See Job 34:19.

II. From all these laws concerning the sin-offerings we may learn, 1. To hate sin, and to watch against it. That is certainly a very bad thing to make atonement for which so many innocent and useful creatures must be slain and mangled thus. 2. To value Christ, the great and true sin-offering, whose blood cleanses from all sin, which it was not possible that the *blood of bulls and of goats should take away*. Now, *if any man sin*, Christ is *the propitiation* (1 Jn. 2:1, 2), not for Jews only, but for Gentiles.

And perhaps there was some allusion to this law concerning sacrifices for sins of ignorance in that prayer of Christ's, just when he was offering up himself a sacrifice, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

Chapter 5

This chapter, and part of the next, concern the trespass-offering. The difference between this and the sin-offering lay not so much in the sacrifices themselves, and the management of them, as in the occasions of the offering of them. They were both intended to make atonement for sin; but the former was more general, this applied to some particular instances. Observe what is here said, I. Concerning the trespass. If a man sin, 1. In concealing his knowledge, when he is adjured (v. 1). 2. In touching an unclean thing (v. 2, 3). 3. In swearing (v. 4). 4. In embezzling the holy things (v. 14–16). 5. In any sin of infirmity (v. 17–19). Some other cases there are, in which these offerings were to be offered (ch. 6:2-4; 14:12; 19:21; Num. 6:12). II. Concerning the trespass-offerings, 1. Of the flock (v. 5, 6). 2. Of fowls (v. 7–10). 3. Of flour (v. 11–13; but chiefly a ram without blemish (v. 15, etc.).

Verses 1-6

I. The offences here supposed are, 1. A man's concealing the truth when he was sworn as a witness to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Judges among the Jews had power to adjure not only the witnesses, as with us, but the person suspected (contrary to a rule of our law, that no man is bound to accuse himself), as appears by the high priest adjuring our Saviour, who thereupon answered, though before he stood silent, Mt. 26:63, 64. Now (v. 1), *If a soul sin* (that is, a person, for the soul is the man), if he *hear the voice of swearing* (that is, if he be adjured to testify what he knows, by an *oath* of the Lord upon him, 1 Ki. 8:31), if in such a case, for fear of offending one that either has been his friend or may be his enemy, he refuses to give evidence, or gives it but in part, *he shall bear his iniquity*. And that is a heavy burden, which, if some course be not taken to get it removed, will sink a man to the lowest hell. He that *heareth cursing* (that is, that is thus adjured) and betrayeth it not (that is, stifles his evidence, and does not utter it), he is a partner with the sinner, and *hateth his own soul*; see Prov. 29:24. Let all that are called out at any time to bear testimony think of this law, and be free and open in their evidence, and take heed of prevaricating. An oath of the Lord is a sacred thing, and not to be dallied with. 2. A man's touching any thing that was ceremonially unclean, v. 2, 3. If a man, polluted by such touch, came into the sanctuary inconsiderately, or if he neglected to wash himself according to the law, then he was to look upon himself as under guilt, and must bring his offering. Though his touching the unclean thing contracted only a ceremonial defilement, yet his neglect to wash himself according to the law was such an instance either of carelessness or contempt as contracted a moral guilt. If at first it be *hidden from him*, yet when he knows it he *shall be guilty*. Note, As soon as ever God by his Spirit convinces our consciences of any sin or duty we must immediately set in with the conviction, and prosecute it, as those that are not ashamed to own our former mistake. 3. Rash swearing. If a man binds himself by an oath that he will do or not do such a thing, and the performance of his oath afterwards proves either unlawful or impracticable, by which he is discharged from the obligation, yet he must bring an offering to atone for his folly in swearing so rashly, as David that he would kill Nabal. And then it was that he must *say before the angel* that it *was an error*, Eccl. 5:6. *He shall be guilty in one of these* (ch. 5:4), guilty if he do not perform his oath, and yet, if the matter of it were evil, guilty if he do. Such wretched dilemmas as these do some men bring themselves into by their own rashness and

folly; go which way they will their consciences are wounded, sin stares them in the face, so sadly are they *snared in the words of their mouth*. A more sad dilemma this is than that of the lepers, "If we sit still, we die; if we stir, we die." Wisdom and watchfulness beforehand would prevent these straits.

II. Now in these cases, 1. The offender must confess his sin and bring his offering (v. 5, 6); and the offering was not accepted unless it was accompanied with a penitential confession and a humble prayer for pardon. Observe, The confession must be particular, *that he hath sinned in that thing*; such was David's confession (Ps. 51:4), *I have done this evil*; and Achan's (Jos. 7:20), *Thus and thus have I done*. Deceit lies in generals; many will own in general they have sinned, for that all must own, so that it is not any particular reproach to them; but that they have sinned *in this thing* they stand too much upon their honour to acknowledge: but the way to be well assured of pardon, and to be well armed against sin for the future, is to be particular in our penitent confessions. 2. The priest must *make atonement for him*. As the atonement was not accepted without his repentance, so his repentance would not justify him without the atonement. Thus, in our reconciliation to God, Christ's part and ours are both needful.

Verses 7-13

Provision is here made for the poor of God's people, and the pacifying of their consciences under the sense of guilt. Those that were not able to bring a lamb might bring for a sin-offering a pair of *turtle-doves* or *two young pigeons*; nay, if any were so extremely poor that they were not able to procure these so often as they would have occasion, they might bring a pottle of fine flour, and this should be accepted. Thus the expense of the sin-offering was brought lower than that of any other offering, to teach us that no man's poverty shall ever be a bar in the way of his pardon. The poorest of all may have atonement made for them, if it be not their own fault. Thus the poor are evangelized; and no man shall say that he had not wherewithal to bear the charges of a journey to heaven. Now,

I. If the sinner brought two doves, one was to be offered for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering, v. 7. Observe, 1. Before he offered the burnt-offering, which was for the honour and praise of God, he must offer the sin-offering, to make atonement. We must first see to it that our peace be made with God, and then we may expect that our services for his glory will be accepted. The sin-offering must make way for the burnt-offering. 2. After the sin-offering, which made atonement, came the burnt-offering, as an acknowledgment of the great mercy of God in appointing and accepting the atonement.

II. If he brought fine flour, a handful of it was to be offered, but without either oil or frankincense (v. 11), not only because this would make it too costly for the poor, for whose comfort this sacrifice was appointed, but because it was a sin-offering, and therefore, to show the loathsomeness of the sin for which it was offered, it must not be made grateful either to the taste by oil or to the smell by frankincense. The unsavouriness of the offering was to intimate that the sinner must never relish his sin again as he had done. God by these sacrifices did speak, 1. Comfort to those that had offended, that they might not despair, nor pine away in their iniquity; but, peace being thus made for them with God, they might have peace in him. 2. Caution likewise not to offend any more, remembering what an expensive troublesome thing it was to make atonement.

Verses 14-19

Hitherto in this chapter orders were given concerning those sacrifices that were both sin-offerings and trespass-offerings, for they go by both names, v. 6. Here we have the law concerning those that were properly and peculiarly *trespass-offerings*, which were offered to atone for trespasses done against a neighbour, those sins we commonly call trespasses. Now injuries done to another may be either in holy things or in common things; of the former we have the law in these verses; of the latter in the beginning of the next chapter. If a man *did harm* (as it is v. 16) *in the holy things of the Lord*, he thereby committed a trespass against the priests, the Lord's ministers, who were entrusted with the care of these holy things, and had the benefit of them. Now if a man did alienate or convert to his own use any thing that was dedicated to God, unwittingly, he was to bring this sacrifice; as suppose he had ignorantly made use of the tithes, or first-fruits, or first-born of his cattle, or (which, it should seem by ch. 22:14–16, is principally meant here) had eaten any of those parts of the sacrifices which were appropriated to the priests; this was a trespass. It is supposed to be done through mistake, or forgetfulness, for want either of care or zeal; for if it was done presumptuously, and in contempt of the law, the offender died without mercy, Heb. 10:28. But in case of negligence and ignorance this sacrifice was appointed; and Moses is told, 1. What must be done in case the trespass appeared to be certain. The trespasser must bring an offering to the Lord, which, in all those that were purely trespass-offerings, must be a *ram without blemish*, "of the second year," say the Jewish doctors. He must likewise make restitution to the priest, according to a just estimation of the thing which he had so alienated, adding a fifth part to it, that he might learn to take more heed next time of embezzling what was sacred to God, finding to his cost that there was nothing got by it, and that he paid dearly for his oversights. 2. What must be done in case it were doubtful whether he had trespassed or no; he had cause to suspect it, but he *wist it not* (v. 17), that is, he was not very certain; in this case, because it is good to be sure, he must bring his trespass-offering, and the value of that which he feared he had embezzled, only he was not to add the fifth part to it. Now this was designed to show the very great evil there is in sacrilege. Achan, that was guilty of it presumptuously, died for it; so did Ananias and Sapphira. But this goes further to show the evil of it, that if a man had, through mere ignorance, and unwittingly, alienated the holy things, nay, if he did but suspect that he had done so, he must be at the expense, not only of a full restitution with interest, but of an offering, with the trouble of bringing it, and must take shame to himself, by making confession of it; so bad a thing is it to invade God's property, and so cautious should we be to abstain from all appearances of this evil. We are also taught here to be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy, to ask pardon for the sin, and make satisfaction for the wrong, which we do but suspect ourselves guilty of. In doubtful cases we should take and keep the safer side.

Chapter 6

The first seven verses of this chapter might fitly have been added to the foregoing chapter, being a continuation of the law of the trespass-offering, and the putting of other cases in which it was to be offered; and with this end the instructions God gave concerning the several kinds of sacrifices that should be offered: and then at v. 8 (which in the original begins a new section of the law) he comes to appoint the several rites and ceremonies concerning these sacrifices which had not been mentioned before. I. The burnt-offering (v. 8–13). II. The meat-offering (v. 11–18), particularly that at the consecration of the priest (v. 19–23). III. The sin-offering (v. 24, etc.).

Verses 1-7

This is the latter part of the law of the trespass-offering: the former part, which concerned trespasses about holy things, we had in the close of the foregoing chapter; this concerns trespasses in common things. Observe here,

I. The trespass supposed, v. 2, 3. Though all the instances relate to our neighbour, yet it is called a *trespass against the Lord*, because, though the injury be done immediately to our neighbour, yet an affront is thereby given to his Maker and our Master. He that speaks evil of his brother is said to speak evil of the law, and consequently of the Law-maker, Jam. 4:11. Though the person injured be ever so mean and despicable, and every way our inferior, yet the injury reflects upon that God who has made the command of loving our neighbour second to that of loving himself. The trespasses specified are, 1. Denying a trust: *If a man lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep*, or, which is worse, which was lent him for his use. If we claim that as our own which is only borrowed, left in our custody, or committed to our care, this is a *trespass against the Lord*, who, for the benefit of human society, will have property and truth maintained. 2. Defrauding a partner: *If a man lie in fellowship*, claiming a sole interest in that wherein he has but a joint-interest. 3. Disowning a manifest wrong: *If a man has the front to lie in a thing taken away by violence*, which ordinarily cannot be hid. 4. Deceiving in commerce, or, as some think, by false accusation; if a man have *deceitfully oppressed* his neighbour, as some read it, either withholding what is due or extorting what is not. 5. Detaining what is found, and denying it (v. 3); if a man have *found that which was lost*, he must not call it his own presently, but endeavour to find out the owner, to whom it must be returned; this is doing as we would be done by: but he that *lies concerning it*, that falsely says he knows nothing of it, especially if he back this lie with a false oath, *trespasseth against the Lord*, who to every thing that is said is a witness, but in an oath he is the party appealed to, and highly affronted when he is called to witness to a lie.

II. The trespass-offering appointed. 1. *In the day of his trespass-offering* he must make satisfaction to his brother. This must be first done *if thy brother hath aught against thee: Because he hath sinned and is guilty*, (v. 4, 5), that is, is convicted of his guilt by his own conscience, and is touched with remorse for it; seeing himself guilty before God, let him faithfully restore all that he has got by fraud or oppression, with a fifth part added, to make amends to the owner for the loss and trouble he had sustained in the mean time; let him account both for debt and damages. Note, Where wrong has been done restitution must be made; and till it is made to the utmost of our power, or an equivalent accepted by the person wronged, we cannot have the

comfort of the forgiveness of the sin; for the keeping of what is unjustly got avows the taking, and both together make but one continued act of unrighteousness. To repent is to undo what we have done amiss, which (whatever we pretend) we cannot be said to do till we restore what has been got by it, as Zaccheus (Lu. 19:8), and make satisfaction for the wrong done. 2. He must *then come and offer his gift*, must *bring his trespass-offering to the Lord* whom he had offended; and the priest must make an atonement for him, v. 6, 7. This trespass-offering could not, of itself, make satisfaction for sin, nor reconciliation between God and the sinner, but as it signified the atonement that was to be made by our Lord Jesus, when he should make his soul *an offering or sin, a trespass-offering*; it is the same word that is here used, Isa. 53:10. The trespasses here mentioned are trespasses still against the law of Christ, which insists as much upon justice and truth as ever the law of nature or the law of Moses did; and though now we may have them pardoned without a trespass-offering, yet not without true repentance, restitution, reformation, and a humble faith in the righteousness of Christ: and, if any make the more bold with these sins because they are not now put to the expense of a trespass-offering for them, they turn the grace of God into wantonness, and so bring upon themselves a swift destruction. The Lord is the avenger of all such, 1 Th. 4:6.

Verses 8-13

Hitherto we have had the instructions which Moses was directed to give to the people concerning the sacrifices; but here begin the instructions he was to give to the priests; he must *command Aaron and his sons*, v. 9. The priests were rulers in the house of God, but these rulers must be ruled; and those that had the command of others must themselves be commanded. Let ministers remember that not only commissions, but commands, were given to Aaron and his sons, who must be in subjection to them.

In these verses we have the law of the burnt-offering, as far as it was the peculiar care of the priests. The daily sacrifice of a lamb, which was offered morning and evening for the whole congregation, is here chiefly referred to.

I. The priest must take care of the ashes of the burnt-offering, that they be decently disposed of, v. 10, 11. He must clear the altar of them every morning, and put them on the east side of the altar, which was furthest from the sanctuary; this he must do in his linen garment, which he always wore when he did any service at the altar; and then he must shift himself, and put on other garments, either such as were his common wear, or (as some think) other priestly garments less honourable, and must *carry the ashes into a clean place without the camp*. Now, 1. God would have this done, for the honour of his altar and the sacrifices that were burnt upon it. Even the ashes of the sacrifices must be preserved, to testify the regard God had to it; by the burnt-offering *he* was honoured, and therefore thus *it* was honoured, and therefore thus *it* was honoured. And some think that this care which was taken of the ashes of the sacrifice typified the burial of our Saviour; his dead body (the ashes of his sacrifice) was carefully laid up in a garden, in a new sepulchre, which was a *clean place*. It was also requisite that the altar should be kept as clean as might be; the fire upon it would burn the better, and it is decent in a house to have a clean fire-side. 2. God would have the priests themselves to keep it so, to teach them and us to stoop to the meanest services for the honour of God and of his altar. The priest himself must not only kindle the fire, but clean the hearth, and carry out the ashes. God's servants must think nothing below them but sin.

II. The priest must take care of the fire upon the altar, that it be kept *always burning*. This is much insisted on here (v. 9, 12), and this express law is given: *The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar, it shall never go out*, v. 13. We may suppose that no day passed without some extraordinary sacrifices, which were always offered between the morning and evening lamb; so that from morning to night the fire on the altar was kept up of course. But to preserve it *all night unto the morning* (v. 9) required some care. Those that keep good houses never let their kitchen fire go out; therefore God would thus give an instance of his good house-keeping. The first fire upon the altar came *from heaven* (ch. 9:24), so that by keeping that up continually with a constant supply of fuel all their sacrifices throughout all their generations might be said to be consumed with that fire from heaven, in token of God's acceptance. If, through carelessness, they should ever let it go out, they could not expect to have it so kindled again. Accordingly the Jews tell us that the fire never did go out upon the altar, till the captivity in Babylon. This is referred to Isa. 31:9, where God is said *to have his fire in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem*. By this law we are taught to keep up in our minds a constant disposition to all acts of piety and devotion, an habitual affection to divine things, so as to be always ready to every good word and work. We must not only not *quench the Spirit*, but we must *stir up the gift* that is in us. Though we be not always sacrificing, yet we must keep the fire of holy love always burning; and thus we must pray always.

Verses 14-23

The meat-offering was either that which was offered by the people or that by the priests at their consecration. Now,

I. As to the common meat-offering,

1. Only a handful of it was to be burnt upon the altar; all the rest was allowed to the priests for their food. The law of the burnt-offerings was such as imposed upon the priests a great deal of care and work, but allowed them little profit; for the flesh was wholly burnt, and the priests had nothing but the skin. But to make them amends the greatest part of the meat-offering was their own. The burning of a handful of it upon the altar (v. 15) was ordered before, ch. 2:2, 9. Here the remainder of it is consigned to the priests, the servants of God's house: *I have given it unto them for their portion of my offerings*, v. 17. Note, (1.) It is the will of God that his ministers should be well provided for with food convenient; and what is given to them he accepts as offered to himself, if it be done with a single eye. (2.) All Christians, being spiritual priests, do themselves share in the spiritual sacrifices they offer. It is not God that is the gainer by them; the handful burnt upon the altar was not worth speaking of, in comparison with the priests' share; we ourselves are the gainers by our religious services. Let God have all the frankincense, and the priests shall have the flour and the oil; what we give to God the praise and glory of we may take to ourselves the comfort and benefit of.

2. The laws concerning the eating of it were, (1.) That it must be *eaten unleavened*, v. 16. What was offered to God must have no leaven in it, and the priests must have it as the altar had it, and no otherwise. Thus must we keep the feasts of the Lord with the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*. (2.) It must be eaten in *the court of the tabernacle* (here called the *holy place*), in some room prepared by the side of the court for this purpose. It was a great crime to carry any of it out of the court. The very eating of it was a sacred rite, by which they were to honour God, and therefore it must be done in a religious manner, and with a holy reverence, which was preserved by confining it to the holy place. (3.) The males only must eat of it, v. 18. Of the less

holy things, as the first-fruits and tithes, and the shoulder and breasts of the peace-offerings, the *daughters* of the priests might eat, for they might be carried out of the court; but this was of the most holy things, which being to be eaten only in the tabernacle, the *sons* of Aaron only might eat of it. (4.) The priests only that were clean might eat of it: *Every one that toucheth them shall be holy*, v. 18. Holy things for holy persons. Some read it, *Every thing that toucheth it shall be holy*: All the furniture of the table on which these holy things were eaten must be appropriated to that use only, and never after used as common things.

II. As to the consecration meat-offering, which was offered for the priests themselves, it was to be *wholly burnt, and none of it eaten*, v. 23. It comes in here as an exception to the foregoing law. It should seem that this law concerning the meat-offering of initiation did not only oblige the high priest to offer it, and on that day only that he was anointed, and so for his successors in the day they were anointed; but the Jewish writers say that by this law every priest, on the day he first entered upon his ministry, was bound to offer this meat-offering,—that the high priest was bound to offer it every day of his life, from the day in which he was anointed,—and that it was to be offered besides the meat-offering that attended the morning and evening sacrifice, because it is said here to be a *meat-offering perpetual*, v. 20. Josephus says, "The high priest sacrificed twice every day at his own charges, and this was his sacrifice." Note, Those whom God has advanced above others in dignity and power ought to consider that he expects more from them than from others, and should attend to every intimation of service to be done for him. The meat-offering of the priest was to be baked as if it were to be eaten, and yet it must be wholly burnt. Though the priest that ministered was to be paid for serving the people, yet there was no reason that he should be paid for serving the high priest, who was the father of the family of the priests, and whom therefore any priest should take a pleasure in serving gratis. Nor was it fit that the priests should eat of the offerings of a priest; for as the sins of the people were typically transferred to the priests, which was signified by their eating of their offerings (Hos. 4:8), so the sins of the priests must be typically transferred to the altar, which therefore must eat up all their offerings. We are all undone, both ministers and people, if we must *bear our own iniquity*; nor could we have had any comfort or hope if God had not laid on his dear Son the iniquity of us all, and he is both the priest and the altar.

Verses 24-30

We have here so much of the law of the sin-offering as did peculiarly concern the priests that offered it. As, 1. That it must be killed *in the place where the burnt-offering was killed* (v. 25), that is, on the north side of the altar (ch. 1:11), which, some think typified the crucifying of Christ on mount Calvary, which was on the north side of Jerusalem. 2. That the priest who offered it for the sinner was (with his sons, or other priests, v. 29) to eat the flesh of it, after the blood and fat had been offered to God, in the *court of the tabernacle*, v. 26. Hereby they were to *bear the iniquity of the congregation*, as it is explained, ch. 10:17. 3. The blood of the sin-offering was with great reverence to be washed out of the clothes on which it happened to light (v. 27), which signified the awful regard we ought to have to the blood of Christ, not counting it a common thing; that blood must be sprinkled on the conscience, not on the raiment. 4. The vessel in which the flesh of the sin-offering was boiled must be broken if it were an earthen one, and, if a brazen one, well washed, v. 28. This intimated that the defilement was not wholly

taken away by the offering, but did rather cleave to it, such was the weakness and deficiency of those sacrifices; but the blood of Christ thoroughly cleanses from all sin, and after it there needs no cleansing. 5. That all this must be understood of the common sin-offerings, not of those for the priest, or the body of the congregation, either occasional, or stated upon the day of atonement; for it had been before ordained, and was now ratified, that if the blood of the offering was brought into the holy place, as it was in those extraordinary cases, the flesh was not to be eaten, but burnt without the camp, v. 30. Hence the apostle infers the advantage we have under the gospel above what they had under the law; for though the blood of Christ was *brought into the tabernacle, to reconcile within the holy place*, yet we have a right by faith to *eat of the altar* (Heb. 13:10–12), and so to take the comfort of the great propitiation.

Chapter 7

Here is, I. The law of the trespass-offering (v. 1-7), with some further directions concerning the burnt-offering and the meat-offering (v. 8-10). II. The law of the peace-offering. The eating of it (v. 11-21), on which occasion the prohibition of eating fat or blood is repeated (v. 22-27), and the priests' share of it (v. 28-34). III. The conclusion of those institutions (v. 35, etc.).

Verses 1-10

Observe here, 1. Concerning the trespass-offering, that, being much of the same nature with the sin-offering, it was to be governed by the same rules, v. 6. When the blood and fat were offered to God to make atonement, the priests were to eat the flesh, as that of the sin-offering, in the holy place. The Jews have a tradition (as we have it from the learned bishop Patrick) concerning the sprinkling of the blood of the trespass-offering *round about upon the altar*, "That there was a scarlet line which went round about the altar exactly in the middle, and the blood of the burnt-offerings was sprinkled round about above the line, but that of the trespass-offerings and peace-offerings round about below the line." As to the flesh of the trespass-offering, the right to it belonged to the priest that offered it, v. 7. He that did the work must have the wages. This was an encouragement to the priests to give diligent attendance on the altar; the more ready and busy they were the more they got. Note, The more diligent we are in the services of religion the more we shall reap of the advantages of it. But any of the priests, and the males of their families, might be invited by him to whom it belonged to partake with him: *Every male among the priests shall eat thereof*, that is, may eat thereof, *in the holy place*, v. 6. And, no doubt, it was the usage to treat one another with those perquisites of their office, by which friendship and fellowship were kept up among the priests. Freely they had received, and must freely give. It seems the offerer was not himself to have any share of his trespass-offering, as he was to have of his peace-offering; but it was all divided between the altar and the priest. They offered peace-offerings in thankfulness for mercy, and then it was proper to feast; but they offered trespass-offerings in sorrow for sin, and then fasting was more proper, in token of holy mourning, and a resolution to abstain from sin. 2. Concerning the burnt-offering it is here appointed that the priest that offered it should have the skin (v. 8), which no doubt he might make money of. "This" (the Jews say) "is meant only for the burnt-offerings which were offered by particular persons; for the profit of the skins of the daily burnt-offerings for the congregation went to the repair of the sanctuary." Some suggest that this appointment will help us to understand God's clothing our first parents with *coats of skins*, Gen. 3:21. It is probable that the beasts whose skins they were were offered in sacrifice as whole burnt-offerings, and that Adam was the priest that offered them; and then God gave him the skins, as his fee, to make clothes of for himself and his wife, in remembrance of which the skins ever after pertained to the priest; and see Gen. 27:16. 3. Concerning the meat-offering, if it was dressed, it was fit to be eaten immediately; and therefore the priest that offered it was to have it, v. 9. If it was dry, there was not so much occasion for being in haste to use it; and therefore an equal dividend of it must be made among all the priests that were then in waiting, v. 10.

Verses 11-34

All this relates to the peace-offerings: it is the repetition and explication of what we had before, with various additions.

I. The nature and intention of the peace-offerings are here more distinctly opened. They were offered either, 1. In thankfulness for some special mercy received, such as recovery from sickness, preservation in a journey, deliverance at sea, redemption out of captivity, all which are specified in Ps. 107, and for them men are called upon to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, v. 22. Or, 2. In performance of some vow which a man made when he was in distress (v. 16), and this was less honourable than the former, though the omission of it would have been more culpable. Or, 3. In supplication for some special mercy which a man was in the pursuit and expectation of, here called a *voluntary offering*. This accompanied a man's prayers, as the former did his praises. We do not find that men were bound by the law, unless they had bound themselves by vow, to offer these peace-offerings upon such occasions, as they were to bring their sacrifices of atonement in case of sin committed. Not but that prayer and praise are as much our duty as repentance is; but here, in the expressions of their sense of mercy, God left them more to their liberty than in the expressions of their sense of sin—to try the generosity of their devotion, and that their sacrifices, being free-will offerings, might be the more laudable and acceptable; and, by obliging them to bring the sacrifices of atonement, God would show the necessity of the great propitiation.

II. The rites and ceremonies about the peace-offerings are enlarged upon.

1. If the peace-offering was offered for a thanksgiving, a meat-offering must be offered with it, cakes of several sorts, and wafers (v. 12), and (which was peculiar to the peace-offerings) leavened bread must be offered, not to be burnt upon the altar, that was forbidden (ch. 2:11), but to be eaten with the flesh of the sacrifice, that nothing might be wanting to make it a complete and pleasant feast; for unleavened bread was less grateful to the taste, and therefore, though enjoined in the passover for a particular reason, yet in other festivals leavened bread, which was lighter and more pleasant, was appointed, that men might feast at God's table as well as at their own. And some think that a meat-offering is required to be brought with every peace-offering, as well as with that of thanksgiving, by that law (v. 29) which requires an oblation with it, that the table might be as well furnished as the altar.

2. The flesh of the peace-offerings, both that which was the priest's share and that which was the offerer's must be eaten quickly, and not kept long, either raw, or dressed, cold. If it was a peace-offering for thanksgiving, it must be all eaten the same day (v. 16); if a vow, or voluntary offering, it must be eaten either the same day or the day after, v. 16. If any was left beyond the time limited, it was to be burnt (v. 17); and, if any person ate of what was so left their conduct should be animadverted upon as a very high misdemeanour, v. 18. Though they were not obliged to eat it in the holy place, as those offerings that are called most holy, but might take it to their own tents and feast upon it there, yet God would by this law make them to know a difference between that and other meat, and religiously to observe it, that whereas they might keep other meat cold in the house as long as they thought fit, and warm it again if they pleased, and eat it three or four days after, they might not do so with the flesh of their peace-offerings, but it must be eaten immediately. (1.) Because God would not have that holy flesh to be in danger of putrefying, or being fly-blown, to prevent which it must be salted with *fire* (as the expression is, Mk. 9:49) if it were kept; as, if it was used, it must be salted with salt. (2.) Because God would not have his people to be niggardly and sparing, and distrustful of providence, but cheerfully to enjoy what God gives them (Eccl. 8:15), and to do good with it,

and not to be anxiously solicitous for the morrow. (3.) The flesh of the peace-offerings was God's treat, and therefore God would have the disposal of it; and he orders it to be used generously for the entertainment of their friends, and charitably for the relief of the poor, to show that he is a bountiful benefactor, *giving us all things richly to enjoy*, the bread of the day in its day. If the sacrifice was thanksgiving, they were especially obliged thus to testify their holy joy in God's goodness by their holy feasting. This law is made very strict (v. 18), that if the offerer did not take care to have all his offering eaten by himself or his family, his friends or the poor, within the time limited by the law, or, in the event of any part being left, to burn it (which was the most decent way of disposing of it, the sacrifices upon the altar being *consumed by fire*), then his offering should not be accepted, nor imputed to him. Note, All the benefit of our religious services is lost if we do not improve them, and conduct ourselves aright afterwards. They are not acceptable to God if they have not a due influence upon ourselves. If a man seemed generous in bringing a peace-offering, and yet afterwards proved sneaking and paltry in the using of it, it was as if he had never brought it; nay, *it shall be an abomination*. Note, There is no mean between God's acceptance and his abhorrence. If our persons and performances are sincere and upright, they are accepted; if not, they are an abomination, Prov. 15:8. He that eats it after the time appointed shall *bear his iniquity*, that is, he shall be *cut off from his people*, as it is explained (ch. 19:8), where this law is repeated. This law of eating the peace-offerings before the third day, that they might not putrefy, is applicable to the resurrection of Christ after two days, that, being God's *holy one*, he might not see corruption, Ps. 16:10. And some think that it instructs us speedily, and without delay, to partake of Christ and his grace, feeding and feasting thereon by faith to-day, *while it is called to-day* (Heb. 3:13, 14), for it will be too late shortly.

3. But the flesh, and those that eat it, must be pure. (1.) The flesh must *touch no unclean thing*; if it did, it must not be eaten, but burnt, v. 19. If, in carrying it from the altar to the place where it was eaten, a dog touched it, or it touched a dead body or any other unclean thing, it was then unfit to be used in a religious feast. Every thing we honour the holy God with must be pure and carefully kept from all pollution. It is a case adjudged (Hag. 2:12) that the holy flesh could not by its touch communicate holiness to what was common; but by this law it is determined that by the touch of that which was unclean it received pollution from it, which intimates that the infection of sin is more easily and more frequently communicated than the savour of grace. (2.) It must not be eaten by any unclean person. When a person was upon any account ceremonially unclean it was at his peril if he presumed to eat of the flesh of the peace-offerings, v. 20, 21. Holy things are only for holy persons; the holiness of the food being ceremonial, those were incapacitated to partake of it who lay under any ceremonial uncleanness; but we are hereby taught to preserve ourselves pure from all the pollutions of sin, that we may have the benefit and comfort of Christ's sacrifice, 1 Pt. 2:1, 2. Our consciences must be purged from dead works, that we may be fit to *serve the living God*, Heb. 9:14. But if any dare to partake of the table of the Lord under the pollution of sin unrepented of, and so profane sacred things, they eat and drink *judgment to themselves*, as those did that ate of the peace-offerings (v. 20) and again (v. 21), that they *pertain unto the Lord*: whatever pertains to the Lord is sacred, and must be used with great reverence and not with unhallowed hands. "*Be you holy*, for God is holy, and you pertain to him."

4. The eating of blood and the fat of the inwards is here again prohibited; and the prohibition is annexed as before to the law of

the peace-offerings, ch. 3:17. (1.) The prohibition of the fat seems to be confined to those beasts which were used for sacrifice, the bullocks, sheep, and goats: but of the roe-buck, the hart, and other clean beasts, they might eat the fat; for those only of which offerings were brought are mentioned here, v. 23–25. This was to preserve in their minds a reverence for God's altar, on which the fat of the inwards was burnt. The Jews say, "If a man eat so much as an olive of forbidden fat—if he do it presumptuously, he is in danger of being cut off by the hand of God—if ignorantly, he is to bring a sin-offering, and so to pay dearly for his carelessness." To eat of the flesh of that which died of itself, or was torn of beasts, was unlawful; but to eat of the fat of such was doubly unlawful, v. 24. (2.) The prohibition of blood is more general (v. 26, 27), because the fat was offered to God only by way of acknowledgment, but the blood *made atonement for the soul*, and so typified Christ's sacrifice much more than the burning of the fat did; to this therefore a greater reverence must be paid, till these types had their accomplishment in the offering up of the body of Christ once for all. The Jews rightly expound this law as forbidding only the *blood of the life*, as they express it, not that which we call the *gravy*, for of that they supposed it was lawful to eat.

5. The priest's share of the peace-offerings is here prescribed. Out of every beast that was offered for a peace-offering the priest that offered it was to have to himself the breast and the right shoulder, v. 30–34. Observe here, (1.) That when the sacrifice was killed the offerer himself must, with his own hands, present God's part of it, that he might signify thereby his cheerfully giving it up to God, and his desire that it might be accepted. He was with his own hands to *lift it up*, in token of his regard to God as the God of heaven, and then to *wave it to and fro*, in token of his regard to God as the Lord of the whole earth, to whom thus, as far as he could reach, he offered it, showing his readiness and wish to do him honour. Now that which was thus heaved and waved was the fat, and the breast, and the right shoulder, it was all offered to God; and then he ordered the fat to his altar, and the breast and shoulder to his priest, both being his receivers. (2.) That when the fat was burnt the priest took his part, on which he and his family were to feast, as well as the offerer and his family. In holy joy and thanksgiving, it is good to have our ministers to go before us, and to be our mouth to God. The melody is sweet when he that sows and those that reap rejoice together. Some observe a significancy in the parts assigned to the priests: the breast and the shoulder intimate the affections and the actions, which must be devoted to the honour of God by all his people and to the service also of the church by all his priests. Christ, our great peace-offering, feasts all his spiritual priests with the breast and shoulder, with the dearest love and the sweetest and strongest supports; for his is the wisdom of God and the power of God. When Saul was designed for a king Samuel ordered the shoulder of the peace-offering to be set before him (1 Sa. 9:24), which gave him a hint of something great and sacred intended for him. Jesus Christ is our great peace-offering; for he made himself a sacrifice, not only to atone for sin, and so to save us from the curse, but to purchase a blessing for us, and all good. By our joyfully partaking of the benefits of redemption we *feast upon the sacrifice*, to signify which the Lord's supper was instituted.

Verses 35-38

Here is the conclusion of these laws concerning the sacrifices, though some of them are afterwards repeated and explained. They are to be considered, 1. As a grant to the priests, v. 35, 36. In the day they were ordained to that work and office this provision was made for their comfortable maintenance. Note, God will take care that those who are employed for him be well

paid and well provided for. Those that receive the anointing of the Spirit to minister unto the Lord shall have their portion, and it shall be a worthy portion, out of the offerings of the Lord; for God's work is its own wages, and there is a present reward of obedience in obedience. 2. As a statute for ever to the people, that they should bring these offerings according to the rules prescribed, and cheerfully give the priests their share out of them. God *commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations*, v. 38. Note, The solemn acts religious worship are commanded. They are not things that we are left to our liberty in, and which we may do or not do at our pleasure; but we are under indispensable obligations to perform them in their season, and it is at our peril if we omit them. The observance of the laws of Christ cannot be less necessary than the observance of the laws of Moses was.

Chapter 8

This chapter gives us an account of the solemn consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priest's office. I. It was done publicly, and the congregation was called together to be witnesses of it (v. 1-4). II. It was done exactly according to God's appointment (v. 5). 1. They were washed and dressed (v. 6-9, 13). 2. The tabernacle and the utensils of it were anointed, and then the priests (v. 10-12). 3. A sin-offering was offered for them (v. 14-17). 4. A burnt-offering (v. 18-21). 5. The ram of consecration (v. 22-30). 6. The continuance of this solemnity for seven days (v. 31, etc.).

Verses 1-13

God had given Moses orders to consecrate Aaron and his sons to the priests' office, when he was with him the first time upon mount Sinai, Ex. 28 and 29, where we have also the particular instructions he had how to do it. Now here we have, I. The orders repeated. What was there commanded to be done is here commanded to be done *now*, v. 2, 3. The tabernacle was newly set up, which, without the priests, would be as a candlestick without a candle; the law concerning sacrifices was newly given, but could not be observed without priests; for, though Aaron and his sons had been nominated to the office, they could not officiate, till they were consecrated, which yet must not be done till the place of their ministration was prepared, and the ordinances were instituted, that they might apply themselves to work as soon as ever they were consecrated, and might know that they were ordained, not only to the honour and profit, but to the business of the priesthood. Aaron and his sons were near relations to Moses, and therefore he would not consecrate them till he had further orders, lest he should seem too forward to bring honour into his family.

II. The congregation called together, *at the door*, that is, in the court of *the tabernacle*, v. 4. The elders and principal men of the congregation, who represented the body of the people, were summoned to attend; for the court would hold but a few of the many thousands of Israel. It was done thus publicly, 1. Because it was a solemn transaction between God and Israel; the priests were to be *ordained for men in things pertaining to God*, for the maintaining of a settled correspondence, and the negotiating of all affairs between the people and God; and therefore it was fit that both sides should appear, to own the appointment, at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 2. The spectators of the solemnity could not but be possessed, by the sight of it, with a great veneration for the priests and their office, which was necessary among a people so wretchedly prone as these were to envy and discontent. It was strange that any of those who were witnesses of what was here done should afterwards say, as some of them did, *You take too much upon you, you sons of Levi*; but what would they have said if it had been done clandestinely? Note, It is very fit, and of good use, that ministers should be ordained publicly, *plebe praesente—in the presence of the common people*, according to the usage of the primitive church.

III. The commission read, v. 5. Moses, who was God's representative in this solemnity, produced his orders before the congregation: *This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done*. Though God had crowned him king in Jeshurun, when he made his face to shine in the sight of all Israel, yet he did not institute or appoint any thing in God's worship but what God himself had commanded. The priesthood he delivered to them was that which he had received from the Lord. Note, All that

minister about holy things must have an eye to God's command as their rule and warrant; for it is only in the observance of this that they can expect to be owned and accepted of God. Thus we must be able to say, in all acts of religious worship, *This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done.*

IV. The ceremony performed according to the divine ritual. 1. Aaron and his sons were *washed with water* (v. 6), to signify that they ought now to purify themselves from all sinful dispositions and inclinations, and ever after to keep themselves pure. Christ washes those from their sins in his own blood whom he makes to our God kings and priests (Rev. 1:5, 6); and those that draw near to God must be washed in pure water, Heb. 10:22. Though they were ever so clean before and no filth was to be seen upon them, yet they must be washed, to signify their purification from sin, with which their souls were polluted, how clean soever their bodies were. 2. They were clothed with the holy garments, Aaron with his (v. 7-9), which typified the dignity of Christ our great high priest, and his sons with theirs (v. 13), which typified the decency of Christians, who are spiritual priests. Christ wears the breast-plate of judgment and the holy crown; for the church's high priest is her prophet and king. All believers are clothed with the robe of righteousness, and girt with the girdle of truth, resolution, and close application; and their heads are *bound*, as the word here is, with the bonnet or diadem of beauty, the beauty of holiness. 3. The high priest was anointed, and, it should seem, the holy things were anointed at the same time; some think that they were anointed before, but that the anointing of them is mentioned here because Aaron was anointed with the same oil with which they were anointed; but the manner of relating it here makes it more than probable that it was done at the same time, and that the seven days employed in consecrating the altar were coincident with the seven days of the priests' consecration. The tabernacle, and all its utensils, had some of the anointing oil put upon them with Moses's finger (v. 10), so had the altar (v. 11); these were to sanctify the gold and the gift (Mt. 23:17-19), and therefore must themselves be thus sanctified; but he poured it out more plentifully upon the head of Aaron (v. 12), so that it ran down to the *skirts of his garments*, because his unction was to typify the anointing of Christ with the Spirit, which was not given by measure to him. Yet all believers also have received the anointing, which puts an indelible character upon them, 1 Jn. 2:27.

Verses 14-30

The covenant of priesthood must be made by sacrifice, as well as other covenants, Ps. 50:5. And thus Christ was consecrated by the sacrifice of himself, once for all. Sacrifices of each kind must be offered for the priests, that they might with the more tenderness and concern offer the gifts and sacrifices of the people, with compassion on the ignorant, and on *those that were out of the way*, not insulting over those for whom sacrifices were offered, remembering that they themselves had had sacrifices offered for them, being *compassed with infirmity*. 1. A bullock, the largest sacrifice, was offered for a sin-offering (v. 14), that hereby atonement might be made, and they might not bring any of the guilt of the sins of their former state into the new character they were now to put on. When Isaiah was sent to be a prophet, he was told to his comfort, *Thy iniquity is taken away*, Isa. 6:7. Ministers, that are to declare the remission of sins to others, should give diligence to get it made sure to themselves in the first place that their own sins are pardoned. Those to whom is *committed the ministry of reconciliation* must first be reconciled to God themselves, that they may deal for the souls of others as for their own. 2. A ram was offered for a

burnt-offering, v. 18–21. By this they gave to God the glory of this great honour which was now put upon them, and returned him praise for it, as Paul thanked Christ Jesus for *putting him into the ministry*, 1 Tim. 1:12. They also signified the devoting of themselves and all their services to the honour of God. 3. Another ram, called the *ram of consecration*, was offered for a peace-offering, v. 22, etc. The blood of it was part put on the priests, on their ears, thumbs, and toes, and part sprinkled upon the altar; and thus he did (as it were) marry them to the altar, upon which they must all their days give attendance. All the ceremonies about this offering, as those before, were appointed by the express command of God; and, if we compare this chapter with Ex. 29, we shall find that the performance of the solemnity exactly agrees with the precept there, and in nothing varies. Here, therefore, as in the account we had of the tabernacle and its vessels, it is again and again repeated, *As the Lord commanded Moses*. And thus Christ, when he sanctified himself with his own blood, had an eye to his Father's will in it. *As the Father gave me commandment so I do*, Jn. 14:31; 10:18; 6:38.

Verses 31-36

Moses, having done his part of the ceremony, now leaves Aaron and his sons to do theirs.

I. They must boil the flesh of their peace-offering, and eat it in the court of the tabernacle, and what remained they must burn with fire, v. 31, 32. This signified their thankful consent to the consecration: when God gave Ezekiel his commission, he told him to eat the roll, Eze. 3:1, 2.

II. They must not stir out of the court of the tabernacle for seven days, v. 33. The priesthood being a good warfare, they must thus learn to endure hardness, and to disentangle themselves from the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. 2:3, 4. Being consecrated to their service, they must *give themselves wholly to it*, and *attend continually to this very thing*. Thus Christ's apostles were appointed to *wait for the promise of the Father*, Acts 1:4. During this time appointed for their consecration, they were daily to repeat the same sacrifices which were offered the first day, v. 34. This shows the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, which, because they could not take away sin, were often repeated (Heb. 10:1, 2), but were here repeated seven times (a number of perfection), because they typified that *one offering, which perfected for ever those that were sanctified*. The work lasted seven days; for it was a kind of creation: and this time was appointed in honour of the sabbath, which, probably, was the last day of the seven, for which they were to prepare during the six days. Thus the time of our life, like the six days, must be our preparation for the perfection of our consecration to God in the everlasting sabbath: they attended *day and night* (v. 35), and so constant should we be in our meditation on God's law, Ps. 1:2. They attended to *keep the charge of the Lord*: we have every one of us a charge to keep, an eternal God to glorify, an immortal soul to provide for, needful duty to be done, our generation to serve; and it must be our daily care to keep this charge, for it is the charge of the Lord our Master, who will shortly call us to an account about it, and it is at our utmost peril if we neglect it. Keep it *that you die not*; it is death, eternal death, to betray the trust we are charged with; by the consideration of this we must be kept in awe. *Lastly*, We are told (v. 36) that *Aaron and his sons did all that was commanded*. Thus their consecration was completed; and thus they set an example before the people of an exact obedience to the laws of sacrifices now newly given, and then they could with the better grace teach them. Thus the *covenant of peace* (Num. 25:12), *of life and peace* (Mal. 2:5), was made with Aaron and his sons; but after all the ceremonies

that were used in their consecration there was one point of ratification which was reserved to be the honour and establishment of Christ's priesthood, which was this, that they were *made priests without an oath, but Christ with an oath* (Hab. 7:21), for neither such priests nor their priesthood could continue, but Christ's is a perpetual and unchangeable priesthood.

Gospel ministers are compared to those who served at the altar, for they *minister about holy things* (1 Co. 9:13), they are God's mouth to the people and the people's to God, the pastors and teachers Christ has appointed to continue in the church to the end of the world: they seem to be meant in that promise which points at gospel times (Isa. 66:21), *I will take of them for priests and for Levites*. No man may take this honour to himself, but he who upon trial is found to be clothed and anointed by the Spirit of God with gifts and graces to qualify him for it, and who with purpose of heart devotes himself entirely to the service, and is then by the *word and prayer* (for so every thing is sanctified), and the imposition of the hands of those that *give themselves to the word and prayer*, set apart to the office, and recommended to Christ as a servant and to the church as a steward and guide. And those that are thus solemnly dedicated to God ought not to depart from his service, but faithfully to abide in it all their days; and those that do so, and continue *labouring in the word and doctrine*, are to be accounted *worthy of double honour*, double to that of the Old-Testament priests.

Chapter 9

Aaron and his sons, having been solemnly consecrated to the priesthood, are in this chapter entering upon the execution of their office, the very next day after their consecration was completed. I. Moses (no doubt by direction from God) appoints a meeting between God and his priests, as the representatives of his people, ordering them to attend him, and assuring them that he would appear to them (v. 1-7). II. The meeting is held according to the appointment. 1. Aaron attends on God by sacrifice, offering a sin-offering and burnt-offering for himself (v. 8-14), and then the offerings for the people, whom he blessed in the name of the Lord (v. 15-22). 2. God signifies his acceptance, (1.) Of their persons, by showing them his glory (v. 23). (2.) Of their sacrifices, by consuming them with fire from heaven (v. 24).

Verses 1-7

Orders are here given for another solemnity upon the eighth day; for the newly-ordained priests were set to work immediately after the days of their consecration were finished, to let them know that they were not ordained to be idle: *He that desires the office of a bishop desires a good work*, which must be looked at with desire, more than the honour and benefit. The priests had not so much as one day's respite from service allowed them, that they might divert themselves, and receive the compliments of their friends upon their elevation, but were busily employed the very next day; for their consecration was the *filling of their hands*. God's spiritual priests have constant work cut out for them, which the duty of every day requires; and those that would give up their account with joy must redeem time; see Eze. 43:26, 27. Now, 1. Moses raises their expectation of a glorious appearance of God to them this day (v. 4): "*To day the Lord will appear to you* that are the priests." And when all the congregation are gathered together, and *stand before the Lord*, he tells them (v. 6), *The glory of the Lord shall appear to you*. Though they had reason enough to believe God's acceptance of all that they had done according to his appointment, upon the general assurance we have that he is the *rewarder of those that diligently seek him* (even if he had not given them any sensible token of it), yet that if possible they and theirs might be effectually obliged to the service and worship of God, and might never turn aside to idols, the glory of God appeared to them, and visibly owned what they had done. We are not now to expect such appearances; we Christians walk more by faith, and less by sight, than they did. But we may be sure that God draws nigh to those who draw nigh to him, and that the offerings of faith are really acceptable to him, though, the sacrifices being spiritual, the tokens of the acceptance are, as it is fit they should be, spiritual likewise. To those who are duly consecrated to God he will undoubtedly manifest himself. 2. He puts both priests and people upon preparing to receive this favour which God designed them. *Aaron and his sons*, and *the elders of Israel*, are all summoned to attend, v. 1. Note, God will manifest himself in the solemn assemblies of his people and ministers; and those that would have the benefit and comfort of God's appearances must in them give their attendance. (1.) Aaron is ordered to prepare his offerings: *A young calf for a sin-offering*, v. 2. The Jewish writers suggest that a *calf* was appointed for a sin-offering to remind him of his sin in making the golden calf, by which he had rendered himself for ever unworthy of the honour of the priesthood, and which he had reason to reflect upon with sorrow and shame in all the atonements he made. (2.) Aaron must direct the people to get theirs ready. Hitherto Moses had told the people

what they must do; but now Aaron, as high priest over the house of God, must be their teacher, *in things pertaining to God: Unto the children of Israel thou shalt speak*, v. 3. Now that he was to speak from them to God in the sacrifices (the language of which he that appointed them very well understood) he must speak from God to them in the laws about the sacrifices. Thus Moses would engage the people's respect and obedience to him, as one that was set *over them in the Lord, to admonish them*. (3.) Aaron must offer his own first, and then the people's, v. 7. Aaron must now *go to the altar*, Moses having shown him the way to it; and there, [1.] He must *make an atonement for himself*; for the high priest, being *compassed with infirmity, ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins* (Heb. 5:2, 3), and for himself first; for how can we expect to be accepted in our prayers for others, if we ourselves be not reconciled to God? Nor is any service pleasing to God till the guilt of sin be removed by our interest in the great propitiation. Those that have the care of the souls of others are also hereby taught to look to their own in the first place; this charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. It is the charge to Timothy, to take care to save himself first, and then those that heard him, 1 Tim. 4:16. The high priest made atonement for himself, as one that was joined with sinners; but we have a high priest that was separated from sinners, and needed no atonement. When Messiah the prince was cut off as a sacrifice, it was not for himself; for he knew no sin. [2.] He must *make an atonement for the people*, by offering their sacrifices. Now that he was made a high priest he must lay to heart the concerns of the people, and this as their great concern, their reconciliation to God, and the putting away of sin which had separated between them and God. He must *make atonement as the Lord commanded*. See here the wonderful condescension of the mercy of God, that he not only allows an atonement to be made, but commands it; not only admits, but requires us to be reconciled to him. No room therefore is left to doubt but that the atonement which is commanded will be accepted.

Verses 8-22

These being the first offerings that ever were offered by the levitical priesthood, according to the newly-enacted law of sacrifices, the manner of offering them is particularly related, that it might appear how exactly they agreed with the institution. 1. Aaron with his own hands *slew the offering* (v. 8), and did the work of the inferior priests; for, great as he was, he must not think any service below him which he could do for the honour of God: and, as Moses had shown him how to do this work decently and dexterously, so he showed his sons, that they might do likewise; for this is the best way of teaching, and thus parents should instruct their children by example. Therefore as Moses before, so Aaron now offered some of each of the several sorts of sacrifices that were appointed, whose rites differed, that they might be *thoroughly furnished for every good work*. 2. He offered these *besides the burnt-sacrifice of the morning*, which was every day offered first, v. 17. Note, Our accustomed devotions morning and evening, alone and in our families, must not be omitted upon any pretence whatsoever, no, not when extraordinary services are to be performed; whatever is added, these must not be diminished. 3. It is not clear whether, when it is said that he burnt such and such parts of the sacrifices upon the altar (v. 10–20), the meaning is that he burnt them immediately with ordinary fire, as formerly, or that he laid them upon the altar ready to be burnt with the fire from heaven which they expected (v. 24), or whether, as bishop Patrick thinks, he burnt the offerings for himself with ordinary fire, but when they were burnt out he laid the people's sacrifices upon the altar, which were kindled and consumed by the fire of the

Lord. I would rather conjecture, because it is said of all these sacrifices that *he burnt them* (except the burnt-offering for the people, of which it is said that he offered it *according to the manner*, v. 16, which seems to be equivalent), that he did not kindle the fire to burn them, but that then the fire from the Lord fastened upon them, put out the fire that he had kindled (as we know a greater fire puts out a less), and suddenly consumed the remainder, which the fire he had kindled would have consumed slowly. 4. When Aaron had done all that on his part was to be done about the sacrifices he *lifted up his hand towards the people, and blessed them*, v. 22. This was one part of the priest's work, in which he was a type of Christ, who came into the world to bless us, and when he was parted from his disciples, at his ascension, *lifted up his hands and blessed them*, and in them his whole church, of which they were the elders and representatives, as the great high priest of our profession. Aaron *lifted up his hands* in blessing them, to intimate whence he desired and expected the blessing to come, even from heaven, which is God's throne. Aaron could but crave a blessing, it is God's prerogative to command it. Aaron, when he had blessed, came down; Christ, when he blessed, went up.

Verses 23-24

We are not told what Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle to do, v. 23. Some of the Jewish writers say, "They went in to pray for the appearance of the divine glory;" most probably they went in that Moses might instruct Aaron how to do the service that was to be done there—burn incense, light the lamps, set the show-bread, etc., that he might instruct his sons in it. But, when they came out, they both joined in blessing the people, who stood expecting the promised appearance of the divine glory; and it was now (when Moses and Aaron concurred in praying) that they had what they waited for. Note, God's manifestations of himself, of his glory and grace, are commonly given in answer to prayer. When Christ was praying the *heavens were opened*, Lu. 3:21. The glory of God appeared, not while the sacrifices were in offering, but when the priests prayed (as 2 Chr. 5:13), when they praised God, which intimates that the prayers and praises of God's spiritual priests are more pleasing to God than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices.

When the solemnity was finished, the blessing pronounced, and the congregation ready to be dismissed, in the close of the day, then God testified his acceptance, which gave them such satisfaction as was well worth waiting for.

I. *The glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people*, v. 23. What the appearance of it was we are not told; no doubt it was such as carried its own evidence along with it. The glory which *filled the tabernacle* (Ex. 40:34) now showed itself at the door of the tabernacle to those who attended there, as a prince shows himself to the expecting crowd, to gratify them. God hereby testified of their gifts, and showed them that he was worthy for whom they should do all this. Note, Those that diligently attend upon God in the way he has appointed shall have such a sight of his glory as shall be abundantly to their satisfaction. Those that dwell in God's house with an eye of faith may *behold the beauty of the Lord*.

II. *There came a fire out from before the Lord, and consumed the sacrifice*, v. 24. Here the learned bishop Patrick has a very probable conjecture, that Moses and Aaron staid in the tabernacle till it was time to offer the evening sacrifice, which Aaron did, but it is not mentioned, because it was done of course, and it was this which the *fire that came out from the Lord consumed*. Whether this fire came from heaven, or out of the most holy place, or from that visible appearance of the glory of

God which all the people saw, it was a manifest token of God's acceptance of their service, as, afterwards, of Solomon's sacrifice, 2 Chr. 7:1, and Elijah's, 1 Ki. 18:38.

1. This fire did consume (or, as the word is, *eat up*) the present sacrifice. And two ways this was a testimony of acceptance:— (1.) It signified the turning away of God's wrath from them. God's wrath is a consuming fire; this fire might justly have fastened upon the people, and consumed them for their sins; but its fastening upon the sacrifice, and consuming that, signified God's acceptance of that as an atonement for the sinner. (2.) It signified God's entering into covenant and communion with them: they ate their part of the sacrifice, and the fire of the Lord ate up his part; and thus he did, as it were, *sup with them, and they with him*, Rev. 3:20.

2. This fire did, as it were, take possession of the altar. The fire was thus kindled in God's house, which was to continue as long as the house stood, as we read before, ch. 6:13. This also was a figure of good things to come. The Spirit descended upon the apostles in *fire* (Acts 2:3), so ratifying their commission, as this spoken of here did the priests'. And the descent of this holy fire into our souls to kindle in them pious and devout affections towards God, and such a holy zeal as burns up the flesh and the lusts of it, is a certain token of God's gracious acceptance of our persons and performances. That redounds to God's glory which is the work of his own grace in us. *Hereby we know that we dwell in God, and God in us, because he hath thus given us of his Spirit*, 1 Jn. 4:13. Now henceforward, (1.) All their sacrifices and incense must be offered with this fire. Note, Nothing goes to God but what comes from him. We must have grace, that holy fire, from the God of grace, else we cannot *serve him acceptably*, Heb. 12:28. (2.) The priests must keep it burning with a constant supply of fuel, and the fuel must be wood, the cleanest of fuel. Thus those to whom God has given grace must take heed of quenching the Spirit.

III. We are here told how the people were affected with this discovery of God's glory and grace; they received it, 1. With the highest joy: *They shouted*; so stirring up themselves and one another to a holy triumph, in the assurance now given them that they had God nigh unto them, which is spoken of the grandeur of their nation, Deu. 4:7. 2. With the lowest reverence: *They fell on their faces*, humbly adoring the majesty of that God who vouchsafed thus to manifest himself to them. That is a sinful fear of God which drives us from him; a gracious fear makes us bow before him. Very good impressions were made upon their minds for the present, but they soon wore off, as those commonly do which are made by that which is only sensible; while the influences of faith are durable.

Chapter 10

The story of this chapter is as sad an interruption to the institutions of the levitical law as that of the golden calf was to the account of the erecting of the tabernacle. Here is, I. The sin and death of Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (v. 1, 2). II. The quieting of Aaron under this sore affliction (v. 3). III. Orders given and observed about the funeral and mourning (v. 4-7). IV. A command to the priests not to drink wine when they went in to minister (v. 8-11). V. The care Moses took that they should go on with their work, notwithstanding the agitation produced by this event (v. 12, etc.).

Verses 1-2

Here is, I. The great sin that Nadab and Abihu were guilty of: and a great sin we must call it, how little soever it appears in our eye, because it is evident by the punishment of it that it was highly provoking to the God of heaven, whose judgment, we are sure, is according to truth. But what was their sin? All the account here given of it is that they *offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not* (v. 1), and the same Num. 3:4. 1. It does not appear they had any orders to burn incense at all at this time. It is true their consecration was completed the day before, and it was part of their work, as priests, to serve at the altar of incense; but, it should seem, the whole service of this solemn day of inauguration was to be performed by Aaron himself, for he *slew the sacrifices* (ch. 9:8, 15, 18), and his sons were only to attend him (v. 9, 12, 18); therefore Moses and Aaron only *went into the tabernacle*, v. 23. But Nadab and Abihu were so proud of the honour they were newly advanced to, and so ambitious of doing the highest and most honourable part of their work immediately, that though the service of this day was extraordinary, and done by particular direction from Moses, yet without receiving orders, or so much as asking leave from him, they took their censers, and they would enter into the tabernacle, at the door of which they thought they had attended long enough, and would burn incense. And then their *offering strange fire* is the same with *offering strange incense*, which is expressly forbidden, Ex. 30:9. Moses, we may suppose, had the custody of the incense which was prepared for this purpose (Ex. 39:38), and they, doing this without his leave, had none of the incense which should have been offered, but common incense, so that the smoke of their incense came from a *strange fire*. God had indeed required the priests to burn incense, but, at this time, it was what he commanded them not; and so their crime was like that of Uzziah the king, 2 Chr. 26:16. The priests were to burn incense only when *it was their lot* (Lu. 1:9), and, at this time, it was not theirs. 2. Presuming thus to burn incense of their own without order, no marvel that they made a further blunder, and instead of taking of the fire from the altar, which was newly kindled from before the Lord and which henceforward must be used in offering both sacrifice and incense (Rev. 8:5), they took common fire, probably from that with which the flesh of the peace-offerings was boiled, and this they made use of in burning incense; not being holy fire, it is called *strange fire*; and, though not expressly forbidden, it was crime enough that God *commanded it not*. For (as bishop Hall well observes here) "It is a dangerous thing, in the service of God, to decline from his own institutions; we have to do with a God who is wise to prescribe his own worship, just to require what he has prescribed, and powerful to revenge what he has not prescribed." 3. Incense was always to be burned by only one priest at a time, but here they would both go in together to do it. 4. They did it rashly, and with precipitation. They *snatched* their censers,

so some read it, in a light careless way, without due reverence and seriousness: when all the people *fell upon their faces*, before the *glory of the Lord*, they thought the dignity of their office was such as to exempt them from such abasements. The familiarity they were admitted to bred a contempt of the divine Majesty; and now that they were priests they thought they might do what they pleased. 5. There is reason to suspect that they were drunk when they did it, because of the law which was given upon this occasion, v. 8. They had been feasting upon the peace-offerings, and the drink-offerings that attended them, and so their heads were light, or, at least, their *hearts were merry with wine*; they *drank and forgot the law* (Prov. 31:5) and were guilty of this fatal miscarriage. 6. No doubt it was done presumptuously; for, if it had been done through ignorance, they would have been allowed the benefit of the law lately made, even for the priests, that they should bring a sin-offering, ch. 4:2, 3. But *the soul that doth aught presumptuously*, and in contempt of God's majesty, authority, and justice, *that soul shall be cut of*, Num. 15:30.

II. The dreadful punishment of this sin: *There went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them*, v. 2. This fire which consumed the sacrifices came the same way with that which had consumed the sacrifices (ch. 9:24), which showed what justice would have done to all the guilty people if infinite mercy had not found and accepted a ransom; and, if that fire struck such an awe upon the people, much more would this.

1. Observe the severity of their punishment. (1.) They *died*. Might it not have sufficed if they had been only struck with a leprosy, as Uzziah, or struck dumb, as Zechariah, and both by the altar of incense? No; they were both struck dead. The wages of this sin was death. (2.) They died *suddenly*, in the very act of their sin, and had not time so much as to cry, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" Though God is long-suffering to us-ward, yet sometimes he makes quick work with sinners; sentence is executed speedily: presumptuous sinners bring upon themselves a swift destruction, and are justly denied even space to repent. (3.) They died *before the Lord*; that is, before the veil that covered the mercy-seat; for even mercy itself will not suffer its own glory to be affronted. Those that sinned before the Lord died before him. Damned sinners are said to be tormented *in the presence of the Lamb*, intimating that he does not interpose on their behalf, Rev. 14:10. (4.) They died *by fire*, as by fire they sinned. They slighted the fire that came from before the Lord to consume the sacrifices, and thought other fire would do every jot as well; and now God justly made them feel the power of that fire which they did not reverence. Thus those that hate to be refined by the fire of divine grace will undoubtedly be ruined by the fire of divine wrath. The fire did not burn them to ashes, as it had done the sacrifices, nor so much as singe their coats (v. 5), but, like lightning, struck them dead in an instant; by these different effects of the same fire God would show that it was no common fire, but kindled *by the breath of the Almighty*, Isa. 30:23. (5.) It is twice taken notice of in scripture that they *died childless*, Num. 3:4, and 1 Chr. 24:2. By their presumption they had reproached God's name, and God justly blotted out their names, and laid that honour in the dust which they were proud of. 2. But why did the Lord deal thus severely with them? Were they not the sons of Aaron, the saint of the Lord, nephews to Moses, the great favourite of heaven? Was not the holy anointing oil sprinkled upon them, as men whom God had set apart for himself? Had they not diligently attended during the seven days of their consecration, and *kept the charge of the Lord*, and might not that atone for this rashness? Would it not excuse them that they were young men, as yet unexperienced in these

services, that it was the first offence, and done in a transport of joy for their elevation? And besides, never could men be worse spared: a great deal of work was now lately cut out for the priests to do, and the priesthood was confined to Aaron and his seed; he has but four sons; if two of them die, there will not be hands enough to do the service of the tabernacle; if they die childless, the house of Aaron will become weak and little, and the priesthood will be in danger of being lost for want of heirs. But none of all these considerations shall serve either to excuse the offence or bring off the offenders. For, (1.) The sin was greatly aggravated. It was a manifest contempt of Moses, and the divine law that was given by Moses. Hitherto it had been expressly observed concerning every thing that was done that they did it *as the Lord commanded Moses*, in opposition to which it is here said they did that *which the Lord commanded them not*, but they did it of their own heads. God was now teaching his people obedience, and to do every thing by rule, as becomes servants; for priests therefore to break rules and disobey was such a provocation as must by no means go unpunished. Their character made their sin more exceedingly sinful. For the sons of Aaron, his eldest sons, whom God had chosen to be immediate attendants upon him, for them to be guilty of such a piece of presumption, it cannot be suffered. There was in their sin a contempt of God's glory, which had now newly appeared in fire, as if that fire were needless, they had as good of their own before. (2.) Their punishment was a piece of necessary justice, now at the first settling of the ceremonial institutions. It is often threatened in the law that such and such offenders should be cut off from the people; and here God explained the threatening with a witness. Now that the laws concerning sacrifices were newly made, lest any should be tempted to think lightly of them because they descended to many circumstances which seemed very minute, these that were the first transgressors were thus punished, for warning to others, and to show how jealous God is in the matters of his worship. Thus he *magnified the law and made it honourable*; and let his priests know that the caution which so often occurs in the laws concerning them, that they must do so *that they die not*, was not a mere bugbear, but fair warning of their danger, if they did the work of the Lord negligently. And no doubt this exemplary piece of justice at first prevented many irregularities afterwards. Thus Ananias and Sapphira were punished, when they presumed to lie to the Holy Ghost, that newly-descended fire. (3.) As the people's falling into idolatry, presently after the moral law was given, shows the weakness of the law and its insufficiency to take away sin, so the sin and punishment of these priests show the imperfection of that priesthood from the very beginning, and its inability to shelter any from the fire of God's wrath otherwise than as it was typical of Christ's priesthood, in the execution of which there never was, nor can be, any irregularity, or false step taken.

Verses 3-7

We may well think that when Nadab and Abihu were struck with death all about them were struck with horror, and every face, as well as theirs, gathered blackness. Great consternation, no doubt, seized them, and they were all full of confusion; but, whatever the rest were, Moses was composed, and knew what he said and did, not being displeased, as David was in a like case, 2 Sa. 6:8. But though it touched him in a very tender part, and was a dreadful damp to one of the greatest joys he ever knew, yet he kept possession of his own soul, and took care to keep good order and a due decorum in the sanctuary.

I. He endeavours to pacify Aaron, and to keep him in a good frame under this sad dispensation, v. 3. Moses was a brother that

was born for adversity, and has taught us, by his example, with seasonable counsels and comforts to *support the weak*, and *strengthen the feeble-minded*. Observe here,

1. What it was that Moses suggested to his poor brother upon this occasion: *This is it that the Lord spoke*. Note, The most quieting considerations under affliction are those that are fetched from the word of God. So and so *the Lord hath said*, and it is not for us to gainsay it. Note, also, In all God's providences it is good to observe the fulfilling of scripture, and to compare God's word and his works together, which if we do we shall find an admirable harmony and agreement between them, and that they mutually explain and illustrate each other. But, (1.) Where did God speak this? We do not find the very words; but to this purport he had said (Ex. 19:22), *Let the priests who come near to the Lord sanctify themselves, lest the Lord break forth upon them*. Indeed the whole scope and tenour of his law spoke this, that being a holy God, and a sovereign Lord, he must always be worshipped with holiness and reverence, and exactly according to his own appointment; and, if any jest with him, it is at their peril. Much had been said to this purport, as Ex. 29:43, 44; 34:14; ch. 8:35. (2.) What was it that God spoke? It was this (the Lord by his grace speak it to all our hearts!) *I will be sanctified in those that come nigh me*, whoever they are, and *before all the people I will be glorified*. Note, *First*, Whenever we worship God, we come nigh unto him, as spiritual priests. This consideration ought to make us very reverent and serious in all acts of devotion, that in them we approach to God, and present ourselves before him. *Secondly*, It concerns us all, when we come nigh to God, to sanctify him, that is, to give him the praise of his holiness, to perform every religious exercise as those who believe that the God with whom we have to do is a holy God, a God of spotless purity and transcendent perfection, Isa. 8:13. *Thirdly*, When we sanctify God we glorify him, for his holiness is his glory; and, when we sanctify him in our solemn assemblies, we glorify him *before all the people*, confessing our own belief of his glory and desiring that others also may be affected with it. *Fourthly*, If God be not sanctified and glorified by us, he will be sanctified and glorified upon us. He will take vengeance on those that profane his sacred name by trifling with him. If his rent be not paid, it shall be distrained for. (3.) But what was this to the present case? What was there in this to quiet Aaron? Two things:—[1.] This must silence him, that his sons deserved their death; for they were thus cut off from their people because they did not sanctify and glorify God. The acts of necessary justice, how hard soever they may seem to bear upon the persons concerned, are not to be complained of, but submitted to. [2.] This must satisfy him, that the death of his sons redounded to the honour of God, and his impartial justice would for it be adored throughout all ages.

2. What good effects this had upon him: *Aaron held his peace*, that is, he patiently submitted to the holy will of God in this sad providence, was *dumb*, and *opened not his mouth*, because God did it. Something he was ready to say by way of complaint (as losers think they may have leave to speak), but he wisely suppressed it, *laid his hand upon his mouth*, and said nothing, for fear lest he *should offend with his tongue*, now that his *heart was hot within him*. Note, (1.) When God corrects us or ours for sin, it is our duty to be silent under the correction, not to quarrel with God, arraign his justice, or charge him with folly, but to acquiesce in all that God does; not only bearing, but accepting, the punishment of iniquity, and saying, as Eli, in a case not much unlike this, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*, 1 Sa. 3:18. *If our children have sinned against God* (as Bildad puts the case, Job 8:4), *and he have cast them away for their transgression*, though it must needs be grievous to think

that the children of our love should be the children of God's wrath, yet we must awfully adore the divine justice, and make no exceptions against its processes. (2.) The most effectual arguments to quiet a gracious spirit under afflictions are those that are fetched from God's glory; this silenced Aaron. It is true he is a loser in his comforts by this severe execution, but Moses has shown him that God is a gainer in his glory, and therefore he has not a word to say against it: if God be sanctified, Aaron is satisfied. Far be it from him that he should honour his sons more than God, or wish that God's name, or house, or law, should be exposed to reproach or contempt for the preserving of the reputation of his family. No; now, as well as in the matter of the golden calf, Levi does not *acknowledge his brethren*, nor *know his own children*; and therefore *they shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law*, Deu. 33:9, 10. Ministers and their families are sometimes exercised with sore trials that they may be examples to the believers of patience and resignation to God, and they may comfort others with that with which they themselves have been comforted.

II. Moses gives orders about the dead bodies. It was not fit that they should be left to lie where they fell; yet their own father and brethren, the amazed spectators of this dismal tragedy, durst not offer to lift them up, no, not to see whether there was any life left in them; they must neither be diverted from nor unfitted for the great work that was now upon their hands. *Let the dead bury their dead*, but they must go on with their service; that is, "Rather let the dead be unburied, if there be nobody else to do it, than that work for God should be left undone by those whom he has called to it." But Moses takes care of this matter, that though they died by the hand of justice in the act of sin, yet they should be decently buried, and they were so, 5:4, 5. 1. Some of their nearest relations were employed in it, who were cousins-german to their father, and are here named, who would perform this office with tenderness and respect. They were Levites only, and might not have come into the sanctuary, no, not upon such an occasion as this, if they had not had a special command for it. 2. They carried them out of the camp to be burned, so far were they from burying them in the place of worship, or the court of it, according to our modern usage, though they died there, that they did not bury them, nor any of their dead, within the lines of their camp; as afterwards their burying places were out of their cities. The tabernacle was pitched in the midst of the camp, so that they could not carry these dead priests to their graves without carrying them through one of the squadrons of the camp; and doubtless it was a very awful affecting sight to the people. The names of Nadab and Abihu had become very great and honourable among them; none more talked of, nor more expected to appear abroad after the days of their consecration, to receive the honours and caresses of the crowd, whose manner it is to adore the rising sun; and next to Moses and Aaron, who were old and going off, Nadab and Abihu (who had been in the mount with God, Ex. 24:1) were looked upon as the great favourites of heaven, and the hopes of their people; and now on a sudden, when the tidings of the event had scarcely reached their ears, to see them both carried out dead, with the visible marks of divine vengeance upon them, as sacrifices to the justice of God, they could not choose but cry out, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* 1 Sa. 6:20. 3. They carried them out (and probably buried them) in their coats, and the garments of their priesthood, which they had lately put on, and perhaps were too proud of. Thus the impartiality of God's justice was proclaimed, and all the people were made to know that even the priests' garments would not protect an offender from the wrath of God. And it was easy to argue, "If they escape not when they transgress, can we expect to go unpunished?" And the priests'

clothes being so soon made grave-clothes might intimate both that *the law worketh death*, and that in the process of time that priesthood itself should be abolished and buried in the grave of the Lord Jesus.

III. He gives directions about the mourning.

1. That the priests must not mourn. Aaron and his two surviving sons, though sad in spirit, must not use any outward expressions of sorrow upon this sad occasion, nor so much as follow the corpse one step from the door of the tabernacle, v. 7. It was afterwards forbidden to the high priest to use the ceremonies of mourning for the death of any friend whatsoever, though it were a father or mother (ch. 21:11); yet it was allowed at the same time to the inferior priests to mourn for their near relations, v. 2, 3. But here it was forbidden both to Aaron and his sons, because, (1.) They were now actually waiting, doing a great work, which must by no means cease (Neh. 6:3); and it was very much for the honour of God that their attendance on him should take place of their respects to their nearest relations, and that all services should give way to those of their ministry. By this they must make it to appear that they had a greater value and affection for their God and their work than for the best friend they had in the world; as Christ did, Mt. 12:47, 48. And we are hereby taught, when we are serving God in holy duties, to keep our minds, as much as may be, intent and engaged, and not to suffer them to be diverted by any worldly thoughts, or cares, or passions. Let us always attend upon the Lord without distraction. (2.) Their brethren were cut off for their transgression by the immediate hand of God, and therefore they must not mourn for them lest they should seem to countenance the sin, or impeach the justice of God in the punishment. Instead of lamenting their own loss, they must be wholly taken up in applauding the sentence, and subscribing to the equity of it. Note, The public concerns of God's glory ought to lie nearer our hearts than any private affections of our own. Observe, How Moses frightens them into this submission, and holds the rod over them to still their crying (v. 6): "*Lest you die likewise, and lest wrath come upon all the people, who may be in danger of suffering for your irreverence, and disobedience, and ungoverned passions;*" and again (v. 7), *lest you die*. See here what use we are to make of the judgments of God upon others; we must double our guard over ourselves, *lest we likewise perish*. The death, especially the sudden death, of others, instead of moving our passion, should compose us into a holy reverence of God, a cautious separation from all sin, and a serious expectation of our own death. The reason given them is because *the anointing oil of your God is upon you*, the honour of which must be carefully preserved by your doing the duty of your office with cheerfulness. Note, Those that through grace have *received the anointing* ought not to disturb themselves with the *sorrow of the world*, which *worketh death*. It was very hard, no doubt, for Aaron and his sons to restrain themselves upon such an extraordinary occasion from inordinate grief, but reason and grace mastered the passion, and they bore the affliction with an obedient patience: *They did according to the word of Moses*, because they knew it to be the word of God. Happy those who thus are themselves under God's government, and have their passions under their own government.

2. The people must mourn: *Let the whole house of Israel bewail the burning which the Lord has kindled*. The congregation must lament, not only the loss of their priests, but especially the displeasure of God which appeared in it. They must bewail the burning that was kindled, that it might not burn further. Aaron and his sons were in danger of being too much affected with the providence, and therefore they are forbidden to mourn: the house of Israel were in danger of being too little affected with it,

and therefore they are commanded to lament. Thus nature must always be governed by grace, according as it needs to be either constrained or restrained.

Verses 8-11

Aaron having been very observant of what God said to him by Moses, now God does him the honour to speak to him immediately (v. 8): *The Lord spoke unto Aaron*, and the rather because what was now to be said Aaron might perhaps have taken amiss from Moses, as if he had suspected him to have been a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, so apt are we to resent cautions as accusations; therefore God saith it himself to him, *Do not drink wine, nor strong drink, when you go into the tabernacle*, and this at their peril, *lest you die*, v. 9. Probably they had seen the ill effect of it in Nadab and Abihu, and therefore must take warning by them. Observe here, 1. The prohibition itself: *Do not drink wine nor strong drink*. At other times they were allowed it (it was not expected that every priest should be a Nazarite), but during the time of their ministration they were forbidden it. This was one of the laws in Ezekiel's temple (Eze. 44:21), and so it is required of gospel ministers that they be *not given to wine*, 1 Tim. 3:3. Note, Drunkenness is bad in any, but it is especially scandalous and pernicious in ministers, who of all men ought to have the clearest heads and the cleanest hearts. 2. The penalty annexed to the prohibition: *Lest you die; lest you die when you are in drink, and so that day come upon you unawares*, Lu. 21:34. Or, "Lest you do that which will make you liable to be cut off by the hand of God." The danger of death we are continually in should engage us to *be sober*, 1 Pt. 4:7. It is a pity that it should ever be used for the support of licentiousness, as it is by those who argue, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. 3. The reasons assigned for this prohibition. They must needs to be sober, else they could not duly discharge their office; they will be in danger of *erring through wine*, Isa. 28:7. They must be sure to keep sober, (1.) That they might themselves be able to distinguish, in their ministrations, between that which was sacred and that which was common, and might never confound them, v. 10. It concerns the Lord's ministers to put a difference between holy and unholy, both things and persons, that they may separate between *the precious and the vile*, Jer. 15:19. (2.) That they might be able to teach the people (v. 11), for that was a part of the priests' work (Deu. 33:10); and those that are addicted to drunkenness are very unfit to teach people God's statutes, both because those that live after the flesh can have no experimental acquaintance with the things of the Spirit, and because such teachers pull down with one hand what they build up with the other.

Verses 12-20

Moses is here directing Aaron to go on with his service after this interruption. Afflictions should rather quicken us to our duty than take us off from it. Observe (v. 12), He spoke unto Aaron and to his sons *that were left*. The notice taken of their survivorship intimates, 1. That Aaron should take comfort under the loss of two of his sons, from this consideration, that God had graciously spared him the other two, and that he had reason to be thankful for the remnant that was left, and all his sons were not dead, and, in token of his thankfulness to God, to go on cheerfully in his work. 2. That God's sparing them should be an engagement upon them to proceed in his service, and not to fly off from it. Here were four priests consecrated together, two were taken away, and two left; therefore the two that were left should endeavour to fill up the places of those that were gone, by double care and diligence in the services of the priesthood. Now,

I. Moses repeats the directions he had formerly given them about eating their share of the sacrifices, v. 12–14, 15. The priests must learn not only to *put a difference between the holy and the unholy*, as they had been taught (v. 10), but also to distinguish between that which was most holy and that which was only holy of the things that were to eat. That part of the meat-offering which remained to the priest was most holy, and therefore must be eaten in the courts of the tabernacle, and by Aaron *sons* only (v. 12, 13); but the breast and shoulder of the peace-offerings might be eaten in any decent place out of the courts of the tabernacle, and by the daughters of their families. The meat-offerings, being annexed to the burnt-offerings, were intended only and wholly for the glory of God; but the peace-offerings were ordained for the furtherance of men's joy and comfort; the former therefore were the more sacred, and to be had more in veneration. This distinction the priests must carefully observe, and take heed of making any blunders. Moses does not pretend to give any reasons for this difference, but refers to his instructions: *For so am I commanded*, v. 13. This was reason enough; he had *received of the Lord all that he delivered unto them*, 1 Co. 11:23.

II. He enquires concerning one deviation from the appointment, which it seems had happened upon this occasion, which was this:—There was a goat to be sacrificed as a *sin-offering or the people*, ch. 9:15. Now the law of the sin-offerings was that if the blood of them was brought into the holy place, as that of the sin-offerings for the priest was, then the flesh was to be burnt without the camp; otherwise it was to be eaten by the priest in the holy place, ch. 6:30. The meaning of this is here explained (v. 17), that the priests did hereby *bear the iniquity of the congregation*, that is, they were types of him who was to be made sin for us, and on whom God would *lay the iniquity of us all*. Now the blood of this goat was not brought into the holy place, and yet, it seems, it was burnt without the camp. Now observe here, 1. The gentle reproof Moses gives to Aaron and his sons for this irregularity. Here again Aaron sons are said to be those *that were left alive* (v. 16), who therefore ought to have taken warning; and Moses was *angry with them*. Though he was the meekest man in the world, it seems he could be angry; and when he thought God was disobeyed and dishonoured, and the priesthood endangered, he would be angry. Yet observe how very mildly he deals with Aaron and his sons, considering their present affliction. He only tells them *they should indeed have eaten it in the holy place*, but is willing to hear what they have to say for themselves, being loth to speak to the grief of those whom God had wounded.

2. The plausible excuse which Aaron makes for this mistake. Moses charged the fault upon Eleazar and Ithamar (v. 16), but it is probable that what they did was by Aaron direction, and therefore he apologized for it. He might have pleaded that this was a sin-offering for the congregation, and if it had been a bullock it must have been wholly burnt (ch. 4:21), and therefore why not now that it was a goat? But it seems it was otherwise ordered at this time, and therefore he makes his affliction his excuse, v. 19. Observe, (1.) How he speaks of affliction: *Such things have befallen me*, such sad things, which could not but go near his heart, and make it very heavy. He was a high priest *taken from among men*, and could not put off natural affection when he put on the holy garments. He held his peace (v. 3), yet his sorrow was stirred, as David's, Ps. 39:2. Note, There may be a deep sense of affliction even where there is a sincere resignation to the will of God in the affliction. *"Such things as never befel me before, and as I little expected now. My spirits cannot but sink, when I see my family sinking; I must needs be heavy, when*

God is angry:" thus it is easy to say a great deal to aggravate an affliction, but it is better to say little. (2.) How he makes this an excuse for his varying from the appointment about the sin-offering. He could not have eaten it but in his mourning, and with a sorrowful spirit; and would this have been accepted? He does not plead that his heart was so full of grief that he had no appetite for it, but that he feared it would not be accepted. Note, [1.] Acceptance with God is the great thing we should desire and aim at in all our religious services, particularly in the Lord's supper, which is our eating of the sin-offering. [2.] The sorrow of the world is a very great hindrance to our acceptable performance of holy duties, both as it is discomposing to ourselves, takes off our chariot-wheels and makes us drive heavily (1 Sa. 1:7, 8), and as it is displeasing to God, whose will it is that we should serve him cheerfully, Deu. 12:7. Mourner's bread was polluted, Hos. 9:4. See Mal. 3:14.

3. The acquiescence of Moses in this excuse: *He was content*, v. 20. Perhaps he thought it justified what they had done. God had provided that what could not be eaten might be burnt. Our unfitness for duty, when it is natural and not sinful, will have great allowances made for it; and God will have mercy and not sacrifice. At least he thought it did very much extenuate the fault; *the spirit indeed was willing, but the flesh was weak*. God by Moses showed that he considered his frame. It appeared that Aaron sincerely aimed at God's acceptance; and those that do so with an upright heart shall find he is not *extreme to mark what they do amiss*. Nor must we be severe in our animadversions upon every mistake, *considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted*.

Chapter 11

The ceremonial law is described by the apostle (Heb. 9:9, 10) to consist, not only "in gifts and sacrifices," which hitherto have been treated of in this book, but "in meats, and drinks, and divers washings" from ceremonial uncleanness, the laws concerning which begin with this chapter, which puts a difference between some sorts of flesh-meat and others, allowing some to be eaten as clean and forbidding others as unclean. "There is one kind of flesh of men." Nature startles at the thought of eating this, and none do it but such as have arrived at the highest degree of barbarity, and become but one remove from brutes; therefore there needed no law against it. But there is "another kind of flesh of beasts," concerning which the law directs here (v. 1-8), "another of fishes" (v. 9-12), "another of birds" (v. 13-19), and "another of creeping things," which are distinguished into two sorts, flying creeping things (v. 20-28) and creeping things upon the earth (v. 29-43). And the law concludes with the general rule of holiness, and reasons for it (v. 44, etc.).

Verses 1-8

Now that Aaron was consecrated a high priest over the house of God, God spoke to him with Moses, and appointed them both as joint-commissioners to deliver his will to the people. He spoke both to Moses and to Aaron about this matter; for it was particularly required of the priests that they should put a difference between clean and unclean, and teach the people to do so. After the flood, when God entered into covenant with Noah and his sons, he allowed them to eat flesh (Gen. 9:13), whereas before they were confined to the productions of the earth. But the liberty allowed to the sons of Noah is here limited to the sons of Israel. They might eat flesh, but not all kinds of flesh; some they must look upon as unclean and forbidden to them, others as clean and allowed them. The law in this matter is both very particular and very strict. But what reason can be given for this law? Why may not God's people have as free a use of all the creatures as other people? 1. It is reason enough that God would have it so: his will, as it is law sufficient, so it is reason sufficient; for his will is his wisdom. He saw good thus to try and exercise the obedience of his people, not only in the solemnities of his altar, but in matters of daily occurrence at their own table, that they might remember they were under authority. Thus God had tried the obedience of man in innocency, by forbidding him to eat of one particular tree. 2. Most of the meats forbidden as unclean are such as were really unwholesome, and not fit to be eaten; and those of them that we think wholesome enough, and use accordingly, as the rabbit, the hare, and the swine, perhaps in those countries, and to their bodies, might be hurtful. And then God in this law did by them but as a wise and loving father does by his children, whom he restrains from eating that which he knows will make them sick. Note, The Lord is for the body, and it is not only folly, but sin against God, to prejudice our health for the pleasing of our appetite. 3. God would thus teach his people to distinguish themselves from other people, not only in their religious worship, but in the common actions of life. Thus he would show them that they must not be numbered among the nations. It should seem there had been, before this, some difference between the Hebrews and other nations in their food, kept up by tradition; for the Egyptians and they would not eat together, Gen. 43:32. And even before the flood there was a distinction of beasts into clean and not clean (Gen. 7:2), which distinction was quite lost, with many other instances of religion, among the Gentiles. But by this law it is

reduced to a certainty, and ordered to be kept up among the Jews, that thus, by having a diet peculiar to themselves, they might be kept from familiar conversation with their idolatrous neighbours, and might typify God's spiritual Israel, who not in these little things, but in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their lives, should be governed by a sober singularity, and not be conformed to this world. The learned observe further, That most of the creatures which by this law were to be abominated as unclean were such as were had in high veneration among the heathen, not so much for food as for divination and sacrifice to their gods; and therefore those are here mentioned as unclean, and an abomination, which yet they would not be in any temptation to eat, that they might keep up a religious loathing of that for which the Gentiles had a superstitious value. The swine, with the later Gentiles, was sacred to Venus, the owl to Minerva, the eagle to Jupiter, the dog to Hecate, etc., and all these are here made unclean. As to the beasts, there is a general rule laid down, that those which both part the hoof and chew the cud were clean, and those only: these are particularly mentioned in the repetition of this law (Deu. 14:4, 5), where it appears that the Israelites had variety enough allowed them, and needed not to complain of the confinement they were under. Those beasts that did not both *chew the cud and divide the hoof* were unclean, by which rule the flesh of swine, and of hares, and of rabbits, was prohibited to them, though commonly used among us. Therefore, particularly at the eating of any of these, we should give thanks for the liberty granted us in this matter by the gospel, which teaches us that *every creature of God is good*, and we are to *call nothing common or unclean*. Some observe a significancy in the rule here laid down for them to distinguish by, or at least think it may be alluded to. Meditation, and other acts of devotion done by the hidden man of the heart, may be signified by the chewing of the cud, digesting our spiritual food; justice and charity towards men, and the acts of a good conversation, may be signified by the *dividing of the hoof*. Now either of these without the other will not serve to recommend us to God, but both must go together, good affections in the heart and good works in the life: if either be wanting, we are not clean, surely we are not clean. Of all the creatures here forbidden as unclean, none has been more dreaded and detested by the pious Jews than swine's flesh. Many were put to death by Antiochus because they would not eat it. This, probably, they were most in danger of being tempted to, and therefore possessed themselves and their children with a particular antipathy to it, calling it not by its proper name, but *a strange thing*. It should seem the Gentiles used it superstitiously (Isa. 65:4), *they eat swine's flesh*; and therefore God forbids all use of it to his people, lest they should learn of their neighbours to make that ill use of it. Some suggest that the prohibition of these beasts as unclean was intended to be a caution to the people against the bad qualities of these creatures. We must not be filthy nor wallow in the mire as swine, nor be timorous and faint-hearted as hares, nor dwell in the earth as rabbits; let not man that is in honour make himself like these beasts that perish. The law forbade, not only the eating of them, but the very touching of them; for those that would be kept from any sin must be careful to avoid all temptations to it, and every thing that looks towards it or leads to it.

Verses 9-19

Here is, 1. A general rule concerning fishes, which were clean and which not. All that had fins and scales they might eat, and only those odd sorts of water-animals that have not were forbidden, v. 9, 10. The ancients accounted fish the most delicate food (so far were they from allowing it on fasting-days, or making it an instance of mortification to eat fish); therefore God did

not lay much restraint upon his people in them; for he is a Master that allows his servants not only for necessity but for delight. Concerning the prohibited fish it is said, *They shall be an abomination to you* (v. 10–12), that is, "You shall count them unclean, and not only not eat of them, but keep at a distance from them." Note, Whatever is unclean should be to us an abomination; *touch not the unclean thing*. But observe, It was to be an abomination only to Jews; the neighbouring nations were under none of these obligations, nor are these things to be an abomination to us Christians. The Jews were honoured with peculiar privileges, and therefore, lest they should be proud of those, *Transeunt cum onere—They were likewise laid under peculiar restraints*. Thus God's spiritual Israel, as they are dignified above others by the gospel-covenant of adoption and friendship, so they must be mortified more than others by the gospel-commands of self-denial and bearing the cross. 2. Concerning fowls here is no general rule given, but a particular enumeration of those fowls that they must abstain from as unclean, which implies an allowance of all others. The critics here have their hands full to find out what is the true signification of the Hebrew words here used, some of which still remain uncertain, some sorts of fowls being peculiar to some countries. Were the law in force now, we should be concerned to know with certainty what are prohibited by it; and perhaps if we did, and were better acquainted with the nature of the fowls here mentioned, we should admire the knowledge of Adam, in giving them names expressive of their natures, Gen. 2:20. But the law being repealed, and the learning in a great measure lost, it is sufficient for us to observe that of the fowls here forbidden, (1.) Some are birds of prey, as the eagle, vulture, etc., and God would have his people to abhor every thing that is barbarous and cruel, and not to live by blood and rapine. Doves that are preyed upon were fit to be food for man and offerings to God; but kites and hawks that prey upon them must be looked upon as an abomination to God and man; for the condition of those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake appears to an eye of faith every way better than that of their persecutors. (2.) Others of them are solitary birds, that abide in dark and desolate places, as the owl and the pelican (Ps. 102:6), and the cormorant and raven (Isa. 34:11); for God's Israel should not be a melancholy people, nor affect sadness and constant solitude. (3.) Others of them feed upon that which is impure, as the stork on serpents, others of them on worms; and we must not only abstain from all impurity ourselves, but from communion with those that allow themselves in it. (4.) Others of them were used by the Egyptians and other Gentiles in their divinations. Some birds were reckoned fortunate, others ominous; and their soothsayers had great regard to the flights of these birds, all which therefore must be an abomination to God's people, who must not learn the way of the heathen.

Verses 20-42

Here is the law, 1. Concerning flying insects, as flies, wasps, bees, etc.; these they might not eat (v. 20), nor indeed are they fit to be eaten; but there were several sorts of locusts which in those countries were very good meat, and much used: John Baptist lived upon them in the desert, and they are here allowed them, v. 21, 22. 2. Concerning the creeping things on the earth; these were all forbidden (v. 29, 30, and again, v. 41, 42); for it was the curse of the serpent that *upon his belly he should go*, and therefore between him and man there was an enmity put (Gen. 3:15), which was preserved by this law. Dust is the meat of the creeping things, and therefore they are not fit to be man's meat. 3. Concerning the dead carcasses of all these unclean animals. (1.) Every one that touched them was to be unclean until the evening, v. 24–28. This law is often repeated, to possess them

with a dread of every thing that was prohibited, though no particular reason for the prohibition did appear, but only the will of the Law-maker. Not that they were to be looked upon as defiling to the conscience, or that it was a sin against God to touch them, unless done in contempt of the law: in many cases, somebody must of necessity touch them, to remove them; but it was a *ceremonial* uncleanness they contracted, which for the time forbade them to come into the tabernacle, or to eat of any of the holy things, or so much as to converse familiarly with their neighbours. But the uncleanness continued only till the evening, to signify that all ceremonial pollutions were to come to an end by the death of Christ in the evening of the world. And we must learn, by daily renewing our repentance every night for the sins of the day, to cleanse ourselves from the pollution we contract by them, that we may not lie down in our uncleanness. Even unclean animals they might touch while they were alive without contracting any ceremonial uncleanness by it, as horses and dogs, because they were allowed to use them for service; but they might not touch them when they were dead, because they might not eat their flesh; and what must not be eaten must not be touched, Gen. 3:3. (2.) Even the vessels, or other things they fell upon, were thereby made unclean until the evening (v. 32), and if they were earthen vessels they must be broken, v. 33. This taught them carefully to avoid every thing that was polluting, even in their common actions. Not only the vessels of the sanctuary, but every pot in Jerusalem and Judah, must be *holiness to the Lord*, Zec. 14:20, 21. The laws in these cases are very critical, and the observance of them would be difficult, we should think, if every thing that a dead mouse or rat, for instance, falls upon must be unclean; and if it were an oven, or ranges for pots, they must all be broken down, v. 35. The exceptions also are very nice, v. 36, etc. All this was designed to exercise them to a constant care and exactness in their obedience, and to teach us, who by Christ are delivered from these burdensome observances, not to be less circumspect in the more weighty matters of the law. We ought as industriously to preserve our precious souls from the pollutions of sin, and as speedily to cleanse them when they are polluted, as they were to preserve and cleanse their bodies and household goods from those ceremonial pollutions.

Verses 43-47

Here is, I. The exposition of this law, or a key to let us into the meaning of it. It was not intended merely for a bill of fare, or as the directions of a physician about their diet, but God would hereby teach them to sanctify themselves and to be holy, v. 44. That is, 1. They must hereby learn to put a difference between good and evil, and to reckon that it could not be all alike what they did, when it was not all alike what they ate. 2. To maintain a constant observance of the divine law, and to govern themselves by that in all their actions, even those that are common, which ought to be performed *after a godly sort*, 3 Jn. 6. Even eating and drinking must be by rule, and *to the glory of God*, 1 Co. 10:31. 3. To distinguish themselves from all their neighbours, as a people set apart for God, and obliged not to walk as the Gentiles: and all this is holiness. Thus these *rudiments of the world* were their tutors and governors (Gal. 4:2, 3), to bring them to that which is the revival of our first state in Adam and the earnest of our best state with Christ, that is, *holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord. This is indeed the great design of all the ordinances, that by them we may sanctify ourselves and learn to be holy. Even This law concerning their food, which seemed to stoop so very low, aimed thus high, for it was the statute-law of heaven, under the Old Testament as well as the New, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*. The caution therefore (v. 43) is, *You shall not make yourselves*

abominable. Note, By having fellowship with sin, which is abominable, we make ourselves abominable. That man is truly miserable who is in the sight of God abominable; and none are so but those that make themselves so. The Jewish writers themselves suggest that the intention of this law was to forbid them all communion by marriage, or otherwise, with the heathen, Deu. 7:2, 3. And thus the moral of it is obligatory on us, forbidding us to *have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*; and, without this real holiness of the heart and life, *he that offereth an oblation is as if he offered swine's blood* (Isa. 66:3); and, if it was such a provocation for a man to eat swine's flesh himself, much more it must be so to offer swine's blood at God's altar; see Prov. 15:8.

II. The reasons of this law; and they are all taken from the Law-maker himself, to whom we must have respect in all acts of obedience. 1. *I am the Lord your God*, v. 44. "Therefore you are bound to do thus, in pure obedience." God's sovereignty over us, and propriety in us, oblige us to do whatever he commands us, how much soever it crosses our inclinations. 2. *I am holy*, v. 44, and again, v. 45. If God be holy, we must be so, else we cannot expect to be accepted of him. His holiness is his glory (Ex. 15:11), and therefore it *becomes his house for ever*, Ps. 93:5. This great precept, thus enforced, though it comes in here in the midst of abrogated laws, is quoted and stamped for a gospel precept, 1 Pt. 1:16, where it is intimated that all these ceremonial restraints were designed to teach us that we must not *fashion ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance*, v. 14. 3. *I am the Lord that bringeth you out of the land of Egypt*, v. 45. This was a reason why they should cheerfully submit to distinguishing laws, having of late been so wonderfully dignified with distinguishing favours. He that had done more for them than for any other people might justly expect more from them.

III. The conclusion of this statute: *This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl*, etc., v. 46, 47. This law was to them a statute for ever, that is, as long as that economy lasted; but under the gospel we find it expressly repealed by a voice from heaven to Peter (Acts 10:15), as it had before been virtually set aside by the death of Christ, with the other ordinances that *perished in the using*: *Touch not, taste not, handle not*, Col. 2:21, 22. And now we are sure that *meat commends us not to God* (1 Co. 8:8), and that *nothing is unclean of itself* (Rom. 14:14), nor does that defile a man which goes into his mouth, but that which comes out from the heart, Mt. 15:11. Let us therefore, 1. Give thanks to God that we are not under this yoke, but that to us every creature of God is allowed as good, and nothing to be refused. 2. *Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*, and take heed of those doctrines which *command to abstain from meats*, and so would revive Moses again, 1 Tim. 4:3, 4. 3. Be strictly and conscientiously temperate in the use of the good creatures God has allowed us. If God's law has given us liberty, let us lay restraints upon ourselves, and never feed ourselves without fear, lest our table be a snare. *Set a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite*; and *be not desirous of dainties or varieties*, Prov. 23:2, 3. Nature is content with little, grace with less, but lust with nothing.

Chapter 12

After the laws concerning clean and unclean food come the laws concerning clean and unclean persons; and the first is in this chapter concerning the ceremonial uncleanness of women in child-birth (v. 1-5). And concerning their purification from that uncleanness (v. 6, etc.).

Verses 1-5

The law here pronounces women lying-in ceremonially unclean. The Jews say, "The law extended even to an abortion, if the child was so formed as that the sex was distinguishable." 1. There was some time of strict separation immediately after the birth, which continued seven days for a son and fourteen for a daughter, v. 2, 5. During these days she was separated from her husband and friends, and those that necessarily attended her were ceremonially unclean, which was one reason why the males were not circumcised till the eighth day, because they participated in the mother's pollution during the days of her separation. 2. There was also a longer time appointed for their purifying; thirty-three days more (forty in all) if the birth were a male, and double that time if a female, v. 4, 5. During this time they were only separated from the sanctuary and forbidden to eat of the passover, or peace-offerings, or, if a priest's wife, to eat of any thing that was holy to the Lord. Why the time of both those was double for a female to what it was for a male I can assign no reason but the will of the Law-maker; in Christ Jesus no difference is made of male and female, Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11. But this ceremonial uncleanness which the law laid women in child-bed under was to signify the pollution of sin which we are all conceived and born in, Ps. 51:5. For, if the root be impure, so is the branch, *Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* If sin had not entered, nothing but purity and honour had attended all the productions of that great blessing, *Be fruitful and multiply*; but now that the nature of man is degenerated the propagation of that nature is laid under these marks of disgrace, because of the sin and corruption that are propagated with it, and in remembrance of the curse upon the woman that was first in the transgression. That *in sorrow* (to which it is here further added *in shame*) she should *bring forth children*. And the exclusion of the woman for so many days from the sanctuary, and all participation of the holy things, signified that our original corruption (that sinning sin which we brought into the world with us) would have excluded us for ever from the enjoyment of God and his favours if he had not graciously provided for our purifying.

Verses 6-8

A woman that had lain in, when the time set for her return to the sanctuary had come, was not to attend there empty, but must bring her offerings, v. 6. 1. A *burnt-offering*; a lamb if she was able, if poor, a pigeon. This she was to offer in thankfulness to God for his mercy to her, in bringing her safely through the pains of child-bearing and all the perils of child-bed, and in desire and hopes of God's further favour both to her and to the child. When a child is born there is joy and there is hope, and therefore it was proper to bring this offering, which was of a general nature; for what we rejoice in we must give thanks for, and what we are in hopes of we must pray for. But, besides this, 2. She must offer a *sin-offering*, which must be the same for poor and rich, a turtle-dove or a young pigeon; for, whatever difference there may be between rich and poor in the sacrifices of

acknowledgment, that of atonement is the same for both. This sin-offering was intended either, (1.) To complete her purification from that ceremonial uncleanness which, though it was not in itself sinful, yet was typical of moral pollution; or, (2.) To make atonement for that which was really sin, either an inordinate desire of the blessing of children or discontent or impatience under the pains of child-bearing. It is only by Christ, the great sin-offering, that the corruption of our nature is done away, and to that it is owing that we are not for ever excluded by it from the sanctuary, and from eating of the holy things. According to this law, we find that the mother of our blessed Lord, though he was not conceived in sin as others, yet *accomplished the days of purification*, and then presented her son to the Lord, being a first-born, and brought her own offering, *a pair of turtle-doves*, Lu. 2:22–24. So poor were Christ's parents that they were not able to bring a lamb for a burnt-offering; and so early was Christ *made under the law, to redeem those that were under it*. The morality of this law obliges those women that have received mercy from God in child-bearing with all thankfulness to own God's goodness to them, acknowledging themselves unworthy of it, and (which is the best purification of women that have been saved in child-bearing, 1 Tim. 2:15) to *continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety*; for this shall please the Lord better than the turtle-doves or the young pigeons.

Chapter 13

The next ceremonial uncleanness is that of the leprosy, concerning which the law was very large and particular; we have the discovery of it in this chapter, and the cleansing of the leper in the next. Scarcely any one thing in all the levitical law takes up so much room as this. I. Rules are here given by which the priest must judge whether the man had the leprosy or no, according as the symptom was that appeared. 1. If it was a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot (v. 1–17). 2. If it was a bile (v. 18–23). 3. If it was in inflammation (v. 24–28). 4. If it was in the head or beard (v. 29–37). 5. If it was a bright spot (v. 38, 39). 6. If it was in a bald head (v. 40–44). II. Direction is given how the leper must be disposed of (v. 45, 46). III. Concerning the leprosy in garments (v. 47, etc.).

Verses 1-17

I. Concerning the plague of leprosy we may observe in general, 1. That it was rather an uncleanness than a disease; or, at least, so the law considered it, and therefore employed not the physicians but the priests about it. Christ is said to cleanse lepers, not to cure them. We do not read of any that died of the leprosy, but it rather buried them alive, by rendering them unfit for conversation with any but such as were infected like themselves. Yet there is a tradition that Pharaoh, who sought to kill Moses, was the first that ever was struck with this disease, and that he died of it. It is said to have begun first in Egypt, whence it spread into Syria. It was very well known to Moses, when he put his own hand into his bosom and took it out leprous. 2. That it was a plague inflicted immediately by the hand of God, and came not from natural causes, as other diseases; and therefore must be managed according to a divine law. Miriam's leprosy, and Gehazi's, and king Uzziah's, were all the punishments of particular sins: and, if generally it was so, no marvel there was so much care taken to distinguish it from a common distemper, that none might be looked upon as lying under this extraordinary token of divine displeasure but those that really were so. 3. That it is a plague not now known in the world; what is commonly called the leprosy is of a quite different nature. This seems to have been reserved as a particular scourge for the sinners of those times and places. The Jews retained the idolatrous customs they had learnt in Egypt, and therefore God justly caused this with some others of the diseases of Egypt to follow them. Yet we read of Naaman the Syrian, who was a leper, 2 Ki. 5:1. 4. That there were other breakings-out in the body which did very much resemble the leprosy, but were not it, which might make a man sore and loathsome and yet not ceremonially unclean. Justly are our bodies called vile bodies, which have in them the seeds of so many diseases, by which the lives of so many are made bitter to them. 5. That the judgment of it was referred to the priests. Lepers were looked upon as stigmatized by the justice of God, and therefore it was left to his servants the priests, who might be presumed to know his mark best, to pronounce who were lepers and who were not. All the Jews say, "Any priest, though disabled by a blemish to attend the sanctuary, might be a judge of the leprosy, provided the blemish were not in his eye. And he might" (they say) "take a common person to assist him in the search, but the priest only must pronounce the judgment." 6. That it was a figure of the moral pollution of men's minds by sin, which is the leprosy of the soul, defiling to the conscience, and from which Christ alone can cleanse us; for herein the power of his grace infinitely transcends that of the legal priesthood, that the priest could only

convict the leper (for by the law is the knowledge of sin), but Christ can cure the leper, he can take away sin. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, which was more than the priests could do, Mt. 8:2. Some think that the leprosy signified, not so much sin in general as a state of sin, by which men are separated from God (their spot not being the spot of God's children), and scandalous sin, for which men are to be shut out from the communion of the faithful. It is a work of great importance, but of great difficulty, to judge of our spiritual state: we have all cause to suspect ourselves, being conscious to ourselves of sores and spots, but whether clean or unclean is the question. A man might have a scab (v. 6) and yet be clean: the best have their infirmities; but, as there were certain marks by which to know that it was a leprosy, so there are characters of such as are in the gall of bitterness, and the work of ministers is to declare the judgment of leprosy and to assist those that suspect themselves in the trial of their spiritual state, remitting or retaining sin. And hence the keys of the kingdom of heaven are said to be given to them, because they are to separate between the precious and the vile, and to judge who are fit as clean to partake of the holy things and who as unclean must be debarred from them.

II. Several rules are here laid down by which the judgment of the priest must be governed. 1. If the sore was but *skin-deep*, it was to be hoped it was not the *leprosy*, v. 4. But, if it was *deeper than the skin*, the man must be pronounced unclean, v. 3. The infirmities that consist with grace do not sink deep into the soul, but *the mind still serves the law of God*, and the *inward man delights in it*, Rom. 7:22, 25. But if the matter be really worse than it shows, and the inwards be infected, the case is dangerous. 2. If the sore *be at a stay*, and do not *spread*, it is no leprosy, v. 4, 5. But if it *spread much abroad*, and continue to do so after several inspections, the case is bad, v. 7, 8. If men do not grow worse, but a stop be put to the course of their sins and their corruptions be checked, it is to be hoped they will grow better; but if sin get ground, and they become worse every day, they are going downhill. 3. If there was *proud raw flesh* in the rising, the priest needed not to wait any longer, it was certainly a leprosy, v. 10, 11. Nor is there any surer indication of the badness of a man's spiritual state than the heart's rising in self-conceit, confidence in the flesh, and resistance of the reproofs of the word and strivings of the Spirit. 4. If the eruption, whatever it was, *covered all the skin* from head to foot, it was no leprosy (v. 12, 13); for it was an evidence that the vitals were sound and strong, and nature hereby helped itself, throwing out what was burdensome and pernicious. There is hope in the small-pox when they come out well: so if men freely confess their sins, and hide them not, there is no danger comparable to theirs that cover their sins. Some gather this from it, that there is more hope of the profane than of hypocrites. The publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of heaven before scribes and Pharisees. In one respect, the sudden breakings-out of passion, though bad enough, are not so dangerous as malice concealed. Others gather this, that, if we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged; if we see and own that there is *no health in us, no soundness in our flesh*, by reason of sin, we shall *find grace in the eyes of the Lord*. 5. The priest must take time in making his judgment, and not give it rashly. If the matter looked suspicious, he must shut up the patient seven days, and then seven days more, that his judgment might be *according to truth*. This teaches all, both ministers and people, not to be hasty in their censures, nor to judge any thing *before the time*. If *some men's sins go before unto judgment*, the sins of others *follow after*, and so men's good works; therefore let nothing be done *suddenly*, 1 Tim. 5:22, 24, 25. 6. If the person suspected was found to be clean, yet he must *wash his clothes* (v. 6), because he had been under

the suspicion, and there had been in him that which gave ground for the suspicion. Even the prisoner that is acquitted must go down on his knees. We have need to be washed in the blood of Christ from our spots, though they be not leprosy-spots; for who can say, *I am pure from sin?* though there are those who through grace are *innocent from the great transgression*.

Verses 18-37

The priest is here instructed what judgment to make if there was any appearance of a leprosy, either, 1. In an old ulcer, or bile, that has been healed, v. 18, etc. When old sores, that seemed to be cured, break out again, it is to be feared there is a leprosy in them; such is the danger of those who, having escaped the pollutions of the world, are again *entangled therein and overcome*. Or, 2. In a burn by accident, for this seems to be meant, v. 24, etc. The burning of strife and contention often proves the occasion of the rising up and breaking out of that corruption which witnesses to men's faces that they are unclean. 3. In a scall-head. And in this commonly the judgment turned upon a very small matter. If the hair in the scall was black, it was a sign of soundness; if yellow, it was an indication of a leprosy, v. 30–37. The other rules in these cases are the same with those mentioned before. In reading of these several sorts of ailments, it will be good for us, 1. To lament the calamitous state of human life, which lies exposed to so many grievances. What troops of diseases are we beset with on every side! and they all entered by sin. 2. To give thanks to God if he has never afflicted us with any of these sores: if the constitution is healthful, and the body lively and easy, we are bound to glorify God with our bodies.

Verses 38-46

We have here,

I. Provisos that neither a *freckled skin* nor a *bald head* should be mistaken for a leprosy, v. 38–41. Every deformity must not forthwith be made a ceremonial defilement. Elisha was jeered for his *bald head* (2 Ki. 2:23); but it was the children of Bethel, that knew not the judgments of their God, who turned it to his reproach.

II. A particular brand set upon the leprosy if at any time it did appear in a *bald head*: *The plague is in his head, he is utterly unclean*, v. 44. If the leprosy of sin have seized the head, if the judgment be corrupted, and wicked principles which countenance and support wicked practices, be embraced, it is an *utter uncleanness*, from which few are ever cleansed. Soundness in the faith keeps the leprosy from the head, and saves conscience from being shipwrecked.

III. Directions what must be done with the convicted leper. When the priest, upon mature deliberation, had solemnly pronounced him unclean,

1. He must pronounce himself so, v. 45. He must put himself into the posture of a mourner and cry, *Unclean, unclean*. The leprosy was not itself a sin, but it was a sad token of God's displeasure and a sore affliction to him that was under it. It was a reproach to his name, put a full stop to his business in the world, cut him off from conversation with his friends and relations, condemned him to banishment till he was cleansed, shut him out from the sanctuary, and was, in effect, the ruin of all the comfort he could have in this world. Heman, it would seem, either was a leper or alludes to the melancholy condition of a leper, Ps. 88:8, etc. He must therefore, (1.) Humble himself under the mighty hand of God, not insisting upon his cleanness when the priest had pronounced him unclean, but justifying God and accepting the *punishment of his iniquity*. He must signify

this by *rending his clothes, uncovering his head, and covering his upper lip*, all tokens of shame and confusion of face, and very significant of that self-loathing and self-abasement which should fill the hearts of penitents, the language of which is self-judging. Thus must we take to ourselves the shame that belongs to us, and with broken hearts call ourselves by our own name, *Unclean, unclean*—heart unclean, life unclean, unclean by original corruption, unclean by actual transgression—unclean, and therefore worthy to be for ever excluded from communion with God, and all hope of happiness in him. *We are all as an unclean thing* (Isa. 64:6)—unclean, and therefore undone, if infinite mercy do not interpose. (2.) He must give warning to others to take heed of coming near him. Wherever he went, he must cry to those he saw at a distance, "*I am unclean, unclean, take heed of touching me.*" Not that the leprosy was catching, but by the touch of a leper ceremonial uncleanness was contracted. Every one therefore was concerned to avoid it; and the leper himself must give notice of the danger. And this was all that the law could do, in that it was weak through the flesh; it taught the leper to cry, *Unclean, unclean*, but the gospel has put another cry into the lepers' mouths, Lu. 17:12, 13, where we find ten lepers crying with a loud voice, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us*. The law only shows us our disease; the gospel shows us our help in Christ.

2. He must then be shut out of the camp, and afterwards, when they came to Canaan, out of the city, town, or village, where he lived, and *dwell alone* (v. 46), associating with none but those that were lepers like himself. When king Uzziah became a leper, he was banished from his palace, and *dwelt in a separate house*, 2 Chr. 26:21. And see 2 Ki. 7:3. This typified the purity which ought to be preserved in the gospel church, by the solemn and authoritative exclusion of scandalous sinners, that hate to be reformed, from the communion of the faithful. *Put away from among yourselves that wicked person*, 1 Co. 5:13.

Verses 47-59

This is the law concerning the plague of leprosy in a garment, whether linen or woollen. A leprosy in a garment, with discernible indications of it, the colour changed by it, the garment fretted, the nap worn off, and this in some one particular part of the garment, and increasing when it was shut up, and not to be got out by washing is a thing which to us now is altogether unaccountable. The learned confess that it was a sign and a miracle in Israel, an extraordinary punishment inflicted by the divine power, as a token of great displeasure against a person or family. 1. The process was much the same with that concerning a leprosy person. The garment suspected to be tainted was not to be burnt immediately, though, it may be, there would have been no great loss of it; for in no case must sentence be given merely upon a surmise, but it must be *shown to the priest*. If, upon search, it was found that there was a *leprous spot* (the Jews say no bigger than a bean), it must be *burnt*, or at least that part of the garment in which the spot was, v. 52, 57. If the cause of the suspicion was gone, it must be *washed*, and then might be used, v. 58. 2. The signification also was much the same, to intimate the great malignity there is in sin: it not only defiles the sinner's conscience, but it brings a stain upon all his employments and enjoyments, all he has and all he does. *To those that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure*, Tit. 1:15. And we are taught hereby to hate even *the garments spotted with the flesh*, Jude 23. Those that make their clothes servants to their pride and lust may see them thereby tainted with a leprosy, and doomed to the fire, Isa. 3:18–24. But the ornament of *the hidden man of the heart is incorruptible*, 1 Pt. 3:4. The robes of righteousness never fret nor are moth-eaten.

Chapter 14

The former chapter directed the priests how to convict a leper of ceremonial uncleanness. No prescriptions are given for his cure; but, when God had cured him, the priests are in this chapter directed how to cleanse him. The remedy here is only adapted to the ceremonial part of his disease; but the authority Christ gave to his ministers was to cure the lepers, and so to cleanse them. We have here, I. The solemn declaration of the leper's being clean, with the significant ceremony attending it (v. 1-9). II. The sacrifices which he was to offer to God eight days after (v. 10-32). III. The management of a house in which appeared signs of a leprosy (v. 33-53). And the conclusion and summary of this whole matter (v. 54, etc.).

Verses 1-9

Here, I. It is supposed that the plague of the leprosy was not an incurable disease. Uzziah's indeed continued to the day of his death, and Gehazi's was entailed upon his seed; but Miriam's lasted only seven days: we may suppose that it often wore off in process of time. Though God contend long, he will *not contend for ever*.

II. The judgment of the cure, as well as that of the disease, was referred to the priest. He must go out of the camp to the leper, to see whether his leprosy was healed, v. 3. And we may suppose the priest did not contract any ceremonial uncleanness by coming near the leper, as another person would. It was in mercy to the poor lepers that the priests particularly had orders to attend them, for *the priests' lips should keep knowledge*; and those in affliction have need to be instructed both how to bear their afflictions and how to reap benefit by them, have need of the word, in concurrence with the rod, to bring them to repentance; therefore it is well for those that are sick if they have these messengers of the Lord of hosts with them, these interpreters, to *show unto them God's uprightness*, Job 33:23. When the leper was shut out, and could not go to the priests, it was well that the priests might come to him. *Is any sick? Let him send for the elders*, the ministers, Jam. 5:14. If we apply it to the spiritual leprosy of sin, it intimates that when we withdraw from those who walk disorderly, that they may be ashamed, we must not count them as enemies, but admonish them as brethren, 2 Th. 3:15. And also that when God by his grace has brought those to repentance who were shut out of communion for scandal, they ought with tenderness, and joy, and sincere affection, to be received in again. Thus Paul orders concerning the excommunicated Corinthian that when he had given evidences of his repentance they should forgive him, and comfort him, and *confirm their love towards him*, 2 Co. 2:7, 8. And ministers are entrusted by our Master with the declarative power of loosing as well as binding: both must be done with great caution and deliberation, impartially and without respect of persons, with earnest prayer to God for directions, and a sincere regard to the edification of the body of Christ, due care being always taken that sinners may not be encouraged by an excess of lenity, nor penitents discouraged by an excess of severity. Wisdom and sincerity are profitable to direct in this case.

III. If it was found that the leprosy was healed, the priest must declare it with a particular solemnity. The leper or his friends were to get ready two birds caught for this purpose (any sort of wild birds that were clean), and cedar-wood, and scarlet, and hyssop; for all these were to be used in the ceremony. 1. A preparation was to be made of blood and water, with which the leper must be sprinkled. One of the birds (and the Jews say, if there was any difference, it must be the larger and better of the

two) was to be killed over an earthen cup of spring water, so that the blood of the bird might discolour the water. This (as some other types) had its accomplishment in the death of Christ, when out of his pierced side there came water and blood, Jn. 19:34. Thus Christ comes into the soul for its cure and cleansing, *not by water only, but by water and blood*, 1 Jn. 5:6. 2. The living bird, with a little scarlet wool, and a bunch of hyssop, must be fastened to a cedar stick, dipped in the water and blood, which must be so sprinkled upon him that was to be cleansed, v. 6, 7. The cedar-wood signified the restoring of the leper to his strength and soundness, for that is a sort of wood not apt to putrefy. The scarlet wool signified his recovering a florid colour again, for the leprosy made him white as snow. And the hyssop intimated the removing of the disagreeable scent which commonly attended the leprosy. The cedar the stateliest plant, and hyssop the meanest, are here used together in this service (see 1 Ki. 4:33); for those of the lowest rank in the church may be of use in their place, as well as those that are most eminent, 1 Co. 12:2. Some make the slain bird to typify Christ *dying for our sins*, and the living bird Christ *rising again for our justification*. The dipping of the living bird in the blood of the slain bird intimated that the merit of Christ's death was that which made his resurrection effectual for our justification. He took his blood with him into the holy place, and there appeared a lamb as it had been slain. The cedar, scarlet wool, and hyssop, must all be dipped in the blood; for the word and ordinances, and all the operations of the Spirit, receive their efficacy for our cleansing from the blood of Christ. The leper must be sprinkled *seven times*, to signify a complete purification, in allusion to which David prays, *Wash me thoroughly*, Ps. 51:2. Naaman was directed to wash *seven times*, 2 Ki. 5:10. 3. The living bird was then to be let loose in the open field, to signify that the leper, being cleansed, was now no longer under restraint and confinement, but might take his liberty to go where he pleased. But this being signified by the flight of a bird towards heaven was an intimation to him henceforward to seek the things that are above, and not to spend this new life to which God had restored him merely in the pursuit of earthly things. This typified that glorious liberty of the children of God to which those are advanced who through grace are sprinkled from an evil conscience. Those whose souls before *bowed down to the dust* (Ps. 44:25), in grief and fear, now fly in the open firmament of heaven, and soar upwards upon the wings of faith and hope, and holy love and joy. 4. The priest must, upon this, pronounce him clean. It was requisite that this should be done with solemnity, that the leper might himself be the more affected with the mercy of God to him in his recovery, and that others might be satisfied to converse with him. Christ is our priest, to whom the Father has committed all judgment, and particularly the judgment of the leprosy. By his definitive sentence impenitent sinners will have their everlasting portion assigned them with the unclean (Job 36:14), out of the holy city; and all that by his grace are cured and cleansed shall be received into the camp of the saints, into which no unclean thing shall enter. Those are clean indeed whom Christ pronounces so, and they need not regard what men say of them. But, though Christ was the *end of this law for righteousness*, yet being in the days of his flesh *made under the law*, which as yet stood unrepealed, he ordered those lepers whom he had cured miraculously to go and *show themselves to the priest*, and *offer for their cleansing according to the law*, Mt. 8:4; Lu. 17:14. The type must be kept up till it was answered by its antitype. 5. When the leper was pronounced clean, he must wash his body and his clothes, and shave *off all his hair* (v. 8), must still tarry seven days out of the camp, and on the seventh day must do it again, v. 9. The priest having pronounced him clean from the disease, he must make himself as clean as

ever he could from all the remains of it, and from all other defilements, and he must take time to do this. Thus those who have the comfort of the remission of their sins, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon their consciences, must with the utmost care and caution *cleanse themselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit*, and thoroughly *purge themselves from their old sins*; for every one that hath this hope in him will be concerned to *purify himself*.

Verses 10-20

Observe, I. To complete the purification of the leper, on the eighth day, after the former solemnity performed without the camp, and, as it should seem, before he returned to his own habitation, he was to attend *at the door of the tabernacle*, and was there to be *presented to the Lord*, with his offering, v. 11. Observe here, 1. That the mercies of God oblige us to present ourselves to him, Rom. 12:1. 2. When God has restored us to the liberty of ordinances again, after restraint by sickness, distance, or otherwise, we should take the first opportunity of testifying our respect to God, and our affection to his sanctuary, by a diligent improvement of the liberty we are restored to. When Christ had healed the impotent man, he soon after *found him in the temple*, Jn. 5:14. When Hezekiah asks, *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?* he means, "What is the sign that I shall recover?" intimating that if God restored him his health, so that he should be able to go abroad, the house of the Lord should be the first place he would go to. 3. When we present ourselves before the Lord we must present our offerings, devoting to God with ourselves all we have and can do. 4. Both we and our offerings must be presented before the Lord by the priest that made us clean, even our Lord Jesus, else neither we nor they can be accepted.

II. Three lambs the cleansed leper was to bring, with a meat-offering, and a log of oil, which was about half a pint. Now, 1. Most of the ceremony peculiar to this case was about the trespass-offering, the lamb for which was offered first, v. 12. And, besides the usual rites with which the trespass-offering was offered, some of the blood was to be put upon the ear, and thumb, and great toe, of the leper that was to be cleansed (v. 14), the very same ceremony that was used in the consecration of the priests, ch. 8:23, 24. It was a mortification to them to see the same purification necessary for them that was for a leper. The Jews say that the leper stood without the gate of the tabernacle and the priest within, and thus the ceremony was performed through the gate, signifying that now he was admitted with other Israelites to attend in the courts of the Lord's house again, and was as welcome as ever; though he had been a leper, and though perhaps the name might stick by him as long as he lived (as we read of one who probably was cleansed by our Lord Jesus, who yet afterwards is called *Simon the leper*, Mt. 26:6), yet he was as freely admitted as ever to communion with God and man. After the blood of the offering had been put with the priest's finger upon the extremities of the body, to include the whole, some of the oil that he brought, which was first waved and then sprinkled before the Lord, was in like manner put in the same places upon the blood. "The blood" (says the learned bishop Patrick) "seems to have been a token of forgiveness, the oil of healing," for God first *forgiveth our iniquities* and then *healeth our diseases*, Ps. 103:3. See Isa. 38:17. Wherever the blood of Christ is applied for justification the oil of the Spirit is applied for sanctification; for these two are inseparable and both necessary to our acceptance with God. Nor shall our former leprosy, if it be healed by repentance, be any bar to these glorious privileges. Cleansed lepers are as welcome to the blood and the oil as consecrated priests. *Such were some of you, but you are washed*. When the leper was sprinkled the water must have blood in it

(v. 5), when he was anointed the oil must have blood under it, to signify that all the graces and comforts of the Spirit, all his purifying dignifying influences, are owing to the death of Christ: it is by his blood alone that we are sanctified. 2. Besides this there must be a sin-offering and a burnt-offering, a lamb for each, v. 19, 20. By each of these offerings, it is said, the priests shall *make atonement for him*. (1.) His moral guilt shall be removed; the sin for which the leprosy was sent shall be pardoned, and all the sins he had been guilty of in his afflicted state. Note, The removal of any outward trouble is then doubly comfortable to us when at the same time God gives us some assurance of the forgiveness of our sins. If we *receive the atonement*, we have reason to rejoice, Rom. 5:11. (2.) His ceremonial pollution shall be removed, which had kept him from the participation of the holy things. And this is called *making an atonement for him*, because our restoration to the privileges of God's children, typified hereby, is owing purely to the great propitiation. When the atonement is made for him he shall be clean, both to his own satisfaction and to his reputation among his neighbours; he shall retrieve both his credit and his comfort, and both these true penitents become entitled to, both ease and honour, by their interest in the atonement. The burnt-offering, besides the atonement that was made by it, was a thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy to him: and the more immediate the hand of God was both in the sickness and in the cure the more reason he had thus to give glory to him, and thus, as our Saviour speaks (Mk. 1:44), to *offer for his cleansing all those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them*.

Verses 21-32

We have here the gracious provision which the law made for the cleansing of *poor lepers*. If they were not able to bring three lambs, and three tenth-deals of flour, they must bring one lamb, and one tenth-deal of flour, and, instead of the other two lambs, two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, v. 21, 22. Here see, 1. That the poverty of the person concerned would not excuse him if he brought no offering at all. Let none think that because they are poor God requires no service from them, since he has considered them, and demands that which it is in the power of the poorest to give. "*My son, give me thy heart*, and with that the *calves of thy lips* shall be accepted instead of the *calves of the stall*." 2. That God expected from those who were poor only according to their ability; *his commandments are not grievous*, nor does he make us to *serve with an offering*. The poor are as welcome to God's altar as the rich; and, if there be first a willing mind and an honest heart, two pigeons, when they are the utmost a man is able to get, are as acceptable to God as two lambs; for he requires *according to what a man has and not according to what he has not*. But it is observable that though a meaner sacrifice was accepted from the poor, yet the very same ceremony was used for them as was for the rich; for their souls are as precious and Christ and his gospel are the same to both. Let not us therefore have *the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect of persons*, Jam. 2:1.

Verses 33-53

This is the law concerning the leprosy in a house. Now that they were in the wilderness they dwelt in tents, and had no houses, and therefore the law is made only an appendix to the former laws concerning the leprosy, because it related, not to their present state, but to their future settlement. The leprosy in a house is as unaccountable as the leprosy in a garment; but, if we see not what natural causes of it can be assigned, we may resolve it into the power of the God of nature, who here says, *I put the leprosy in a house* (v. 34), as his curse is said to *enter into a house, and consume it with the timber and stones thereof*, Zec.

5:4. Now, 1. It is supposed that even in Canaan itself, the land of promise, their houses might be infected with a leprosy. Though it was a holy land, this would not secure them from this plague, while the inhabitants were many of them so unholy. Thus a place and a name in the visible church will not secure wicked people from God's judgments. 2. It is likewise taken for granted that the owner of the house will make the priest acquainted with it, as soon as he sees the least cause to suspect the leprosy in his house: *It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house*, v. 35. Sin, where that reigns in a house, is a plague there, as it is in a heart. And masters of families should be aware and afraid of the first appearance of gross sin in their families, and put away the iniquity, whatever it is, far from their tabernacles, Job 22:23. They should be jealous with a godly jealousy concerning those under their charge, lest they be drawn into sin, and take early advice, if it but seem that there is a plague in the house, lest the contagion spread, and many be by it defiled and destroyed. 3. If the priest, upon search, found that the leprosy had got into the house, he must try to cure it, by taking gout that part of the building that was infected, v. 40, 41. This was like cutting off a gangrened limb, for the preservation of the rest of the body. Corruption should be purged out in time, before it spread; for *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off*. 4. If yet it remained in the house, the whole house must be pulled down, and all the materials carried to the dunghill, v. 44, 45. The owner had better be without a dwelling than live in one that was infected. Note, The leprosy of sin, if it be obstinate under the methods of cure, will at last be the ruin of families and churches. If Babylon will not be healed, she shall be forsaken and abandoned, and (according to the law respecting the leprous house), they shall not *take of her a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations*, Jer. 51:9, 26. The remainders of sin and corruption in our mortal bodies are like this leprosy in the house; after all our pains in scraping and plastering, we shall never be quite clear of it, till the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved and taken down; when we are dead we shall be free from sin, and not till then, Rom. 6:7. 5. If the taking out the infected stones cured the house, and the leprosy did not spread any further, then the house must be cleansed; not only aired, that it might be healthful, but purified from the ceremonial pollution, that it might be fit to be the habitation of an Israelite. The ceremony of its cleansing was much the same with that of cleansing a leprous person, v. 49, etc. This intimated that the house was smitten for the man's sake (as bishop Patrick expresses it), and he was to look upon himself as preserved by divine mercy. The houses of Israelites are said to be *dedicated* (Deu. 20:5), for they were a holy nation, and therefore they ought to keep their houses pure from all ceremonial pollutions, that they might be fit for the service of that God to whom they were devoted. And the same care should we take to reform whatever is amiss in our families, that we and our houses may serve the Lord; see Gen. 35:2. Some have thought the leprosy in the house was typical of the idolatry of the Jewish church, which did strangely cleave to it; for, though some of the reforming kings took away the infected stones, yet still it broke out again, till by the captivity of Babylon God took down the house, and carried it to an unclean land; and this proved an effectual cure of their inclination to idols and idolatrous worships.

Verses 54-57

This is the conclusion of this law concerning the leprosy. There is no repetition of it in Deuteronomy, only a general memorandum given (Deu. 24:8), *Take heed in the plague of leprosy*. We may see in this law, 1. The gracious care God took of

his people Israel, for to them only this law pertained, and not to the Gentiles. When Naaman the Syrian was cured of his leprosy he was not bidden to show himself to the priest, though he was cured in Jordan, as the Jews that were cured by our Saviour were. Thus those who are entrusted with the key of discipline in the church judge those only *that are within*; but *those that are without God judgeth*, 1 Co. 5:12, 13. 2. The religious care we ought to take of ourselves, to keep our minds from the dominion of all sinful affections and dispositions, which are both their disease and their defilement, that we may be fit for the service of God. We ought also to avoid all bad company, and, as much as may be, to avoid coming within the danger of being infected by it. *Touch not the unclean thing, saith the Lord, and I will receive you*, 2 Co. 6:17.

Chapter 15

In this chapter we have laws concerning other ceremonial uncleanness contracted either by bodily disease like that of the leper, or some natural incidents, and this either, I. In men (v. 1–18). Or, II. In women (v. 19–33). We need not be at all curious in explaining these antiquated laws, it is enough if we observe the general intention; but we have need to be very cautious lest sin take occasion by the commandment to become more exceedingly sinful; and exceedingly sinful it is when lust is kindled by sparks of fire from God's altar. The case is bad with the soul when it is putrefied by that which should purify it.

Verses 1-18

We have here the law concerning the ceremonial uncleanness that was contracted by running issues in men. It is called in the margin (v. 2) the *running of the reins*: a very grievous and loathsome disease, which was, usually the effect and consequent of wantonness and uncleanness, and a dissolute course of life, filling men's bones with the sins of their youth, and leaving them to mourn at the last, when all the pleasures of their wickedness have vanished, and nothing remains but the pain and anguish of a rotten carcase and a wounded conscience. And what fruit has the sinner then of those things whereof he has so much reason to be ashamed? Rom. 6:21. As modesty is *an ornament of grace to the head and chains about the neck*, so chastity is *health to the navel and marrow to the bones*; but uncleanness is a *wound and dishonour*, the consumption of the flesh and the body, and a sin which is often its own punishment more than any other. It was also sometimes inflicted by the righteous hand of God for other sins, as appears by David's imprecation of a curse upon the family of Joab, for the murder of Abner. 2 Sa. 3:29, *Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or is a leper*. A vile disease for vile deserts. Now whoever had this disease upon him, 1. He was himself unclean, v. 2. He must not dare to come near the sanctuary, it was at his peril if he did, nor might he eat of the holy things. This signified the filthiness of sin, and of all the productions of our corrupt nature, which render us odious to God's holiness, and utterly unfit for communion with him. Out of a pure heart well kept are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23), but out of an unclean heart comes that which is defiling, Mt. 12:34, 35. 2. He made every person and thing unclean that he touched, or that touched him, v. 4–12. His bed, and his chair, and his saddle, and every thing that belonged to him, could not be touched without a ceremonial uncleanness contracted, which a man must remain conscious to himself of till sunset, and from which he could not be cleansed without washing his clothes, and bathing his flesh in water. This signified the contagion of sin, the danger we are in of being polluted by conversing with those that are polluted, and the need we have with the utmost circumspection to *save ourselves from this untoward generation*. 3. When he was cured of the disease, yet he could not be cleansed from the pollution without a sacrifice, for which he was to prepare himself by seven days' expectation after he was perfectly clear from his distemper, and by bathing in spring water, v. 13–15. This signified the great gospel duties of faith and repentance, and the great gospel privileges of the application of Christ's blood to our souls for our justification and his grace for our sanctification. God has promised to sprinkle clean water upon us, and to cleanse us from all our filthiness, and has appointed us by repentance to wash and make ourselves clean: he has also provided a sacrifice of atonement, and requires us by faith to interest ourselves in that sacrifice; for it is *the blood of Christ his Son that cleanses us from all sin*, and by which

atonement is made for us, that we may have admission into God's presence and may partake of his favour.

Verses 19-33

This is concerning the ceremonial uncleanness which women lay under from their issues, both those that were regular and healthful, and according to the course of nature (v. 19–24), and those that were unseasonable, excessive, and the disease of the body; such was the bloody issue of that poor woman who was suddenly cured by touching the hem of Christ's garment, after she had lain twelve years under her distemper, and had spent her estate upon physicians and physic in vain. This made the woman that was afflicted with it unclean (v. 25) and every thing she touched unclean, v. 26, 27. And if she was cured, and found by seven days' trial that she was perfectly free from her issue of blood, she was to be cleansed by the offering of two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, to make an atonement for her, v. 28, 29. All wicked courses, particularly idolatries, are compared to the uncleanness of a *removed woman* (Eze. 36:17), and, in allusion to this, it is said of Jerusalem (Lam. 1:9), *Her filthiness is in her skirts*, so that (as it follows, v. 17) she was shunned as a menstruous woman.

I. The reasons given for all these laws (which we are ready to think might very well have been spared) we have, v. 31. 1. *Thus shall you separate the children of Israel* (for to them only and their servants and proselytes these laws pertained) *from their uncleanness*; that is, (1.) By these laws they were taught their privilege and honour, that they were *purified unto God a peculiar people*, and were intended by the holy God for a kingdom of priests, a holy nation; for that was a defilement to them which was not so to others. (2.) They were also taught their duty, which was to preserve the honour of their purity, and to keep themselves from all sinful pollutions. It was easy for them to argue that if those pollutions which were natural, unavoidable, involuntary, their affliction and not their sin, rendered them for the time so odious that they were not fit for communion either with God or man, much more abominable and filthy were they if they sinned against the light and law of nature, by drunkenness, adultery, fraud, and the like sins, which defile the very mind and conscience. And, if these ceremonial pollutions could not be done away but by sacrifice and offering, something greater and much more valuable must be expected and depended upon for the purifying of the soul from the uncleanness of sin. 2. Thus their dying in their uncleanness by the hand of God's justice, if while they were under any of these defilements they should come near the sanctuary, would be prevented. Note, It is a dangerous thing to die in our uncleanness; and it is our own fault if we do, since we have not only fair warning given us, by God's law, against those things that will defile us, but also such gracious provision made by his gospel for our cleansing if at any time we be defiled. 3. In all these laws there seems to be a special regard had to the honour of the tabernacle, to which none must approach in their uncleanness, that they *defile not my tabernacle*. Infinite Wisdom took this course to preserve in the minds of that careless people a continual dread of, and veneration for, the manifestations of God's glory and presence among them in his sanctuary. Now that the tabernacle of God was with men familiarity would be apt to breed contempt, and therefore the law made so many things of frequent incidence to be ceremonial pollutions, and to involve an incapacity of drawing near to the sanctuary (making death the penalty), that so they might not approach without great caution, and reverence, and serious preparation, and fear of being found unfit. Thus they were taught never to draw near to God but with an awful humble sense of their distance and danger, and an exact observance of every thing that was required in

order to their safety and acceptance.

II. And what duty must we learn from all this? 1. Let us bless God that we are not under the yoke of these carnal ordinances, that, as nothing can destroy us, so nothing can defile us, but sin. Those may now partake of the Lord's supper who durst not then eat of the peace-offerings. And the defilement we contract by our sins of daily infirmity we may be cleansed from in secret by the renewed acts of repentance and faith, without bathing in water or bringing an offering to the door of the tabernacle. 2. Let us carefully abstain from all sin, as defiling to the conscience, and particularly from all fleshly lusts, *possessing our vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness*, which not only pollute the soul, but *war against it*, and threaten its ruin. 3. Let us all see how indispensably necessary real holiness is to our future happiness, and get our hearts purified by faith, that we may see God. Perhaps it is in allusion to these laws which forbade the unclean to approach the sanctuary that when it is asked, *Who shall stand in God's holy place?* it is answered, *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart* (Ps. 24:3, 4); for *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*.

Chapter 16

In this chapter we have the institution of the annual solemnity of the day of atonement, or expiation, which had as much gospel in it as perhaps any of the appointments of the ceremonial law, as appears by the reference the apostle makes to it, Heb. 9:7, etc. We had before divers laws concerning sin-offerings for particular persons, and to be offered upon particular occasions; but this is concerning the stated sacrifice, in which the whole nation was interested. The whole service of the day is committed to the high priest. I. He must never come into the most holy place but upon this day (v. 1, 2). II. He must come dressed in linen garments (v. 4). III. He must bring a sin-offering and a burnt-offering for himself (v. 3), offer his sin-offering (v. 6–11), then go within the veil with some of the blood of his sin-offering, burn incense, and sprinkle the blood before the mercy-seat (v. 12–14). IV. Two goats must be provided for the people, lots cast upon them, and, 1. One of them must be a sin-offering for the people (v. 5, 7-9), and the blood of it must be sprinkled before the mercy-seat (v. 15–17), and then some of the blood of both the sin-offerings must be sprinkled upon the altar (v. 18, 19). 2. The other must be a scape-goat (v. 10), the sins of Israel must be confessed over him, and then he must be sent away into the wilderness (v. 20–22), and he that brought him away must be ceremonially unclean (v. 26). V. The burnt-offerings were then to be offered, the fat of the sin-offerings burnt on the altar, and their flesh burnt without the camp (v. 23–25, 27, 28). VI. The people were to observe the day religiously by a holy rest and holy mourning for sin; and this was to be a statute for ever (v. 29, etc.).

Verses 1-4

Here is, I. The date of this law concerning the day of atonement: it was *after the death of the two sons of Aaron* (v. 1), which we read, ch. 10:1. 1. Lest Aaron should fear that any remaining guilt of that sin should cleave to his family, or (seeing the priests were so apt to offend) that some after-sin of his other sons should be the ruin of his family, he is directed how to make atonement for his house, that it might keep in with God; for the atonement for it would be the establishment of it, and preserve the entail of the blessing upon it. 2. The priests being warned by the death of Nadab and Abihu to approach to God with reverence and godly fear (without which they came at their peril), directions are here given how the nearest approach might be made, not only without peril, but to unspeakable advantage and comfort, if the directions were observed. When they were cut off for an undue approach, the rest must not say, "Then we will not draw near at all," but, "Then we will do it by rule." They died for their sin, therefore God graciously provides for the rest, that they die not. Thus God's judgments on some should be instructions to others.

II. The design of this law. One intention of it was to preserve a veneration for the most holy place, within the veil, where the *Shechinah*, or divine glory, was pleased to dwell between the cherubim: *Speak unto Aaron, that he come not at all times into the holy place*, v. 2. Before the veil some of the priests came every day to burn incense upon the golden altar, but within the veil none must ever come but the high priest only, and he but on one day in the year, and with great ceremony and caution. That place where God manifested his special presence must not be made common. If none must come into the presence-chamber of an earthly king uncalled, no, not the queen herself, upon pain of death (Esth. 4:11), was it not requisite that the

same sacred respect should be paid to the Kings of kings? But see what a blessed change is made by the gospel of Christ; all good Christians have now *boldness to enter into the holiest*, through the veil, every day (Heb. 10:19, 20); and we *come boldly* (not as Aaron must, with fear and trembling) to the *throne of grace*, or mercy-seat, Heb. 4:16. While the manifestations of God's presence and grace were sensible, it was requisite that they should thus be confined and upon reserve, because the objects of sense the more familiar they are made the less awful or delightful they become; but now that they are purely spiritual it is otherwise, for the objects of faith the more they are conversed with the more do they manifest of their greatness and goodness: now therefore we are welcome to come at all times into the *holy place not made with hands*, for we are made to *sit together with Christ in heavenly places* by faith, Eph. 2:6. Then Aaron must not come near at all times, *lest he die*; we now must come near at all times that we may live: it is distance only that is our death. Then God appeared in the cloud upon the mercy-seat, but now with open face we behold, not in a dark cloud, but in a clear glass, the glory of the Lord, 2 Co. 3:18.

III. The person to whom the work of this day was committed, and that was the high priest only: *Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place*, v. 3. He was to do all himself upon the day of atonement: only there was a second provided to be his substitute or supporter, in case any thing should befall him, either of sickness or ceremonial uncleanness, that he could not perform the service of the day. All Christians are spiritual priests, but Christ only is the high priest, and he alone it is that makes atonement, nor needed he either assistant or substitute.

IV. The attire of the high priest in this service. He was not to be dressed up in his rich garments that were peculiar to himself: he was not to put on the ephod, with the precious stones in it, but only the linen clothes which he wore in common with the inferior priests, v. 4. That meaner dress did best become him on this day of humiliation; and, being thinner and lighter, he would in it be more expedite for the work or service of the day, which was all to go through his hands. Christ, our high priest, made atonement for sin in our nature; not in the robes of his own peculiar glory, but the linen garments of our mortality, clean indeed, but mean.

Verses 5-14

The Jewish writers say that for seven days before the day of expiation the high priest was to retire from his own house, and to dwell in a chamber of the temple, that he might prepare himself for the service of this great day. During those seven days he himself did the work of the inferior priests about the sacrifices, incense, etc., that he might have his hand in for this day: he must have the institution read to him again and again, that he might be fully apprised of the whole method. 1. He was to begin the service of the day very early with the usual morning sacrifice, after he had first washed his whole body before he dressed himself, and his hands and feet again afterwards. He then burned the daily incense, dressed the lamps, and offered the extraordinary sacrifice appointed for this day (not here, but Num. 29:8), a bullock, a ram, and seven lambs, all for burnt-offerings. This he is supposed to have done in his high priest's garments. 2. He must now put off his rich robes, bathe himself, put on the linen garments, and present unto the Lord his own bullock, which was to be a sin-offering for himself and his own house, v. 6. The bullock was set between the temple and the altar, and the offering of him mentioned in this verse was the making of a solemn confession of his sins and the sins of his house, earnestly praying for the forgiveness of them, and this with

his hands on the head of the bullock. 3. He must then cast lots upon the two goats, which were to make (both together) one sin-offering for the congregation. One of these goats must be slain, in token of a satisfaction to be made to God's justice for sin, the other must be sent away, in token of the remission or dismissal of sin by the mercy of God. Both must be presented together to God (v. 7) before the lot was cast upon them, and afterwards the scape-goat by itself, v. 10. Some think that goats were chosen for the sin-offering because, by the disagreeableness of their smell, the offensiveness of sin is represented: others think, because it was said that the demons which the heathens then worshipped often appeared to their worshippers in the form of goats, God therefore obliged his people to sacrifice goats, that they might never be tempted to sacrifice to goats. 4. The next thing to be done was to kill the bullock for the sin-offering for himself and his house, v. 11. "Now," say the Jews, "he must again put his hands on the head of the bullock, and repeat the confession and supplication he had before made, and kill the bullock with his own hands, to make atonement for himself first (for how could he make reconciliation for the sins of the people till he was himself first reconciled?) and for his house, not only his own family, but all the priests, who are called the *house of Aaron*," Ps. 135:19. This charity must begin at home, though it must not end there. The bullock being killed, he left one of the priests to stir the blood, that it might not thicken, and then, 5. He took a censer of burning coals (that would not smoke) in one hand, and a dish full of the sweet incense in the other, and then went into the holy of holies through the veil, and went up towards the ark, set the coals down upon the floor, and scattered the incense upon them, so that the room was immediately filled with smoke. The Jews say that he was to go in *side-ways*, that he might not look directly upon the ark where the divine glory was, till it was covered with smoke; then he must come out *backwards*, out of reverence to the divine majesty; and, after a short prayer, he was to hasten out of the sanctuary, to show himself to the people, that they might not suspect that he had misbehaved himself and died before the Lord. 6. He then fetched the blood of the bullock from the priest whom he had left stirring it, and took that in with him the second time into the holy of holies, which was now filled with the smoke of the incense, and sprinkled with his finger of that blood upon, or rather towards, the mercy-seat, once over against the top of it and then seven times towards the lower part of it, v. 14. But the drops of blood (as the Jews expound it) all fell upon the ground, and none touched the mercy-seat. Having done this, he came out of the most holy place, set the basin of blood down in the sanctuary, and went out.

Verses 15-19

When the priest had come out from the sprinkling the blood of the bullock before the mercy-seat, 1. He must next kill the goat which was the sin-offering for the people (v. 15) and go the third time into the holy of holies, to sprinkle the blood of the goat, as he had done that of the bullock; and thus he was to *make atonement for the holy place* (v. 16); that is, whereas the people by their sins had provoked God to take away those tokens of his favourable presence with them, and rendered even that holy place unfit to be the habitation of the holy God, atonement was hereby made for sin, that God, being reconciled to them, might continue with them. 2. He must then do the same for the outward part of the tabernacle that he had done for the inner room, by sprinkling the blood of the bullock first, and then that of the goat, without the veil, where the table and incense-altar stood, eight times each as before. The reason intimated is *because the tabernacle remained among them in the midst of their*

uncleanness, v. 16. God would hereby show them how much their hearts needed to be purified, when even the tabernacle, only by standing in the midst of such an impure and sinful people, needed this expiation; and also that even their devotions and religious performances had much amiss in them, for which it was necessary that atonement should be made. During this solemnity, none of the inferior priests must come into the tabernacle (v. 17), but, by standing without, must own themselves unworthy and unfit to minister there, because their follies, and defects, and manifold impurities in their ministry, had made this expiation of the tabernacle necessary. 3. He must then put some of the blood, both of the bullock and of the goat mixed together, upon the horns of the altar that is before the Lord, v. 18, 19. It is certain that the altar of incense had this blood put upon it, for so it is expressly ordered (Ex. 30:10); but some think that this directs the high priest to the altar of burnt-offerings, for that also is here called the *altar before the Lord* (v. 12), because he is said to *go out* to it, and because it may be presumed that that also had need of an expiation; for to that the gifts and offerings of the children of Israel were all brought, from whose uncleanness the altar is here said to be hallowed.

Verses 20-28

The high priest having presented unto the Lord the expiatory sacrifices, by the sprinkling of their blood, the remainder of which, it is probable, he poured out at the foot of the brazen altar, 1. He is next to confess the sins of Israel, with both his hands upon the head of the scape-goat (v. 20, 21); and whenever hands were imposed upon the head of any sacrifice it was always done with confession, according as the nature of the sacrifice was; and, this being a sin-offering, it must be a confession of sin. In the latter and more degenerate ages of the Jewish church they had a set form of confession prepared for the high priest, but God here prescribed none; for it might be supposed that the high priest was so well acquainted with the state of the people, and had such a tender concern for them, that he needed not any form. The confession must be as particular as he could make it, not only of *all the iniquities of the children of Israel*, but *all their transgressions in all their sins*. In one sin there may be many transgressions, from the several aggravating circumstances of it; and in our confessions we should take notice of them, and not only say, *I have sinned*, but, with Achan, "Thus and thus have I done." By this confession he must *put the sins of Israel upon the head of the goat*; that is, exercising faith upon the divine appointment which constituted such a translation, he must transfer the punishment incurred from the sinners to the sacrifice, which would have been but a jest, nay, an affront to God, if he himself had not ordained it. 2. The goat was then to be sent away immediately by the hand of a fit person pitched upon for the purpose, into a wilderness, a land not inhabited; and God allowed them to make this construction of it, that the sending away of the goat was the sending away of their sins, by a free and full remission: *He shall bear upon him all their iniquities*, v. 22. The losing of the goat was a sign to them that *the sins of Israel should be sought for, and not found*, Jer. 50:20. The later Jews had a custom to tie one shred of scarlet cloth to the horns of the goat and another to the gate of the temple, or to the top of the rock where the goat was lost, and they concluded that if it turned white, as they say it usually did, the sins of Israel were forgiven, as it is written, *Though your sins have been as scarlet, they shall be as wool*: and they add that for forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans the scarlet cloth never changed colour at all, which is a fair confession that, having rejected the substance, the shadow stood them in no stead. 3. The high priest must then put off his linen garments in the

tabernacle, and leave them there, the Jews say never to be worn again by himself or any other, for they made new ones every year; and he must bathe himself in water, put on his rich clothes, and then offer both his own and the people's burnt-offerings, v. 23, 24. When we have the comfort of our pardon God must have the glory of it. If we have the benefit of the sacrifice of atonement, we must not grudge the sacrifices of acknowledgment. And, it should seem, the burning of the fat of the sin-offering was deferred till now (v. 25), that it might be consumed with the burnt-offerings. 4. The flesh of both those sin-offerings whose blood was taken within the veil was to be all burnt, not upon the altar, but at a distance without the camp, to signify both our putting away sin by true repentance, and the spirit of burning, and God's putting it away by a full remission, so that it shall never rise up in judgment against us. 5. He that took the scape-goat into the wilderness, and those that burned the sin-offering, were to be looked upon as ceremonially unclean, and must not come into the camp till they had washed their clothes and bathed their flesh in water, which signified the defiling nature of sin; even the sacrifice which was but made sin was defiling: also the imperfection of the legal sacrifices; they were so far from taking away sin that even *they* left some stain upon those that touched them. 6. When all this was done, the high priest went again into the most holy place to fetch his censer, and so returned to his own house with joy, because he had done his duty, and died not.

Verses 29-34

I. We have here some additional directions in reference to this great solemnity, particularly,

1. The day appointed for this solemnity. It must be observed yearly on *the tenth day of the seventh month*, v. 29. The seventh had been reckoned the first month, till God appointed that the month in which the children of Israel came out of Egypt should thenceforward be accounted and called the first month. Some have fancied that this tenth day of the seventh month was the day of the year on which our first parents fell, and that it was kept as a fast in remembrance of their fall. Dr. Lightfoot computes that this was the day on which Moses came the last time down from the mount, when he brought with him the renewed tables, and the assurances of God's being reconciled to Israel, and his face shone: that day must be a day of atonement throughout their generations; for the remembrance of God's forgiving them their sin about the golden calf might encourage them to hope that, upon their repentance, he would forgive them all trespasses.

2. The duty of the people on this day. (1.) They must rest from all their labours: *It shall be a sabbath of rest*, v. 31. The work of the day was itself enough, and a good day's work if it was done well; therefore they must do no other work at all. The work of humiliation for sin requires such a close application of mind, and such a fixed engagement of the whole man, as will not allow us to turn aside to any other work. The day of atonement seems to be that sabbath spoken of by the prophet (Isa. 58:13), for it is the same with the fast spoken of in the verses before. (2.) They must afflict their souls. They must refrain from all bodily refreshments and delights, in token of inward humiliation and contrition of soul for their sins. They all fasted on this day from food (except the sick and children), and laid aside their ornaments, and did not anoint themselves, as Daniel, ch. 10:3, 12. *David chastened his soul with fasting*, Ps. 35:13. And it signified the mortifying of sin and turning from it, *loosing the bands of wickedness*, Isa. 58:6, 7. The Jewish doctors advised that they should not on that day read those portions of scripture which were proper to affect them with delight and joy, because it was a day to afflict their souls.

3. The perpetuity of this institution: *It shall be a statute for ever*, v. 29, 34. It must not be intermitted any year, nor ever let fall till that constitution should be dissolved, and the type should be superseded by the antitype. As long as we are continually sinning, we must be continually repenting, and receiving the atonement. The law of afflicting our souls for sin is a statute for ever, which will continue in force till we arrive where all tears, even those of repentance, will be wiped from our eyes. The apostle observes it as an evidence of the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to take away sin, and purge the conscience from it, that in them there was a *remembrance made of sin every year*, upon the day of atonement, Heb. 10:1-3. The annual repetition of the sacrifices showed that there was in them only a faint and feeble effort towards making atonement; it could be done effectually only by the *offering up of the body of Christ once for all*, and that once was sufficient; that sacrifice needed not to be repeated.

II. Let us see what there was of gospel in all this.

1. Here are typified the two great gospel privileges of the remission of sin and access to God, both which we owe to the mediation of our Lord Jesus. Here then let us see,

(1.) The expiation of guilt which Christ made for us. He is himself both the maker and the matter of the atonement; for he is, [1.] The priest, the high priest, that *makes reconciliation for the sins of the people*, Heb. 2:17. He, and he only, is *par negotio—fit for the work* and worthy of the honour: he is appointed by the Father to do it, who sanctified him, and sent him into the world for this purpose, that *God might in him reconcile the world to himself*. He undertook it, and for our sakes sanctified himself, and set himself apart for it, Jn. 17:19. The high priest's frequently bathing himself on this day, and performing the service of it in fine linen clean and white, signified the holiness of the Lord Jesus, his perfect freedom from all sin, and his being beautified and adorned with all grace. No man was to be with the high priest when he made atonement (v. 17); for our Lord Jesus was to *tread the wine-press alone*, and of the people there must be *none with him* (Isa. 63:3); therefore, when he entered upon his sufferings, *all his disciples forsook him and fled*, for if any of them had been taken and put to death with him it would have looked as if they had assisted in making the atonement; none but thieves, concerning whom there could be no such suspicion, must suffer with him. And observe what the extent of the atonement was which the high priest made: it was *for the holy sanctuary, for the tabernacle, for the altar, for the priests, and for all the people*, v. 33. Christ's satisfaction is that which atones for the sins both of ministers and people, the *iniquities of our holy* (and our unholy) *things*; the title we have to the privileges of ordinances, our comfort in them, and benefit by them, are all owing to the atonement Christ made. But, whereas the atonement which the high priest made pertained only to the congregation of Israel, Christ is the propitiation, not for their sins only, that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole Gentile world. And in this also Christ infinitely excelled Aaron, that Aaron needed to offer sacrifice for his own sin first, of which he was to make confession upon the head of his sin-offering; but our Lord Jesus had no sin of his own to answer for. *Such a high priest became us*, Heb. 7:26. And therefore, when he was baptized in Jordan, whereas others stood in the water *confessing their sins* (Mt. 3:6), he *went up straightway out of the water* (v. 16), having no sins to confess. [2.] As he is the high priest, so he is the sacrifice with which atonement is made; for he is all in all in our reconciliation to God. Thus he was prefigured by the two goats, which both made one offering: the slain goat was

a type of Christ dying for our sins, the scape-goat a type of Christ rising again for our justification. It was directed by lot, the disposal whereof was of the Lord, which goat should be slain; for Christ was delivered *by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*. *First*, The atonement is said to be completed by putting the sins of Israel upon the head of the goat. They deserved to have been abandoned and sent into a land of forgetfulness, but that punishment was here transferred to the goat that bore their sins, with reference to which God is said to have laid upon our Lord Jesus (the substance of all these shadows) *the iniquity of us all* (Isa. 53:6), and he is said to have *borne our sins*, even the punishment of them, *in his own body upon the tree*, 1 Pt. 2:24. Thus was he made sin for us, that is, a sacrifice for sin, 2 Co. 5:21. He suffered and died, not only for our good, but in our stead, and was forsaken, and seemed to be forgotten for a time, that we might not be forsaken and forgotten for ever. Some learned men have computed that our Lord Jesus was baptized of John in Jordan upon the tenth day of the seventh month, which was the very day of atonement. Then he entered upon his office as Mediator, and was immediately *driven of the Spirit into the wilderness*, a land not inhabited. *Secondly*, The consequence of this was that all the iniquities of Israel were *carried into a land of forgetfulness*. Thus Christ, the Lamb of God, *takes away the sin the of world*, by taking it upon himself, Jn. 1:29. And, when God forgives sin, he is said to remember it no more (Heb. 8:12), *to cast it behind his back* (Isa. 38:17), *into the depths of the sea* (Mic. 7:19), and to separate it *as far as the east is from the west*, Ps. 103:12.

(2.) The entrance into heaven which Christ made for us is here typified by the high priest's entrance into the most holy place. This the apostle has expounded (Heb. 9:7, etc.), and he shows, [1.] That heaven is the holiest of all, but not of that building, and that the way into it by faith, hope, and prayer, through a Mediator, was not then so clearly manifested as it is to us now by the gospel. [2.] That Christ our high priest entered into heaven at his ascension once for all, and as a public person, in the name of all his spiritual Israel, and through the veil of his flesh, which was rent for that purpose, Heb. 10:20. [3.] That he entered *by his own blood* (Heb. 9:12), taking with him to heaven the virtues of the sacrifice he offered on earth, and so sprinkling his blood, as it were, before the mercy-seat, where it speaks better things than the blood of bulls and goats could do. Hence he is said to appear in the midst of the throne *as a lamb that had been slain*, Rev. 5:6. And, though he had no sin of his own to expiate, yet it was by his own merit that he obtained for himself a restoration to his own ancient glory (Jn. 17:4, 5), as well as an eternal redemption for us, Heb. 9:12. [4.] The high priest in the holy place burned incense, which typified the intercession that Christ ever lives to make for us within the veil, in virtue of his satisfaction. And we could not expect to live, no, not before the mercy-seat, if it were not covered with the cloud of this incense. Mere mercy itself will not save us, without the interposition of a Mediator. The intercession of Christ is there set forth before God as incense, as *this incense*. And as the high priest interceded for himself first, then for his household, and then for all Israel, so our Lord Jesus, in the 17th of St. John (which was a specimen of the intercession he makes in heaven), recommended himself first to his Father, then his disciples who were his household, and then all that should believe on him through their word, as all Israel; and, having thus adverted to the uses and intentions of his offering, he was immediately seized and crucified, pursuant to these intentions. [5.] Herein the entry Christ made far exceeded Aaron's, that Aaron could not gain admission, no, not for his own sons, into the most holy place; but our Lord Jesus has consecrated for us also a *new and living way into the holiest*, so that we also have *boldness to*

enter, Heb. 10:19, 20. [6.] The high priest was to come out again, but our Lord Jesus ever lives, making intercession, and always appears in the presence of God for us, whither as the forerunner he has for us entered, and where as agent he continues for us to reside.

2. Here are likewise typified the two great gospel duties of faith and repentance, by which we are qualified for the atonement, and come to be entitled to the benefit of it. (1.) By faith we must put our hands upon the head of the offering, relying on Christ as the Lord our Righteousness, pleading his satisfaction as that which was alone able to atone for our sins and procure us a pardon. *"Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me. This is all I have to say for myself, Christ has died, yea, rather has risen again; to his grace and government I entirely submit myself, and in him I receive the atonement,"* Rom. 5:11. (2.) By repentance we must afflict our souls; not only fasting for a time from the delights of the body, but inwardly sorrowing for our sins, and living a life of self-denial and mortification. We must also make a penitent confession of sin, and this with an eye to Christ, whom we have pierced, and mourning because of him; and with a hand of faith upon the atonement, assuring ourselves that, *if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Lastly, In the year of jubilee, the trumpet which proclaimed the liberty was ordered to be sounded in the close of the *day of atonement*, ch. 25:9. For the remission of our debt, release from our bondage, and our return to our inheritance, are all owing to the mediation and intercession of Jesus Christ. By the atonement we obtain rest for our souls, and all the glorious liberties of the children of God.

Chapter 17

After the law concerning the atonement to be made for all Israel by the high priest, at the tabernacle, with the blood of bulls and goats, in this chapter we have two prohibitions necessary for the preservation of the honour of that atonement. I. That no sacrifice should be offered by any other than the priests, nor any where but at the door of the tabernacle, and this upon pain of death (v. 1-9). II. That no blood should be eaten, and this under the same penalty (v. 10, etc.).

Verses 1-9

This statute obliged all the people of Israel to bring all their sacrifices to God's altar, to be offered there. And as to this matter we must consider,

I. How it stood before. 1. It was allowed to all people to build altars, and offer sacrifices to God, where they pleased. Wherever Abraham had a tent he built an altar, and every master of a family was a priest to his own family, as Job 1:5. 2. This liberty had been an occasion of idolatry. When every man was his own priest, and had an altar of his own, by degrees, as they became vain in their imaginations, they invented gods of their own, *and offered their sacrifices unto demons*, v. 7. The word signifies *rough* or *hairy goats*, because it is probable that in the shape the evil spirits often appeared to them, to invite their sacrifices and to signify their acceptance of them. For the devil, ever since he became a revolter from God and a rebel against him, has set up for a rival with him, and coveted to have divine honours paid him: he had the impudence to solicit our blessed Saviour to *fall down and worship him*. The Israelites themselves had learned in Egypt to sacrifice to demons. And some of them, it should seem, practised it even since the God of Israel had so gloriously appeared for them, and with them. They are said to *go a whoring after* these demons; for it was such a breach of their covenant with God as adultery is of the marriage covenant: and they were as strongly addicted to their idolatrous worships, and as hard to be reclaimed from them, as those that have given themselves over to fornication, to *work all uncleanness with greediness*; and therefore it is with reference to this that God calls himself *a jealous God*.

II. How this law settled it. 1. Some think that the children of Israel were by this law forbidden, while they were in the wilderness, to kill any beef, or mutton, or veal, or lamb, or goat, even for their common eating, but at the *door of the tabernacle*, where the blood and the fat were to be offered to God upon the altar, and the flesh to be returned back to the offerer to be eaten as a peace-offering, according to the law. And the statute is so worded (v. 3, 4) as to favour this opinion, for it speaks generally of killing any ox, or lamb, or goat. The learned Dr. Cudworth puts this sense upon it, and thinks that while they had their tabernacle so near them in the midst of their camp they ate no flesh but what had first been offered to God, but that when they were entering Canaan this constitution was altered (Deu. 12:21), and they were allowed to kill their beasts of the flock and herd at home, as well as the roebuck and the hart; only thrice a year they were to see God at his tabernacle, and to eat and drink before him there. And it is probable that in the wilderness they did not eat much flesh but that of their peace-offerings, preserving what cattle they had, for breed, against they came to Canaan; therefore they murmured for flesh, being weary of manna; and Moses on that occasion speaks as if they were very sparing of the *flocks and the herds*, Num. 11:4, 22.

Yet it is hard to construe this as a temporary law, when it is expressly said to be a *statute for ever* (v. 7); and therefore, 2. It should seem rather to forbid only the killing of beasts for sacrifice any where but at God's altar. They must not offer sacrifice, as they had done, *in the open field* (v. 5), no, not to the true God, but it must be brought to the priest, to be offered on the altar of the Lord: and the solemnity they had lately witnessed, of consecrating both the priests and the altar, would serve for a good reason why they should confine themselves to both these that God had so signally appointed and owned. This law obliged not only the Israelites themselves, but the proselytes or strangers that were circumcised and sojourned among them, who were in danger of retaining an affection to their old ways of worship. If any should transgress this law, and offer sacrifice any where but at the tabernacle, (1.) The guilt was great: *Blood shall be imputed to that man; he hath shed blood*, v. 4. Though it was but a beast he had killed, yet, killing it otherwise than God had appointed, he was looked upon as a murderer. It is by the divine grant that we have the liberty to kill the inferior creatures, to the benefit of which we are not entitled, unless we submit to the limitations of it, which are that it be not done either with cruelty or with superstition, Gen. 9:3, 4. Nor was there ever any greater abuse done to the inferior creatures than when they were made either false gods or sacrifices to false gods, to which the apostle perhaps has special reference when he speaks of the vanity and bondage of corruption to which the creature was made subject, Rom. 8:20, 21, and compare ch. 1:23, 25. Idolatrous sacrifices were looked upon, not only as adultery, but as murder: *he that offereth them is as if he slew a man*, Isa. 66:3. (2.) The punishment should be severe: *That man shall be cut off from among his people*. Either the magistrate must do it if it were manifest and notorious, or, if not, God would take the work into his own hands, and the offender should be cut off by some immediate stroke of divine justice. The reasons why God thus strictly ordered all their sacrifices to be offered at one place were, [1.] For the preventing of idolatry and superstition. That sacrifices might be offered to God, and according to the rule, and without innovations, they must always be offered by the hands of the priests, who were servants in God's house, and under the eye of the high priest, who was ruler of the house, and took care to see every thing done according to God's ordinance. [2.] For the securing of the honour of God's temple and altar, the peculiar dignity of which would be endangered if they might offer their sacrifices any where else as well as there. [3.] For the preserving of unity and brotherly love among the Israelites, that meeting all at one altar, as all the children of the family meet daily at one table, they might live and love as brethren, and be as one man, of one mind in the Lord.

III. How this law was observed. 1. While the Israelites kept their integrity they had a tender and very jealous regard to this law, as appears by their zeal against the altar which was erected by the two tribes and a half, which they would by no means have left standing if they had not been satisfied that it was never designed, nor should ever be used, for sacrifice or offering, Jos. 22:12, etc. 2. The breach of this law was for many ages the scandalous and incurable corruption of the Jewish church, witness that complaint which so often occurs in the history even of the good kings, *Howbeit the high places were not taken away*; and it was an inlet to the grossest idolatries. 3. Yet this law was, in extraordinary cases, dispensed with. Gideon's sacrifice (Jdg. 6:26), Manoah's (Jdg. 13:19), Samuel's (1 Sa. 7:9; 9:13; 11:15), David's (2 Sa. 24:18), and Elijah's (1 Ki. 18:23), were accepted, though not offered at the usual place: but these were all either ordered by angels or offered by prophets; and some think that after the desolation of Shiloh, and before the building of the temple, while the ark and altar were unsettled, it was

more allowable to offer sacrifice elsewhere.

IV. How the matter stands now, and what use we are to make of this law. 1. It is certain that the spiritual sacrifices we are now to offer are not confined to any one place. Our Saviour has made this clear (Jn. 4:21), and the apostle (1 Tim. 2:8), according to the prophecy, that *in every place incense should be offered*, Mal. 1:11. We have now no temple nor altar that sanctifies the gift, nor does the gospel unity lie in one place, but in one heart, and the *unity of the spirit*. 2. Christ is our altar, and the *true tabernacle* (Heb. 8:2; 13:10); in him God dwells among us, and it is in him that our sacrifices are acceptable to God, and in him only, 1 Pt. 2:5. To set up other mediators, or other altars, or other expiatory sacrifices, is, in effect, to set up other gods. He is the centre of unity, in whom all God's Israel meet. 3. Yet we are to have respect to the public worship of God, not *forsaking the assemblies of his people*, Heb. 10:25. The Lord loves *the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, and so should we; see Eze. 20:40. Though God will graciously accept our family offerings, we must not therefore neglect the door of the tabernacle.

Verses 10-16

We have here, I. A repetition and confirmation of the law against eating blood. We have met with this prohibition twice before in the levitical law (ch. 3:17; 7:26), besides the place it had in the precepts of Noah, Gen. 9:4. But here, 1. The prohibition is repeated again and again, and reference had to the former laws to this purport (v. 12): *I said to the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood*; and again (v. 14), *You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh*. A great stress is laid upon it, as a law which has more in it than at first view one would think. 2. It is made binding, not only on the *house of Israel*, but on *the strangers that sojourned among them* (v. 10), which perhaps was one reason why it was thought advisable, for a time, to forbid blood to the Gentile converts, Acts 15:29. 3. The penalty annexed to this law is very severe (v. 10): *I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood*, if he do it presumptuously, and *will cut him off*; and again (v. 14), *He shall be cut off*. Note, God's wrath will be the sinner's ruin. Write that man undone, for ever undone, against whom God sets his face; for what creature is able to confront the Creator? 4. A reason is given for this law (v. 11): *because it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul*; and *therefore* it was appointed to make atonement with, because *the life of the flesh is the blood*. The sinner deserved to die; therefore the sacrifice must die. Now, the blood being so the life that ordinarily beasts were killed for man's use by the drawing out of all their blood, God appointed the sprinkling or pouring out of the blood of the sacrifice upon the altar to signify that the life of the sacrifice was given to God instead of the sinner's life, and as a ransom or counter-price for it; therefore *without shedding of blood there was no remission*, Heb. 9:22. For this reason they must eat no blood, and, (1.) It was then a very good reason; for God would by this means preserve the honour of that way of atonement which he had instituted, and keep up in the minds of the people a reverent regard to it. The blood of the covenant being then a sensible object, no blood must be either eaten or trodden under foot as a common thing, as they must have no ointment nor perfume like that which God ordered them to make for himself. But, (2.) This reason is now superseded, which intimates that the law itself was ceremonial, and is now no longer in force: the blood of Christ who has come (and we are to look for no other) is that alone which makes atonement for the soul, and of which the blood of the sacrifices was an imperfect type: the coming of the substance supersedes

the shadow. The blood of beasts is no longer the ransom, but Christ's blood only; and therefore there is not now that reason for abstaining from blood which there was then, and we cannot suppose it was the will of God that the law should survive the reason of it. The blood, provided it be so prepared as not to be unwholesome, is now allowed for the nourishment of our bodies, because it is no longer appointed to make an atonement for the soul. (3.) Yet it has still useful significancy. The life is in the blood; it is the vehicle of the animal spirits, and God would have his people to regard the life even of their beasts, and not to be cruel and hard-hearted, not to take delight in any thing that is barbarous. They must not be a blood-thirsty people. The blood then made atonement figuratively, now the blood of Christ makes atonement really and effectually; to this therefore we must have a reverent regard, and not use it as *a common thing*, for he will set his face against those that do so, and they shall be cut off, Heb. 10:29.

II. Some other precepts are here given as appendages to this law, and hedges about it, 1. They must cover the blood of that which they *took in hunting*, v. 13. They must not only not eat it, but must give it a decent burial, in token of some mystery which they must believe lay hidden in this constitution. the Jews look upon this as a very weighty precept and appoint that the blood should be covered with these words, *Blessed be he that hath sanctified us by his precepts, and commanded us to cover blood*. 2. They must not eat that which *died of itself* or was *torn of beasts* (v. 15), for the blood was either not at all, or not regularly, drawn out of them. God would have them to be curious in their diet, not with the curiosity that gratifies the sensual appetite, but with that which checks and restrains it. God would not have his children to eat every thing that came in their way with greediness, but to consider diligently what was before them, that they might learn in other things to ask questions for conscience' sake. Those that *flew upon the spoiled* sinned, 1 Sa. 14:32, 33. If a man did, through ignorance or inconsideration, eat the flesh of any beast not duly slain, he must *wash himself and his clothes*, else he *bore his iniquity*, v. 15, 16. The pollution was ceremonial, so was the purification from it; but if a man slighted the prescribed method of cleansing, or would not submit, he thereby contracted moral guilt. See the nature of a remedial law: he that obeys it has the benefit of it; he that does not, not only remains under his former guilt, but adds to that guilt of contemning the provisions made by divine grace for his relief, and sins against the remedy.

Chapter 18

Here is, I. A general law against all conformity to the corrupt usages of the heathen (v. 1-5). II. Particular laws, 1. Against incest (v. 6-18). 2. Against beastly lusts, and barbarous idolatries (v. 19-23). III. The enforcement of these laws from the ruin of the Canaanites (v. 24-30).

Verses 1-5

After divers ceremonial institutions, God here returns to the enforcement of moral precepts. The former are still of use to us as types, the latter still binding as laws. We have here, 1. The sacred authority by which these laws are enacted: *I am the Lord your God* (v. 1, 4, 30), and *I am the Lord*, v. 5, 6, 21. "The Lord, who has a right to rule all; your God, who has a peculiar right to rule you." Jehovah is the fountain of being, and therefore the fountain of power, whose we are, whom we are bound to serve, and who is able to punish all disobedience. "Your God to whom you have consented, in whom you are happy, to whom you lie under the highest obligations imaginable, and to whom you are accountable." 2. A strict caution to take heed of retaining the relics of the idolatries of Egypt, where they had dwelt, and of receiving the infection of the idolatries of Canaan, whither they were now going, v. 3. Now that God was by Moses teaching them his ordinances there was *aliquid dediscendum—something to be unlearned*, which they had sucked in with their milk in Egypt, a country noted for idolatry: *You shall not do after the doings of the land of Egypt*. It would be the greatest absurdity in itself to retain such an affection for their house of bondage as to be governed in their devotions by the usages of it, and the greatest ingratitude to God, who had so wonderfully and graciously delivered them. Nay, as if governed by a spirit of contradiction, they would be in danger, even after they had received these ordinances of God, of admitting the wicked usages of the Canaanites and of inheriting their vices with their land. Of this danger they are here warned, *You shall not walk in their ordinances*. Such a tyrant is custom that their practices are called *ordinances*, and they became rivals even with God's ordinances, and God's professing people were in danger of receiving law from them. 3. A solemn charge to them to *keep God's judgments, statutes, and ordinances*, v. 4, 5. To this charge, and many similar ones, David seems to refer in the many prayers and professions he makes relating to God's laws in the 119th Psalm. Observe here, (1.) The great rule of our obedience—God's statutes and judgments. These we must *keep to walk therein*. We must keep them in our books, and keep them in our hands, that we may practise them in our hearts and lives. *Remember God's commandments to do them*, Ps. 103:18. We must keep in them as our way to travel in, keep to them as our rule to work by, keep them as our treasure, as the apple of our eye, with the utmost care and value. (2.) The great advantage of our obedience: *Which if a man do, he shall live in them*, that is, "he shall be happy here and hereafter." We have reason to thank God, [1.] That this is still in force as a promise, with a very favourable construction of the condition. If we keep God's commandments in sincerity, though we come short of sinless perfection, we shall find that the way of duty is the way of comfort, and will be the way to happiness. Godliness has the *promise of life*, 1 Tim. 4:8. Wisdom has said, *Keep my commandments and live: and if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body* (which are to us as the usages of Egypt were to Israel) *we shall live*. [2.] That it is not so in force in the nature of a covenant as that the least transgression shall for

ever exclude us from this life. The apostle quotes this twice as opposite to the faith which the gospel reveals. It is the description of the *righteousness which is by the law, the man that doeth them shall live ev autois—in them* (Rom. 10:5), and is urged to prove that *the law is not of faith*, Gal. 3:12. The alteration which the gospel has made is in the last word: still *the man that does them shall live*, but not live *in them*; for the law could not give life, because we could not perfectly keep it; it was *weak through the flesh*, not in itself; but now *the man that does them shall live by the faith of the Son of God*. He shall owe his life to the grace of Christ, and not to the merit of his own works; see Gal. 3:21, 22. *The just shall live*, but they shall live *by faith*, by virtue of their union with Christ, who is their life.

Verses 6-18

These laws relate to the seventh commandment, and, no doubt, are obligatory on us under the gospel, for they are consonant to the very light and law of nature: one of the articles, that of a man's having his father's wife, the apostle speaks of as a sin *not so much as named among the Gentiles*, 1 Co. 5:1. Though some of the incests here forbidden were practised by some particular persons among the heathen, yet they were disallowed and detested, unless among those nations who had become barbarous, and were quite given up to vile affections. Observe,

I. That which is forbidden as to the relations here specified is *approaching to them to uncover their nakedness*, v. 6.

1. It is chiefly intended to forbid the marrying of any of these relations. Marriage is a divine institution; this and the sabbath, the eldest of all, of equal standing with man upon the earth: it is intended for the comfort of human life, and the decent and honourable propagation of the human race, such as became the dignity of man's nature above that of the beasts. It is *honourable in all*, and these laws are for the support of the honour of it. It was requisite that a divine ordinance should be subject to divine rules and restraints, especially because it concerns a thing wherein the corrupt nature of man is as apt as in any thing to be wilful and impetuous in its desires, and impatient of check. Yet these prohibitions, besides their being enacted by an incontestable authority, are in themselves highly reasonable and equitable. (1.) By marriage two were to become one flesh, therefore those that before were in a sense one flesh by nature could not, without the greatest absurdity, become one flesh by institution; for the institution was designed to unite those who before were not united. (2.) Marriage puts an equality between husband and wife. "Is she not thy companion taken out of thy side?" Therefore, if those who before were superior and inferior should intermarry (which is the case in most of the instances here laid down), the order of nature would be taken away by a positive institution, which must by no means be allowed. The inequality between master and servant, noble and ignoble, is founded in consent and custom, and there is no harm done if that be taken away by the equality of marriage; but the inequality between parents and children, uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, either by blood or marriage, is founded in nature, and is therefore perpetual, and cannot without confusion be taken away by the equality of marriage, the institution of which, though ancient, is subsequent to the order of nature. (3.) No relations that are equals are forbidden, except brothers and sisters, by the whole blood or half blood, or by marriage; and in this there is not the same natural absurdity as in the former, for Adam's sons must of necessity have married their own sisters; but it was requisite that it should be made by a positive law unlawful and detestable, for the preventing of sinful familiarities between those that in the days of their youth are supposed to live in a house

together, and yet cannot intermarry without defeating one of the intentions of marriage, which is the enlargement of friendship and interest. If every man married his own sister (as they would be apt to do from generation to generation if it were lawful), each family would be a world to itself, and it would be forgotten that *we are members one of another*. It is certain that this has always been looked upon by the more sober heathen as a most infamous and abominable thing; and those who had not this law yet were herein a law to themselves. The making use of the ordinance of marriage for the patronizing of incestuous mixtures is so far from justifying them, or extenuating their guilt, that it adds the guilt of profaning an ordinance of God, and prostituting that to the vilest of purposes which was instituted for the noblest ends. But,

2. Uncleanness, committed with any of these relations out of marriage, is likewise, without doubt, forbidden here, and no less intended than the former: as also all lascivious carriage, wanton dalliance, and every thing that has the appearance of this evil. Relations must love one another, and are to have free and familiar converse with each other, but it must be with all purity; and the less it is suspected of evil by others the more care ought the persons themselves to take that *Satan do not get advantage against them*, for he is a very subtle enemy, and seeks all occasions against us.

II. The relations forbidden are most of them plainly described; and it is generally laid down as a rule that what relations of a man's own he is bound up from marrying the same relations of his wife he is likewise forbidden to marry, for they two are one. That law which forbids marrying a brother's wife (v. 16) had an exception peculiar to the Jewish state, that, if a man died without issue, his brother or next of kin should marry the widow, and raise up seed to the deceased (Deu. 25:5), for reasons which held good only in that commonwealth; and therefore now that those reasons have ceased the exception ceases, and the law is in force, that a man must in no case marry his brother's widow. That article (v. 18) which forbids a man to *take a wife to her sister* supposes a connivance at polygamy, as some other laws then did (Ex. 21:10; Deu. 21:15), but forbids a man's marrying two sisters, as Jacob did, because between those who had before been equal there would be apt to arise greater jealousies and animosities than between wives that were not so nearly related. If the sister of the wife be taken for the concubine, or secondary wife, nothing can be more vexing in her life, or as long as she lives.

Verses 19-30

Here is, I. A law to preserve the honour of the marriage-bed, that it should not be unseasonably used (v. 19), nor invaded by an adulterer, v. 20.

II. A law against that which was the most unnatural idolatry, causing their children to *pass through the fire to Moloch*, v. 21. Moloch (as some think) was the idol in and by which they worshipped the sun, that great fire of the world; and therefore in the worship of it they made their own children either sacrifices to this idol, burning them to death before it, or devotees to it, causing them to pass between two fires, as some think, or to be thrown through one, to the honour of this pretended deity, imagining that the consecrating of but one of their children in this manner to Moloch would procure good fortune for all the rest of their children. Did idolaters thus give their own children to false gods, and shall we think any thing too dear to be dedicated to, or to be parted with for, the true God? See how this sin of Israel (which they were afterwards guilty of, notwithstanding this law) is aggravated by the relation which they and their children stood in to God. Eze. 16:20, *Thou hast*

taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto me, and these thou hast sacrificed. Therefore it is here called *profaning the name of their God*; for it looked as if they thought they were under greater obligations to Moloch than to Jehovah; for to him they offered their cattle only, but to Moloch their children.

III. A law against unnatural lusts, sodomy and bestiality, sins not to be named nor thought of without the utmost abhorrence imaginable, v. 22, 23. Other sins level men with the beasts, but these sink them much lower. That ever there should have been occasion for the making of these laws, and that since they are published they should ever have been broken, is the perpetual reproach and scandal of human nature; and the giving of men up to these vile affections was frequently the punishment of their idolatries; so the apostle shows, Rom. 1:24.

IV. Arguments against these and the like abominable wickednesses. He that has an indisputable right to command us, yet because he will deal with us as men, and *draw with the cords of a man*, condescends to reason with us. 1. Sinners defile themselves with these abominations: *Defile not yourselves in any of these things*, v. 24. All sin is defiling to the conscience, but these are sins that have a peculiar turpitude in them. Our heavenly Father, in kindness to us, requires of us that we keep ourselves clean, and do not wallow in the dirt. 2. *The souls that commit them shall be cut off*, v. 29. And justly; for, *if any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy*, 1 Co. 3:17. Fleshly lusts war against the soul, and will certainly be the ruin of it if God's mercy and grace prevent not. 3. *The land is defiled*, v. 25. If such wickednesses as these be practised and connived at, the land is thereby made unfit to have God's tabernacle in it, and the pure and holy God will withdraw the tokens of his gracious presence from it. It is also rendered unwholesome to the inhabitants, who are hereby infected with sin and exposed to plagues and it is really nauseous and loathsome to all good men in it, as the wickedness of Sodom was to the soul of righteous Lot. 4. These have been the abominations of the former inhabitants, v. 24, 27. Therefore it was necessary that these laws should be made, as antidotes and preservatives from the plague are necessary when we go into an infected place. And therefore they should not practise any such things, because the nations that had practised them now lay under the curse of God, and were shortly to fall by the sword of Israel. They could not but be sensible how odious those people had made themselves who wallowed in this mire, and how they stank in the nostrils of all good men; and shall a people sanctified and dignified as Israel was make themselves thus vile? When we observe how ill sin looks in others we should use this as an argument with ourselves with the utmost care and caution to preserve our purity. 5. For these and the like sins the Canaanites were to be destroyed; these filled the measure of the Amorites' iniquity (Gen. 15:16), and brought down that destruction of so many populous kingdoms which the Israelites were now shortly to be not only the spectators, but the instruments of: *Therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it*, v. 25. Note, The tremendous judgments of God, executed on those that are daringly profane and atheistical, are intended as warnings to those who profess religion to take heed of every thing that has the least appearance of, or tendency towards, profaneness or atheism. Even the ruin of the Canaanites is an admonition to the Israelites not to do like them. Nay, to show that not only the Creator is provoked, but the creation burdened, by such abominations as these, it is added (v. 25), *The land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants*. The very ground they went upon did, as it were, groan under them, and was sick of them, and not easy till it had discharged itself of these *enemies of the Lord*, Isa. 1:24. This bespeaks the extreme

loathsomeness of sin; sinful man indeed *drinks in iniquity like water*, but the harmless part of the creation even heaves at it, and rises against it. Many a house and many a town have spued out the wicked inhabitants, as it were, with abhorrence, Rev. 3:16. Therefore take heed, saith God, *that the land spue not you out also*, v. 28. It was secured to them, and entailed upon them, and yet they must expect that, if they made the vices of the Canaanites their own, with their land their fate would be the same. Note, Wicked Israelites are as abominable to God as wicked Canaanites, and more so, and will be as soon spued out, or sooner. Such a warning as was here given to the Israelites is given by the apostle to the Gentile converts, with reference to the rejected Jews, in whose room they were substituted (Rom. 11:19, etc.); they must take heed of falling *after the same example of unbelief*, Heb. 4:11. Apply it more generally; and let it deter us effectually from all sinful courses to consider how many they have been the ruin of. Lay the ear of faith to the gates of the bottomless pit, and hear the doleful shrieks and outcries of damned sinners, whom earth has spued out and hell has swallowed, that find themselves undone, for ever undone, by sin; and tremble lest this be your portion at last. God's threatenings and judgments should frighten us from sin.

V. The chapter concludes with a sovereign antidote against this infection: *Therefore you shall keep my ordinance that you commit not any one of these abominable customs*, v. 30. This is the remedy prescribed. Note, 1. Sinful customs are abominable customs, and their being common and fashionable does not make them at all the less abominable nor should we the less abominate them, but the more; because the more customary they are the more dangerous they are. 2. It is of pernicious consequence to admit and allow of any one sinful custom, because one will make way for many, *Uno absurdo dato, mille sequuntur—Admit but a single absurdity, you invite a thousand*. The way of sin is downhill. 3. A close and constant adherence to God's ordinances is the most effectual preservative from the infection of gross sin. The more we taste of the sweetness and feel of the power of holy ordinances the less inclination we shall have to the forbidden pleasures of sinners' abominable customs. It is the grace of God only that will secure us, and that grace is to be expected only in the use of the means of grace. Nor does God ever leave any to their own hearts' lusts till they have first left him and his institutions.

Chapter 19

Some ceremonial precepts there are in this chapter, but most of them are moral. One would wonder that when some of the lighter matters of the law are greatly enlarged upon (witness two long chapters concerning the leprosy) many of the weightier matters are put into a little compass: divers of the single verses of this chapter contain whole laws concerning judgment and mercy; for these are things which are manifest in every man's conscience; men's own thoughts are able to explain these, and to comment upon them. I. The laws of this chapter, which were peculiar to the Jews, are, 1. Concerning their peace-offerings (v. 5-8). 2. Concerning the gleanings of their fields (v. 9, 10). 3. Against mixtures of their cattle, seed, and cloth (v. 19). 4. Concerning their trees (v. 23-25). 5. Against some superstitious usages (v. 26-28). But, II. Most of these precepts are binding on us, for they are expositions of most of the ten commandments. 1. Here is the preface to the ten commandments, "I am the Lord," repeated fifteen times. 2. A sum of the ten commandments. All the first table in this, "Be you holy," (v. 2). All the second table in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour" (v. 18), and an answer to the question, "Who is my neighbour?" (v. 33, 34). 3. Something of each commandment. (1.) The first commandment implied in that which is often repeated here, "I am your God." And here is a prohibition of enchantment (v. 26) and witchcraft (v. 31), which make a god of the devil. (2.) Idolatry, against the second commandment, is forbidden, (v. 4). (3.) Profanation of God's name, against the third (v. 12). (4.) Sabbath-sanctification is pressed (v. 3, 30). (5.) Children are required to honour their parents (v. 3), and the aged (v. 32). (6.) Hatred and revenge are here forbidden, against the sixth commandment (v. 17, 18). (7.) Adultery (v. 20-22), and whoredom (v. 29). (8.) Justice is here required in judgment (v. 15), theft forbidden (v. 11), fraud and withholding dues (v. 13), and false weights (v. 35, 36). (9.) Lying (v. 11). Slandering (v. 14). Tale-bearing, and false-witness bearing (v. 16). (10.) The tenth commandment laying a restraint upon the heart, so does that (v. 17), "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart." And here is a solemn charge to observe all these statutes (v. 37). Now these are things which need not much help for the understanding of them, but require constant care and watchfulness for the observing of them. "A good understanding have all those that do these commandments."

Verses 1-10

Moses is ordered to deliver the summary of the laws *to all the congregation of the children of Israel* (v. 2); not to Aaron and his sons only, but to all the people, for they were all concerned to know their duty. Even in the darker ages of the law, that religion could not be of God which boasted of ignorance as its mother. Moses must make known God's statutes to all the congregation, and proclaim them through the camp. These laws, it is probable, he delivered himself to as many of the people as could be within hearing at once, and so by degrees at several times to them all. Many of the precepts here given they had received before, but it was requisite that they should be repeated, that they might be remembered. Precept must be upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough. In these verses,

I. It is required that Israel be a holy people, because the God of Israel is a holy God, v. 2. Their being distinguished from all other people by peculiar laws and customs was intended to teach them a real separation from the world and the flesh, and an

entire devotedness to God. And this is now the law of Christ (the Lord bring every thought within us into obedience to it!) *You shall be holy, for I am holy*, 1 Pt. 1:15, 16. We are the followers of the holy Jesus, and therefore must be, according to our capacity, consecrated to God's honour, and conformed to his nature and will. Israel was sanctified by the types and shadows (ch. 20:8), but we are *sanctified by the truth*, or substance of all those shadows, Jn. 17:17; Tit. 2:14.

II. That children be obedient to their parents: "*You shall fear every man his mother and his father*", v. 3. 1. The fear here required is the same with the honour commanded by the fifth commandment; see Mal. 1:6. It includes inward reverence and esteem, outward expressions of respect, obedience to the lawful commands of parents, care and endeavour to please them and make them easy, and to avoid every thing that may offend and grieve them, and incur their displeasure. The Jewish doctors ask, "What is this fear that is owing to a father?" And they answer, "It is not to stand in his way nor to sit in his place, not to contradict what he says nor to carp at it, not to call him by his name, either living or dead, but 'My Father,' or 'Sir;' it is to provide for him if he be poor, and the like." 2. Children, when they grow up to be men, must not think themselves discharged from this duty: every man, though he be a wise man, and a great man, yet must reverence his parents, because they are his parents. 3. The mother is put first, which is not usual, to show that the duty is equally owing to both; if the mother survive the father, still she must be revered and obeyed. 4. It is added, *and keep my sabbaths*. If God provides by his law for the preserving of the honour of parents, parents must use their authority over their children for the preserving of the honour of God, particularly the honour of his sabbaths, the custody of which is very much committed to parents by the fourth commandment, *Thou, and thy son, and thy daughter*. The ruin of young people has often been observed to begin in the contempt of their parents and the profanation of the sabbath day. Fitly therefore are these two precepts here put together in the beginning of this abridgment of the statutes: "*You shall fear, every man, his mother and his father, and keep my sabbaths*". Those are hopeful children, and likely to do well, that make conscience of honouring their parents and keeping holy the sabbath day. 5. The reason added to both these precepts is, "*I am the Lord your God; the Lord of the sabbath and the God of your parents*."

III. That God only be worshipped, and not by images (v. 4): "*Turn you not to idols, to Elilim, to vanities, things of no power, no value, gods that are no gods. Turn not from the true God to false ones, from the mighty God to impotent ones, from the God that will make you holy and happy to those that will deceive you, debauch you, ruin you, and make you for ever miserable. Turn not your eye to them, much less your heart. Make not to yourselves gods, the creatures of your own fancy, nor think to worship the Creator by molten gods. You are the work of God's hands, be not so absurd as to worship gods the work of your own hands*". Molten gods are specified for the sake of the molten calf.

IV. That the sacrifices of their peace-offerings should always be offered, and eaten, according to the law, v. 5-8. There was some particular reason, it is likely, for the repetition of this law rather than any other relating to the sacrifices. The eating of the peace-offerings was the people's part, and was done from under the eye of the priests, and perhaps some of them had kept the cold meat of their peace-offerings, as they had done the manna (Ex. 16:20), longer than was appointed, which occasioned this caution; see the law itself before, ch. 7:16-18. God will have his own work done in his own time. Though the sacrifice was

offered according to the law, if it was not eaten according to the law, it was not accepted. Though ministers do their part, what the better if people do not theirs? There is work to be done after our spiritual sacrifices, in a due improvement of them; and, if this be neglected, all is in vain.

V. That they should leave the gleanings of their harvest and vintage for the poor, v. 9, 10. Note, Works of piety must be always attended with works of charity, according as our ability is. When they gathered in their corn, they must leave some standing in the corner of the field; the Jewish doctors say, "It should be a sixtieth part of the field;" and they must also leave the gleanings and the small clusters of their grapes, which at first were overlooked. This law, though not binding now in the letter of it, yet teaches us, 1. That we must not be covetous and griping, and greedy of every thing we can lay any claim to; nor insist upon our right in things small and trivial. 2. That we must be well pleased to see the poor supplied and refreshed with the fruit of our labours. We must not think every thing lost that goes beside ourselves, nor any thing wasted that goes to the poor. 3. That times of joy, such as harvest-time is, are proper times for charity; that, when we rejoice, the poor may rejoice with us, and when our hearts are blessing God their loins may bless us.

Verses 11-18

We are taught here,

I. To be honest and true in all our dealings, v. 11. God, who has appointed every man's property by his providence, forbids by his law the invading of that appointment, either by downright theft, *You shall not steal*, or by fraudulent dealing, "You shall not cheat, or deal falsely." Whatever we have in the world, we must see to it that it be honestly come by, for we cannot be truly rich, nor long rich, with that which is not. The God of truth, who requires truth in the heart (Ps. 51:6), requires it also in the tongue: *Neither lie one to another*, either in bargaining or common converse. This is one of the laws of Christianity (Col. 3:9): *Lie not one to another*. Those that do not speak truth do not deserve to be told truth; those that sin by lying justly suffer by it; therefore we are forbidden to *lie one to another*; for, if we lie to others, we teach them to lie to us.

II. To maintain a very reverent regard to the sacred name of God (v. 12), and not to call him to be witness either, 1. To a lie: *You shall not swear falsely*. It is bad to tell a lie, but it is much worse to swear it. Or, 2. To a trifle, and every impertinence: *Neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God*, by alienating it to any other purpose than that for which it is to be religiously used.

III. Neither to take nor keep any one's right from him, v. 13. We must not take that which is none of our own, either by fraud or robbery; nor detain that which belongs to another, particularly the *wages of the hireling*, let it not *abide with thee all night*. Let the day-labourer have his wages as soon as he has done his day's work, if he desire it. It is a great sin to deny the payment of it, nay, to defer it, to his damage, a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance, Jam. 5:4.

IV. To be particularly tender of the credit and safety of those that cannot help themselves, v. 14. 1. The credit of the deaf: *Thou shalt not curse the deaf*; that is, not only those that are naturally deaf, that cannot hear at all, but also those that are absent, and at present out of hearing of the curse, and so cannot show their resentment, return the affront, nor right themselves, and those that are patient, that seem as if they heard not, and are not willing to take notice of it, as David, Ps. 38:13. Do not injure any

because they are unwilling, or unable, to avenge themselves, for God sees and hears, though they do not. 2. The safety of the blind we must likewise be tender of, and not put a stumbling-block before them; for this is to add affliction to the afflicted, and to make God's providence a servant to our malice. This prohibition implies a precept to help the blind, and remove stumbling-blocks out of their way. The Jewish writers, thinking it impossible that any should be so barbarous as to put a *stumbling-block in the way of the blind*, understood it figuratively, that it forbids giving bad counsel to those that are simple and easily imposed upon, by which they may be led to do something to their own prejudice. We ought to take heed of doing any thing which may occasion our weak brother to fall, Rom. 14:13; 1 Co. 8:9. It is added, as a preservative from these sins, *but fear thou God*. "Thou dost not fear the deaf and blind, they cannot right themselves; but remember it is the glory of God to help the helpless, and he will plead their cause." Note, The fear of God will restrain us from doing that which will not expose us to men's resentments.

V. Judges and all in authority are here commanded to give verdict and judgment without partiality (v. 15); whether they were constituted judges by commission or made so in a particular case by the consent of both parties, as referees or arbitrators, they must do no wrong to either side, but, to the utmost of their skill, must go according to the rules of equity, having respect purely to the merits of the cause, and not to the characters of the person. Justice must never be perverted, either, 1. In pity to the poor: *Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor*, Ex. 23:3. Whatever may be given to a poor man as an alms, yet let nothing be awarded him as his right but what he is legally entitled to, nor let his poverty excuse him from any just punishment for a fault. Or, 2. In veneration or fear of the mighty, in whose favour judges would be most frequently biased. The Jews say, "Judges were obliged by this law to be so impartial as not to let one of the contending parties sit while the other stood, nor permit one to say what he pleased and bid the other be short; see James 2:1-4.

VI. We are all forbidden to do any thing injurious to our neighbour's good name (v. 16), either, 1. In common conversation: *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer*. It is as bad an office as a man can put himself into to be the publisher of every man's faults, divulging what was secret, aggravating crimes, and making the worst of every thing that was amiss, with design to blast and ruin men's reputation, and to sow discord among neighbours. The word used for a tale-bearer signifies a *pedlar*, or *petty chapman*, the interlopers of trade; for tale-bearers pick up ill-natured stories at one house and utter them at another, and commonly barter slanders by way of exchange. See this sin condemned, Prov. 11:13; 20:19; Jer. 9:4, 5; Eze. 22:9. Or, 2. In witness-bearing: Neither *shalt thou stand as a witness against the blood of thy neighbour*, if his blood be innocent, nor join in confederacy with such bloody men as those described," Prov. 1:11, 12. The Jewish doctors put this further sense upon it: "Thou shalt not stand by and see thy brother in danger, but thou shalt come in to his relief and succour, though it be with the peril of thy own life or limb;" they add, "He that can by his testimony clear one that is accused is obliged by this law to do it;" see Prov. 24:11, 12.

VII. We are commanded to rebuke our neighbour in love (v. 17): *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour*. 1. Rather rebuke him than hate him for an injury done to thyself. If we apprehend that our neighbour has any way wronged us, we must not conceive a secret grudge against him, and estrange ourselves from him, speaking to him neither bad nor good, as the

manner of some is, who have the art of concealing their displeasure till they have an opportunity of a full revenge (2 Sa. 13:22); but we must rather give vent to our resentments with the meekness of wisdom, endeavour to convince our brother of the injury, reason the case fairly with him, and so put an end to the disgust conceived: this is the rule our Saviour gives in this case, Lu. 17:3. 2. Therefore rebuke him for his sin against God, because thou lovest him; endeavour to bring him to repentance, that his sin may be pardoned, and he may turn from it, and it may not be suffered to lie upon him. Note, Friendly reproof is a duty we owe to one another, and we ought both to give it and take it in love. *Let the righteous smite me, and it shall be a kindness*, Ps. 141:5. Faithful and useful are those *wounds of a friend*, Prov. 27:5, 6. It is here strictly commanded, "*Thou shalt in any wise do it, and not omit it under any pretence.*" Consider, (1.) The guilt we incur by not reproofing: it is construed here into a hating of our brother. We are ready to argue thus, "Such a one is a friend I love, therefore I will not make him uneasy by telling him of his faults;" but we should rather say, "therefore I will do him the kindness to tell him of them." Love covers sin from others, but not from the sinner himself. (2.) The mischief we do by not reproofing: we *suffer sin upon him*. Must we help the ass of an enemy that has fallen under his burden, and shall we not help the soul of a friend? Ex. 23:5. And by *suffering sin upon him* we are in danger of *bearing sin for him*, as the margin reads it. If we reprove not the *unfruitful works of darkness*, we have fellowship with them, and become accessaries *ex post facto*—*after the fact*, Eph. 5:11. It is thy brother, thy neighbour, that is concerned; and he was a Cain that said, *Am I my brother's keeper?*

VIII. We are here required to put off all malice, and to put on brotherly love, v. 18. 1. We must be ill-affected to none: *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge*; to the same purport with that v. 17, *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart*; for malice is murder begun. If our brother has done us an injury, we must not return it upon him, that is avenging; we must not upon every occasion upbraid him with it, that is bearing a grudge; but we must both forgive it and forget it, for thus we are forgiven of God. It is a most ill-natured thing, and the bane of friendship, to retain the resentment of affronts and injuries, and to let that *word devour for ever*. 2. We must be well-affected to all: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. We often wrong ourselves, but we soon forgive ourselves those wrongs, and they do not at all lessen our love to ourselves; and in like manner we should love our neighbour. Our Saviour has made this the second great commandment of the law (Mt. 22:39), and the apostle shows how it is the summary of all the laws of the second table, Rom. 13:9, 10; Gal. 5:14. We must love our neighbour as truly as we love ourselves, and without dissimulation; we must evidence our love to our neighbour in the same way as that by which we evidence our love to ourselves, preventing his hurt, and procuring his good, to the utmost of our power. We must do to our neighbour as we would be done to ourselves (Mt. 7:12), putting *our souls into his soul's stead*, Job 16:4, 5. Nay, we must in many cases deny ourselves for the good of our neighbour, as Paul, 1 Co. 9:19, etc. Herein the gospel goes beyond even that excellent precept of the law; for Christ, by laying down his life for us, has taught us even to *lay down our lives for the brethren*, in some cases (1 Jn. 3:16), and so to love our neighbour better than ourselves.

Verses 19-29

Here is, I. A law against mixtures, v. 19. God in the beginning made the cattle *after their kind* (Gen. 1:25), and we must acquiesce in the order of nature God hath established, believing that is best and sufficient, and not covet monsters. *Add thou*

not unto his works, lest he reprove thee; for it is the excellency of the work of God that nothing can, without making it worse, be either put to it or taken from it, Eccl. 3:14. As what God has joined we must not separate, so what he has separated we must not join. The sowing of mingled corn and the wearing of linsey-woolsey garments are forbidden, either as superstitious customs of the heathen or to intimate how careful they should be not to mingle themselves with the heathen nor to weave any of the usages of the Gentiles into God's ordinances. Ainsworth suggests that it was to lead Israel to the simplicity and sincerity of religion, and to all the parts and doctrines of the law and gospel in their distinct kinds. As faith is necessary, good works are necessary, but to mingle these together in the cause of our justification before God is forbidden, Gal. 2:16.

II. A law for punishing adultery committed with one that was a bondmaid that was espoused, v. 20–22. If she had not been espoused, the law appointed no punishment at all; being espoused, if she had not been a bondmaid, the punishment had been no less than death: but, being as yet a bondmaid (though before the completing of her espousals she must have been made free), the capital punishment is remitted, and they shall both be scourged; or, as some think, the woman only, and the man was to bring a sacrifice. It was for the honour of marriage, though but begun by betrothing, that the crime should be punished; but it was for the honour of freedom that it should not be punished as the debauching of a free woman was, so great was the difference then made between bond and free (Gal. 4:30); but the gospel of Christ knows no such distinction, Col. 3:11.

III. A law concerning fruit-trees, that for the first three years after they were planted, if they should happen to be so forward as to bear in that time, yet no use should be made of the fruit, v. 23–25. It was therefore the practice of the Jews to pluck off the fruit, as soon as they perceived it knit, from their young trees, as gardeners do sometimes, because their early bearing hinders their growing. If any did come to perfection, it was not to be used in the service either of God or man; but what they bore the fourth year was to be holy to the Lord, either given to the priests, or eaten before the Lord with joy, as their second tithe was, and thenceforward it was all their own. Now, 1. Some think this taught them not to follow the custom of the heathen, who, they say, consecrated the very first products of their fruit-trees to their idols, saying that otherwise all the fruits would be blasted. 2. This law in the case of fruit-trees seems to be parallel with that in the case of animals, that no creature should be accepted as an offering till it was past eight days old, nor till that day were children to be circumcised; see ch. 22:27. God would have the first-fruits of their trees, but, because for the first three years they were as inconsiderable as a lamb or a calf under eight days old, therefore God would not have them, for it is fit he should have every thing at its best; and yet he would not allow them to be used, because his first-fruits were not as yet offered: they must therefore be accounted as uncircumcised, that is, as an animal under eight days' old, not fit for any use. 3. We are hereby taught not to be over-hasty in catching at any comfort, but to be willing with patience to wait the time for the enjoyment of it, and particularly to acknowledge ourselves unworthy of the increase of the earth, our right to the fruits of which was forfeited by our first parents eating forbidden fruit, and we are restored to it only *by the word of God and prayer*, 1 Tim. 4:5.

IV. A law against the superstitious usages of the heathen, v. 26–28. 1. Eating upon the blood, as the Gentiles did, who gathered the blood of their sacrifices into a vessel for their demons (as they fancied) to drink, and then sat about it, eating the flesh themselves, signifying their communion with devils by their feasting with them. Let not this custom be used, for the blood of

God's sacrifices was to be sprinkled on the altar, and then poured at the foot of it, and conveyed away. 2. Enchantment and divination, and a superstitious observation of the times, some days and hours lucky and others unlucky. Curious arts of this kind, it is likely, had been of late invented by the Egyptian priests, to amuse the people, and support their own credit. The Israelites had seen them practised, but must by no means imitate them. It would be unpardonable in those *to whom were committed the oracles of God* to ask counsel of the devil, and yet worse in Christians, to whom *the Son of God is manifested*, who has *destroyed the works of the devil*. For Christians to have their nativities cast, and their fortunes told them, to use spells and charms for the cure of diseases and the driving away of evil spirits, to be affected with the falling of the salt, a hare crossing the way, cross days, or the like, is an intolerable affront to the Lord Jesus, a support of paganism and idolatry, and a reproach both to themselves and to that worthy name by which they are called: and those must be grossly ignorant, both of the law and the gospel, that ask, "What harm is there in these things?" Is it no harm for those that have fellowship with Christ to have fellowship with devils, or to learn the ways of those that have? Surely *we have not so learned Christ*. 3. There was a superstition even in trimming themselves used by the heathen, which must not be imitated by the people of God: *You shall not round the corners of your heads*. Those that worshipped the hosts of heaven, in honour of them, cut their hair so as that their heads might resemble the celestial globe; but, as the custom was foolish itself, so, being done with respect to their false gods, it was idolatrous. 4. The rites and ceremonies by which they expressed their sorrow at their funerals must not be imitated, v. 28. They must not make cuts or prints in their flesh for the dead; for the heathen did so to pacify the infernal deities they dreamt of, and to render them propitious to their deceased friends. Christ by his sufferings has altered the property of death, and made it a true friend to every true Israelite; and now, as there needs nothing to make death propitious to us (for, if God be so, death is so of course), so we sorrow not as those that have no hope. Those whom the God of Israel had set apart for himself must not receive the image and superscription of these dunghill deities. *Lastly*, The prostituting of their daughters to uncleanness, which is here forbidden (v. 29), seems to have been practised by the heathen in their idolatrous worships, for with such abominations those unclean spirits which they worshipped were well pleased. And when lewdness obtained as a religious rite, and was committed in their temples, no marvel that the land became full of that wickedness, which, when it entered at the temple-doors, overspread the land like a mighty torrent, and bore down all the fences of virtue and modesty. The devil himself could not have brought such abominations into their lives if he had not first brought them into their worships. And justly were those given up to vile affections who forsook the holy God, and gave divine honours to impure spirits. Those that dishonour God are thus suffered to dishonour themselves and their families.

Verses 30-37

Here is, I. A law for the preserving of the honour of the time and place appropriated to the service of God, v. 30. This would be a means to secure them both from the idolatries and superstitions of the heathen and from all immoralities in conversation. 1. Sabbaths must be religiously observed, and not those times mentioned (v. 26) to which the heathen had a superstitious regard. 2. The sanctuary must be revered: great care must be taken to approach the tabernacle with that purity and preparation which the law required, and to attend there with that humility, decency, and closeness of application which became them in the

immediate presence of such an awful majesty. Though now there is no place holy by divine institution, as the tabernacle and temple then were, yet this law obliges us to respect the solemn assemblies of Christians for religious worship, as being held under a promise of Christ's special presence in them, and to carry ourselves with a due decorum while in those assemblies we attend the administration of holy ordinances, Eccl. 5:1.

II. A caution against all communion with witches, and those that were in league with familiar spirits: "*Regard them not, seek not after them*, be not in fear of any evil from them nor in hopes of any good from them. Regard not their threatenings, or promises, or predictions; seek not to them for discovery or advice, for, if you do, you are defiled by it, and rendered abominable both to God and your own consciences." This was the sin that completed Saul's wickedness, for which he was rejected of God, 1 Chr. 10:13.

III. A charge to young people to show respect to the aged: *Thou shall rise up before the hoary head*, v. 32. Age is honourable, and he that is the Ancient of days requires that honour be paid to it. *The hoary head is a crown of glory*. Those whom God has honoured with the common blessing of long life we ought to honour with the distinguishing expressions of civility; and those who in age are wise and good are worthy of double honour: more respect is owing to such old men than merely to rise up before them; their credit and comfort must be carefully consulted, their experience and observations improved, and their counsels asked and hearkened to, Job 32:6, 7. Some, by the old man whose face or presence is to be honoured, understand the elder in office, as by the hoary head the elder in age; both ought to be respected as fathers, and in the fear of God, who has put some of his honour upon both. Note, Religion teaches good manners, and obliges us to give honour to those to whom honour is due. It is an instance of great degeneracy and disorder in a land when *the child behaves himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable*, Isa. 3:5; Job 30:1, 12. It becomes the aged to receive this honour, and the younger to give it; for it is the ornament as well as duty of their youth to *order themselves lowly and reverently to all their betters*.

IV. A charge to the Israelites to be very tender of strangers, v. 33, 34. Both the law of God and his providence had vastly dignified Israel above any other people, yet they must not therefore think themselves authorized to trample upon all mankind but those of their own nation, and to insult them at their pleasure; no, "*Thou shall not vex a stranger, but love him as thyself, and as one of thy own people*." It is supposed that this stranger was not an idolater, but a worshipper of the God of Israel, though not circumcised, a proselyte of the gate at least, though not a proselyte of righteousness: if such a one sojourned among them, they must not vex him, nor oppress, nor over-reach him in a bargain, taking advantage of his ignorance of their laws and customs; they must reckon it as great a sin to cheat a stranger as to cheat an Israelite; "nay" (say the Jewish doctors) "they must not so much as upbraid him with his being a stranger, and his having been formerly an idolater." Strangers are God's particular care, as the widow and the fatherless are, because it is his honour to help the helpless, Ps. 146:9. It is therefore at our peril if we do them any wrong, or put any hardships upon them. Strangers shall be welcome to God's grace, and therefore we should do what we can to invite them to it, and to recommend religion to their good opinion. It argues a generous disposition, and a pious regard to God, as a common Father, to be kind to strangers; for those of different countries, customs, and languages, are all made of one blood. But here is a reason added peculiar to the Jews: "*For you were strangers in the land of Egypt*. God then

favoured you, therefore do you now favour the strangers, and do to them as you then wished to be done to. You were strangers, and yet are now thus highly advanced; therefore you know not what these strangers may come to, whom you are apt to despise."

V. Justice in weights and measures is here commanded. That there should be no cheat in them, v. 35. That they should be very exact, v. 36. In weighing and measuring, we pretend a design to give all those their own whom we deal with; but, if the weights and measures be false, it is like a corruption in judgment, it cheats under colour of justice; and thus to deceive a man to his damage is worse than picking his pocket or robbing him on the highway. He that sells is bound to give the full of the commodity, and he that buys the full of the price agreed upon, which cannot be done without just balances, weights, and measures. *Let no man go beyond or defraud his brother*, for, though it be hidden from man, it will be found that *God is the avenger of all such*.

VI. The chapter concludes with a general command (v. 37): *You shall observe all my statutes, and do them*. Note, 1. We are not likely to do God's statutes, unless we observe them with great care and consideration. 2. Yet it is not enough barely to observe God's precepts, but we must make conscience of obeying them. What will it avail us to be critical in our notions, if we be not conscientious in our conversations? 3. An upright heart has respect to all God's commandments, Ps. 119:6. Though in many instances the hand fails in doing what should be done, yet the eye observes all God's statutes. We are not allowed to pick and choose our duty, but must aim at standing complete in all the will of God.

Chapter 20

The laws which before were made are in this chapter repeated and penalties annexed to them, that those who would not be deterred from sin by the fear of God might be deterred from it by the fear of punishment. If we will not avoid such and such practices because the law has made them sin (and it is most acceptable when we go on that principle of religion), surely we shall avoid them when the law has made them death, from a principle of self-preservation. In this chapter we have, I. Many particular crimes that are made capital. I. Giving their children to Moloch (v. 1-5). 2. Consulting witches (v. 6, 27). 3. Cursing parents (v. 9). 4. Adultery (v. 10). 5. Incest (v. 11, 12, 14, 17, 19–21). 6. Unnatural lusts (v. 13, 15, 16, 18). II. General commands given to be holy (v. 7, 8, 22–26).

Verses 1-9

Moses is here directed to say that again to the children of Israel which he had in effect said before, v. 2. We are sure it was no vain repetition, but very necessary, that they might *give the more earnest heed to the things that were spoken*, and might believe them to be of great consequence, being so often inculcated. *God speaketh once, yea, twice*, and what he orders to be said again we must be willing to hear again, because *for us it is safe*, Phil. 3:1.

I. Three sins are in these verses threatened with death:—

1. Parents abusing their children, by sacrificing them to Moloch, v. 2, 3. There is the grossest absurdity that can be in all the rites of idolatry, and they are all a great reproach to men's reason; but none trampled upon all the honours of human nature as this did, the burning of children in the fire to the honour of a dunghill-god. It was a plain evidence that their gods were devils, who desired and delighted in the misery and ruin of mankind, and that the worshippers were worse than the beasts that perish, perfectly stripped, not only of reason, but of natural affection. Abraham's offering Isaac could not give countenance, much less could it give rise to this barbarous practice, since, though that was commanded, it was immediately countermanded. Yet such was the power of the god of this world over the children of disobedience that this monstrous piece of inhumanity was generally practised; and even the Israelites were in danger of being drawn into it, which made it necessary that this severe law should be made against it. It was not enough to tell them they might spare their children (the fruit of their body should never be accepted for the sin of their soul), but they must be told, (1.) That the criminal himself should be put to death as a murderer: *The people of the land shall stone him with stones* (v. 2), which was looked upon as the worst of capital punishments among the Jews. If the children were sacrificed to the malice of the devil, the parents must be sacrificed to the justice of God. And, if either the fact could not be proved or the magistrates did not do their duty, God would take the work into his own hands: *I will cut him off*, v. 3. Note, Those that escape punishment from men, yet shall not escape the righteous judgments of God; so wretchedly do those deceive themselves that promise themselves impunity in sin. How can those escape against whom God sets his face, that is, whom he frowns upon, meets as an enemy, and fights against? The heinousness of the crime is here set forth to justify the doom: it *defiles the sanctuary*, and *profanes the holy name* of God, for the honour of both which he is jealous. Observe, The malignity of the sin is laid upon that in it which was peculiar to Israel. When the Gentiles sacrificed their children they were

guilty of murder and idolatry; but, if the Israelites did it, they incurred the additional guilt of defiling the sanctuary (which they attended upon even when they lay under this guilt, as if there might be an agreement between the temple of God and idols), and of *profaning the holy name of God*, by which they were called, as if he allowed his worshippers to do such things, Rom. 2:23, 24. (2.) That all his aiders and abettors should be cut off likewise by the righteous hand of God. If his neighbours concealed him, and would not come in as witnesses against him,—if the magistrates connived at him, and would not pass sentence upon him, rather pitying his folly than hating his impiety,—God himself would reckon with them, v. 4, 5. Misprision of idolatry is a crime cognizable in the court of heaven, and which shall not go unpunished: *I will set my face against that man* (that magistrate, Jer. 5:1) *and against his family*. Note, [1.] The wickedness of the master of a family often brings ruin upon a family; and he that should be the house-keeper proves the house-breaker. [2.] If magistrates will not do justice upon offenders, God will do justice upon them, because there is danger that many will *go a whoring after those* who do but countenance sin by winking at it. And, if the sins of leaders be leading sins, it is fit that their punishments should be exemplary punishments.

2. Children's abusing their parents, by cursing them, v. 9. If children should speak ill of their parents, or wish ill to them, or carry it scornfully or spitefully towards them, it was an iniquity to be punished by the judges, who were employed as conservators both of God's honour and of the public peace, which were both attacked by this unnatural insolence. See Prov. 30:17, *The eye that mocks at his father the ravens of the valley shall pick out*, which intimates that such wicked children were in a fair way to be not only hanged, but hanged in chains. This law of Moses Christ quotes and confirms (Mt. 15:4), for it is as direct a breach of the fifth commandment as wilful murder is of the sixth. The same law which requires parents to be tender of their children requires children to be respectful to their parents. He that despitefully uses his parents, the instruments of his being, flies in the face of God himself, the author of his being, who will not see the paternal dignity and authority insulted and trampled upon.

3. Persons abusing themselves by consulting such as have *familiar spirits*, v. 6. By this, as much as any thing, a man diminishes, disparages, and deceives himself, and so abuses himself. What greater madness can there be than for a man to go to a liar for information, and to an enemy for advice? Those do so who turn after those that deal in the black art, and know the depths of Satan. This is spiritual adultery as much as idolatry is, giving that honour to the devil which is due to God only; and the jealous God will give a bill of divorce to those that thus *go a whoring from him*, and will *cut them off*, they having first cut themselves off from him.

II. In the midst of these particular laws comes in that general charge, v. 7, 8, where we have,

1. The duties required; and they are two:—(1.) That in our principles, affections, and aims, we be holy: *Sanctify yourselves and be you holy*. We must cleanse ourselves from all the pollutions of sin, consecrate ourselves to the service and honour of God, and conform ourselves in every thing to his holy will and image: this is to *sanctify ourselves*. (2.) That in all our actions, and in the whole course of our conversation, we be obedient to the laws of God: *You shall keep my statutes*. By this only can we make it to appear that we have sanctified ourselves and are holy, even by our keeping God's commandments; *the tree is known by its fruit*. Nor can we *keep God's statutes*, as we ought, unless we first sanctify ourselves, and be holy. Make the tree good, and the

fruit will be good.

2. The reasons to enforce these duties. (1.) "*I am the Lord your God; therefore be holy, that you may resemble him whose people you are, and may be pleasing to him. Holiness becomes his house and household.*" (2.) *I am the Lord who sanctifieth you.* God sanctified them by peculiar privileges, laws, and favours, which distinguished them from all other nations, and dignified them as a people set apart for God. He gave them his word and ordinances to be means of their sanctification, and his good Spirit to instruct them; therefore they must be holy, else they received the grace of God herein in vain. Note, [1.] God's people are, and must be, persons of distinction. God has distinguished them by his holy covenant, and therefore they ought to distinguish themselves by their holy conversation. [2.] God's sanctifying us is a good reason why we should sanctify ourselves, that we may comply with the designs of his grace, and not walk contrary to them. If it be the Lord that sanctifies us, we may hope the work shall be done, though it be difficult: the manner of expression is like that, 2 Co. 5:5, *He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.* And his grace is so far from superseding our care and endeavour that it most strongly engages and encourages them. *Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh in you.*

Verses 10-21

Sins against the seventh commandment are here ordered to be severely punished. These are sins which, of all others, fools are most apt to make a mock at; but God would teach those the heinousness of the guilt by the extremity of the punishment that would not otherwise be taught it.

I. Lying with another man's wife was made a capital crime. The adulterer and the adulteress that had joined in the sin must fall alike under the sentence: they shall both be *put to death*, v. 10. Long before this, even in Job's time, this was reputed a *heinous crime* and an *iniquity to be punished by the judges*, Job 31:11. It is a presumptuous contempt of an ordinance of God, and a violation of his covenant, Prov. 2:17. It is an irreparable wrong to the injured husband, and debauches the mind and conscience of both the offenders as much as any thing. It is a sin which headstrong and unbridled lusts hurry men violently to, and therefore it needs such a powerful restraint as this. It is a sin which defiles a land and brings down God's judgments upon it, which disquiets families, and tends to the ruin of all virtue and religion, and therefore is fit to be animadverted upon by the conservators of the public peace: but see Jn. 8:3–11.

II. Incestuous connections, whether by marriage or not. 1. Some of them were to be punished with death, as a man's *lying with his father's wife*, v. 11. Reuben would have been put to death for his crime (Gen. 35:22) if this law had been then made. It was the sin of the incestuous Corinthian, for which he was to be *delivered unto Satan*, 1 Co. 5:1, 5. A man's debauching his daughter-in-law, or his mother-in-law, or his sister, was likewise to be punished with death, v. 12, 14, 17. 2. Others of them God would punish with the curse of barrenness, as a man's defiling his aunt, or his brother's wife (v. 19–21): *They shall die childless*. Those that keep not within the divine rules of marriage forfeit the blessings of marriage: *They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase*, Hos. 4:10. Nay it is said, *They shall bear their iniquity*, that is, though they be not immediately cut off by the hand either of God or man for this sin, yet the guilt of it shall lie upon them, to be reckoned for another day, and not be purged with sacrifice or offering.

III. The unnatural lusts of sodomy and bestiality (sins not to be mentioned without horror) were to be punished with death, as they are at this day by our law, v. 13, 15, 16. Even the beast that was thus abused was to be killed with the sinner, who was thereby openly put to the greater shame: and the villany was thus represented as in the highest degree execrable and abominable, all occasions of the remembrance or mention of it being to be taken away. Even the unseasonable use of the marriage, if presumptuous, and in contempt of the law, would expose the offenders to the just judgment of God: they *shall be cut off*, v. 18. For this is the will of God, that *every man should possess his vessel* (and the wife is called the weaker vessel) *in sanctification and honour*, as becomes saints.

Verses 22-27

The last verse is a particular law, which comes in after the general conclusion, as if omitted in its proper place: it is for the putting of those to death that dealt with familiar spirits, v. 27. It would be an affront to God and to his lively oracles, a scandal to the country, and a temptation to ignorant bad people, to consult them, if such were known and suffered to live among them. Those that are in league with the devil have in effect made a covenant with death and an agreement with hell, and so shall their doom be.

The rest of these verses repeat and inculcate what had been said before; for to that unthinking forgetful people it was requisite that there should be line upon line, and that general rules, with their reasons, should be frequently insisted on, for the enforcement of particular laws, and making them more effectual. Three things we are here reminded of:-

I. Their dignity. 1. They had the *Lord for their God*, v. 24. They were his, his care, his choice, his treasure, his jewels, his kingdom of priests (v. 26): *That you should be mine*. Happy the people, and truly great, that are in such a case. 2. Their God was a holy God (v. 26), infinitely advanced above all others. His holiness is his glory, and it was their honour to be related to him, while their neighbours were the infamous worshippers of impure and filthy spirits. 3. The great God had separated them from other people (v. 24), and again, v. 26. Other nations were the common; they were the enclosure, beautified and enriched with peculiar privileges, and designed for peculiar honours; let them therefore value themselves accordingly, preserve their honour, and not lay it in the dust, by walking in the way of the heathen.

II. Their duty; this is inferred from their dignity. God had done more for them than for others, and therefore expected more from them than from others. And what is it that the Lord their God requires, in consideration of the great things done and designed? 1. *You shall keep all my statutes* (v. 22); and there was all the reason in the world that they should, for the statutes were their honour, and obedience to them would be their lasting comfort. 2. *You shall not walk in the manners of nations*, v. 23. Being separated from them, they must not associate with them, nor learn their ways. The manners of the nations were bad enough in them, but would be much worse in God's people. 3. *You shall put a difference between clean and unclean*, v. 25. This is holiness, to discern between things that differ, not to live at large, as if we might say and do any thing, but to speak and act with caution. 4. *You shall not make your souls abominable*, v. 25. Our constant care must be to preserve the honour, by preserving the purity, of our own souls, and never to do any thing to make them abominable to God and to our own consciences.

III. Their danger. 1. They were going into an infected place (v. 24): *You shall inherit their land*, a land *flowing with milk and honey*, which they would have the comfort of if they kept their integrity; but, withal, it was a land full of idols, idolatries, and superstitious usages, which they would be apt to fall in love with, having brought from Egypt with them a strange disposition to take that infection. 2. If they took the infection, it would be of pernicious consequence to them. The Canaanites were to be expelled for these very sins: *They committed all these things, therefore I abhorred them*, v. 23. See what an evil thing sin is; it provokes God to abhor his own creatures, whereas otherwise he delights in the work of his hands. And, if the Israelites trod in the steps of their impiety, they must expect that the land would spue them out (v. 22), as he had told them before, ch. 18:28. If God spared not the natural branches, but broke them off, neither would he spare those who were grafted in, if they degenerated. Thus the rejection of the Jews stands for a warning to all Christian churches to take heed lest the kingdom of God be taken from them. Those that sin like others must expect to smart like them; and their profession of relation to God will be no security to them.

Chapter 21

This chapter might borrow its title from Mal. 2:1, "And now, O you priests, this commandment is for you." It is a law obliging priests with the utmost care and jealousy to preserve the dignity of their priesthood. I. The inferior priests are here charged both concerning their mourning and concerning their marriages and their children (v. 1-9). II. The high priest is restrained more than any of them (v. 10–15). III. Neither the one nor the other must have any blemish (v. 16, etc.).

Verses 1-9

It was before appointed that the priests should teach the people the statutes God had given concerning the *difference between clean and unclean*, ch. 10:10, 11. Now here it is provided that they should themselves observe what they were to teach the people. Note, Those whose office it is to instruct must do it by example as well as precept, 1 Tim. 4:12. The priests were to draw nearer to God than any of the people, and to be more intimately conversant with sacred things, and therefore it was required of them that they should keep at a greater distance than others from every thing that was defiling and might diminish the honour of their priesthood.

I. They must take care not to disparage themselves in their mourning for the dead. All that mourned for the dead were supposed to come near the body, if not to touch it: and the Jews say, "It made a man ceremonially unclean to come within six feet of a dead corpse;" nay, it is declared (Num. 19:14) that all who come into the tent where the dead body lies shall be unclean seven days. Therefore all the mourners that attended the funeral could not but defile themselves, so as not to be fit to come into the sanctuary for seven days: for this reason it is ordered, 1. That the priests should never put themselves under this incapacity of coming into the sanctuary, unless it were for one of their nearest relations, v. 1-3. A priest was permitted to do it for a parent or a child, for a brother or an unmarried sister, and therefore, no doubt (though this is not mentioned) for the wife of his bosom; for Ezekiel, a priest, would have mourned for his wife if he had not been particularly prohibited, Eze. 24:17. By this allowance God put an honour upon natural affection, and favoured it so far as to dispense with the attendance of his servants for seven days, while they indulged themselves in their sorrow for the death of their dear relations; but, beyond this period, weeping must not hinder sowing, nor their affection to their relations take them off from the service of the sanctuary. Nor was it at all allowed for the death of any other, no, not of a *chief man among the people*, as some read it, v. 4. They must not defile themselves, no, nor for the high priest himself, unless thus akin to them. Though *there is a friend that is nearer than a brother*, yet the priests must not pay this respect to the best friend they had, except he were a relation, lest, if it were allowed for one, others should expect it, and so they should be frequently taken off from their work: and it is hereby intimated that there is a particular affection to be reserved for those that are thus near akin to us; and, when any such are removed by death, we ought to be affected with it, and lay it to heart, as the near approach of death to ourselves, and an alarm to us to prepare to follow. 2. That they must not be extravagant in the expressions of their mourning, no, not for their dearest relations, v. 5. Their mourning must not be either, (1.) Superstitious, according to the manner of the heathen, who cut off their hair, and let out their blood, in honour of the imaginary deities which presided (as they thought) in the congregation of the dead, that they might

engage them to be propitious to their departed friends. Even the superstitious rites used of old at funerals are an indication of the ancient belief of the immortality of the soul, and its existence in a separate state: and though the rites themselves were forbidden by the divine law, because they were performed to false gods, yet the decent respect which nature teaches and which the law allows to be paid to the remains of our deceased friends, shows that we are not to look upon them as lost. Nor, (2.) Must it be passionate or immoderate. Note, God's ministers must be examples to others of patience under affliction, particularly that which touches in a very tender part, the death of their near relations. They are supposed to know more than others of the reasons why we must *not sorrow as those that have no hope* (1 Th. 4:13), and therefore they ought to be eminently calm and composed, that they may be able to comfort others with the same comforts wherewith they are themselves comforted of God. The people were forbidden to mourn for the dead with superstitious rites (ch. 19:27, 28), and what was unlawful to them was much more unlawful to the priest. The reason given for their peculiar care not to defile themselves we have (v. 6): *Because they offered the bread of their God, even the offerings of the Lord made by fire*, which were the provisions of God's house and table. They are highly honoured, and therefore must not stain their honour by making themselves slaves to their passions; they are continually employed in sacred service, and therefore must not be either diverted from or disfigured for the services they were called to. If they pollute themselves, they profane the name of their God on whom they attend: if the servants are rude and of ill behaviour, it is a reflection upon the master, as if he kept a loose and disorderly house. Note, All that either offer or eat the bread of our God must be holy in all manner of conversation, or else they profane that name which they pretend to sanctify.

II. They must take care not to degrade themselves in their marriage, v. 7. A priest must not marry a woman of ill fame, that either had been guilty or was suspected to have been guilty of uncleanness. He must not only not marry a harlot, though ever so great a penitent for her former whoredoms, but he must not marry one that was profane, that is, of a light carriage or indecent behaviour. Nay, he must not marry one that was divorced, because there was reason to think it was for some fault she was divorced. The priests were forbidden to undervalue themselves by such marriages as these, which were allowed to others, 1. Lest it should bring a present reproach upon their ministry, harden the profane in their profaneness, and grieve the hearts of serious people: the New Testament gives laws to ministers' wives (1 Tim. 3:11), that they be *grave and sober*, that *the ministry be not blamed*. 2. Lest it should entail a reproach upon their families; for the work and honour of the priesthood were to descend as an inheritance to their children after them. Those do not consult the good of their posterity as they ought who do not take care to marry such as are of good report and character. He that would seek *a godly seed* (as the expression is, Mal. 2:15) must first seek a godly wife, and take heed of a corruption of blood. It is added here (v. 8), *Thou shalt sanctify him*, and *he shall be holy unto thee*. "Not only thou, O Moses, by taking care that these laws be observed, but thou, O Israel, by all endeavours possible to keep up the reputation of the priesthood, which the priests themselves must do nothing to expose or forfeit. *He is holy to his God* (v. 7), therefore *he shall be holy unto thee*." Note, We must honour those whom our God puts honour upon. Gospel ministers by this rule are to be *esteemed very highly in love for their works' sake* (1 Th. 5:13), and every Christian must look upon himself as concerned to be the guardian of their honour.

III. Their children must be afraid of doing any thing to disparage them (v. 9): *If the daughter of any priest play the whore*, her crime is great; she not only polluteth but *profaneth herself*: other women have not that honour to lose that she has, who, as one of a priest's family, has eaten of the holy things, and is supposed to have been better educated than others. Nay, *she profaneth her father*; he is reflected upon, and every body will be ready to ask, "Why did not he teach her better?" And the sinners in Zion will insult and say, "Here is your priest's daughter." Her punishment there must be peculiar: *She shall be burnt with fire*, for a terror to all priests' daughters. Note, The children of ministers ought, of all others, to take heed of doing any thing that is scandalous, because in them it is doubly scandalous, and will be punished accordingly by him whose name is *Jealous*.

Verses 10-15

More was expected from a priest than from other people, but more from the high priest than from other priests, because upon his head the *anointing oil was poured*, and he was *consecrated to put on the garments* (v. 10), both which were typical of the anointing and adorning of the Lord Jesus, with all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which he received without measure. It is called *the crown of the anointing oil of his God* (v. 12); for the anointing of the Spirit is, to all that have it, a *crown of glory*, and a *diadem of beauty*. The high priest being thus dignified,

I. He must not defile himself at all for the dead, no, nor for his nearest relations, *his father or his mother*, much less his child or brother, v. 11. 1. He must not use the common expressions of sorrow on those occasions, such as *uncovering his head, and rending his clothes* (v. 10), so perfectly unconcerned must he show himself in all the crosses and comforts of this life: even his natural affection must be swallowed up in compassion to the ignorant, and a feeling of their infirmities, and a tender concern for the household of God, which he was made the ruler of. Thus being the holy one that was entrusted with the *thummim and the urim* he must not know *father or mother*, Deu. 33:8, 9. 2. He must not *go in to any dead body*, v. 11. If any of the inferior priests were under a ceremonial pollution, there were other priests that might supply their places; but, if the high priest were defiled, there would be a greater want of him. And the forbidding of him to go to any house of mourning, or attend any funeral, would be an indication to the people of the greatness of that dignity to which he was advanced. Our Lord Jesus, the great high priest of our profession, touched the dead body of Jairus's daughter, the bier of the widow's son, and the grave of Lazarus, to show that he came to altar the property of death, and to take off the terror of it, by breaking the power of it. Now that it cannot destroy it does not defile. 3. He must *not go out of the sanctuary* (v. 12); that is, whenever he was attending or officiating in the sanctuary, where usually he tarried in his own apartment all day, he must not go out upon any occasion whatsoever, nor cut short his attendance on the living God, no, not to pay his last respects to a dying relation. It was a profanation of the sanctuary to leave it, while his presence was requisite there, upon any such occasion; for thereby he preferred some other business before the service of God and the business of his profession, to which he ought to make every thing else give place. Thus our Lord Jesus would not leave off preaching to *speak with his mother and brethren*, Mt. 12:48.

II. He might not marry a widow (as other priests might), much less one divorced, or a harlot, v. 13, 14. The reason of this was to put a difference between him and other priests in this matter; and (as some suggest) that he might be a type of Christ, to whom the church was to be presented a *chaste virgin*, 2 Co. 11:2. See Eze. 44:22. Christ must have our first love, our pure

love, our entire love; thus the *virgins love thee* (Cant. 1:3), and such only are fit to *follow the Lamb*, Rev. 14:4.

III. He might not profane his seed among his people, v. 15. Some understand it as forbidding him to marry any of an inferior rank, which would be a disparagement to his family. Jehoiada indeed married of his own tribe, but then it was into the royal family, 2 Chr. 22:11. This was not to teach him to be proud, but to teach him to be pure, and to do nothing unbecoming his office and the worthy name by which he was called. Or it may be a caution to him in disposing of his children; he must not profane his seed by marrying them unsuitably. Ministers' children are profaned if they be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Verses 16-24

The priesthood being confined to one particular family, and entailed upon all the male issue of that family throughout their generations, it was very likely that some or other in after-ages that were born to the priesthood would have natural blemishes and deformities: the honour of the priesthood would not secure them from any of those calamities which are common to men. Divers blemishes are here specified; some that were ordinarily for life, as blindness; others that might be for a time, as a scurf or scab, and, when they were gone, the disability ceased. Now,

I. The law concerning priests that had blemishes was, 1. That they might *live upon the altar* (v. 22): *He shall eat* of the sacrifices with the other priests, even the *most holy things*, such as the show-bread and the sin-offerings, as well as the *holy things*, such as the tithes and first-fruits, and the priests' share of the peace-offerings. The blemishes were such as they could not help, and therefore, though they might not work, they must not starve. Note, None must be abused for their natural infirmities. Even the deformed child in the family must have its child's part. 2. Yet they must not *serve at the altar*, at either of the altars, nor be admitted to attend or assist the other priests in offering sacrifice or burning incense, v. 17, 21, 23. Great men choose to have such servants about them as are sightly, and it was fit that the great God should have such in his house then, when he was pleased to manifest his glory in external indications of it. But it was especially requisite that comely men should be chosen to minister about holy things, for the sake of the people, who were apt to judge according to outward appearance, and to think meanly of the service, how honourable soever it was made by the divine institution, of those that performed it looked despicably or went about it awkwardly. This provision God made for the preserving of the reputation of his altar, that it might not at any time fall under contempt. It was for the credit of the sanctuary that none should appear there who were any way disfigured, either by nature or accident.

II. Under the gospel, 1. Those that labour under any such blemishes as these have reason to thank God that they are not thereby excluded from offering spiritual sacrifices to God; nor, if otherwise qualified for it, from the office of the ministry. There is many a healthful beautiful soul lodged in a crazy deformed body. Yet, 2. We ought to infer hence how incapable those are to serve God acceptably whose minds are blemished and deformed by any reigning vice. Those are unworthy to be called Christians, and unfit to be employed as ministers, that are spiritually blind, and lame, and crooked, whose sins render them scandalous and deformed, so as that the offerings of the Lord are abhorred for their sakes. The deformities of Hophni and Phinehas were worse than any of the blemishes here mentioned. Let such therefore as are openly vicious be put out of the priesthood as polluted persons; and let all that are made to our God spiritual priests be before him *holy and without blemish*,

and comfort themselves with this, that, though in this imperfect state they have spots that are the spots of God's children, yet they shall shortly appear before the throne of God *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*

Chapter 22

In this chapter we have divers laws concerning the priests and sacrifices all for the preserving of the honour of the sanctuary. I. That the priests should not eat the holy things in their uncleanness (v. 1-9). II. That no stranger who did not belong to some family of the priests should eat of the holy things (v. 10–13), and, if he did it unwittingly, he must make restitution, (v. 14–16). III. That the sacrifices which were offered must be without blemish (v. 17–25). IV. That they must be more than eight days old (v. 26–28), and that the sacrifices of thanksgiving must be eaten the same day they were offered (v. 29, etc.).

Verses 1-9

Those that had a natural blemish, though they were forbidden to do the priests' work, were yet allowed to eat of the holy things: and the Jewish writers say that "to keep them from idleness they were employed in the wood-room, to pick out that which was worm-eaten, that it might not be used in the fire upon the altar; they might also be employed in the judgment of leprosy:" but,

I. Those that were under any ceremonial uncleanness, which possibly they contracted by their own fault, might no so much as eat of the holy things while they continued in their pollution. 1. Some pollutions were permanent, as a leprosy or a running issue, v. 4. These separated the people from the sanctuary, and God would show that they were so far from being more excusable that really they were more abominable in a priest. 2. Others were more transient, as the touching of a dead body, or any thing else that was unclean, from which, after a certain time, a man was cleansed by bathing his flesh in water, v. 6. But whoever was thus defiled might not *eat of the holy things*, under pain of God's highest displeasure, who said, and ratified the saying, *That soul shall be cut off from my presence*, v. 3. Our being in the presence of God, and attending upon him, will be so far from securing us that it will but the more expose us to God's wrath, if we dare to draw nigh to him in our uncleanness. The destruction shall come *from the presence of the Lord* (2 Th. 1:9), as the fire by which Nadab and Abihu died came *from before the Lord*. Thus those who profane the holy word of God will be cut off by that word which they make so light of; it shall condemn them. They are again warned of their danger if they eat the holy thing in their uncleanness (v. 9), *lest they bear sin, and die therefore*. Note, (1.) Those contract great guilt who profane sacred things, by touching them with unhallowed hands. Eating the holy things signified an interest in the atonement; but, if they ate of them in their uncleanness, they were so far from lessening their guilt that they increased it: They shall *bear sin*. (2.) Sin is a burden which, if infinite mercy prevent not, will certainly sink those that bear it: They shall *die therefore*. Even priests may be ruined by their pollutions and presumptions. II. As to the design of this law we may observe, 1. This obliged the priests carefully to preserve their purity, and to dread every thing that would defile them. The holy things were their livelihood; if they might not eat of them, how must they subsist? The more we have to lose of comfort and honour by our defilement, the more careful we should be to preserve our purity. 2. This impressed the people with a reverence for the holy things, when they saw the priests themselves *separated from them* (as the expression is, v. 2) so long as they were in their uncleanness. He is doubtless a God of infinite purity who kept his immediate attendants under so strict a discipline. 3. This teaches us carefully to watch against all moral pollutions, because by them we

are unfitted to receive the comfort of God's sanctuary. Though we labour not under habitual deformities, yet actual defilements deprive us of the pleasure of communion with God; and therefore *he that is washed needeth to wash his feet* (Jn. 13:10), *to wash his hands*, and so to *compass the altar*, Ps. 26:6. Herein we have need to be jealous over ourselves, lest (as it is observably expressed here) we *profane God's holy name in those things which we hallow unto him*, v. 2. If we affront God in those very performances wherein we pretend to honour him, and provoke him instead of pleasing him, we shall make up but a bad account shortly; yet thus we do if we profane God's name, by doing that in our uncleanness which pretends to be hallowed to him.

Verses 10-16

The holy things were to be eaten by the priests and their families. Now,

I. Here is a law that no stranger should eat of them, that is, no person whatsoever but the priests only, and those that pertained to them, v. 10. The priests are charged with this care, not to *profane the holy things* by permitting the strangers to eat of them (v. 15) or *suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass* (v. 16); that is, suffer them to bring guilt upon themselves, by meddling with that which they have no right to. Thus it is commonly understood. Note, We must not only be careful that we do not bear iniquity ourselves, but we must do what we can to prevent others bearing it. We must not only not suffer sin to *lie* upon our brother, but, if we can help it, we must not suffer it to *come* upon him. But perhaps there is another meaning of those words: the priests' eating the sin-offerings is said to signify their *bearing the iniquity of the congregation, to make an atonement for them*, ch. 10:17. Let not a stranger therefore eat of that holy thing particularly, and so pretend to *bear the iniquity of trespass*; for it is daring presumption for any to do that, but such as are appointed to do it. Those that set up other mediators besides Christ our priest, to *bear the iniquity of trespass*, sacrilegiously rob Christ of his honour, and invade his rights. When we warn people not to trust to their own righteousness, nor dare to appear before God in it, but to rely on Christ's righteousness only for peace and pardon, it is because we dare not *suffer them to bear the iniquity of trespass*, for we know it is too heavy for them.

II. Here is an explanation of the law, showing who were to be looked upon as belonging to the priest's family, and who not. 1. Sojourners and hired servants abode not in the house for ever; they were in the family, but not of it; and therefore they might not eat of the holy things (v. 10): but the servant that was born in the house or bought with money, being a heirloom to the family, though a servant, yet might eat of the holy things, v. 11. Note, Those only are entitled to the comforts of God's house who make it their *rest for ever*, and resolve to *dwell in it all the days of their life*. As for those who for a time only believe, to serve a present turn. They are looked upon but as sojourners and mercenaries, and have *no part nor lot in the matter*. 2. As to the children of the family, concerning the sons there could be no dispute, they were themselves priests, but concerning the daughters there was a distinction. While they continued in their father's house they might eat of the holy things; but, if they married such as were not priests, they lost their right (v. 12), for now they were cut off from the family of the priests. Yet if a priest's daughter became a widow, and had no children in whom she might preserve a distinct family, and returned to her father's house again, being neither wife nor mother, she should again be looked upon as a daughter, and might eat of the holy things. If those whom Providence has made sorrowful widows, and who are dislodged from the rest they had in the house of a

husband, yet find it again in a father's house, they have reason to be thankful to the widows' God, who does not leave them comfortless. 3. Here is a demand of restitution to be made by him that had no right to the holy things, and yet should eat of them unwittingly, v. 14. If he did it presumptuously, and in contempt of the divine institution, he was liable to be cut off by the hand of God, and to be beaten by the magistrate; but, if he did it through weakness in inconsideration, he was to restore the value, adding a fifth part to it, besides which he was to bring an offering to atone for the trespass; see ch. 5:15, 16.

III. This law might be dispensed with in a case of necessity, as it was when David and his men ate of the show-bread, 1 Sa. 21:6. And our Saviour justifies them, and gives a reason for it, which furnishes us with a lasting rule in all such cases, that *God will have mercy and not sacrifice*, Mt. 12:3, 4, 7. Rituals must give way to morals.

IV. It is an instruction to gospel ministers, who are *stewards of the mysteries of God*, not to admit all, without distinction, to *eat of the holy things*, but to take out the precious from the vile. Those that are scandalously ignorant or profane are strangers and aliens to the family of the Lord's priests; and it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to such. Holy things are for holy persons, for those who are holy, at least, in profession, Mt. 7:6.

Verses 17-33

Here are four laws concerning sacrifices:—

I. Whatever was offered in sacrifice to God should be without blemish, otherwise it should not be accepted. This had often been mentioned in the particular institutions of the several sorts of offerings. Now here they are told what was to be accounted a blemish which rendered a beast unfit for sacrifice: if it was blind, or lame, had a wen, or the mange (v. 22),—if it was bruised, or crushed, or broken, or cut (v. 24), that is, as the Jewish writers understand it, if it was, in any of these ways, castrated, if bulls and rams were made into oxen and weathers, they might not be offered. Moreover a difference is made between what was brought as a free-will offering and what was brought as a vow, v. 23. And, though none that had any of the forementioned blemishes might be brought for either, yet if a beast had any thing superfluous or lacking (that is, as the Jews understand it, if there was a disproportion or inequality between those parts that are pairs, when one eye, or ear, or leg, was bigger than it should be, or less than it should be)—if there was no other blemish than this, it might be accepted for a free-will offering, to which a man had not before laid himself, nor had the divine law laid him, under any particular obligation; but for a vow it might not be accepted. Thus God would teach us to make conscience of performing our promises to him very exactly, and not afterwards to abate in quantity or value of what we had solemnly engaged to devote to him. What was, before the vow, in our own power, as in the case of a free-will offering, afterwards is not, Acts 5:4. It is again and again declared that no sacrifice should be accepted if it was thus blemished, v. 20, 21. According to this law great care was taken to search all the beasts that were brought to be sacrificed, that there might, to a certainty, be no blemish in them. A blemished sacrifice might not be accepted even *from the hand of a stranger*, though to such all possible encouragement should be given to do honour to the God of Israel, v. 25. By this it appears that strangers were expected to come to the house of God from a *far country* (1 Ki. 8:41, 42), and that they should be welcome, and their offerings accepted, as those of Darius, Ezra 6:9, 10; Isa. 56:6, 7. The heathen priests were many of them not so strict in this matter, but would receive sacrifices for their gods that were ever so

scandalous; but let strangers know that the God of Israel would not be so served. Now, 1. This law was then necessary for the preserving of the honour of the sanctuary, and of the God that was there worshipped. It was fit that every thing that was employed for his honour should be the best of the kind; for, as he is the greatest and brightest, so he is the best of beings; and he that is the best must have the best. See how greatly and justly displeasing the breach of this law was to the holy God, Mal. 1:8, 13, 14. 2. This law made all the legal sacrifices the fitter to be types of Christ, the great sacrifice from which all these derived their virtue. In allusion to this law, he is said to be *a Lamb without blemish and without spot*, 1 Pt. 1:19. As such a priest, so such a sacrifice, became us, who was harmless and undefiled. When Pilate declared, *I find no fault in this man*, he did thereby in effect pronounce the sacrifice without blemish. The Jews say it was the work of the sagan, or suffragan, high priest, to view the sacrifices, and see whether they were without blemish or no; when Christ suffered, Annas was in that office; but little did those who brought Christ to Annas first, by whom he was sent bound to Caiaphas, as a sacrifice fit to be offered (Jn. 18:13, 24), think that they were answering the type of this law. 3. It is an instruction to us to offer to God the best we have in our spiritual sacrifices. If our devotions are ignorant, and cold, and trifling, and full of distractions, we offer *the blind, and the lame, and the sick, for sacrifice*; but cursed be the deceiver that does so, for, while he thinks to put a cheat upon God, he puts a damning cheat upon his own soul.

II. That no beast should be offered in sacrifice before it was eight days old, v. 26, 27. It was provided before that the firstlings of their cattle, which were to be dedicated to God, should not be brought to him till after the eighth day, Ex. 22:30. Here it is provided that no creature should be offered in sacrifice till it was eight days old complete. Sooner than that it was not fit to be used at men's tables, and therefore not a God's altar. The Jews say, "It was because the sabbath sanctifies all things, and nothing should be offered to God till at least one sabbath had passed over it." It was in conformity to the law of circumcision, which children were to receive on the eighth day. Christ was sacrificed for us, not in his infancy, though then Herod sought to slay him, but in the prime of his time.

III. That the dam and her young should not both be killed in one day, whether in sacrifice or for common use, v. 28. There is such a law as this concerning birds, Deu. 22:6. This was forbidden, not as evil in itself, but because it looked barbarous and cruel to the brute creatures; like the tyranny of the king of Babylon, that slew Zedekiah's sons before his eyes, and then put out his eyes. It looked ill-natured towards the species to kill two generations at once, as if one designed the ruin of the kind.

IV. That the flesh of their thank-offerings should be eaten on the same day that they were sacrificed, v. 29, 30. This is a repetition of what we had before, ch. 7:15; 19:6, 7. The chapter concludes with such a general charge as we have often met with, to *keep God's commandments*, and not to *profane his holy name*, v. 31, 32. Those that profess God's name, if they do not make conscience of keeping his commandments, do but profane his name. The general reasons are added: God's authority over them—*I am the Lord*; his interest in them—I am *your God*; the title he had to them by redemption—"I brought you out of the land of Egypt, on purpose that I might be your God;" the designs of his grace concerning them—I am *the Lord that hallow you*; and the resolutions of his justice, if he had not honour from them, to *get himself honour* upon them—I will be *hallowed among the children of Israel*. God will be a loser in his glory by no man at last; but sooner or later will recover his right, either in the

repentance of sinners or in their ruin.

Chapter 23

Hitherto the levitical law had been chiefly conversant about holy persons, holy things, and holy places; in this chapter we have the institution of holy times, many of which had been mentioned occasionally before, but here they are all put together, only the new moons are not mentioned. All the rest of the feasts of the Lord are, I. The weekly feast of the sabbath (v. 3). II. The yearly feasts, 1. The passover, and the feast of unleavened bread (v. 4-8), to which was annexed the offering of the sheaf of firstfruits (v. 9-14). 2. Pentecost (v. 15-22). 3. The solemnities of the seventh month. The feast of trumpets on the first day (v. 23-25), the day of atonement on the tenth day (v. 26-32), and the feast of tabernacles on the fifteenth (v. 33, etc.).

Verses 1-3

Here is, I. A general account of the holy times which God appointed (v. 2), and it is only his appointment that can make time holy; for he is the Lord of time, and as soon as ever he had set its wheels a-going it was he that sanctified and blessed one day above the rest, Gen. 2:3. Man may by his appointment make a good day (Esth. 9:19), but it is God's prerogative to make a holy day; nor is any thing sanctified but by the stamp of his institution. As all inherent holiness comes from his special grace, so all adherent holiness from his special appointment. Now, concerning the holy times here ordained, observe, 1. They are called *feasts*. The day of atonement, which was one of them, was a fast; yet, because most of them were appointed for joy and rejoicing, they are in the general called feasts. Some read it, *These are my assemblies*, but that is co-incident with *convocations*. I would rather read it, *These are my solemnities*; so the word here used is translated (Isa. 33:20), where Zion is called the *city of our solemnities*: and, reading it so here, the day of atonement was as great a solemnity as any of them. 2. They are the feasts of the Lord (*my feasts*), observed to the honour of his name, and in obedience to his command. 3. They were proclaimed; for they were not to be observed by the priests only that attended the sanctuary, but by all the people. And this proclamation was the joyful sound concerning which we read, *Blessed are the people that know it*, Ps. 89:15. 4. They were to be sanctified and solemnized with holy convocations, that the services of these feasts might appear the more honourable and august, and the people the more unanimous in the performance of them; it was for the honour of God and his institutions, which sought not corners and the purity of which would be best preserved by the public administration of them; it was also for the edification of the people in love that the feasts were to be observed as holy convocations.

II. A repetition of the law of the sabbath in the first place. Though the annual feasts were made more remarkable by the general attendance at the sanctuary, yet these must not eclipse the brightness of the sabbath, v. 3. They are here told, 1. That on that day they must withdraw themselves from all the affairs and business of the world. It is a *sabbath of rest*, typifying our spiritual rest from sin, and in God: *You shall do no work therein*. On other holy days they were forbidden to do any servile work (v. 7), but on the sabbath, and the day of atonement (which is also called a sabbath), they were to do no work at all, no, not the dressing of meat. 2. On that day they must employ themselves in the service of God. (1.) It is a *holy convocation*; that is, "If it lie within your reach, you shall sanctify it in a religious assembly: let as many as can come to the door of the tabernacle, and let others meet elsewhere for prayer, and praise, and the reading of the law," as in the schools of the prophets, while prophecy

continued, and afterwards in the synagogues. Christ appointed the New-Testament sabbath to be a holy convocation, by meeting his disciples once and again (and perhaps oftener) on the first day of the week. (2.) "Whether you have opportunity of sanctifying it in a holy convocation or not, yet let it be *the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings*. Put a difference between that day and other days in your families. It is the *sabbath of the Lord*, the day on which he rested from the work of creation, and on which he has appointed us to rest; let it be observed in all your dwellings, even now that you dwell in tents." Note, God's sabbaths are to be religiously observed in every private house, by every family apart, as well as by many families together in holy convocations. The sabbath of the Lord in our dwellings will be their beauty, strength, and safety; it will sanctify, edify, and glorify them.

Verses 4-14

Here again the feasts are called the *feasts of the Lord*, because he appointed them. Jeroboam's feast, which he *devised of his own heart* (1 Ki. 12:33), was an affront to God, and a reproach upon the people. These feasts were to be proclaimed in their seasons (v. 4), and the seasons God chose for them were in March, May and September (according to our present computation), not in winter, because travelling would then be uncomfortable, when the days were short, and the ways foul; not in the middle of summer, because then in those countries they were gathering in their harvest and vintage, and could be ill spared from their country business. Thus graciously does God consult our comfort in his appointments, obliging us thereby religiously to regard his glory in our observance of them, and not to complain of them as a burden. The solemnities appointed them were, 1. Many and returned frequently, which was intended to preserve in them a deep sense of God and religion, and to prevent their inclining to the superstitions of the heathen. God kept them fully employed in his service, that they might not have time to hearken to the temptations of the idolatrous neighbourhood they lived in. 2. They were most of them times of joy and rejoicing. The weekly sabbath is so, and all their yearly solemnities, except the day of atonement. God would thus teach them that wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and engage them to his service by encouraging them to be cheerful in it and to sing at their work. Seven days were days of strict rest and holy convocations; the first day and the seventh of the feast of unleavened bread, the day of pentecost, the day of the feast of trumpets, the first day and the eighth of the feast of tabernacles, and the day of atonement: here were six for holy joy and one only for holy mourning. We are commanded to *rejoice evermore*, but not to be evermore weeping. Here is,

I. A repetition of the law of the passover, which was to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month, in remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt and the distinguishing preservation of their first-born, mercies never to be forgotten. This feast was to begin with the killing of the paschal lamb, v. 5. It was to continue seven days, during all which time they were to eat sad bread, that was unleavened (v. 6), and the first and last day of the seven were to be days of *holy rest* and *holy convocations*, v. 7, 8. They were not idle days spent in sport and recreation (as many that are called Christians spend their holy days), but offerings were *made by fire unto the Lord* at his altar; and we have reason to think that the people were taught to employ their time in prayer, and praise, and godly meditation.

II. An order for the offering of a sheaf of the first-fruits, upon the second day of the feast of unleavened bread; the first is

called the *sabbath*, because it was observed as a sabbath (v. 11), and, on the morrow after, they had this solemnity. A sheaf or handful of new corn was brought to the priest, who was to wave it up, in token of his presenting it to the God of Heaven, and to wave it to and fro before the Lord, as the Lord of the whole earth, and this should be accepted for them as a thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy to them in clothing their fields with corn, and of their dependence upon God, and desire towards him, for the preserving of it to their use. For it was the expression both of prayer and praise, v. 11. A lamb for a burnt-offering was to be offered with it, v. 12. As the sacrifice of animals was generally attended with meat-offerings, so this sacrifice of corn was attended with a burnt-offering, that bread and flesh might be set together on God's table. They are forbidden to eat of their new corn till this handful was offered to God; for it was fit, if God and Israel feast together, that he should be served first. And the offering of this sheaf of first-fruits in the name of the whole congregation did, as it were, sanctify to them their whole harvest, and give them a comfortable use of all the rest; for then we may *eat our bread with joy* when we have, in some measure, performed our duty to God, and God has accepted our works, for thus all our enjoyments become clean to us. Now, 1. This law was given now, though there was no occasion for putting it in execution till they came to Canaan: in the wilderness they sowed no corn; but God's feeding them there with *bread from heaven* obliged them hereafter not to grudge him his share of their bread out of the earth. We find that when they came into Canaan the manna ceased upon the very day that the sheaf of first-fruits was offered; they had eaten of the old corn the day before (Jos. 5:11), and then on this day they offered the first-fruits, by which they became entitled to the new corn too (v. 12), so that there was no more occasion for manna. 1. This sheaf of first-fruits was typical of our Lord Jesus, who has risen from the dead as the *first-fruits of those that slept*, 1 Co. 15:20. That *branch of the Lord* (Isa. 4:2) was then presented to him, in virtue of the sacrifice of himself, the Lamb of God, and it was accepted for us. It is very observable that our Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the very day that the first-fruits were offered, to show that he was the substance of this shadow. 3. We are taught by this law to *honour the Lord with our substance, and with the first-fruits of all our increase*, Prov. 3:9. They were not to eat of their new corn till God's part was offered to him out of it (v. 14), for we must always begin with God, begin our lives with him, begin every day with him, begin every meal with him, begin every affair and business with him; *seek first the kingdom of God*.

Verses 15-22

Here is the institution of the feast of *pentecost*, or *weeks*, as it is called (Deu. 16:9), because it was observed fifty days, or seven weeks, after the passover. It is also called the *feast of harvest*, Ex. 23:16. For as the presenting of the sheaf of first-fruits was an introduction to the harvest, and gave them liberty to put in the sickle, so they solemnized the finishing of their corn-harvest at this feast. 1. Then they offered a handful of ears of barley, now they offered *two loaves of wheaten bread*, v. 17. This was leavened. At the passover they ate unleavened bread, because it was in remembrance of the bread they ate when they came out of Egypt, which was unleavened; but now at pentecost it was leavened, because it was an acknowledgment of God's goodness to them in their ordinary food, which was leavened. 2. With that sheaf of first-fruits they offered only one lamb for a burnt-offering, but with these loaves of first-fruits they offered seven lambs, two rams, and one bullock, all for a burnt-offering, so giving glory to God, as the Lord of their land and the Lord of their harvest, by whose favour they lived and to

whose praise they ought to live. They offered likewise a kid for a sin-offering, so taking shame to themselves as unworthy of the bread they ate, and imploring pardon for their sins, by which they had forfeited their harvest-mercies, and which they had been guilty of in the receiving of them. And lastly, two lambs for a sacrifice of peace-offerings, to beg a blessing upon the corn they had gathered in, which would be neither sure nor sweet to them without that blessing, Hag. 1:9. These were the only peace-offerings that were offered on the behalf of the whole congregation, and they were reckoned *most holy* offerings, whereas other peace-offerings were but *holy*. All these offerings are here appointed, v. 18–20. 3. That one day was to be kept with a holy convocation, v. 21. It was one of the days on which all Israel was to meet God and one another, at the place which the Lord should choose. Some suggest that whereas seven days were to make up the feast of unleavened bread there was only one day appointed for the feast of pentecost, because this was a busy time of the year with them, and God allowed them speedily to return to their work in the country. This annual feast was instituted in remembrance of the giving of the law upon mount Sinai, the fiftieth day after they came out of Egypt. That was the feast which they were told in Egypt must be observed to God in the wilderness, as a memorial of which ever after they kept this feast. But the period and perfection of this feast was the pouring out of the Spirit upon the apostles on the day of this feast (Acts 2:1), in which the law of faith was given, fifty days after Christ our passover was sacrificed for us. And on that day (as bishop Patrick well expresses it) the apostles, having themselves received the *first-fruits of the Spirit*, begat three thousand souls, through the word of truth, and presented them, as the first-fruits of the Christian church, to God and the Lamb.

To the institution of the feast of pentecost is annexed a repetition of that law which we had before (ch. 19:9), by which they were required to leave the gleanings of their fields, and the corn that grew on the ends of the butts, for the poor, v. 22. Probably it comes in here as a thing which the priests must take occasion to remind the people of, when they brought their first-fruits, intimating to them that to obey even in this small matter was better than sacrifice, and that, unless they were obedient, their offerings should not be accepted. It also taught them that the joy of harvest should express itself in charity to the poor, who must have their due out of what we have, as well as God his. Those that are truly sensible of the mercy they receive from God will without grudging show mercy to the poor.

Verses 23-32

Here is, I. The institution of the feast of trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month, v. 24, 25. That which was now the seventh month had been reckoned the first month, and the year of jubilee was still to begin with this month (ch. 25:8), so that this was their new year's day. It was to be as their other yearly sabbaths, a day of holy rest—*You shall do no servile work therein*; and a day of holy work—*You shall offer an offering to the Lord*; concerning these particular directions were afterwards given, Num. 29:1. That which is here made peculiar to this festival is that it was *a memorial of blowing of trumpets*. They blew the trumpet every new moon (Ps. 81:3), but in the new moon of the seventh month it was to be done with more than ordinary solemnity; for they began to blow at sun-rise and continued till sun-set. Now, 1. This is here said to be a *memorial*, perhaps of the sound of the trumpet upon mount Sinai when the law was given, which must never be forgotten. Some think that it was a memorial of the creation of the world, which is supposed to have been in autumn; for which reason this was, till now,

the first month. The mighty word by which God made the world is called *the voice of his thunder* (Ps. 104:7); fitly therefore was it commemorated by blowing of trumpets, or a memorial of *shouting*, as the Chaldee renders it; for, when the *foundations of the earth were fastened, all the sons of God shouted for joy*, Job 38:6, 7. 2. The Jewish writers suppose it to have a spiritual signification. Now at the beginning of the year they were called by this sound of trumpet to shake off their spiritual drowsiness, to search and try their ways, and to amend them: the day of atonement was the ninth day after this; and thus they were awakened to prepare for that day, by sincere and serious repentance, that it might be indeed to them a day of atonement. And they say, "The devout Jews exercised themselves more in good works between the feast of trumpets and the day of expiation than at any other time of the year." 3. It was typical of the preaching of the gospel, by which joyful souls were to be called in to serve God and keep a spiritual feast to him. The conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ is said to be by the *blowing of a great trumpet*, Isa. 27:13.

II. A repetition of the law of the day of atonement, that is, so much of it as concerned the people. 1. They must on this day rest from all manner of work, and not only from servile works as on other annual festivals; it must be as strict a rest as that of the weekly sabbath, v. 28, 30, 31. The reason is: *For it is a day of atonement*. Note, The humbling of our souls for sin, and the making of our peace with God, is work that requires the whole man, and the closest application of mind imaginable, and all little enough. He that would do the work of a day of atonement in its day, as it should be done, had need lay aside the thoughts of every thing else. On that day God *spoke peace unto his people, and unto his saints*; and therefore they must lay aside all their worldly business, that they might the more clearly and the more reverently hear that voice of joy and gladness. Fasting days should be days of rest. 2. They must afflict their souls, and this upon pain of being cut off by the hand of God, v. 27, 29, 32. They must mortify the body, and deny the appetites of it, in token of their sorrow for the sins they had committed, and the mortifying of their indwelling corruptions. Every soul must be afflicted, because every soul was polluted, and guilty before God; while none have fulfilled the law of innocency none are exempt from the law of repentance, besides that every man must sigh and cry for the *abominations of the land*. 3. The entire day must be observed: *From even to even you shall afflict your souls* (v. 32), that is, "You shall begin your fast, and the expressions of your humiliation, in the *ninth day of the month at even*." They were to leave off all their worldly labour, and compose themselves to the work of the day approaching, some time before sun-set on the ninth day, and not to take any food (except children and sick people) till after sun-set on the tenth day. Note, The eves of solemn days ought to be employed in solemn preparation. When work for God and our souls is to be done, we should not straiten ourselves in time for the doing of it; for how can we spend our time better? Of this sabbath the rule here given is to be understood: *From even unto even shall you celebrate your sabbath*.

Verses 33-44

We have here, I. The institution of the feast of tabernacles, which was one of the three great feasts at which all the males were bound to attend, and celebrated with more expressions of joy than any of them.

1. As to the directions for regulating this feast, observe, (1.) It was to be observed *on the fifteenth day of the seventh month* (v. 34), but five days after the day of atonement. We may suppose, though they were not all bound to attend on the day of

atonement, as on the three great festivals, yet that many of the devout Jews came up so many days before the feast of tabernacles as to enjoy the opportunity of attending on the day of atonement. Now, [1.] The afflicting of their souls on the day of atonement prepared them for the joy of the feast of tabernacles. The more we are grieved and humbled for sin, the better qualified we are for the comforts of the Holy Ghost. [2.] The joy of this feast recompensed them for the sorrow of that fast; for those that *sow in tears* shall *reap in joy*. (2.) It was to continue eight days, the first and last of which were to be observed as sabbaths, days of holy rest and holy convocations, v. 35, 36, 39. The sacrifices to be offered on these eight days we have a very large appointment of, Num. 29:12, etc. (3.) During the first seven days of this feast all the people were to leave their houses, and the women and children in them, and to dwell in booths made of the boughs of thick trees, particularly palm trees, v. 40, 42. The Jews make the taking of the branches to be a distinct ceremony from the making of the booths. It is said, indeed (Neh. 8:15), that they *made their booths of the branches of trees*, which they might do, and yet use that further expression of joy, the carrying of palm-branches in their hands, which appears to have been a token of triumph upon other occasions (Jn. 12:13), and is alluded to, Rev. 7:9. The eighth day some make a distinct feast of itself, but it is called (Jn. 7:37) *that great day of the feast*; it was the day on which they returned from their booths, to settle again in their own houses. (4.) They were to *rejoice before the Lord God* during all the time of this feast, v. 40. The tradition of the Jews is that they were to express their joy by dancing, and singing hymns of praise to God, with musical instruments: and not the common people only, but the wise men of Israel, and their elders, were to do it in the court of the sanctuary: for (say they) the joy with which a man rejoices in doing a commandment is really a great service.

2. As to the design of this feast,

(1.) It was to be kept in remembrance of their dwelling in tents in the wilderness. Thus it is expounded here (v. 43): *That your generations may know*, not only by the written history, but by this ocular tradition, *that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths*. Thus it kept in perpetual remembrance, [1.] The meanness of their beginning, and the low and desolate state out of which God advanced that people. Note, Those that are comfortably fixed ought often to call to mind their former unsettled state, when they were but little in their own eyes. [2.] The mercy of God to them, that, when they dwelt in tabernacles, God not only set up a tabernacle for himself among them, but, with the utmost care and tenderness imaginable, hung a canopy over them, even the cloud that sheltered them from the heat of the sun. God's former mercies to us and our fathers ought to be kept in everlasting remembrance. The eighth day was the great day of this feast, because then they returned to their own houses again, and remembered how, after they had long dwelt in tents in the wilderness, at length they came to a happy settlement in the land of promise, where they dwelt in goodly houses. And they would the more sensibly value and be thankful for the comforts and conveniences of their houses when they had been seven days dwelling in booths. It is good for those that have ease and plenty sometimes to learn what it is to endure hardness.

(2.) It was a feast of in-gathering, so it is called, Ex. 23:16. When they had gathered in the *fruit of their land* (v. 39), the vintage as well as the harvest, then they were to keep this feast in thankfulness to God for all the increase of the year; and some think that the eighth day of the feast had special reference to this ground of the institution. Note, The joy of harvest ought to be

improved for the furtherance of our joy in God. *The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof*, and therefore whatever we have the comfort of he must have the glory of, especially when any mercy is perfected.

(3.) It was a typical feast. It is supposed by many that our blessed Saviour was born much about the time of this feast; then he left his mansions of light above to *tabernacle among us* (Jn. 1:14), and he dwelt in booths. And the worship of God under the New Testament is prophesied of under the notion of keeping the *feast of tabernacles*, Zec. 14:16. For, [1.] The gospel of Christ teaches us to dwell in tabernacles, to sit loose to this world, as those that have here no continuing city, but by faith, and hope and holy contempt of present things, to *go out to Christ without the camp*, Heb. 13:13, 14. [2.] It teaches us to rejoice before the Lord our God. Those are the circumcision, Israelites indeed, that always *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, Phil. 3:3. And the more we are taken off from this world the less liable we are to the interruption of our joys.

II. The summary and conclusion of these institutions.

1. God appointed these feasts (v. 37, 38), *besides the sabbaths and your free-will offerings*. This teaches us, (1.) That calls to extraordinary services will not excuse us from our constant stated performances. Within the days of the feast of tabernacles there must fall at least one sabbath, which must be as strictly observed as any other. (2.) That God's institutions leave room for free-will offerings. Not that we may invent what he never instituted, but we may repeat what he has instituted, ordinarily, the oftener the better. God is well pleased with a willing people.

2. Moses declared them to the children of Israel, v. 44. He let them know what God appointed, and neither more nor less. Thus Paul delivered to the churches what he had *received from the Lord*. We have reason to be thankful that the feasts of the Lord, declared unto us, are not so numerous, nor the observance of them so burdensome and costly, as theirs then were, but more spiritual and significant, and surer sweeter earnest of the everlasting feast, at the last in-gathering, which we hope to be celebrating to eternity.

Chapter 24

In this chapter we have, I. A repetition of the laws concerning the lamps and the show-bread (v. 1-9). II. A violation of the law against blasphemy, with the imprisonment, trial, condemnation, and execution, of the blasphemer (v. 10–14, with v. 23). III. The law against blasphemy reinforced (v. 15, 16), with sundry other laws (v. 17, etc.).

Verses 1-9

Care is here taken, and orders are given, for the decent furnishing of the candlestick and table in God's house.

I. The lamps must always be kept burning. The law for this we had before, Ex. 27:20, 21. It is here repeated, probably because it now began to be put in execution, when other things were settled. 1. The people were to provide oil (v. 2), and this, as every thing else that was to be used in God's service, must be of the best, *pure olive-oil, beaten*, probably it was double-strained. This was to *cause the lamps to burn*; all our English copies read it *lamps*, but in the original it is singular in v. 2—to *cause the lamp to burn*; but plural in v. 4—he *shall order the lamps*. The seven lamps made all one lamp, in allusion to which the blessed Spirit of grace is represented by *seven lamps of fire before the throne* (Rev. 4:5), for there are *diversities of gifts, but one Spirit*, 1 Co. 12:4. Ministers are as burning and shining lights in Christ's church, but it is the duty of people to provide comfortably for them, as Israel for the lamps. Scandalous maintenance makes a scandalous ministry. 2. The priests were to tend the lamps; they must snuff them, clean the candlestick, and supply them with oil, morning and evening, v. 3, 4. Thus it is the work of the ministers of the gospel to *hold forth that word of life*, not to set up new lights, but, by expounding and preaching the word, to make the light of it more clear and extensive. This was the ordinary way of keeping the lamps burning; but, when the church was poor and in distress, we find its lamps fed constantly with *oil from the good olives* immediately, without the ministry of priest or people (Zec. 4:2, 3); for, though God has tied us to means, he has not tied himself to them, but will take effectual care that his lamp never go out in the world for want of oil.

II. The table must always be kept spread. This was appointed before, Ex. 25:30. And here also, 1. The table was furnished with bread; not dainties nor varieties to gratify a luxurious palate, but twelve loaves or cakes of bread, v. 5, 6. Where there is plenty of bread there is no famine; and where bread is not there is no feast. There was a loaf for every tribe, for *in our Father's house there is bread enough*. They were all provided for by the divine bounty, and were all welcome to the divine grace. Even after the revolt of the ten tribes this number of loaves was continued (2 Chr. 13:11), for the sake of those few of each tribe that retained their affection to the temple and continued their attendance on it. 2. A handful of frankincense was put in a golden saucer, upon or by each row, v. 7. When the bread was removed, and given to the priests, this frankincense was burnt upon the golden altar (I suppose) over and above the daily incense: and this was for a memorial instead of the bread, an offering made by fire, as the handful of the meat-offering which was burnt upon the altar is called the *memorial thereof*, ch. 2:2. Thus a little was accepted as a humble acknowledgment, and all the loaves were consigned to the priests. All God's spiritual Israel, typified by the twelve loaves, are made through Christ a sweet savour to him, and their prayers are said to come up before God *for a memorial*, Acts 10:4. The word is borrowed from the ceremonial law. 3. Every sabbath it was renewed. When the loaves had

stood there a week, the priests had them to eat with other holy things that were to be eaten in the holy place (v. 9), and new ones were provided at the public charge, and put in the room of them, v. 8. The Jews say, "The hands of those priests that put on were mixed with theirs that took off, that the table might be never empty, but the bread might be *before the Lord continually*." God is never unprovided for the entertainment of those that visit him, as men often are, Lu. 11:5. Every one of those cakes contained two tenth-deals, that is, two omers of fine flour; just so much manna every Israelite gathered on the sixth day for the sabbath, Ex. 16:22. Hence some infer that this show-bread, which was set on the table on the sabbath, was intended as a memorial of the manna wherewith they were fed in the wilderness. Christ's ministers should provide new bread for his house every sabbath day, the production of their fresh studies in the scripture, that *their proficiency may appear to all*, 1 Tim. 4:1, 5.

Verses 10-23

Evil manners, we say, beget good laws. We have here an account of the evil manners of a certain nameless mongrel Israelite, and the good laws occasioned thereby.

I. The offender was the son of an Egyptian father and an Israelitish mother (v. 10); his mother was of the tribe of Dan, v. 11. Neither he nor his father is named, but his mother only, who was an Israelite. This notice is taken of his parentage either, 1. To intimate what occasioned the quarrel he was engaged in. The Jews say, "He offered to set up his tent among the Danites in the right of his mother, but was justly opposed by some or other of that tribe, and informed that his father being an Egyptian he had no part nor lot in the matter, but must look upon himself as a stranger." Or, 2. To show the common ill effect of such mixed marriages. When a daughter of Israel would marry an idolatrous malignant Egyptian, what could be the fruit of such a marriage but a blasphemer? For the children will be apt to take after the worse side, whichsoever it is, and will sooner learn of an Egyptian father to blaspheme than of an Israelitish mother to pray and praise.

II. The occasion of the offence was contention: He *strove with a man of Israel*. The mixed multitude of Egyptians that came up with Israel (Ex. 12:38) were in many ways hurtful to them, and this was one, they were often the authors of strife. The way to preserve the peace of the church is to preserve the purity of it. In this strife he broke out into ill language. Note, When quarrels begin we know not what mischief they will make before they end, nor how treat a matter a little fire may kindle. When men's passion is up they are apt to forget both their reason and their religion, which is a good reason why we should not be apt either to give or to resent provocation, but leave off strife before it be meddled with, because the beginning of it is *as the letting forth of water*.

III. The offence itself was blasphemy and cursing, v. 11. It is supposed that his cause came to be heard before the judges, who determined that he had no right to the privileges of an Israelite, his father being an Egyptian, and that, being enraged at the sentence, 1. He *blasphemed the name of the Lord*. He blasphemed *the name*, that is, he blasphemed God, who is known by his name only, not by his nature, or any similitude. Not as if God were a mere name, but his is a name above every name. The translators add *of the Lord*, which is implied, but not expressed, in the original, for the greater reverence of the divine Majesty: it is a shame that it should be found on record that the very name of Jehovah should be blasphemed; *tell it not in Gath*. It is a

fond conceit of the superstitious Jews that his blasphemy was in pronouncing the name of *Jehovah*, which they call ineffable: he that made himself known by that name never forbade the calling of him by that name. It is probable that finding himself aggrieved by the divine appointment, which separated between the Israelites and strangers, he impudently reproached both the law and the Law-maker, and set him at defiance. 2. He cursed either God himself (and then his cursing was the same with blaspheming) or the person with whom he strove. Imprecations of mischief are the hellish language of hasty passion, as well as of rooted malice. Or perhaps he cursed the judges that gave sentence against him; he flew in the face of the court, and ridiculed the processes of it; thus he added sin to sin.

IV. The caution with which he was proceeded against for this sin. The witnesses or inferior judges brought him and his case (which was somewhat extraordinary) unto Moses (v. 11), according to the order settled (Ex. 18:22), and Moses himself would not give judgment hastily, but committed the offender into custody, till he had consulted the oracle in this case. Note, Judges must deliberate; both those that give the verdict and those that give the sentence must consider diligently what they do, and do nothing rashly, for *the judgment is God's* (Deu. 1:17), and before him there will be a rehearing of the cause. They waited to know what was *the mind of the Lord*, whether he was to be put to death by the hand of the magistrate or to be left to the judgment of God: or, rather, they wanted to know whether he should be stoned, as those were to be that only cursed their *parents* (ch. 20:9), or whether, the crime being so much greater, some sorer punishment should be inflicted on him. Note, Those that sit in judgment should sincerely desire, and by prayer and the use of all good means should endeavour to *know the mind of the Lord*, because they *judge for him* (2 Chr. 19:6) and to him they are accountable.

V. Sentence passed upon this offender by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth himself: *Let all the congregation stone him*, v. 14. God could have cut him off by an immediate stroke from heaven, but he would put this honour upon the institution of magistracy to make use of it for the supporting and vindicating of his own glory in the world. Observe, 1. The place of execution appointed: *Bring him forth without the camp*. To signify their detestation of the crime, they must thus cast out the criminal as an abominable branch, and separate him from them as an unclean thing and unworthy a place in the camp of Israel. 2. The executioners: *Let all the congregation do it*, to show their zeal for the honour of God's name. Every man should have a stone to throw at him that blasphemes God, reckoning himself nearly concerned in the reproaches cast on God, Ps. 69:9. Thus also the greater terror would be cast upon the congregation; those that once helped to stone a blasphemer would ever after dread every thing that bordered upon blasphemy, that looked like it or looked towards it. 3. The solemnity of the execution; before the congregation stoned him, the witnesses were to *lay their hands upon his head*. The Jews say that this was used in the execution of no criminals but blasphemers; and that it was done with words to this purport, "*Thy blood be upon thy own head, for thou thyself hast occasioned it*. Let no blame be laid on the law, judges, juries, or witnesses; *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*."

VI. A standing law made upon this occasion for the stoning of blasphemers, v. 15, 16. Magistrates are the guardians of both tables, and ought to be as jealous for the honour of God against those that speak contemptuously of his being and government as for the public peace and safety against the disturbers of them. 1. A great stress is laid upon this law, as in no case to be

dispensed with: *He shall surely be put to death; they shall certainly stone him*. Those that lightly esteemed God's honour might think it hard to make a man an offender for a word (words are but wind); but God would let them know that they must not make light of such words as these, which come from malice against God in the heart of him that speaks, and must occasion either great guilt or great grief to those that hear. 2. It is made to extend to the strangers that sojourned among them, as well as those that were born in the land. God never made any law to compel strangers to be circumcised and embrace the Jewish religion (proselytes made by force would be no honour to the God of Israel), but he made a law to restrain strangers from speaking evil of the God of Israel. 3. He that was put to death for blasphemy is said to *bear his sin*, in the punishment of it; no sacrifice being appointed, on the head of which the sin might be transferred, he himself was to bear it upon his own head, as a sacrifice to divine justice. So *his own tongue fell upon him* (Ps. 64:8), and the tongue of a blasphemer will fall heavily.

VII. A repetition of some other laws annexed to this new law. 1. That murder should be punished with death (v. 17, and again v. 21), according to an ancient law in Noah's time (Gen. 9:6), and the very law of nature, Gen. 4:10. 2. That maimers should in like manner be punished by the law of retaliation, v. 19, 20. Not that men might in these cases be their own avengers, but they might appeal to the civil magistrate, who should award suffering to the injurious and satisfaction to the injured as should be thought fit in proportion to the hurt done. This law we had before, Ex. 22:4, 5. And it was more agreeable to that dispensation, in which were revealed the rigour of the law and what sin deserved, than to the dispensation we are under, in which are revealed the grace of the gospel and the remission of sins: and therefore our Saviour has set aside this law (Mt. 5:38, 39), not to restrain magistrates from executing public justice, but to restrain us all from returning personal injuries and to oblige us to forgive as we are and hope to be forgiven. 3. That hurt done wilfully to a neighbour's cattle should be punished by making good the damage, v. 18, 21. Thus the divine law took not only their lives, but their goods also under its protection. Those beasts which belonged to no particular person, but were, as our law speaks, *ferae naturae—of a wild nature*, it was lawful for them to kill; but not those which any man had a property in. Does God take care for oxen? Yes; for our sakes he does. 4. That strangers, as well as native Israelites, should be both entitled to the benefit of this law, so as not to suffer wrong, and liable to the penalty of this law in case they did wrong. And, it should seem, this is it that brings in these laws here, to show how equitable it was that strangers as well as Israelites should be punished for blasphemy, because strangers as well as Israelites were punishable for other crimes. And there may be this further reason for the recognition of these laws here, God would hereby show what provision he had made for man's safety, in punishing those that were injurious to him, which should be an argument with magistrates to be jealous for his honour, and to punish those that blasphemed his name. If God took care for their comfort, they ought to take care for his glory.

VIII. The execution of the blasphemer. Moses did, as it were, sign the warrant or it: *He spoke unto the children of Israel to do it, and they did as the Lord commanded Moses*, v. 23. This teaches that death is the wages of sin, and that blasphemy in particular is an *iniquity to be punished by the judges*. But, if those who thus profane the name of God escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgments. This blasphemer was the first that died by the law of Moses. Stephen, the first that died for the gospel, died by the abuse of this law; the martyr and the malefactor

suffered the same death: but how vast the difference between them!

Chapter 25

The law of this chapter concerns the lands and estates of the Israelites in Canaan, the occupying and transferring of which were to be under the divine direction, as well as the management of religious worship; for, as the tabernacle was a holy house, so Canaan was a holy land; and upon that account, as much as any thing, it was the glory of all lands. In token of a peculiar title which God had to this land, and a right to dispose of it, he appointed, I. That every seventh year should be a year of rest from occupying the land, a sabbatical year (v. 1-7). In this God expected from them extraordinary instances of faith and obedience, and they might expect from God extraordinary instances of power and goodness in providing for them (v. 18-22). II. That every fiftieth year should be a year of jubilee, that is, 1. A year of release of debts and mortgages, and return to the possession of their alienated lands (v. 8-17). Particular directions are given, (1.) Concerning the sale and redemption of lands (v. 23-28). (2.) Of houses in cities and villages, with a proviso for Levite-cities (v. 29-34). 2. A year of release of servants and bond-slaves. (1.) Here is inserted a law for the kind usage of poor debtors (v. 35-38). (2.) Then comes the law for the discharge of all Israelites that were sold for servants, in the year of jubilee, if they were not redeemed before. [1.] If they were sold to Israelites (v. 39-46). And, [2.] If sold to proselytes (v. 47-55). All these appointments have something moral and of perpetual obligation in them, though in the letter of them they were not only peculiar to the Jews, but to them only while they were in Canaan.

Verses 1-7

The law of Moses laid a great deal of stress upon the sabbath, the sanctification of which was the earliest and most ancient of all divine institutions, designed for the keeping up of the knowledge and worship of the Creator among men; that law not only revived the observance of the weekly sabbath, but, for the further advancement of the honour of them, added the institution of a sabbatical year: *In the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land*, v. 4. And hence the Jews collect that vulgar tradition that after the world has stood six thousand years (a thousand years being to God as one day) it shall cease, and the eternal sabbath shall succeed—a weak foundation on which to build the fixing of that day and hour which it is God's prerogative to know. This sabbatical year began in September, at the end of harvest, the seventh month of their ecclesiastical year: and the law was, 1. That at the seed-time, which immediately followed the end of their in-gathering, they should sow no corn in their land, and that they should not in the spring dress their vineyards, and consequently that they should not expect either harvest or vintage the next year. 2. That what their ground did produce of itself they should not claim any property or use in, otherwise than from hand to mouth, but leave it for the poor, servants, strangers, and cattle, v. 5-7. It must be a sabbath of rest to the land; they must neither do any work about it, nor expect any fruit from it; all annual labours must be intermitted in the seventh year, as much as daily labours on the seventh day. The Jews say they "began not to reckon for the sabbatical year till they had completed the conquest of Canaan, which was in the eighth year of Joshua; the seventh year after that was the first sabbatical year, and so the fiftieth year was the jubilee." This year there was to be a general release of debts (Deu. 15:1, 2), and a public reading of the law in the feast (Deu. 31:10, 11), to make it the more solemn. Now, (1.) God would hereby show them that he was their landlord, and that they were tenants at will under him. Landlords are wont to stipulate with their tenants

when they shall break up their ground, how long they shall till it, and when they shall let it rest: God would thus give, grant, and convey, that good land to them, under such provisos and limitations as should let them know that they were not proprietors, but dependents on their Lord. (2.) It was a kindness to their land to let it rest sometimes, and would keep it *in heart* (as our husbandmen express it) for posterity, whose satisfaction God would have them to consult, and not to use the ground as if it were designed only for one age. (3.) When they were thus for a whole year taken off from all country business, they would have the more leisure to attend the exercises of religion, and to get the knowledge of God and his law. (4.) They were hereby taught to be charitable and generous, and not to engross all to themselves, but to be willing that others should share with them in the gifts of God's bounty, which the earth brought forth of itself. (5.) They were brought to live in a constant dependence upon the divine providence, finding that, as man lives not by bread alone, so he has bread, not by his own industry alone, but, if God pleases, by the word of blessing from the mouth of God, without any care or pains of man, Mt. 4:4. (6.) They were reminded of the easy life man lived in paradise, when he ate of every good thing, not, as since, in the sweat of his face. Labour and toil came in with sin. (7.) They were taught to consider how the poor lived, that did neither sow nor reap, even by the blessing of God upon a little. (8.) This year of rest typified the spiritual rest which all believers enter into through Christ, our true Noah, who giveth us comfort and rest *concerning our work, and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed*, Gen. 5:29. Through him we are eased of the burden of worldly care and labour, both being sanctified and sweetened to us, and we are enabled and encouraged to live by faith. And, as the fruits of this sabbath of the land were enjoyed in common, so the salvation wrought out by Christ is a common salvation; and this sabbatical year seems to have been revived in the Christian church, when the believers had *all things common*, Acts 2:44.

Verses 8-22

Here is, I. The general institution of the jubilee, v. 8. etc.

1. When it was to be observed: after *seven sabbaths of years* (v. 8), whether the forty-ninth or fiftieth is a great question among learned men: that it should be the seventh sabbatical year, that is, the forty-ninth (which by a very common form of speech is called the fiftieth), seems to me most probable, and is, I think, made pretty clear and the objections removed by that learned chronologer Calvisius; but this is not a place for arguing the question. Seven sabbaths of weeks were reckoned from the passover to the feast of pentecost (or fiftieth day, for so pentecost signifies), and so seven sabbaths of years from one jubilee to another, and the seventh is called the fiftieth; and all this honour is put upon the sevenths for the sake of God's resting the seventh day from the work of creation.

2. How it was to be proclaimed, with sound of trumpet in all parts of the country (v. 5), both to give notice to all persons of it, and to express their joy and triumph in it; and the word *jobel*, or *jubilee*, is supposed to signify some particular sound of the trumpet distinguishable from any other; for the trumpet that gives an uncertain sound is of little service, 1 Co. 14:8. The trumpet was sounded in the close of the day of atonement; thence the jubilee commenced, and very fitly; when they had been humbling and afflicting their souls for sin, then they were made to hear this voice of *joy and gladness*, Ps. 11:8. When their peace was made with God, then liberty was proclaimed; for the removal of guilt is necessary to make way for the entrance of

all true comfort, Rom. 5:1, 2. In allusion to this solemn proclamation of the jubilee, it was foretold concerning our Lord Jesus that he should *preach the acceptable year of the Lord*, Isa. 61:2. He sent his apostles to proclaim it with the trumpet of the everlasting gospel, which they were to preach to every creature. And it stands still foretold that at the last day the trumpet shall sound, which shall release the dead out of the bondage of the grave, and restore us to our possessions.

3. What was to be done in that year extraordinary; besides the common rest of the land, which was observed every sabbatical year (v. 11, 12), and the release of personal debts (Deu. 15:2, 3), there was to be the legal restoration of every Israelite to all the property, and all the liberty, which had been alienated from him since the last jubilee; so that never was any people so secured in their liberty and property (those glories of a people) as Israel was. Effectual care was taken that while they kept close to God these should not only not be taken from them by the violence of others, but not thrown away by their own folly.

(1.) The property which every man had in his dividend of the land of Canaan could not be alienated any longer than till the year of jubilee, and then he or his should return to it, and have a title to it as undisputed, and the possession of it as undisturbed, as ever (v. 10, 13): "*You shall return every man to his possession*; so that if a man had sold or mortgaged his estate, or any part of it, it should then return to him or his heirs, free of all charge and encumbrance. Now this was no wrong to the purchaser, because the year of jubilee was fixed, and every man knew when it would come, and made his bargain accordingly. By our law indeed, if lands be granted to a man and his heirs, upon condition that he should never sell or alienate them, the grant is good, but the condition is void and repugnant: *Iniquum est ingenuis hominibus* (say the lawyers) *non esse liberam rerum suarum alienationem*—*It is unjust to prevent free men from alienating their own possessions*. Yet it is agreed in the books that if the king grant lands to a man in fee upon condition he shall not alienate, the condition is good. Now God would show his people Israel that their land was his, and they were his tenants; and therefore he ties them up that they shall not have power to sell, but only to make leases for any term of years, not going beyond the next jubilee. By this means it was provided, [1.] That their genealogies should be carefully preserved, which would be of use for clearing our Saviour's pedigree. [2.] That the distinction of tribes should be kept up; for, though a man might purchase lands in another tribe, yet he could not retain them longer than till the year of jubilee, and then they would revert of course. [3.] That none should grow exorbitantly rich, by laying *house to house, and field to field* (Isa. 5:8), but should rather apply themselves to the cultivating of what they had than the enlarging of their possessions. The wisdom of the Roman commonwealth sometimes provided that no man should be master of above 500 acres. [4.] That no family should be sunk and ruined, and condemned to perpetual poverty. This particular care God took for the support of the honour of that people, and the preserving, not only of that good land to the nation in general, but of every man's share to his family in particular, for a perpetual inheritance, that it might the better typify that good part which shall *never be taken away* from those that have it.

(2.) The liberty which every man was born to, if it were sold or forfeited, should likewise return at the year of jubilee: *You shall return every man to his family*, v. 10. Those that were sold into other families thereby became strangers to their own; but in this year of redemption they were to return. This was typical of our redemption by Christ from the slavery of sin and Satan, and our restoration to the glorious liberty of the children of God. Some compute that the very year in which Christ died was a

year of jubilee, and the last that ever was kept. But, however that be, we are sure it is the Son that *makes us free*, and then we are *free indeed*.

II. A law upon this occasion against oppression in buying and selling of land; neither the buyer nor the seller must overreach, v. 14–17. In short, the buyer must not give less, nor the seller take more, than the just value of the thing, considered as necessarily returning at the year of jubilee. It must be settled what the clear yearly value of the land was, and then how many years' purchase it was worth till the year of jubilee. But they must reckon only *the years of the fruits* (v. 15), and therefore must discount for the sabbatical years. It is easy to observe that the nearer the jubilee was the less must the value of the land be. *According to the fewness of the years thou shalt diminish the price*. But we do not find it so easy practically to infer thence that the nearer the world comes to its period the less value we should put upon the things of it: because *the time is short*, and the *fashion of the world passeth away*, let those that *buy be as though they possessed not*. One would put little value on an old house, that is ready to drop down. All bargains ought to be made by this rule, *You shall not oppress one another*, nor take advantage of one another's ignorance or necessity, *but thou shalt fear thy God*. Note, The fear of God reigning in the heart would effectually restrain us from doing any wrong to our neighbour in word or deed; for, though man be not, God is *the avenger* of those that *go beyond or defraud* their brethren, 1 Th. 4:6. Perhaps Nehemiah refers to this very law (ch. 5:15), where he tells us that he did not oppress those he had under his power, *because of the fear of God*.

III. Assurance given them that they should be no losers, but great gainers, by observing these years of rest. It is promised, 1. That they should be safe: *You shall dwell in the land in safety*, v. 18. and again, v. 19. The word signifies both outward safety and inward security and confidence of spirit, that they should be quiet both from evil and from the fear of evil. 2. That they should be rich: *You shall eat your fill*. Note, If we be careful to do our duty, we may cheerfully trust God with our comfort. 3. That they should not want food convenient that year in which they did neither sow nor reap: *I will command my blessing in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years*, v. 21. This was, (1.) A standing miracle, that, whereas at other times one year did but serve to bring in another, the productions of the sixth year should serve to bring in the ninth. Note, The blessing of God upon our provision will make a little go a great way, and *satisfy even the poor with bread*, Ps. 131:15. (2.) A lasting memorial of the manna which was given double on the sixth day for two days. (3.) It was intended for an encouragement to all God's people, in all ages, to trust him in the way of duty, and to cast their care upon him. There is nothing lost by faith and self-denial in our obedience.

Verses 23-38

Here is, I. A law concerning the real estates of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and the transferring of them. 1. No land should be sold for ever from the family to whose lot it fell in the division of the land. And the reason given is, *The land is mine, and you are strangers and sojourners with me*, v. 23. (1.) God having a particular propriety in this land, he would by this restraint keep them sensible of it. The possessions of good people, who, having given up themselves to God, have therewith given up all they have to him, are in a particular manner at his disposal, and his disposal of them must be submitted to. (2.) They being *strangers and sojourners with him* in that land, and having his tabernacle among them, to alienate their part of that

land would be in effect to cut themselves off from their fellowship and communion with God, of which that was a token and symbol, for which reason Naboth would rather incur the wrath of a king than part with the inheritance of his fathers, 1 Ki. 21:3. 2. If a man was constrained through poverty to sell his land for the subsistence of his family, yet, if afterwards he was able, he might redeem it before the year of jubilee (v. 24, 26, 27), and the price must be settled according to the number of years since the sale and before the jubilee. 3. If the person himself was not able to redeem it, his next kinsman might (v. 25): *The redeemer thereof, he that is near unto him, shall come and shall redeem*, so it might be read. The kinsman is called *Goel*, the redeemer (Num. 5:8; Ruth 3:9), to whom belonged the right of redeeming the land. And this typified Christ, who assumed our nature, that he might be our *kinsman*, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and, being the only kinsman we have that is able to do it, to him belonged the right of redemption. As for all our other kinsmen, their shoe must be plucked off (Ruth 4:6, 7); they cannot redeem. But Christ can and hath redeemed the inheritance which we by sin had forfeited and alienated, and made a new settlement of it upon all that by faith become allied to him. We know that this *Redeemer liveth*, Job 19:25. And some make this duty of the kinsman to signify the brotherly love that should be among Christians, inclining them to recover those that are fallen, and to restore them with the spirit of meekness. 4. If the land was not redeemed before the year of jubilee, then it should return of course to him that had sold or mortgaged it: *In the jubilee it shall go out*, v. 28. This was a figure of the free grace of God towards us in Christ, by which, and not by any price or merit of our own, we are restored to the favour of God, and become entitled to paradise, from which our first parents, and we in them, were expelled for disobedience. 5. A difference was made between houses in walled cities, and lands in the country, or houses in country villages. Houses in walled cities were more the fruits of their own industry than land in the country, which was the immediate gift of God's bounty; and therefore, if a man sold a house in a city, he might redeem it any time within a year after the sale, but otherwise it was confirmed to the purchaser for ever, and should not return, no, not at the year of the jubilee, v. 29, 30. This provision was made to encourage strangers and proselytes to come and settle among them. Though they could not purchase land in Canaan to them and their heirs, yet they might purchase houses in walled cities, which would be most convenient for those who were supposed to live by trade. But country houses could be disposed of no otherwise than as lands might. 6. A clause is added in favour of the Levites, by way of exception from these rules. (1.) Dwelling houses in the cities of the Levites might be redeemed at any time, and, if not redeemed, should revert in the year of jubilee (v. 32, 33), because the Levites had no other possessions than cities and their suburbs, and God would show that the Levites were his peculiar care; and it was for the interest of the public that they should not be impoverished, or wormed out of their inheritances. (2.) The fields adjoining to their cities (Num. 35:4, 5) might not be sold at any time, for they belonged, not to particular Levites, but to the city of the Levites, as a corporation, who could not alienate without a wrong to their tribe; therefore, if any of those fields were sold, the bargain was void, v. 34. Even the Egyptians took care to preserve the *land of the priests*, Gen. 47:22. And there is no less reason for the taking of the maintenance of the gospel ministry under the special protection of Christian governments.

II. A law for the relief of the poor, and the tender usage of poor debtors, and these are of more general and perpetual obligation than the former.

1. The poor must be relieved, v. 35. Here is, (1.) Our brother's poverty and distress supposed: *If thy brother be waxen poor*; not only thy brother by nation as a Jew, but thy brother by nature as a man, for it follows, *though he be a stranger or a sojourner*. All men are to be looked upon and treated as brethren, for *we have all one Father*, Mal. 2:10. Though he is poor, yet still he is thy brother, and is to be loved and owned as a brother. Poverty does not destroy the relation. Though a son of Abraham, yet he may wax poor and fall into decay. Note, Poverty and decay are great grievances, and very common: *The poor you have always with you*. (2.) Our duty enjoined: *Thou shalt relieve him*. By sympathy, pitying the poor; by service, doing for them; and by supply, giving to them according to their necessity and thy ability.

2. Poor debtors must not be oppressed: *If thy brother be waxen poor*, and have occasion to borrow money of thee for the necessary support of his family, *take thou no usury of him*, either for money or victuals, v. 36, 37. And thus far this law binds still, but could never be thought binding where money is borrowed for purchase of lands, trade, or other improvements; for there it is reasonable that the lender share with the borrower in the profit. The law here is plainly intended for the relief of the poor, to whom it is sometimes as great a charity to lend freely as to give. Observe the arguments here used against extortion. (1.) God patronizes the poor: *"Fear thy God, who will reckon with thee for all injuries done to the poor: thou fearest not them, but fear him."* (2.) Relieve the poor, *that they may live with thee*, and some way or other they may be serviceable to thee. The rich can as ill spare the hands of the poor as the poor can the purses of the rich. (3.) The same argument is used to enforce this precept that prefaces all the ten commandments: *I am the Lord your God which brought you out of Egypt*, v. 38. Note, It becomes those that have received mercy to show mercy. If God has been gracious to us, we ought not to be rigorous with our brethren.

Verses 39-55

We have here the laws concerning servitude, designed to preserve the honour of the Jewish nation as a free people, and rescued by a divine power out of the house of bondage, into the glorious liberty of God's sons, his first-born. Now the law is,

I. That a native Israelite should never be made a bondman for perpetuity. If he was sold for debt, or for a crime, by the house of judgment, he was to serve but six years, and to go out the seventh; this was appointed, Ex. 21:2. But if he sold himself through extreme poverty, having nothing at all left him to preserve his life, and if it was to one of his own nation that he sold himself, in such a case it is here provided, 1. That he should not *serve as a bond-servant* (v. 39), nor be *sold with the sale of a bondman* (v. 42); that is, "it must not be looked upon that his master that bought him had as absolute a property in him as in a captive taken in war, that might be used, sold, and bequeathed, at pleasure, as much as a man's cattle; no, he shall serve thee as a *hired servant*, whom the master has the use of only, but not a despotic power over." And the reason is, *They are my servants*, v. 42. God does not make his servants slaves, and therefore their brethren must not. God had redeemed them out of Egypt, and therefore they must never be exposed to sale as bondmen. The apostle applies this spiritually (1 Co. 7:23), *You are bought with a price, be not the servants of men*, that is, "of the lusts of men, no, nor of your own lusts;" for, having *become the servants of God*, we must not *let sin reign in our mortal bodies*, Rom. 6:12, 22. 2. That while he did serve he should not be ruled with rigour, as the Israelites were in Egypt, v. 43. Both his work and his usage must be such as were fitting for a son of Abraham.

Masters are still required to *give to their servants that which is just and equal*, Col. 4:1. They may be used, but must not be abused. Those masters that are always hectoring and domineering over their servants, taunting them and trampling upon them, that are unreasonable in exacting work and giving rebukes, and that rule them with a high hand, forget that their Master is in heaven; and what will they do when he rises up? as holy Job reasons with himself, Job 31:13, 14. 3. That at the year of jubilee he should *go out free*, he *and his children*, and should *return to his own family*, v. 41. This typified our redemption from the service of sin and Satan by the grace of God in Christ, whose *truth makes us free*, Jn. 7:32. The Jewish writers say that, for ten days before the jubilee-trumpet sounded, the servants that were to be discharged by it did express their great joy by feasting, and wearing garlands on their heads: it is therefore called the *joyful sound*, Ps. 89:15. And we are thus to rejoice in the liberty we have by Christ.

II. That they might purchase bondmen of the heathen nations that were round about them, or of those strangers that sojourned among them (except of those seven nations that were to be destroyed); and might claim a dominion over them, and entail them upon their families as an inheritance, for the year of jubilee should give no discharge to them, v. 44, 46. Thus in our English plantations the *negroes* only are used as slaves; how much to the credit of Christianity I shall not say. Now, 1. This authority which they had over the bondmen whom they purchased from the neighbouring nations was in pursuance of the blessing of Jacob, Gen. 27:29, *Let people serve thee*. 2. It prefigured the bringing in of the Gentiles to the service of Christ and his church. *Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thy inheritance*, Ps. 2:8. And it is promised (Isa. 61:5), *Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your vine-dressers*; see Rev. 2:26, 27. *The upright shall have the dominion in the morning*, Ps. 49:14. 3. It intimates that none shall have the benefit of the gospel jubilee but those only that are Israelites indeed, and the children of Abraham by faith: as for those that continue heathenish, they continue bondmen. See this turned upon the unbelieving Jews themselves, Gal. 4:25, where Jerusalem, when she had rejected Christ, is said to be *in bondage with her children*. Let me only add here that, though they are not forbidden to rule their bondmen with rigour, yet the Jewish doctors say, "It is the property of mercy, and way of wisdom, that a man should be compassionate, and not make his yoke heavy upon any servant that he has."

III. That if an Israelite sold himself for a servant to a wealthy proselyte that sojourned among them care should be taken that he should have the same advantages as if he had sold himself to an Israelite, and in some respects greater. 1. That he should not serve as a bondman, but as a hired servant, and not to be *ruled with rigour* (v. 53), *in thy sight*, which intimated that the Jewish magistrates should particularly have an eye to him, and, if he were abused, should take cognizance of it, and redress his grievances, though the injured servant did not himself complain. Also he was to go free at the year of jubilee, v. 54. Though the sons of strangers might serve them for ever, yet the sons of Israel might not serve strangers for ever; yet the servant here, having made himself a slave by his own act and deed, should not go out in the seventh year of release, but in the jubilee only. 2. That he should have this further advantage that he might be redeemed again before the year of jubilee, v. 48, 49. He that had sold himself to an Israelite might, if ever he was able, redeem himself, but his relations had no right to redeem him. "But if a man sold himself to a stranger," the Jews say, "his relations were urged to redeem him; if they did not, it was fit that he should

be redeemed at the public charge," which we find done, Neh. 5:8. The price of his ransom was to be computed according to the prospect of the year of jubilee (v. 50–52), as in the redemption of land, v. 15, 16. The learned bishop Patrick quotes one of the Jewish rabbins for an evangelical exposition of that appointment (v. 48), *One of his brethren shall redeem him*. "This Redeemer," says the rabbi, *"is the Messiah, the Son of David."* They expected this Messiah to be their Redeemer out of their captivity, and to restore them to their own land again; but we welcome him as the Redeemer who shall come to Zion, and shall *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, for he shall *save his people from their sins*; and under this notion there were those that *looked for redemption in Jerusalem*.

Chapter 26

This chapter is a solemn conclusion of the main body of the levitical law. The precepts that follow in this and the following book either relate to some particular matters or are repetitions and explications of the foregoing institutions. Now this chapter contains a general enforcement of all those laws by promises of reward in case of obedience on the one hand, and threatenings of punishment for disobedience on the other hand, the former to work upon hope, the latter on fear, those two handles of the soul, by which it is taken hold of and managed. Here is, I. A repetition of two or three of the principal of the commandments (v. 1, 2). II. An inviting promise of all good things, if they would but keep God's commandments (v. 3–13). III. A terrible threatening of ruining judgments which would be brought upon them if they were refractory and disobedient (v. 14–39). IV. A gracious promise of the return of mercy to those of them that would repent and reform (v. 40, etc.). Deu. 28 is parallel to this.

Verses 1-13

Here is, I. The inculcating of those precepts of the law which were of the greatest consequence, and by which were of the greatest consequence, and by which especially their obedience would be tried, v. 1, 2. They are the abstract of the second and fourth commandments, which, as they are by much the largest in the decalogue, so they are most frequently insisted on in other parts of the law. As, when a master has given many things in charge to his servant, he concludes with the repetition of those things which were of the greatest importance, and which the servant was most in danger of neglecting, bidding him, whatever he did, be sure to remember those, so here God by Moses, after many precepts, closes all with a special charge to observe these two great commandments. 1. "Be sure you never worship images, nor ever make any sort of images or pictures for a religious use," v. 1. No sin was more provoking to God than this, and yet there was none that they were more addicted to, and which afterwards proved of more pernicious consequence to them. Next to God's being, unity, and universal influence, it is necessary that we know and believe that he is an infinite Spirit; and therefore to represent him by an image in the making of it, to confine him to an image in the consecrating of it, and to worship him by an image in bowing down to it, *changes his truth into a lie* and *his glory into shame*, as much as any thing. 2. "Be sure you keep up a great veneration for sabbaths and religious assemblies," v. 2. As nothing tends more to corrupt religion than the use of images in devotion, so nothing contributes more to the support of it than *keeping the sabbaths* and *reverencing the sanctuary*. These make up very much of the instrumental part of religion, by which the essentials of it are kept up. Therefore we find in the prophets that, next to the sin of idolatry, there is no sin for which the Jews are more frequently reprov'd and threatened than the profanation of the sabbath day.

II. Great encouragements given them to live in constant obedience to all God's commandments, largely and strongly assuring them that if they did so they should be a happy people, and should be blessed with all the good things they could desire. Human governments enforce their laws with penalties to be inflicted for the breach of them; but God will be known as *the rewarder of those that seek and serve him*. Let us take a view of these great and precious promises, which, though they relate chiefly to the life which now is, and to the public national concerns of that people, were typical of the spiritual blessings entailed by the covenant of grace upon all believers through Christ. 1. Plenty and abundance of the fruits of the earth. They

should have seasonable rain, neither too little nor too much, but what was requisite for their land, which was watered with the dew of heaven (Deu. 11:10, 11), that it might *yield its increase*, v. 4. The dependence which the fruitfulness of the earth beneath has upon the influences of heaven above is a sensible intimation to us that every good and perfect gift must be expected *from above*, from the *Father of lights*. It is promised that the earth should produce its fruits in such great abundance that they would be kept in full employment, during both the harvest and the vintage, to gather it in, v. 5. Before they had reaped their corn and threshed it, the vintage would be ready; and, before they had finished their vintage, it would be high time to begin their sowing. Long harvests are often with us the consequences of bad weather, but with them they should be the effects of a great increase. This signified the abundance of grace which should be poured out in gospel times, when the *ploughman should overtake the reaper* (Amos 9:13), and a great harvest of souls should be gathered in to Christ. The plenty should be so great that they should *bring forth the old* to be given away to the poor *because of the new*, to make room for it in their barns, which yet they would not *pull down to build greater*, as that rich fool (Lu. 12:18), for God gave them this abundance to be laid out, not be hoarded up from one year to another. *He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him*, Prov. 11:26. That promise (Mal. 3:10), *I will pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it*, explains this, v. 10. And that which crowns this blessing of plenty is (v. 5), *You shall eat your bread to the full*, which intimates that they should have, not only abundance, but content and satisfaction in it. They should have enough, and should know when they had enough. Thus *the meek shall eat and be satisfied*, Ps. 22:26. 2. Peace under the divine protection; *"You shall dwell in your land safely* (v. 5); both really save, and safe in your own apprehensions; you shall lie down to rest in the power and promise of God, and not only none shall hurt you, but none shall so much as *make you afraid*," v. 6. See Ps. 4:8. They should not be infested with wild beasts, these should be *rid out of the land*, or, as it is promised (Job 5:23), should *be at peace with them*. Nor should they be terrified with the alarms of war: *Neither shall the sword go through your land*. This holy security is promised to all the faithful, Ps. 91:1, etc. Those must needs dwell in safety that *dwell in God*, Job 9:18, 19. 3. Victory and success in their wars abroad, while they had peace and tranquility at home, v. 7, 8. They are assured that the hand of God should so signally appear with them in their conquests that no disproportion of numbers should make against them: *Five of you shall have courage to attack, and strength to chase and defeat, a hundred*, as Jonathan did (1 Sa. 14:12), experiencing the truth of his own maxim (v. 6), that it is all one with the Lord to *save by many or by few*. 4. The increase of their people: *I will make you fruitful and multiply you*, v. 9. Thus the promise made to Abraham must be fulfilled, that his seed should be *as the dust of the earth*; and much more numerous they would have been if they had by their sin cut themselves short. It is promised to the gospel church that it shall be fruitful, Jn. 15:16. 5. The favour of God, which is the fountain of all good: *I will have respect unto you*, v. 9. If the eye of our faith be unto God, the eye of his favour will be unto us. More is implied than is expressed in that promise, *My soul shall not abhor you* (v. 11), as there is in that threatening, *My soul shall have no pleasure in him*, Heb. 10:38. Though there was that among them which might justly have alienated him from them, yet, if they would closely adhere to his institutions, he would not abhor them. 6. Tokens of his presence in and by his ordinances: *I will set my tabernacle among you*, v. 11. It was their honour and advantage that God's tabernacle was lately

erected among them; but here he lets them know that the continuance and establishment of it depended upon their good behaviour. The tabernacle that was now set should be settled if they would be obedient, else not. Note, The way to have God's ordinances fixed among us, as a nail in a sure place, is to cleave closely to the institution of them. It is added (v. 12), "*I will walk among you*, with delight and satisfaction, as a man in his garden; I will keep up communion with you as a man walking with his friend." This seems to be alluded to, Rev. 2:1, where Christ is said to *walk in the midst of the golden candlesticks*. 7. The grace of the covenant, as the fountain and foundation, the sweetness and security, of all these blessings: *I will establish my covenant with you*, v. 9. Let them perform their part of the covenant, and God would not fail to perform his. All covenant-blessings are summed up in the covenant-relation (v. 12): *I will be your God, and you shall be my people*; and they are all grounded upon their redemption: *I am your God*, because *I brought you forth out of the land of Egypt*, v. 13. Having purchased them, he would own them, and never cast them off till they cast him off. He *broke their yoke*, and *made them go upright*, that is, their deliverance out of Egypt put them in a state both of ease and honour, that, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, they might *serve God without fear*, each walking *in his uprightness*. When Israel rejected Christ, and was therefore rejected by him, their back is said to be *bowed down* always under the burden of their guilt, which was heavier than that of their bondage in Egypt, Rom. 11:10.

Verses 14-39

After God had set the blessing before them (the life and good which would make them a happy people if they would be obedient), he here sets the curse before them, the death and evil which would make them as miserable if they were disobedient. Let them not think themselves so deeply rooted as that God's power could not ruin them, nor so highly favoured as that his justice would not ruin them if they revolted from him and rebelled against him; no *You only have I known, therefore I will punish you* soonest and sorest. Amos 3:2. Observe,

I. How their sin is described, which would bring all this misery upon them. Not sins of ignorance and infirmity; God had provided sacrifices for those. Not the sins they repented of and forsook; but the sins that were presumptuously committed, and obstinately persisted in. Two things would certainly bring this ruin upon them:—

1. A contempt of God's commandments (v. 14): "*If you will not hearken to me* speaking to you by the law, nor *do all these commandments*, that is, desire and endeavour to do them, and, wherein you miss it, make use of the prescribed remedies." Thus their sin is supposed to begin in mere carelessness, and neglect, and omission. These are bad enough, but they make way for worse; for the people are brought in (v. 15) as, (1.) *Despising God's statutes*, both the duties enjoined and the authority enjoining them, thinking meanly of the law and the Law-maker. Note, Those are hastening apace to their own ruin who begin to think it below them to be religious. (2.) *Abhorring his judgments*, their very souls abhorring them. Note, Those that begin to despise religion will come by degrees to loathe it; and mean thoughts of it will ripen into ill thoughts of it; those that turn from it will turn against it, and their hearts will rise at it. (3.) *Breaking his covenant*. Though every breach of the commandment does not amount to a breach of the covenant (we were undone if it did), yet, when men have come to such a pitch of impiety as to despise and abhor the commandment, the next step will be to disown God, and all relation to him. Those that reject the precept

will come at last to renounce the covenant. Observe, It is God's covenant which they break: he made it, but they break it. Note, If a covenant be made and kept between God and man, God must have all the honour; but, if ever it be broken, man must bear all the blame: on him shall this breach be.

2. A contempt of his corrections. Even their disobedience would not have been their destruction if they had not been obstinate and impenitent in it, notwithstanding the methods God took to reclaim them. Their contempt of God's word would not have brought them to ruin, if they had not added to that a contempt of his rod, which should have brought them to repentance. Three ways this is expressed:—(1.) *"If you will not for all this hearken to me,* v. 18, 21, 27. If you will not learn obedience by the things which you suffer, but be as deaf to the loud alarms of God's judgments as you have been to the close reasonings of his word and the secret whispers of your own consciences, you are obstinate indeed." (2.) *"If you walk contrary to me,* v. 21, 23, 27. All sinners walk contrary to God, to his truths, laws, and counsels; but those especially that are incorrigible under his judgments. The design of the rod is to humble them, and soften them, and bring them to repentance; but, instead of this, their hearts are more hardened and exasperated against God, and *in their distress they trespass yet more against him,* 2 Chr. 28:22. This is walking contrary to God. Some read it, "If you walk at all adventures with me, carelessly and presumptuously, as if you heeded not either what you do, whether it be right or wrong, or what God does with you, whether it be for you or against you, blundering on in wilful ignorance." (3.) *If you will not be reformed by these things.* God's design in punishing is to reform, by giving men sensible convictions of the evil of sin, and obliging them to seek unto him for relief: this is the primary intention; but those that will not be reformed by the judgments of God must expect to be ruined by them. Those have a great deal to answer for that have been long and often under God's correcting hand, and yet go on frowardly in a sinful way; sick and in pain, and yet not reformed; crossed and impoverished, and yet not reformed; broken with breach upon breach, yet *not returning to the Lord,* Amos 4:6, etc.

II. How the misery is described which their sin would bring upon them, under two heads:—

1. God himself would be against them; and this is the root and cause of all their misery. (1.) *I will set my face against you* (v. 17), that is, "I will set myself against you, set myself to ruin you." These proud sinners God will resist, and face those down that confront his authority. Or the face is put for the anger: "I will show myself highly displeased at you." (2.) *I will walk contrary to you* (v. 24, 28); *with the forward he will wrestle,* Ps. 28:26 [margin]. When God in his providence thwarts the designs of a people, which they thought well laid, crosses their purposes, breaks their measures, blasts their endeavours, and disappoints their expectations, then he walks contrary to them. Note, There is nothing got by striving with God Almighty, for he will break either the heart or the neck of those that contend with him, will bring them either to repentance or ruin. "I will walk at all adventures with you," so some read; "all covenant loving-kindness shall be forgotten, and I will leave you to common providence." Note, Those that cast off God deserve that he should cast them off. (3.) As they continued obstinate, the judgments should increase yet more upon them. If the first sensible tokens of God's displeasures do not attain their end, to humble and reform them, then (v. 18), *I will punish you seven times more,* and again (v. 21), *I will bring seven times more plagues,* and (v. 24), *I will punish you yet seven times,* and (v. 28), *I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins.* Note, If

less judgments do not do their work, God will send greater; for, when he *judges, he will overcome*. If true repentance do not stay process, it will go on till execution be taken out. Those that are obstinate and incorrigible, when they have weathered one storm must expect another more violent; and, how severely soever they are punished, till they are in hell they must still say, "There is worse behind," unless they repent. If the *fouder have hitherto melted in vain* (Jer. 6:29), the furnace will be heated *seven times hotter* (a proverbial expression, used Dan. 3:19), and again and again *seven times hotter*; and who among us can dwell with such devouring fire? God does not begin with the sorest judgments, to show that he is patient, and delights not in the death of sinners; but, if they repent not, he will proceed to the sorest, to show that he is righteous, and that he will not be mocked or set at defiance. (4.) Their misery is completed in that threatening: *My soul shall abhor you*, v. 30. That man is as miserable as he can be whom God abhors; for his resentments are just and effective. Thus *if any man draw back*, as these are supposed to do, *God's soul shall have no pleasure in him* (Heb. 10:38), and he will *spue them out of his mouth*, Rev. 3:16. It is spoken of as strange, and yet too true, *Hath thy soul loathed Zion?* Jer. 14:19.

2. The whole creation would be at war with them. All God's sore judgments would be sent against them; for he hath many arrows in his quiver. The threatenings here are very particular, because really they were prophecies, and he that foresaw all their rebellions knew they would prove so; see Deu. 31:16, 29. This long roll of threatening shows that evil pursues sinners. We have here,

(1.) Temporal judgments threatened. [1.] Diseases of body, which should be epidemical: *I will appoint over you*, as task-masters, to rule you with rigour, *terror, consumption, and the burning ague*, v. 16. What we translate *terror*, some think, signifies a particular disease, probably (says the learned bishop Patrick) the *falling sickness*, which is terror indeed: all chronical diseases are included in the consumption, and all acute diseases in the burning ague or fever. These consume the eyes, and cause sorrow both to those that are visited with them and to their friends and relations. Note, All diseases are God's servants; they do what he appoints them, and are often used as scourges wherewith he chastises a provoking people. The pestilence is threatened (v. 25) to meet them, when they are gathered together in their cities for fear of the sword. The greater the concourse of people is, the greater desolation does the pestilence make; and, when it gets among the soldiers that should defend a place, it is of most fatal consequence. [2.] Famine and scarcity of bread, which should be brought upon them several ways; as, *First*, By plunder (v. 16): *Your enemies shall eat it up*, and carry it off as the Midianites did, Jdg. 6:5, 6. *Secondly*, By unseasonable weather, especially the want of rain (v. 19): *I will make your heaven as iron*, letting fall no rain, but reflecting heat, and then the earth would of course be as dry and hard *as brass*, and their labour in ploughing and sowing would *be in vain* (v. 20); for the increase of the earth depends upon God's good providence more than upon man's good husbandry. This should be the breaking of the *staff of bread* (v. 26), which life leans upon, and is supported by, on which perhaps they had leaned more than upon God's blessing. There should be so great a dearth of corn that, whereas every family used to fill an oven of their own with household bread, now ten families should have to fill but one over, which would bring themselves and their children and servants to short allowance, so that they should *eat and not be satisfied*. The less they had the more craving should their appetites be. *Thirdly*, By the besieging of their cities, which would reduce them to such an extremity that they

should *eat the flesh of their sons and daughters*, v. 29. [3.] War, and the prevailing of their enemies over them: "*You shall be slain before your enemies*, v. 17. Your choice men shall die in battle, and *those that hate you shall reign over you*, and justly, since you are not willing that the God that loved you should reign over you;" 2 Chr. 12:8. Miserable is that people whose enemies are their rulers and have got dominion over them, or whose rulers have become their enemies and under-hand seek the ruin of their interests. Thus God would *break the pride of their power*, v. 19. God had given them power over the nations; but when they, instead of being thankful for that power, and improving it for the service of God's kingdom, grew proud of it, and perverted the intentions of it, it was just with God to break it. Thus God would *bring a sword upon them to avenge the quarrel of his covenant*, v. 25. Note, God has a just quarrel with those that break covenant with him, for he will not be mocked by the treachery of perfidious men; and one way or other he will avenge this quarrel upon those that play at fast and loose with him. [4.] Wild beasts, lions, bears, and wolves, which should increase upon them, and tear in pieces all that come in their way (v. 22), as we read of two bears that in an instant killed forty-two children, 2 Ki. 2:24. This is one of the four sore judgments threatened Eze. 14:21, which plainly refers to this chapter. Man was made to have dominion over the creatures, and, though many of them are stronger than he, yet none of them could have hurt him, nay, all of them would have served him, if he had not first shaken off God's dominion, and so lost his own; and now the creatures are in rebellion against him that is in rebellion against his Maker, and, when the Lord of those hosts pleases, they are the executioners of his wrath and the ministers of his justice. [5.] Captivity, or dispersion: *I will scatter you among the heathen* (v. 33), *in your enemies' land*, v. 34. Never were any people so incorporated and united among themselves as they were; but for their sin God would scatter them, so that they should be lost among the heathen, from whom God had graciously distinguished them, but with whom they had wickedly mingled themselves. Yet, when they were scattered, divine justice had not done with them, but would draw out a sword after them, which would find them out, and follow them wherever they were. God's judgments, as they cannot be outfaced, so they cannot be outrun. [6.] The utter ruin and desolation of their land, which should be so remarkable that their very enemies themselves, who ha helped it forward, should in the review be astonished at it, v. 32. *First*, Their cities should be waste, forsaken, uninhabited, and all the buildings destroyed; those that escaped the desolations of war should fall to decay of themselves. *Secondly*, Their sanctuaries should be a desolation, that is, their synagogues where they met for religious worship every sabbath, as well as their tabernacle where they met thrice a year. *Thirdly*, The country itself should be desolate, not tilled or husbanded (v. 34, 35); then the land should enjoy its sabbaths, because they had not religiously observed the sabbatical years which God appointed them. They tilled their ground when God would have them let it rest; justly therefore were they driven out of it; and the expression intimates that the ground itself was pleased and easy when it was rid of the burden of such sinners, under which it had groaned, Rom. 8:20, etc. The captivity in Babylon lasted seventy years, and so long the land *enjoyed her sabbaths*, as is said (2 Chr. 36:21) with reference to this. [7.] The destruction of their idols, though rather a mercy than a judgment, yet, being a necessary piece of justice, is here mentioned, to show what would be the sin that would bring all these miseries upon them: *I will destroy your high places*, v. 30. Those that will not be parted from their sins by the commands of God shall be parted from them by his judgments; since they would not destroy their high places, God would. And, to

upbraid them with the unreasonable fondness they had shown for their idols, it is foretold that their *carcasses should be cast upon the carcasses of their idols*. Those that are wedded to their lusts will sooner or later have enough of them. Their idols would not be able to help either themselves or their worshippers; but, those that made them being like them, they should both perish alike, and fall together as blind into the ditch.

(2.) Spiritual judgments are here threatened. These should seize the mind; for he that made the mind can, when he pleases, make his sword approach to it. It is here threatened, [1.] That they should find no acceptance with God: *I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours*, v. 31. Though the judgments of God upon them did not separate them and their sins, yet they extorted incense from them; but in vain—even their incense was an abomination, Isa. 1:13. [2.] That they should have no courage in their wars, but should be quite dispirited and disheartened. They should not only fear and flee (v. 17), but fear and fall, *when none pursued*, v. 36. A guilty conscience would be their continual terror, so that not only the sound of a trumpet, but the very *sound of a leaf, should chase them*. Note, Those that cast off the fear of God expose themselves to the fear of every thing else, Prov. 28:1. Their very fears should dash them *one against another*, v. 37, 38. And those that had increased one another's guilt would now increase one another's fears. [3.] That they should have no hope of the forgiveness of their sins (v. 39): *They shall pine away in their iniquity, and how should they then live?* Eze. 33:10. Note, It is a righteous thing with God to leave those to despair of pardon that have presumed to sin; and it is owing to free grace if we are not abandoned to pine away in the iniquity we were born in and have lived in.

Verses 40-46

Here the chapter concludes with gracious promises of the return of God's favour to them upon their repentance, that they might not (unless it were their own fault) *pine away in their iniquity*. Behold, with wonder, the riches of God's mercy to a people that had obstinately stood it out against the judgments of God, and would never think of surrendering till they were reduced to the last extremity. Yet *turn to strong-hold, you prisoners of hope*, Zec. 9:12. As bad as things are, they may be mended. *Yet there is hope in Israel*. Observe,

I. How the repentance which would qualify them for this mercy is described, v. 40, 41. The instances of it are three:-1.

Confession, by which they must give glory to God, and take shame to themselves. There must be a confession of sin, their own and their fathers', which they must lament the guilt of because they feel the smart of it; that thus they may cut off the entail of wrath. They must in their confession put sin under its worst character, as *walking contrary to God*; this is the sinfulness of sin, the worst thing in it, and which in our repentance we should especially bewail. There must also be a confession of wrath; they must overlook the instruments of their trouble and the second causes, and confess that God has *walked contrary to them*, and so *dealt with them according to their sins*. Such a confession as this we find made by Daniel just before the dawning of the day of their deliverance (ch. 9), and the like, Ezra 9 and Neh. 9:2. Remorse and godly sorrow for sin: *If their uncircumcised heart be humbled*. An impenitent, unbelieving, unhumiliated heart, is called an *uncircumcised heart*, the heart of a Gentile that is a stranger to God, rather than the heart of an Israelite in covenant with him. True circumcision is *of the heart* (Rom. 2:29), without which the circumcision of the flesh avails nothing, Jer. 9:26. Now in repentance this uncircumcised heart was

humbled, that is, it was truly broken and contrite for sin. Note, A humble heart under humbling providences prepares for deliverance and true comfort. 3. Submission to the justice of God in all his dealings; if they then *accept of the punishment of their iniquity* (v. 41 and again v. 43), that is, if they justify God and condemn themselves, patiently bear the punishment as that which they have well deserved, and carefully answer the ends of it as that which God has well designed, accept it as a kindness, take it as physic, and improve it, then they are penitents indeed.

II. How the mercy which they should obtain upon their repentance is described. 1. They should not be abandoned: *Though they have despised my judgments, yet, for all that, I will not cast them away*, v. 43, 44. He speaks as a tender Father that cannot find in his heart to disinherit a son that has been very provoking. *How shall I do it?* Hos. 11:8, 9. Till he had laid the foundations of a church for himself in the Gentile world, the Jewish church was not quite forsaken, nor cast away. 2. They should be remembered: *I will remember the land* with favour, which is grounded upon the promise before, *I will remember my covenant* (v. 42), which is repeated, v. 45. God is said *to remember the covenant* when he performs the promises of it, purely for his faithfulness' sake; not because there is any thing in us to recommend us to his favour, but because he will be as good as his word. This is the church's plea. Ps. 74:20, *Have respect unto the covenant*. He will remember the constitution of the covenant, which is such as leaves room for repentance, and promises pardon upon repentance; and the Mediator of the covenant, who was promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was sent, when the fulness of time came, in remembrance of that holy covenant. The word covenant is thrice repeated, to intimate that God is ever mindful of it and would have us to be so. The persons also with whom the covenant was made are mentioned in an unusual manner, *per modum ascensus—in the ascending line*, beginning with Jacob, to lead them gradually to the most ancient promise, which was made to the father of the faithful: thus (Mic. 7:20) he is said to perform the *truth to Jacob*, and the *mercy to Abraham*. He will for their sakes (v. 45), not their merit's sake, but their benefit's sake, remember the covenant of their ancestors, and upon that score show kindness to them, though most unworthy; they are therefore said to be, *as touching the election, beloved for the fathers' sake*, Rom. 11:28. Note, When those that have walked contrary to God in a way of sin return to him by sincere repentance, though he has walked contrary to them in a way of judgment he will return to them in a way of special mercy, pursuant to the covenant of redemption and grace. None are so ready to repent as God is to forgive upon repentance, through Christ, who is given for a covenant. *Lastly*, These are said to be *the laws which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel*, v. 46. His communion with his church is kept up by his law. He manifests not only his dominion over them, but his favour to them, by giving them his law; and they manifest not only their holy fear, but their holy love, by the observance of it; and thus it is made between them, rather as a covenant than a law; for he draws with the cords of a man.

Chapter 27

The last verse of the foregoing chapter seemed to close up the statute-book; yet this chapter is added as an appendix. Having given laws concerning instituted services, here he directs concerning vows and voluntary services, the free-will offerings of their mouth. Perhaps some devout serious people among them might be so affected with what Moses had delivered to them in the foregoing chapter as in a pang of zeal to consecrate themselves, or their children, or estates to him: this, because honestly meant, God would accept; but, because men are apt to repent of such vows, he leaves room for the redemption of what had been so consecrated, at a certain rate. Here is, I. The law concerning what was sanctified to God, persons (v. 2-8), cattle, clean or unclean (v. 9-13), houses and lands (v. 15-25), with an exception of firstlings, (v. 26, 27). II. Concerning what was devoted (v. 28, 29). III. Concerning tithes (v. 30, etc.).

Verses 1-13

This is part of the law concerning singular vows, extraordinary ones, which though God did not expressly insist on, yet, if they were consistent with and conformable to the general precepts, he would be well pleased with. Note, We should not only ask, What must we do, but, What may we do, for the glory and honour of God? As the *liberal devises liberal things* (Isa. 32:8), so the pious devises pious things, and the enlarged heart would willingly do something extraordinary in the service of so good a Master as God is. When we receive or expect some singular mercy it is good to honour God with some singular vow.

I. The case is here put of persons vowed to God by a singular vow, v. 2. If a man consecrated himself, or a child, to the service of the tabernacle, to be employed there in some inferior office, as sweeping the floor, carrying out ashes, running of errands, or the like, *the person so consecrated shall be for the Lord*, that is, "God will graciously accept the good-will." *Thou didst well that it was in thy heart*, 2 Chr. 6:8. But forasmuch as he had no occasion to use their service about the tabernacle, a whole tribe being appropriated to the use of it, those that were thus vowed were to be redeemed, and the money paid for their redemption was employed for the repair of the sanctuary, or other uses of it, as appears by 2 Ki. 12:14, where it is called, in the margin, the *money of the souls of his estimation*. A book of rates is accordingly provided, by which the priests were to go in their estimation. Here is, 1. The rate of the middle-aged, between twenty and threescore, these were valued highest, because most serviceable; a male fifty shekels, and a female thirty, v. 3, 4. The females were then less esteemed, but not so in Christ; for in *Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female*, Gal. 3:28. Note, Those that are in the prime of their time must look upon themselves as obliged to do more in the service of God and their generation than can be expected either from minors, that have not yet arrived to their usefulness, or from the aged, that have survived it. 2. The rate of the youth between five years old and twenty was less, because they were then less capable of doing service, v. 5. 3. Infants under five years old were capable of being vowed to God by their parents, even before they were born, as Samuel was, but not to be presented and redeemed till a month old, that, as one sabbath passed over them before they were circumcised, so one new moon might pass over them before they were estimated; and their valuation was but small, v. 6. Samuel, who was thus vowed to God, was not redeemed, because he was a Levite, and a particular favourite, and therefore was employed in his childhood in the service of the tabernacle. 4. The

aged are valued less than youth, but more than children, v. 7. And the Hebrews observe that the rate of an aged woman is two parts of three to that of an aged man, so that in that age the female came nearest to the value of the male, which occasioned (as bishop Patrick quotes it here) this saying among them, *That an old woman in a house is a treasure in a house*. Paul sets a great value upon the aged women, when he makes them *teachers of good things*, Tit. 2:3. 5. The poor shall be valued according to their ability, v. 8. Something they must pay, that they might learn not to be rash in vowing to God, for *he hath no pleasure in fools*, Eccl. 5:4. Yet not more than their ability, but *secundum tenementum*—*according to their possessions*, that they might not ruin themselves and their families by their zeal. Note, God expects and requires from men according to what they have, and not according to what they have not, Lu. 21:4.

II. The case is put of beasts vowed to God, 1. If it was a clean beast, such as was offered in sacrifice, it must not be redeemed, nor any equivalent given for it: *It shall be holy*, v. 9, 10. After it was vowed, it was not to be put to any common use, nor changed upon second thoughts; but it must be either offered upon the altar, or, if through any blemish it was not meet to be offered, he that vowed it should not take advantage of that, but the priests should have it for their own use (for they were God's receivers), or it should be sold for the service of the sanctuary. This teaches caution in making vows and constancy in keeping them when they are made; for *it is a snare to a man to devour that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry*, Prov. 20:25. And to this that rule of charity seems to allude (2 Co. 9:7), *Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give*. 2. If it was an unclean beast, it should go to the use of the priest at such a value; but he that vowed it, upon paying that value in money, and adding a fifth part more to it, might redeem it if he pleased, v. 11–13. It was fit that men should smart for their inconstancy. God has let us know his mind concerning his service, and he is not pleased if we do not know our own. God expects that those that deal with him should be at a point, and way what they will stand to.

Verses 14-25

Here is the law concerning real estates dedicated to the service of God by a singular vow.

I. Suppose a man, in his zeal for the honour of God, should *sanctify his house to God* (v. 14), the house must be valued by the priest, and the money got by the sale of it was to be converted to the use of the sanctuary, which by degrees came to be greatly enriched with *dedicated things*, 1 Ki. 15:15. But, if the owner be inclined to redeem it himself, he must not have it so cheap as another, but must add a fifth part to the price, for he should have considered before he had vowed it, v. 15. To him that was necessitous God would abate the estimation (v. 8); but to him that was fickle and humoursome, and whose second thoughts inclined more to the world and his secular interest than his first, God would rise in the price. Blessed be God, there is a way of sanctifying our houses to be holy unto the Lord, without either selling them or buying them. If we and our houses serve the Lord, if religion rule in them, and we put away iniquity far from them, and have a church in our house, holiness to the Lord is written upon it, it is his, and he will dwell with us in it.

II. Suppose a man should sanctify some part of his land to the Lord, giving it to pious uses, then a difference must be made between land that came to the donor by descent and that which came by purchase, and accordingly the case altered.

1. If it was the inheritance of his fathers, here called the *field of his possession*, which pertained to his family from the first

division of Canaan, he might not give it all, no, not to the sanctuary; God would not admit such a degree of zeal as ruined a man's family. But he might sanctify or dedicate only some part of it, v. 16. And in that case, (1.) The land was to be valued (as our countrymen commonly compute land) by so many measures' sowing of barley. So much land as would take a *homer*, or *chomer*, of barley, which contained ten ephahs, Eze. 45:11 (not, as some have here mistaken it, an *omer*, which was but a tenth part of an ephah, Ex. 16:36), was valued at fifty shekels, a moderate price (v. 16), and that if it were sanctified immediately from the year of jubilee, v. 17. But, if some years after, there was to be a discount accordingly, even of that price, v. 18. And, (2.) When the value was fixed, the donor might, if he pleased, redeem it for sixty shekels the homer's sowing, which was with the addition of a fifth part: the money then went to the sanctuary, and the land reverted to him that had sanctified it, v. 19. But if he would not redeem it, and the priest sold it to another, then at the year of jubilee, beyond which the sale could not go, the land came to the priests, and was theirs for ever, v. 20, 21. Note, What is given to the Lord ought not to be given with a power of revocation; what is devoted to the Lord must be his for ever, by a perpetual covenant.

2. If the land was his own purchase, and came not to him from his ancestors, then not the land itself, but the value of it was to be given to the priests for pious uses, v. 22, 24. It was supposed that those who, by the blessing of God, had grown so rich as to become purchasers would think themselves obliged in gratitude to sanctify some part of their purchase, at least (and here they are not limited, but they might, if they pleased, sanctify the whole), to the service of God. For we ought to give *as God prospers us*, 1 Co. 16:2. Purchasers are in a special manner bound to be charitable. Now, forasmuch as purchased lands were by a former law to return at the year of jubilee to the family from which they were purchased, God would not have that law and the intentions of it defeated by making the lands *corban*, a gift, Mk. 7:11. But it was to be computed how much the land was worth for so many years as were from the vow to the jubilee; for only so long it was his own, and God *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*. We can never acceptably serve God with that of which we have wronged our neighbour. And so much money he was to give for the present, and keep the land in his own hands till the year of jubilee, when it was to return free of all encumbrances, even that of its being dedicated to him of whom it was bought. The value of the shekel by which all these estimations were to be made is here ascertained (v. 25); it shall be twenty gerahs, and every gerah was sixteen barley-corns. This was fixed before (Ex. 30:13); and, whereas there had been some alterations, it is again fixed in the laws of Ezekiel's visionary temple (Eze. 45:12), to denote that the gospel should reduce things to their ancient standard.

Verses 26-34

Here is, I. A caution given that no man should make such a jest of sanctifying things to the Lord as to sanctify any firstling to him, for that was his already by the law, v. 26. Though the matter of a general vow be that which we were before obliged to, as of our sacramental covenant, yet a singular vow should be of that which we were not, in such circumstances and proportions, antecedently bound to. The law concerning the firstlings of unclean beasts (v. 27) is the same with that before, v. 11, 12.

II. Things or persons devoted are here distinguished from things or persons that were only sanctified. 1. Devoted things were most holy to the Lord, and could neither revert nor be alienated, v. 28. They were of the same nature with those sacrifices which were called most holy, which none might touch but only the priests themselves. The difference between these and other

sanctified things arose from the different expression of the vow. If a man dedicated any thing to God, binding himself with a solemn curse never to alienate it to any other purpose, then it was a thing devoted. 2. Devoted persons were to be put to death, v. 29. Not that it was in the power of any parent or master thus to devote a child or a servant to death; but it must be meant of the public enemies of Israel, who, either by the appointment of God or by the sentence of the congregation, were devoted, as the seven nations with which they must make no league. The city of Jericho in particular was thus devoted, Jos. 6:17. The inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead were put to death for violating the curse pronounced upon those who came not up to Mizpeh, Jdg. 21:9, 10. Some think it was for want of being rightly informed of the true intent and meaning of this law that Jephtha sacrificed his daughter as one devoted, who might not be redeemed.

III. A law concerning tithes, which were paid for the service of God before the law, as appears by Abraham's payment of them, (Gen. 14:20), and Jacob's promise of them, Gen. 28:22. It is here appointed, 1. That they should pay tithes of all their increase, their corn, trees, and cattle, v. 30, 32. Whatsoever productions they had the benefit of God must be honoured with the tithes of, if it were titheable. Thus they acknowledged God to be the owner of their land, the giver of its fruits, and themselves to be his tenants, and dependents upon him. Thus they gave him thanks for the plenty they enjoyed, and supplicated his favour in the continuance of it. And we are taught in general to *honour the Lord with our substance* (Prov. 3:9), and in particular to support and maintain his ministers, and to be *ready to communicate* to them, Gal. 6:6; 1 Co. 9:11. And how this may be done in a fitter and more equal proportion than that of the tenth, which God himself appointed of old, I cannot see. 2. That which was once marked for tithes should not be altered, no, not for a better (v. 33), for Providence directed the rod that marked it. God would accept it though it were not the best, and they must not grudge it though it were, for it was what passed under the rod. 3. That it should not be redeemed, unless the owner would give a fifth part more for its ransom, v. 31. If men had the curiosity to prefer what was marked for tithes before any other part of their increase, it was fit that they should pay for their curiosity.

IV. The last verse seems to have reference to this whole book of which it is the conclusion: *These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses, for the children of Israel*. Many of these commandments are moral, and of perpetual obligation; others of them, which were ceremonial and peculiar to the Jewish economy, have notwithstanding a spiritual significancy, and are instructive to us who are furnished with a key to let us into the mysteries contained in them; for *unto us, by those institutions, is the gospel preached as well as unto them*, Heb. 4:2. Upon the whole matter, we may see cause to bless God that *we have not come to mount Sinai*, Heb. 12:18. 1. That we are not under the *dark shadows* of the law, but enjoy the clear light of the gospel, which shows us *Christ the end of the law for righteousness*, Rom. 10:4. The doctrine of our reconciliation to God by a Mediator is not clouded with the smoke of burning sacrifices, but cleared by the knowledge of *Christ and him crucified*. 2. That we are not under the *heavy yoke* of the law, and the carnal ordinances of it (as the apostle calls them, Heb. 9:10), imposed till the time of reformation, a yoke which *neither they nor their fathers were able to bear* (Acts 15:10), but under the sweet and easy institutions of the gospel, which pronounces those the *true worshippers that worship the Father in spirit and truth*, by Christ only, and in his name, who is our priest, temple, altar, sacrifice, purification, and all. Let us not therefore think that because we are not tied to the ceremonial cleansings, feasts, and oblations, a little care, time, and

expense, will serve to honour God with. No, but rather have our hearts more enlarge with free-will offerings to his praise, more inflamed with holy love and joy, and more engaged in seriousness of thought and sincerity of intention. *Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, and full assurance of faith, worshipping God with so much the more cheerfulness and humble confidence, still saying, Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!*