

The Severity of God

“Nadab & Abihu”

(Leviticus 10)

- Introduction:
1. In order to properly and adequately understand who God is and what he is like, we must view him in his fullness.
 - a. Ills. of blind men in zoo and they touch an elephant.
 2. Many today have a rather skewed perception of God.
 3. As Romans 11:22 states, God is both good and severe.
 - a. Concerning this point, some have attempted to dissect God into two different persons.
 - 1). The God of the Old Testament who is severe.
 - 2). The God of the New Testament who is good.
 - b. Such a view flies in the face of Scripture and gives people living today a false sense of security.
 - 1). God was good in the O.T. (Psalm 136:1-26; Psalm 33:5).
 - 2). God was severe in the N.T. (2 Cor. 5:11; Heb. 12:29; 2 Thess. 1:8).
 - c. So you see, God is not suffering from some sort of dysfunctional personality disorder, but has always been good and severe.
 4. In this lesson, we will look at one Old Testament instance in which God demonstrated his severity, and see what lessons we can learn from it.

I. The Background To Nadab & Abihu

- A. The consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests had just been completed (Leviticus 8-9).
- B. In fact, the glory of the Lord had just appeared to Aaron as fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering (Leviticus 9:22-24).
- C. Little did anyone know that this fire that just came from the Lord in pleasure to consume the burnt offering, would also come down in displeasure and consume the two sons of Aaron.
- D. Read the text (Leviticus 10:1-11).

II. The Sins Of Nadab & Abihu

- A. While there is one explicit explanation of their sin, there may be several other indications of wrong doing in the text.
- B. First, the explicit condemnation is for offering a “profane fire,” “strange fire,” or an “unauthorized fire.”
 1. (Exodus 30:9) Altar of Incense was to be kept perpetually burning and no “strange” incense was to be offered on it.
 2. (Leviticus 16:12) Fire from the altar of burnt offering was to be used

- 3. to light this incense.
- 3. Simply put, Nadab and Abihu gathered from a place that God had “not commanded” or not authorized, and thus they sinned.
- C. Other sins not explicitly condemned in this immediate text of which Nadab and Abihu were also guilty.
 - 1. *Unauthorized Entry into the Most Holy Place.*
 - a. (Leviticus 16:1-2).
 - b. Following the death of Nadab and Abihu, God warns Aaron not to pass beyond the veil lest he die.
 - 2. *Lack of Reverence.*
 - a. (Leviticus 10:3).
 - b. Again, immediately following the death of Nadab and Abihu, God declares that he will be treated as holy and he will be honored.
 - 3. *Intoxicated.*
 - a. (Leviticus 10:9-10).
 - b. Perhaps this explains why they so flagrantly violated the commandments of God.

III. Lessons Learned From Nadab & Abihu

- A. We must only do what the Lord commands.
 - 1. (Leviticus 10:2).
 - 2. (Colossians 3:17).
 - 3. “But he doesn’t say you can’t...”
 - 4. (Hebrews 7:14).
 - 5. “It would be a dispensation of grace in which ‘regulations of divine worship’ would be made obsolete. No longer would one’s expressions of worship be judged worthy or unworthy by specifics of a systemized religion or the tedious tenets of traditionalism...under the new order of the new covenant...all worshipful expressions of the devotion of men’s hearts would be spiritually, not legally, rendered and received” - (Al Maxey).
 - 6. “...the church need not have either explicit mandate or permission for everything it wishes to do” - (Rubel Shelly).
 - 7. (John 4:24).
- B. One cannot show reverence to God apart from obedience.
 - 1. (John 15:14).
 - 2. (Luke 4:46).
 - 3. A show of “spirituality” rings hollow apart from obedience.
 - 4. (1 Samuel 15:22).
 - 5. (2 Chronicles 26:16-21).
- C. God must be hallowed in worship.
 - 1. (Leviticus 10:3).
 - 2. In a day and age when entertainment, hype, flippancy seems to find it’s way into our worship, this reminder is appropriate.

3. There is a sacredness to worship that cannot be sacrificed on the altar of cultural relevancy.
4. "One of my biggest childhood disappointments came one day when I saw a huge tent in a field and thought a circus was in town. I excitedly walked in the tent only to discover it was a revival meeting. One of the biggest disappointments of my adult life came one day when I went to church expecting a revival and discovered it was just a circus." - (Bob Russell).

D. God must come before family/all things.

1. (Leviticus 10:4-7).
 - a. Aaron was not to mourn.
 - b. Aaron could not even bury his sons, for he was consecrated for service to God and could not defile himself.
2. Note Aaron's response: "He held his peace" (10:3) and "did according to the word of Moses" (10:7).
3. (Matthew 6:33).
4. (Luke 9:59-60).
5. (Matthew 10:34-37).

Conclusion: 1. The record of Nadab and Abihu is a demonstration of God's severity and ought to remind us of the seriousness of serving God.