

## Deuteronomy Chapter 17 Commentary

**1 Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that is an abomination unto the LORD thy God.**

There is, in this verse, a warning for us: If an Israelite had a sacrifice that was without blemish; they would be tempted to keep it for themselves to improve their own flocks, which would be a sin of covetousness. Finding, and dedicating, the sacrifice without blemish was a constant reminder to Israel of their need to put God first. They had to examine their flocks in order to find that sacrifice without blemish. They had to set it apart, and be sure that it was sacrificed to the Lord, and not kept for personal gain. Therefore, we see; the sacrifice, without blemish, was a reminder to Israel to put God first, since God was the giver of their blessings.

The warning for us today is against covetousness and for putting God first in our lives. Just like, giving up our own will, to do that which is right in God's eyes, cost us a lots, in our fleshly nature eyes. Do you see; covetousness, in our own lives, can be the will of the flesh seeking to serve its own will? God is asking us to lay down our lives for him, by putting ourselves in humble subjection to "**thus saith the Lord.**" How much time to you devote each day, to seek out the blessings that God has given you? How much time, each day, have you dedicated to seek God, and thank him for his blessings, with the sacrifice of your praises? Failure to do these things is not putting God in first place, which leads us back to the sin of covetousness.

**"wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness:"** How often are our sacrifices of praise not whole hearted but halfhearted? How many times we, in a ritualistic effort, claim to be worshipping God, but our hearts, the whole of ourselves, is not given to the worship time? Oh God, help us to worship in spirit, and in truth, with our whole hearts.

The sacrifice without blemish is the prophetic picture of Jesus Christ, the only pure, holy, undefiled, and sinless, sacrifice that was acceptable to God. It was prophetically demonstrative, of the greatness of God's love for his people, as demonstrated in scripture: ***Joh 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*** Christ laid down his life for us, in a display of the greatness of the love of God for his chosen people. Surely, if Christ could leave heaven, come to earth, and give his life on our behalf; we can leave the world, draw near to God with all our hearts, and give ourselves in devoted worship to God.

**2 If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant, 3 And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; 4 And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel: 5 Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.**

God is telling Israel; if it be found to be true, that one of your number is turned to idolatry; you are to immediately execute that person, from out of the midst of my people, by stoning them to death.

From God's perspective; for a person to turn to idolatry; is rejection of God. Removal of idolaters is a defensive weapon of armor, to prevent the spread of this deadly disease among God's people.

I believe; this same principle is true for the church today, as seen in:

- ***2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.***
- ***1Ti 6:5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.***

We understand; the action, of withdrawal from the disorderly, is not physically putting the person to death, rather, it is the physical withdrawal, of the body of Christ, from fellowship with any that would worship another god.

I believe that this finding, of any that have turned to idolatry, needs to begin with a search of our own hearts. If we examine ourselves and see that we have turned from God in any point, we need to slay the thing that has drawn us away with immediacy. For instance, if you have any sinful thoughts come into your mind, you should immediately cast it aside by praying to God for its removal. Why? Because, if you continue to play with sinful thoughts; they will work their way into your heart; and they will eventually lead you into sin.

**6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. 7 The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.**

One witness could not put a person to death. Why? Suppose someone got mad at someone else; or one person had something someone else wanted; they could then make an accusation against the other person, and have them killed. This way; there must be the collaboration of at least two witnesses, and the guilt must be substantially established.

Let's here pursue the thoughts above of parleying with sinful thoughts. Do you understand, to have a sinful thought is just one witness? However, pursuing sinful thoughts, leads us to setting God aside, which is a second witness against us. Action taken, by following through with the sinful thought, is a third witness against us. Now we are worthy of the death sentence, because we didn't turn from our sinful thoughts and seek the face of God and his protecting power.

Did you notice; the one who brought the report, of idolatry against another, had to be the first, to put their hand upon the one to be slain. I believe; this would help sort out, the ones who had personal grudges, or covetous reasons, for wishing another dead. Did you notice; all the people were to put their hands upon the one to be slain? This was God's way of reminding the Israel; "***thou shalt have no other gods before me***" and if you do, the penalty is death.

We find similar language in the New Testament in God's command of dealing with problems in: ***Mt 18:15 Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear***

**the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.** God is always consistent in dealings with sinners.

**8 If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose; 9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment: 10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee: 11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.**

God is explaining; I have given you judges and officers, throughout the lands of Israel, to judge and pass sentence according to my commandments, in matters between brethren. If they have a matter between Israelites, in which they don't know what to do; they are to bring it to the chief rulers, or the high priest, who will enquire of me what to do, if they don't already know. They will tell you what to do, and you are to follow the requirements to the full.

God gives us similar instruction, in the New Testament, in dealing with one another, seen in: **1Co 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? 4 If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. 5 I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? 6 But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. 7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? 8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.**

We understand; this is not dealing with others outside of the church setting. It doesn't lessen that we are to be godly in our actions, but we recognize that when dealing with the world, we may have to use worldly means, if no resolution is reached by godly means.

**12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. 13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.**

Presumptuously means: *arrogance, prideful, proud.* This would mean; without humility and submissiveness to God. Should anyone fail to carry out the sentence passed, to the full, that person is presumptuous, they think they know more, and are better than God; therefore, put that person to death, that the sin of presumption will be purged from Israel.

Again, we see the principle, and make application to the church today. We should not rise up in our own will, and pride, and defy God's commandments. We should be found; even as Jesus Christ prayed

in; "**Lu 22:42 Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.**" This not only shows our obedience to God and his will, but that we have our own wills in subjection to God.

The judicial punishment of death was harsh for sure, but it would cause the people to fear God, and make them want to do right. Likewise, excommunication from the church body should cause us to fear the judicial judgement of God being applied in our lives.

**14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; 15 Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.**

God foresees; Israel will one day reject him and desire a king, so they can be like other nations. God tells Israel; don't presume to choose your own king, petition me and I will choose for you a king. Suppose, a church knows an elder that they really like, and they want him to be their pastor and preside over them, believing that he can make their church grow. God is telling us; you don't choose your pastors; you petition me in humble prayer to choose for you the pastor that is God's choice for the church. You see, God sees things differently than we do and God doesn't let his feelings get in the way for doing that which is best for his people. We may make bad decisions, because of the passions of our hearts; not knowing that our passions are against God's will and purpose.

We notice, also; Israel was not to have a king that was not an Israelite. Why? Because the king was to be over the nation Israel, which is the nation upon whom God had set his name. Israel was not to look at a some king from another nation, who was being successful and was appealing to their desires, and set that person to be their king. Why? Israel is a nation of people chosen by God to bear his name on the earth. If they choose a stranger, who doesn't know God then they are placing themselves in a idolatrous situation, they are simply rejecting God from being their king.

This same principle is still at work today. What do you mean? A church doesn't go, outside the church, and get a pastor from the outside world, who is not a believer in Jesus Christ, to preside over them. They seek one of their own, who has been anointed by God, and believes in Jesus Christ, and God's word of truth, to preside over them.

**16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. 17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold. 18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.**

If you are given a king here are the rules he shall follow:

- "**he shall not multiply horses to himself,**" Horses and chariots were a means of making war and symbolized superiority. God is reminding the king, and Israel, to trust in the Lord, only, so that he doesn't get the big head and think too much of his own might and power.
- "**nor cause the people to return to Egypt,**" The king shall not barter, or return, Israel to Egypt for any reason. Why? One reason is; that would be returning Israel, to the place that God removed them from, by his own power and might. We have this same principle in New Testament scripture:
  - **Mt 12:43 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.**
  - **Lu 9:62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**
- "**forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.**" It would be direct disobedience to God. God hath said: do not go to Egypt again.
- "**Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away:**" Why? More than one wife; is direct disobedience to God's original plan for mankind, seen in scripture in:
  - **Ge 2:24 Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.**
  - **Mt 19:5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?**
  - **Mr 10:7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;** We see in each instance the wife is in singular form, not multiple form.
  - Secondly, as we see later in the book of Solomon, many wives will turn the king's heart to idolatry, and bring God's judicial wrath upon the king and Israel. Why? Because if the king does it, then the people think it is okay for them to do it.
- "**when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:**" Why? If the king writes all the laws of God, he removes all excuses of "I didn't know". It will give the king the sure foundation, upon which to rule and reign, in righteousness, over God's people, according to God's standard.
- "**And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life:**" The king shall occupy his time reading and studying the law. Why? If he is occupied doing that which God commands, he will not have time to go to lust after many wives, trying to assemble great armies, and becoming secure in his own strength, or other forms of ungodliness. He will always realize his dependence upon God.
- "**that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:**" So the king's heart will be like God's heart; as we see in God's choice of King David: **1Sa 13:13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. 14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.** We know from scripture that this was King David, who Samuel anointed to be king over Israel, at the command of God.

- "***That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren,***" The king was to, not do, or to do, as commanded by God, so that his heart would not be lifted up in pride, and forget who he is, and who God is.
- "***and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left:***" So that he will keep the commandments of God.
- "***to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.***" God gives the king the whole armor of God, to put on to protect the king from himself, and that God might pour out upon the king, his family, and the nation, the blessings of God.

Surely, we can see the lesson for our own lives today; seeing we are made "***kings and priest***" to God as seen in scripture in:

- ***Re 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.***
- ***Re 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.***

We, today, being made kings and priests, should be like the king that God chooses; so grounded in searching the scriptures, and studying "***thus saith the Lord,***" that we have no time for turning from God. We thank you Lord, for your graciousness to thy people, and all the defensive armor that you have provided for us. Praise the Lord and bless his name!

Elder Clarke Lee, 2021-04-01