

NOTES
ON
THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

by

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"Things new and old."

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by

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Leviticus 26 - Leviticus 27

This chapter requires little in the way of note or exposition. It contains a most solemn and affecting record of the blessings of obedience, on the one hand, and the terrible consequences of disobedience, on the other.

Had Israel walked in obedience, they would have been invincible.

"I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword, and five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you and ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new. And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and ye shall be my people. I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, that ye should not be their bondsmen; and I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright" (Ver. 6-13).

The presence of GOD should ever have been their shield and buckler. No weapon formed against them could prosper. But, then, the divine presence was only to be enjoyed by an obedient people. The Lord could not sanction by His presence disobedience or wickedness. The uncircumcised

nations around might depend upon their prowess and their military resources. Israel had only the arm of the Lord to depend upon, and that arm could never be stretched forth to shield unholiness or disobedience. Their strength was to walk with GOD in a spirit of dependence and obedience. So long as they walked thus, there was a wall of fire round about them, to protect them from every enemy and every evil.

But, alas! Israel failed altogether. Notwithstanding the solemn and appalling picture placed before their eyes, in verses 14-33 of this chapter, they forsook the Lord and served other gods, and thus brought upon themselves the sore judgments threatened in this section, the bare record of which is sufficient to make the ears tingle. Under the heavy weight of these judgments they are suffering at this very hour. Scattered and peeled, wasted and outcast, they are the monuments of the Lord's inflexible truth and justice. They read aloud, to all the nations of the earth, a most impressive lesson on the subject of the moral government of GOD - a lesson which it would be profitable for these nations to study deeply, yea, and a lesson which it would be salutary for our own hearts to ponder likewise.

We are very prone to confound two things which are clearly distinguished in the word, namely:

- GOD's government and
- GOD's grace.

The evils which result from this confusion are various. It is sure to lead to an enfeebled sense of the dignity and solemnity of government, and of the purity, fullness, and elevation of grace. It is quite true that GOD in government reserves to Himself the sovereign right to act in patience, long-suffering, and mercy; but the exercise of these attributes, in connection with His throne of government, must never be confounded with the unconditional actings of pure and absolute grace.

The chapter before us is a record of divine government, and yet, in it we find such clauses as the following:

"If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me; and that also they have walked contrary unto me, and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her Sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them; and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet, for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the Lord" (Ver. 40-45).

Here we find GOD in government, meeting, in long-suffering mercy, the very earliest and

faintest breathings of a broken and penitent spirit. The history of the judges and of the kings presents many instances of the exercise of this blessed attribute of the divine government. Again and again, the soul of the Lord was grieved for Israel, (Judges 10:16), and He sent them one deliverer after another, until at length there remained no hope, and the righteous claims of His throne demanded their expulsion from that land which they were wholly incompetent to keep.

All this is government. But, by and by, Israel will be brought into possession of the land of Canaan on the ground of unqualified and unchangeable grace - grace exercised in divine righteousness through the Blood of the Cross. It will not be by works of law; nor yet by the institutions of an evanescent economy, but by that grace which **"reigns through righteousness, by Jesus Christ our Lord."** Wherefore, they shall never again be driven forth from their possession. No enemy shall ever molest them. They shall enjoy undisturbed repose behind the shield of the Lord's favour. Their tenure of the land will be according to the eternal stability of divine grace, and the efficacy of the blood of the everlasting covenant. **"They shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."**

May the Spirit of GOD lead us into more enlarged apprehensions of divine truth, and endow us with a greater capacity to try the things that differ, and rightly to divide the word of truth.

Leviticus 27

This closing section of our book treats of the "singular vow," or the voluntary act whereby a person devoted himself or his property unto the Lord.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When a man shall make a singular vow the persons shall be for the Lord by thy estimation. And thy estimation shall be . . . after the shekel of the sanctuary."

Now, in the case of a person devoting himself, or his beast, his house, or his field, unto the Lord, it was obviously a question of capacity or worth; and, hence, there was a certain scale of valuation, according to age. Moses, as the representative of the claims of GOD, was called upon to estimate, in each case, according to the standard of the sanctuary.

If a man undertakes to make a vow, he must be tried by the standard of righteousness; and, moreover, in all cases, we are called upon to recognize the difference between capacity and title. In Exodus 30:15, we read, in reference to the atonement money, **"The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less, than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls."**

In the matter of atonement all stood upon one common level. Thus it must ever be. High and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young, all have one common title. **"There is no difference."** All stand alike on the ground of the infinite preciousness of the Blood of CHRIST. There may be a vast difference as to capacity, as to title there is none. There may be a vast difference as to experience - as to title there is none. There may be a vast difference as to knowledge, gift, and fruitfulness - as to title there is none. The sapling and the tree, the babe and the father, the convert of yesterday and the matured believer, are all on the same ground.

"The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." Nothing more could be given, nothing less could be taken. **"We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."** This is our title to enter. Our capacity to worship, when we have entered, will depend upon our spiritual energy. CHRIST is our title. The Holy Ghost is our capacity. Self has nothing to do with either the one or the other. What a mercy! We get in by the Blood of JESUS; we enjoy what we find there by the Holy Ghost. The Blood of JESUS opens the door; the Holy Ghost conducts us through the house. The Blood of JESUS opens the casket; the Holy Ghost unfolds the precious contents. The Blood of JESUS makes the casket ours; the Holy Ghost enables us to appreciate its rare and costly gems.

But, in Leviticus 27, it is entirely a question of ability, capacity, or worth. Moses had a certain standard from which he could not possibly descend. He had a certain rule from which he could not possibly swerve. If any one could come up to that well; if not, he had to take his place accordingly.

What, then, was to be done in reference to the person who was unable to rise to the height of the claims set forth by the representative of divine righteousness? Hear the consolatory answer:

"But if he be poorer than thy estimation, then he shall present himself before the priest, and the priest shall value him; according to, his ability that vowed shall the priest value him" (Ver. 8).

In other words, if it be a question of man's undertaking to meet the claims of righteousness, then he must meet them. But if, on the other hand, a man feels himself wholly unable to meet those claims, he has only to fall back upon grace, which will take him up, just as he is. Moses is the representative of the claims of divine righteousness. The priest is the exponent of the provisions of divine grace. The poor man who was unable to stand before Moses fell back into the arms of the priest. Thus it is ever. If we cannot **"dig"** we can **"beg;"** and directly we take the place of a beggar, it is no longer a question of what we are able to earn, but of what GOD is pleased to give. "Grace all the work shall crown, through everlasting days." How happy it is to be debtors to grace! How happy to take when GOD is glorified in giving! When man is in question, it is infinitely better to dig than to beg; but when GOD is in question, the case is the very reverse.

I would just add, that I believe this entire chapter bears, in an especial manner, upon the nation of Israel.

It is intimately connected with the two preceding chapters. Israel made **"a singular vow"** at the foot of Mount Horeb; but were quite unable to meet the claims of law - they were far **"poorer than Moses' estimation."** But, blessed be GOD, they will come in under the rich provisions of divine grace. Having learnt their total inability **"to dig,"** they will not be **"ashamed to beg;"** and, hence, they shall experience the deep blessedness of being cast upon the sovereign mercy of the Lord, which stretches, like a golden chain, **"from everlasting to everlasting."**

It is well to be poor, when the knowledge of our poverty serves but to unfold to us the exhaustless riches of divine grace.

That grace can never suffer any one to go empty away. It can never tell any one that he is too

poor. It can meet the very deepest human need; and not only so but it is glorified in meeting it. This holds good in every case. It is true of any individual sinner; and it is true with respect to Israel, who, having been valued by the Lawgiver, have proved "**poorer than his estimation.**"

Grace is the grand and only resource for all. It is the basis of our salvation; the basis of a life of practical godliness; and the basis of those imperishable hopes which animate us amid the trials and conflicts of this sin-stricken world. May we cherish a deeper sense of grace, and more ardent desire for the glory!

We shall here close our meditations upon this most profound and precious book. If the foregoing pages should be used of GOD to awaken an interest in a section of inspiration which has been so much neglected by the Church, in all ages, they shall not have been written in vain.

C. H. M.

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