

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.).

~~CONT~~ LEVITICUS 10:1-2

DEATH OF NADAB AND ABIHU

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 ~~CONT~~ Numbers 3:4.

1. It does not appear the 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* (~~CONT~~ Leviticus 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, ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾Exodus 30:9. Moses, we may suppose, had the custody of the incense which was prepared for this purpose (⁽¹⁰⁸⁾Exodus 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, ⁽⁴⁰⁶⁾2 Chronicles 26:16. The priests were to burn incense only when *it was their lot* (⁽⁴⁰⁹⁾Luke 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 (⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾Revelation 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* (^{<218>}Proverbs 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, ^{<219>}Leviticus 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*, ^{<215>}Numbers 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 (^{<222>}Leviticus 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, ^{<240>}Revelation 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*, ^{<313>}Isaiah 30:23.

(5.) It is twice taken notice of in scripture that they *died childless*, ^{<314>}Numbers 3:4, and ^{<315>}1 Chronicles 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.

◀808▶ LEVITICUS 10:3-7

MOURNING FOR NADAB AND ABIHU

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, ^{<1068>}2 Samuel 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 (^{<1092>}Exodus 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 ^{<1093>}Exodus 29:43, 44; 34:14; ^{<1095>}Leviticus 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, ^{<BIB>}Isaiah 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*, ^{<BIB>}1 Samuel 3:18. *If our children have sinned against God* (as Bildad puts the case, ^{<BIB>}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*, ⁴⁵³⁹Deuteronomy 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, v. 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, ⁽²²¹⁾Exodus 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?* ⁽⁹⁶⁾1 Samuel 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 (⁽³²¹⁾Leviticus 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 (⁽³⁶⁶⁾Nehemiah 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, ⁴¹²Matthew 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.

LEVITICUS 10:8-11

CAUTIONS TO THE PRIESTS

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 (²⁶⁴²Ezekiel 44:21), and so it is required of gospel ministers that they be *not given to wine*, ^{548B}1 Timothy 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*, ⁴²³⁴Luke 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*, ^{691E}1 Peter 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 tomorrow 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*, ^{<381>}Isaiah 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*, ^{<4159>}Jeremiah 15:19.

(2.) That they might be able to teach the people (v. 11), for that was a part of the priests' work (^{<4580>}Deuteronomy 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.

^{<812>}LEVITICUS 10:12-20

MOSES ANGRY WITH ELEAZAR AND ITHAMAR

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*, ^{<412>}1 Corinthians 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*, ^{<415>}Leviticus 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, ^{<416>}Leviticus 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 (~~CR02~~ Leviticus 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, ~~CR02~~ Psalm 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 (~~CR02~~ 1 Samuel 1:7, 8), and as it is displeasing to God, whose will it is that we should serve him cheerfully, ~~CR02~~ Deuteronomy 12:7. Mourner's bread was polluted, ~~CR02~~ Hosea 9:4. See ~~CR02~~ Malachi 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*.