

You Shall Be Holy

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 13th of July 2003. The preacher is Paul Barker.

His sermon is entitled, You Shall Be Holy, and is based on Leviticus chapter 19 verses 1 to 37.

The model and the basis for the holiness of the people of God. We also ought to bear in mind the context in Leviticus is how do the people of God live with God himself present in their midst in the holy place within the tabernacle.

And part of that we've seen over the last two weeks is answered by the sacrificial system and the Day of Atonement. That is, the people of God exist and live with God in their midst by offering sacrifices and approaching by blood.

But that's not the end of the story. The people of God exist and live with God in their midst, a holy God in their midst, not only by sacrifice, but by demonstrating a character of holiness themselves because God is holy.

[1 : 1 3] That is, they're to reflect the company they keep, so to speak. God's in their midst. He's holy. We'd better be holy. Because God is in our midst. And that's his character.

And so notice through this chapter, 16 times in fact, the little refrain, I am the Lord, your God. Sometimes it's just I am the Lord. Other times it's I am the Lord, your God.

Literally, I am Yahweh, your God, or Jehovah, your God, the name of God as revealed in the Old Testament. That is, dotted throughout this chapter, 16 times, the basis, motivation, if you like, for the laws that are stated here is Yahweh is their God.

That is, there is a relationship between the people of God and Yahweh. It's not about living obedience to these laws in order to somehow begin a relationship with God.

The relationship's already there. We've seen that in recent weeks with the sacrificial system, the Day of Atonement. God's in their midst. Now, because you're in a relationship with God, because God's in your midst, how do you express that relationship with Yahweh, your God?

[2 : 2 5] And so at each point, God is the motivation. There's a sense of awe and fear conveyed by I am Yahweh, your God, dotted throughout this chapter.

Because sometimes we forget that holiness is not about a public parade of piety, that is, putting on the right sort of veneer or facade so that other people think that we're holy people.

God sees the secrets of our life. I am Yahweh, your God. That's why you must obey these laws of God. So what sort of things then comprise holiness?

An astonishing variety if you're listening to the reading. And let's see some of those things now. Verse 3 tells us that you shall each revere your mother and father.

One of the Ten Commandments, although different. Here it is to revere or literally fear your parents, not just honour them, as was the case in the Ten Commandments.

[3 : 28] Fear, in fact, usually applies to God. Here it is applied to parents. So the family life is part of an expression of holiness. And then it moves on to another of the Ten Commandments.

You shall keep my Sabbaths. Now the Sabbath was Friday night through to Saturday night in the weekly calendar. We might think of Sunday as the day of worship, but for the Old Testament people of God, the Israelites or Jews, their day of worship come rest was Friday night through to Saturday night.

Their day began at sunset, not sort of when you wake up in the morning. So as soon as the sunset, no work was to be done, sometimes special sacrifices made, family life was to be celebrated and enjoyed as part of that.

And over the years, outside the Old Testament laws, a whole range of other laws got added to this to sort of make it a very cumbersome process about keeping the Sabbath day. Jesus often got into trouble and he often told off the Pharisees of his day for their attitude to the Sabbath.

But strictly no work was to be done on that day. A very important law, in fact, in the Old Testament. We might think it inconsequential. It comes up again in verse 30 and it's dotted throughout the first five books of the Old Testament, not just occurring once or twice.

[4 : 47] And then another of the Ten Commandments restated in verse 4. Do not turn to idols or make cast images for yourselves. Idols would be any form of representation of God, whether a statue probably, a carving, something molten out of metal, maybe metal covering over a wooden carved object, whether it was of an animal or a bird or a fish or something else.

That's what an idol is. That's what's being prohibited here. Idolatry is consistently one of the most horrific sins in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments for that matter. And what it is, is the worship of something that was regarded as representing God.

And one reason why idolatry was so strictly prohibited is that God is never seen. See, what matters about God is what he says, not what he looks like.

It's his word that matters, not what he looks like. And so because God is not seen, even strictly by Moses on Mount Sinai at the time that these laws were given, no image or idol or representation of God was ever to be made.

And we saw last week when we talked about the holy place in the tabernacle where the blood of the atoning sacrifice was taken, there was the ark, the cherubim on either side, the throne of God, if you like, or the footstool of the throne of God.

[6 : 16] But exactly where God would dwell above that was empty in the visual sense. Nothing was there to represent God at all, just his throne or the footstool of his throne.

God is never to be represented physically and then that object bowed down to, worshipped or revered. So far we've had, in effect, bits of the first two commandments and the fourth and the fifth of the ten commandments and some of the others occur later on.

But then verses five to eight sort of take a slightly different slam. We're not now dealing with ten commandments, we're dealing with one specific sacrifice, a sacrifice of well-being that in Leviticus is found in chapters three and for the priests in chapter seven.

In a sense, it's the culmination of the regular sacrifices. You'd offer sacrifices for sin and guilt and then dedication to God and this was the sort of festive sacrifice at the end of that process.

And strictly here, it's about the fact that on that day you've got to eat the meat within the two days and not leave it longer than that. That would be prohibited. You might think, well, that seems to be slightly trivial compared to the previous things, but remember we're dealing here with a sampler of what it means to be holy.

[7 : 32] And so we're touching down on all sorts of different things. Now, in one sense, these things so far, verses three through to the end of verse eight, are about our devotion to God specifically, but we'll move on to other things in the verses that follow.

But let's pause here for a minute before we move on. How do we work out which of these laws we keep? Now, I suspect that if I was to go through each of these and ask you to put up your hand if you think that we still keep them, most of us would say, yes, we probably should revere our mother and father, though there'd be some reluctant hands, I guess, most of us would, we'd be a bit unsure about the Sabbaths, I think.

You know, we sort of think, well, maybe Sunday should be a special day, but certainly not Friday night to Saturday night, although there's some people and Christians who think that and maybe we're a bit unsure about that. Idols, no, no, we probably agree that idols would be a bad thing, but the sacrifice of well-being, well, I've never made a sacrifice of well-being, so I'm not actually in danger of leaving the food from it to last too long.

How do we determine which of these laws we now keep? Do you see the inconsistency already? How do we work it out? We can't simply say we keep all these laws because obviously we don't.

And we can't simply say, well, we don't keep all these laws because some of them we obviously do. How do we decide? That's the crucial issue, it seems to me, for Christians today in this issue of Old Testament law.

[9 : 03] And that's why it's been in the news. But it seems to me that a case-for-case basis is right and best. There is no simple way of saying, all those laws over there we keep, all those laws over there we don't keep.

I think in the end that becomes too simplistic. Let me try and give you a simple model for working on a case-by-case basis. We take each Old Testament law, whether it's in Leviticus or elsewhere, it doesn't really matter, and we seek to establish what are the principles behind that law.

They will be theological and ethical principles, that is, principles about God and his character and principles about moral behaviour. And then, and so in a sense we've lifted out the principles from the actual law and then we see, well, what does Jesus, what does the New Testament have to say or how does it reflect those principles?

some of those principles might be annulled, some of them might actually be strengthened or reinforced in the New Testament. And then at the end of the process, having got perhaps the same principles, maybe with some modifications, as we'll see, then we reapply it into our own situation.

So I'm going to model that with a few of these laws that come. But let me simply say that in the New Testament, St Paul in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 2 says that we Christians are to obey our parents.

[10 : 30] Slightly different word from revere or honour, but it's the same sort of idea. So clearly the right response to parents remains obligatory for Christians because in the light of the New Testament it still stands, reinforced by Paul.

But the well-being sacrifice, for example, of verses 5 to 8, well, we realise that all sacrifices have found their fulfilment in the one sacrifice of Jesus on the cross on the first Good Friday.

So we're no longer under obligation to offer a sacrifice of well-being. So we don't really need to worry about whether we keep the meat from that sacrifice too long or not because that sacrifice has been fulfilled in Jesus.

Idolatry, we know, is still forbidden and it may be that we're not going to actually carve a statue of a fish or an animal, you know, a tiger or something and bow down and worship and say, well, this represents God.

But maybe there are subtler forms of idolatry which remain just as prohibited, things that we worship as well. Well, the next five paragraphs, and when I say paragraph, I mean the bits that include at the end of them, I am the Lord or I am the Lord your God, that seems to be broken, breaking this passage into paragraphs.

[11 : 50] The next five paragraphs clearly have a concern for neighbours, not the TV programme, but our neighbours, our fellow citizens, if you like, the people we come in contact with.

And so it shows again the different dimensions of holiness. Holiness is not just about our direct relationship to God, our prohibition of idolatry, our right sacrifices and so on.

it's about our horizontal relationships with each other as well. So the next five paragraphs show that sort of concern. Verses 9 and 10.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard.

You shall leave them for the poor and the alien. Now I bet that none of us has ever obeyed that law. Probably because none of us has a vineyard and harvests our field.

[12 : 50] Now I might be wrong in that. But my guess is that none of us when we've harvested fields if we've ever done it or picked the grapes if we've ever done that in a vineyard have actually consciously thought I must obey this law and not strip it bare and not harvest my field exactly to the corners.

And we might well say well this is a law that no longer applies. But let me model what I was saying before about how to understand this law. What is the principle in this law?

The principle is you leave behind the gleanings whether it's grapes or grain doesn't really matter. You leave behind some gleanings for the poor to collect.

That is the law is about provision for the poor allowing enough for them. Notice that you don't do it all and then present the poor with a little food basket at the end of it all.

The poor still have to exercise some responsibility to collect it. But the sense of not actually harvesting absolutely every last head of grain and every last grape is an act of generosity to the poor.

[13 : 55] So how might we reapply that principle in a non-agricultural society? The principle still applies surely because the New Testament reminds us and Jesus reminds us that we ought to be specifically concerned for the poor because we most of us anyway here are not poor.

Well one of the good ways that I think we at Holy Trinity do that is we encourage people to think about bringing along an item of food each week and putting it in the boxes at the front of the church and they get taken into another church in a city to provide baskets of or boxes of food parcels for poor people.

In fact yesterday a number of people from here picked up food items from neighbouring houses where we told them we've got 22 boxes worth which is fantastic. I think that's the sort of principle because we're not gleaning fields and picking vineyards so we're thinking about allowing some item of our own produce if you like to be there for the poor not as a sort of handout the poor still in here have to go and harvest and collect and so on.

And notice there the unchanging character of God who still has a concern for the poor and we are to reflect that character in our expression of holiness.

So this law may not be strictly adhered to in the way that it's presented there because of our different situation but the principles still apply and our obligation is not to throw out the law and say that's old agricultural stuff, it's out of date but it's to rethink how in my life do these principles still apply for me?

[15 : 36] Am I doing the equivalent of leaving my gleanings for the poor? And if not then what are we going to do about it? Verses 11 and 12 deal with issues of honesty in effect you shall not steal one of the Ten Commandments you shall not deal falsely you shall not lie to one another and you'll not swear falsely by my name profaning the name of your God.

They may be independent items they may be all connected that is you steal that leads you to lie if perhaps you're accused and maybe even lie on oath in court thus profaning the name of the Lord.

Now all those principles of honesty and integrity they still apply. The New Testament shows that the character of God here is unchanging and those principles still apply in the situations in which we live.

We might have to rethink sometimes what does it mean to steal and to lie and be dishonest. that is deceptive words or elusive evasive answers. That's in effect deceit and lies, not telling the whole truth and not telling it clearly and blatantly.

Verses 13 and 14 don't defraud your neighbour not steal again mentioned don't keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning you shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind.

[16 : 55] Now in those sorts of laws again there is the right treatment of other people especially people in particular need paying wages at the end of the day. I'm not sure that literally that is a law that we have to keep because in those days you would pay a labourer their wages at the end of the day they weren't on the sort of contracts and so on that labourers or workers generally are today.

But surely the principle is payment on time so that your employee is not disadvantaged and yet how often Christian businesses and Christian employers actually have bad reputations for the way they treat their employees even in our society.

I'm not sure that the verse 14 is meant to be restricted to the deaf and the blind. Remember we're dealing with a sampler here so that it's referring to any person perhaps who is at least physically handicapped that we should not revile them, make life difficult for them.

There is a special care here for the, if you like, the underprivileged. Verses 15 and 16 don't render an unjust judgment, a legal context here in court.

Remember that in those days courts would be probably held in local towns and villages, maybe with all amongst people who were known. Those who were the defendants and the prosecutors and the judges would all be known to each other.

[18 : 20] So very prone probably to corruption and favouritism. So you shall not be partial to the poor. Isn't that astonishing? We might think well God's partial to the poor, a bias to the poor.

But no, even the poor have got to be treated absolutely fairly in legal matters. A bias to the poor by way of economics in provision for them, but no bias to the poor in a sense of legal issues.

Otherwise that's unfairness against those who are not poor. So you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great. That's always tempting to do, isn't it? That is we kowtow to those who've got a bit of influence.

Maybe trying to sort of suck up to them for some favour that they might bestow on us at a later time. How easy corruption is in all sorts of little ways. I remember a Looning cartoon of probably 20 years ago and talking about the great corruptions of the world and you know in Looning's typical way ending up with it all begins when grandmother wins the chook raffle drawn by her grandchild or something to that sort of banal effect.

You know that sort of corruption we must make sure that our hands are not tainted by that. Very easy to do. personal favouritism in our work or whatever in the favours we extend.

[19 : 41] Now those sorts of principles, those sorts of characteristics are still the characteristics of God. He's still an upright God who wants integrity of speech and action and fairness in all people.

We should be demonstrating that still in our lives in whatever situation we find ourselves. And then perhaps the climax of this section is verses 17 and 18.

You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin. Wow, it's easy to get away with that isn't it? See I can hate all sorts of people in my heart, you can't tell that.

But God knows, God knows whom we hate. You see the Old Testament law is not just about what we do and is seen in public. The Old Testament law is about what's in our hearts and God knows and we don't get away with it in the end.

You may put your hate into action, in which case it is seen, but you may not. You might just let hate fester in the inner recesses of your life.

[20 : 50] You shall reprove your neighbour. Oh goodness, how hard that is to do and receive. We don't like reproof, correcting, rebuking anyone, telling them off and if we do it's usually because we hate them but we're told here to correct, to reprove and rebuke and that still remains part of the characteristic of God and what he expects.

Indeed one of the functions of the scriptures is to rebuke and reprove us but it's to be done out of love not hate and it's hard to give and it's hard to receive but if we truly love each other then we'll reprove them when they're wrong.

I remember one of the hardest things I did 21 years ago telling one of my closest friends that I thought as a Christian he was wrong for dating a girl who was not a Christian and I took a week or more to pluck up the courage to tell him and we talked about it and we prayed about it and within a week she was converted and last night I happened to be in Sydney for dinner with them amongst other people there's a reunion of old university days and they're still happily married and both Christians and very keenly involved in their church.

Not that my reproof or rebuke probably had that much effect but I'm sure it was the right thing to do. I'm sure it helped keep and establish a relationship on the right footing.

Not easy to do I'm sure it wasn't hard to receive. I'm sure it was hard to receive. Verse 17 goes on you shall not you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people.

[22 : 38] That's a principle underlined in the New Testament. Vengeance is mine says the Lord. Yes there's lots of injustice in our world sometimes we're the victims and we hate it and we're incensed by it and we want to get back at those who somehow have mistreated us.

Vengeance is easy easy to do but it's the Lord's and the principle's still there. We entrust injustice to him and his final judgment.

And then verse 18 finishes so famously but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. The positive correction to the previous ones that were negative. Here is the second great commandment as Jesus taught it and quoted it from Leviticus 19 verse 18.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Not promoting self-love by that but recognizing that we actually usually do love ourselves to a great extent. We are to love our neighbor in the same way and equally.

There is no parallel in any ancient law code for that verse. It is unique in the Old Testament among all the ancient Mesopotamian Egyptian Babylonian law codes.

[23 : 47] A unique command of God for the ancient world and clearly one still taught by Jesus so one that we keep. But who is the neighbor? A whole range of words are used in here.

Notice in verse 17 don't hate in your heart anyone of your kin. You shall not reprove your neighbor or any of your people. Verse 18. There is a sense of inclusiveness amongst the people of God.

But remember how Jesus applied this statement. Who is my neighbor? He was asked. And he told the parable of the Good Samaritan because your neighbor is not just a fellow Christian. Oh yes there is a primary responsibility about our relationships within Christian fellowship.

But our neighbor is anyone whom we meet. Not the person next door alone. The person sitting opposite in the bus. Every person in our school class including our teachers and our lecturers at university.

Our bosses, our employees. Anybody that we have contact with in life. Whether or not we have any responsibility in a relationship with them.

[24 : 49] We ultimately do. And that is to love our neighbor as ourself. A principle that is kept in the New Testament but probably intensified and extended.

Indeed the New Testament teaches us as well to love our enemies. How hard is that? Well most of what we have seen in those sections are enduring standards of God.

Yes we can see that we reapply those laws in different situations. God's character is unchanging. But now for some odder, less obvious laws to finish up in the second half of this chapter.

Verse 19. You shall not let your animals breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed nor shall you put on a garment made of two different materials.

Now I suspect that the bulk of us here have got polycotton blends in some of the clothes that we're wearing if not other sorts of blends. Are we therefore being sort of flagrantly disobedient to one of these crucial commands of God?

[25 : 49] Well it seems from what's known of the ancient world and what God is commanding his people here and elsewhere in the Old Testament is that Israel was to be distinct from the other nations.

Not to intermix. And so the way they dealt with their fields and their animals and their materials was to reflect that separation if you like of Israel from other nations.

The same with the forbidden foods. They could eat these animals but not those animals. The principle behind that is not a sort of hygiene principle or a sort of dietary requirement or what someone's taste buds told them.

The principle is Israel was to be distinct from other nations and so its treatment of what foods it would eat, how it would plant its fields, etc. would not be to just mingle and mix.

It was to keep things distinct. Now I'm not sure that these principles still apply in this law because we're told in the New Testament that now the gospel is for all the people, Jew and Gentile.

[26 : 51] The food laws have gone and I suspect that the same principle lies behind these non-mixing laws and therefore probably these are laws that now no longer apply.

That is lifting out the principle, Israel to be different from other nations, distinctly the people of God. The principle is reapplied in the New Testament. Now the gospel is for anyone and everyone.

And so now we reapply this and see that it doesn't actually still reapply. The principles are nulled, if you like, in the New Testament. Verses 20 to 22 give a specific instance of a man with sexual relations with a woman who's a slave, betrothed to another person but not yet married.

Slightly complicated exception to the general stoning for adultery laws. At one level, of course, we're not allowed to exercise the sort of punishment of stoning and so on.

We're not a nation of God's people anymore. But certainly sexual fidelity within the context of marriage remains in the New Testament, I think, the principle taught by God.

[27 : 55] And is actually a very, I think, quite an important mark of God's character because he uses the language of marriage and faithfulness in marriage to describe his own relationship with us in Christ.

And as we are prepared as a bride adorned for Christ at the last time. When we sometimes think, oh, the church is just all hung up about sex again, there is actually a real importance about issues of sexuality because it's a way that God describes his relationship with us.

So faithfulness and fidelity is crucial and still for us today. Verse 23 to 25 tells us that when you come into the land and plant all sorts of fruit trees, the first three years you're not allowed to eat.

The fourth year goes to God and then you can eat it after that. Well, that's a bizarre law, surely. How do you actually give fruit to God? Well, we know that God demanded the first fruits of everything that you earned and gained.

And when you plant a tree, a fruit tree, by and large, the first three years you don't get much of a crop. The fourth year is meant to be the first good crop. And then the rest can be yours.

[29 : 08] And then the good crops keep flowing. Now, of course, the stingy person might say, I'm going to plant this fruit tree. I know that the first year I may not get anything. The first year belongs to God and I'll get what's coming after.

Well, there's stinginess, isn't it? It's greed. The first really good crop belongs to God. That's what really is the principle behind this. And so the principle behind this is perhaps not for us and fruit trees. I've never planted a fruit tree in my life.

I doubt that I ever will. But it's about how we deal with our earnings. Because for most people in the ancient world, they didn't earn a sort of money paycheck into their bank account.

They earned by having another animal being born or getting a bit of grain or fruit or whatever. How do we deal with our income, our produce, the labour of our hands?

Are we generous in giving back to God? Or is it the sort of leftovers at the end, a stinginess being expressed? See, holiness expresses a generosity to God and to the service of God, first and foremost.

[30 : 21] And so I try and make it my practice still, as I've done for 20 or more years, half of which was spent as student, that the first check that I write, so to speak, when I get paid is my tithe offering.

So that it's not what's left over at the end of a month, which might be little in a bad month. But it's the first thing, the first commitment that I make. That's my principle. I think it's actually a biblical principle.

If it's not yours, I encourage you to do it. Verses 26 to 28 prohibit augury and witchcraft.

Augury was sort of trying to determine the future, maybe by looking at the pattern of clouds or maybe not tea leaves, but that's perhaps a sort of slightly more modern equivalent. It expresses a fatalistic worldview.

It doesn't express a worldview where God is sovereign. It's directly opposed to God, in fact, and therefore it's to be prohibited because all our sense of direction and the future and guidance must come from God and God's words and God's principles.

[31 : 27] Now, it may be that we were not tea leaf readers, but I suspect there's a fair number here who might read their horoscopes sometime and not just for fun, perhaps. Well, they're rubbish, but they're worse than rubbish.

They're deceptive and they're leading us into a worldview that somehow seems to say that everything is mapped out for your future and that we have therefore no responsibility and in the end God's not sovereign.

That's why we should shun and shy away from all those sorts of practices, even if we kid ourselves that it's relatively harmless. We're told also in verse 27, you shall not round off the hair on your temples.

I've been trying to work out whether I do that or not. I don't think I do, actually, and I encourage you not to. What does it mean? I think it means that you should have, I presume for men, sideboards, at least some, so that it's not sort of, you know, one of those awful, you know, medieval monk type haircuts that's quite straight around.

And we're also told here that you shall not mar the edges of your beard. Well, I shaved mine off a bit under two years ago because I didn't want to break this law by accident. You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead, thankfully, because sometimes I do gash my flesh unintentionally, and I shall not or tattoo any marks upon you.

[32 : 49] Well, how do we rate there? It seems to be that the idea of gashing your flesh for the dead or tattooing marks upon you is probably linked to some sort of funeral rite, a pagan rite, something that you would do to mark the dead in some way.

There may be more to it than that. It may be about just sort of disfiguring even the body that God has given us that is important. Part of this temples and the edges of your beard stuff is why you might see Orthodox Jews today with curly sideboards.

I mean, there's other stuff in the Old Testament about that and so on, and often rabbis with beards, et cetera. Probably it's about not looking like and not behaving like pagan leaders or pagan people.

This is where sometimes the principles are a bit hard to detect, I guess. Certainly the gashing your flesh for the dead suggests a pagan view about death and funerals that we should shy away from.

Not eating anything with blood. Blood is life, and Leviticus 17 dealt with that at greater length to understand what that principle is. Don't practice... Sorry, that was verse 26.

[34 : 09] Verse 29, don't profane your daughter by making her a prostitute. Well, probably most of us don't do that, but in the ancient world, you see, there were temple prostitutes in pagan worship.

You'd go up to the pagan temples to worship, and one of the ways you would worship would be to engage in some sexual intercourse with a temple prostitute, not only female necessarily if you were a man. And the idea was that through the sexual intercourse, you would provoke the pagan gods to produce rain or a child or crops or animals or some form of fertility blessing.

And here, perhaps, the man is tempted to profane his daughter making her a prostitute because it was a good way of making money. Don't do it. Don't engage in pagan worship, even if you're going to make money out of it.

Because the result will be, in fact, that the whole land will become prostituted and full of depravity. And of course, in Israel's history, that certainly happened. Again, the repeat of the Sabbaths, and now revere my sanctuary.

So rather than pagan temples and pagan worship and pagan worldviews with witches and so on, the sanctuary of the Lord was to be revered. Obey the laws that apply to it, as we saw some of them in the last two weeks about sacrifices and day of atonement.

[35 : 20] Don't turn to mediums or wizards. They're probably people who had supposedly some contact with the dead. You know, occasionally they come on the chat shows on TV and stuff like that. More than harmless rubbish.

There is a deceptiveness going on here that is evil in the end, and certainly anti-God. Don't seek them out. Don't be defiled by them.

Rise before the aged. Well, I noticed some of you young people didn't sort of stand when I entered the room tonight. You should be stoned later tonight. Defer to the old.

Well, that principle, I think, probably still applies. Not only in this verse, but other places of the Old Testament, and I think there is a respect for the age to have wisdom meant to apply in the New Testament as well.

Although, on the other hand, don't despise youth, Timothy was told. But to be honest, I think probably one of the failings of youth of every generation is their arrogance in the face of the elderly.

[36 : 26] I see it in church life quite often. Not that the elderly are necessarily right, but it's an expression, surely, of humility and an acknowledgement that certainly amongst the people of God, there may be an accumulated wisdom amongst the elderly that young people don't have.

And then the right treatment of an alien, not an extraterrestrial sort of being here, but rather a foreigner who lives in your midst permanently, not a tourist, not someone just passing through to trade, but somebody from another country who's decided to settle in the land and adopt the laws.

In effect, almost like a convert in the Old Testament language. They were people, though, who were not allowed to own land. And so it would be easy to oppress them because they would tend to be poor.

They're to be treated well and generously as a citizen amongst you. And part of the basis for that is that Israel itself were aliens in Egypt, leading up to just a few months before these words were spoken in Leviticus.

And then finally, don't cheat in measuring length, weight or quantity. You know, the sort of people who, it's not prohibiting people who might say, look, I'm actually six foot, but you're really 5'11".

[37 : 37] Or the people like me who might say, look, I'm actually so many kilograms, but I'm really, you know. It's not about cheating at weight watchers and all that sort of stuff. The idea is that if you're trading goods and you wanted to come and buy from me a kilogram of flour, well, I'll get out these set of weights.

And so I'll put my kilogram weight here and you'll get your kilogram balance to flour back. And if you had equal weights, you'd probably find that I've sold you 920 grams.

But you've paid for a kilogram. Or if I'm buying something from you and trading, I might get out my weights over here. I want a kilogram, thank you. I'll put on my kilogram weight and I'll collect my kilogram of produce and I've actually bought for a kilogram's worth 1.1 kilograms.

That was common practice. Amos and Hosea, the prophets, later on than Moses, rebuked the people for dishonesty and cheating in such a way. The character of God is unchanging here. Honesty, integrity in all our dealings with whomever we're dealing.

It's always easy to cheat a little. Grab a little bit more, sell a bit for a bit, a bit more and so on. And then a final overall command at the end, you shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances and observe them for I am the Lord.

[38 : 55] Behind every refrain in this chapter is a statement, I am Yahweh or I am Yahweh your God. It is an exclusive relationship with a holy God. And holiness is to be expressed not in some airy, fairy, away with the cloud sort of spirituality.

Holiness is to be expressed in daily life, in family life, in business life, in the way you deal with your wallet, in every aspect of your life. This is just a sampler.

It's telling us that there is nothing in life that is outside the command to live and practice holy living. Holiness standards are not fixed by society.

They are fixed by God and his character and demands. And as our society changes its standards from a generation ago and the next generation will no doubt change them again, holiness remains constant because God's character is unchanging.

Holiness, you see, is not a movable feast. So that we can say that in our generation, because we know so much more, sexual promiscuity is okay.

[40 : 03] God's standards are fixed. And these are the standards we've seen tonight and there are more elsewhere. So because his character and standards are unchanging, the principles behind these laws are basically unchanging as well.

Honesty, integrity, anti-corruption, compassion, care for the weak, care for the landless, the foreigner, the refugee, expression of love for anyone, honouring of others, not least our elders, sexual faithfulness and an exclusive devotion to Yahweh, which prohibits any forms of pagan worship or contact with pagan worship, witchcraft or occult, etc.

Those principles still apply. But because of Jesus' death on the cross and because of the inbreaking of the gospel of Christ, 1400 years after Leviticus, we no longer need to make sacrifices.

The sacrificial laws have gone. The Sabbath laws, I think, have now been compromised at best if not done away with by the coming of Jesus Christ, 1400 years after this.

And because the gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel for all people, the laws that specifically were to show that Israel was different and distinct, themselves have been done away with by the coming of the gospel of Jesus for Jews and for Gentiles.

[41 : 16] And also our change situation will mean that some laws cannot be applied. So the law that might say you might stone and adultery, we can't do that in our society without getting into great trouble.

And so we let God exercise his judgment in his way, in his time. Yes, we don't pay our labours each day at the end of the day, but we're to pay them promptly.

We may not plant fruit trees, but the first fruits of all our income and produce in effect still belongs to God. The ethical principles remain constant, even if the practical application and situations might change.

Now what high standards these are. What demands of holiness still then apply to us? See, we're not exempt from the demands to reflect the character of God who is holy in our midst.

Who can attain this? Well, Jesus has, perfectly and uniquely, of course, a model to follow. But this perfect standard of holiness exposes our failure.

[42 : 26] That's part of its function. Because we realise that in our hearts we hate people. We realise that we are corrupt because we favour some and not others. We realise that sometimes we cheat or lie or steal.

That we're actually not models of total integrity and faithfulness and honesty and so on. And Leviticus knew that people couldn't keep these laws properly, which is why they're counterparts to the sacrificial laws we've already seen.

Because the sacrificial laws know that we fail, but they provide an ongoing basis of relationship with the holy God, even though we fail. To approach with caution, because we approach with blood.

And those sacrificial laws, of course, superseded by the one great sacrifice for all people, for all time, for all sin. Jesus on the cross. Holiness is severely under-emphasised, I think, in our churches today, sadly.

But these chapters of laws, and beyond this one chapter we've looked at tonight, are reminding us and warning us that every single aspect of our life is to be holy.

[43 : 35] So a young person does keep us high for white- schooling, and ideally the most part of your life is to be holy. And so attention is what nadzieja is here time to judge us... Which is because of the sacred and yoga, and the other four of the human being unturned or the sacred etc. We believe that your body can view this body because of how to deploy this body and concern them all others.

We believe that your bodies for the naturalism that are not yet to be imitate, and therefore correctness is the same way. Thank you.