

# CHIEF MINISTRIES

February 2019

The single but never to be forgotten occasion of strange fire is described as follows; *“Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense, and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to His command. So fire came out before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord” (Leviticus 10:1-2)*. They were not fulfilling divinely mandated instructions. They were “doing their own thing”. God told Israel explicitly in the ceremonial law how He wants to be worshiped. God wrote the ceremony, He prescribed the order of worship. He knew what He wanted. Trying to do one better than His word was not pleasing to Him. There is no reward for un-commanded work: doing only what God commands pleases Him.

God is Spirit; those who worship Him must do so in *“spirit and in truth” (John 4:24)*. Some hastily think only of worshipping Him in the Spirit – and forget the truth. *God is Spirit. He is also truth (Psalms 31:5)*.

“Strange fire” is the King James version of what other versions call “unauthorized fire”. The Hebrew word means “foreign” or “profane” fire. Not only was the fire not commanded; indeed, it was contrary to His command (Leviticus 10:1).

It might seem to some that the moral law – the 10 Commandments – are all that mattered in those days. But God wrote the moral law, the civil law, and also the ceremonial law (although these distinctions are what theologians have made in order to clarify their application). It was the ceremonial law that was being violated in this account.

King Saul later became “yesterday’s man because he did not respect the explicit command regarding who is qualified to offer the burnt offering (part of the ceremonial law). He was to wait for Samuel but didn’t. *“Bring me the burnt offering, Saul commanded*. Someone should have stopped him or at least cautioned him. No one did. He then offered the burnt offering. When Samuel arrived. Saul explained that he felt compelled to do this. *(1 Samuel 13:8-12)*.

Imagine that. Going against the plain teaching of the word because he felt “compelled” to do so! Is this not like those who say, “I know it’s not in the Bible, but God told me to do it” or “I felt led to do it”, going right against the Holy Scripture! Saul did that. Samuel told him that he had “acted foolishly” and would forfeit his kingdom and legacy (1 Samuel 13:13-14). That is exactly what happened – all because he took lightly the Lord’s command regarding how God wanted to be worshiped. Although he became “yesterday’s man” in that moment. He wore the crown for another 20 years. 20 years without God’s favor, but the people had no idea of this. Only Samuel (1 Samuel 16:1).

It was so sad that Aaron’s very own sons Nadab and Abihu did this. The event of this strange fire incident would have no doubt been recorded in the Holy Word even if these two men had not been such high profile. But being the sons of none other than Aaron – God’s #2 in those days – heightened their sin. Nadab was actually Aaron’s firstborn son – the most prestigious and respected place in ancient Israel. The firstborn had double the rights when it came to inheritance. You may recall that Esau was Isaac’s firstborn but forfeited it all to Jacob by his folly (Genesis 25:31-34).

God is no respecter of persons. Therefore, Nadab and Abihu would not be exempt because they were Aaron's sons. And yet these two brothers would have known of their father's own idolatry when Aaron was directly involved in making the golden calf (Exodus 32:2-35). Children imitate their parents. It is possible that these two sons never truly saw the seriousness of their father's grievous sin. They may have even developed an absence of reverence by Aaron's rebellion.

What are we to learn from this incident of unauthorized fire? First, we must remember that the use of fire itself in the old sacrificial system was God's idea. So, whether it was natural fire used in the sacrificial system or supernatural fire when God manifested His glory, God had a reason for fire. The use of fire therefore was never man's idea. Moreover, everything in the Mosaic Law was a shadow of good things to come (Hebrews 10:1). The fire of the Old Testament pointed to the divided tongues of fire at Pentecost. It pointed to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire. God himself would always be a consuming fire. Fire itself therefore would be sacred when it came to God's prescription of how He would be worshiped. Only fire was acceptable. And yet man has a way of imitating God's idea. What Nadab and Abihu did by offering strange fire set a pattern of subsequent generations to follow. Too many become either rebellious, prideful, impatient, or faithless – and take God's own word lightly.

Aaron's legacy was partly the planting of the seed of rebellion in his two sons, so the example of Nadab and Abihu set the stage for rebellion in subsequent generations. Referring to the golden calf incident Moses said to the Israelites, *"from the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord"* (Deuteronomy 9:7). Rebellion became one of the chief sins in ancient Israel. *"If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!"* (Deuteronomy 31:27). *Rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft* (1 Samuel 15:23). *The false prophet Hananiah said that Jeremiah had "preached rebellion against the Lord"* (Jeremiah 28:16). The Lord said to Ezekiel, *"son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day."* (Ezekiel 2:3). What Nadab and Abihu had done by offering their unauthorized fire was to rebel against God's prescription of worship.

The offering of strange fire therefore was not merely a sin of weakness or ignorance; it was a sin with a high hand. Not adhering to Scripture is rebellion.

Another way of getting into the minds of the two men that lay behind this unauthorized fire was that a rival spirit set itself up in their hearts. A competitive spirit, it was their fire versus the fire of God.

But there was even more going on here. They showed no respect for their elders and those whom God appointed. Nadab and Abihu were insubordinate. In the New Testament we are commanded never to rebuke an elder but to treat him as a Father (1 Timothy 5:1). Whether elder means an older man or an official position, one is to show respect for those over them. Sometimes young people – or those new in ministry – get impatient for their day to come and consequently become their own authority. The worst thing that can happen to a man is to succeed before he is ready. Nadab and Abihu could not wait for their time to come: they wanted to show themselves equal to their elders.

A rival spirit is also what motivates people to reject God's way of salvation, God says *salvation is by grace through faith – not of works* (Ephesians 2:8 – 9). A rival spirit says, "I can save myself by what I do. In other words, people by nature want to compete with what Jesus Christ has done on the cross. They cannot bear the thought of giving total glory to God for their salvation; they want to feel they have a hand in it. So, with the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu, they wanted to do their own thing.

Pride is a feeling of pleasure from one's own achievements. This equally lay at the bottom of this unauthorized fire. They wanted to show what they could do without following God's prescribed way. Their egos got involved. They wanted to make a statement. They knew exactly what they were doing. They were not doing this in a corner so that no one would know. Quite the contrary, they wanted to make sure everyone witnessed what they did. They wanted to be the first to do this. Perhaps people with less profile would not have thought

of such a thing. But they wanted to set a precedent, to go down in history. They certainly would be known in history, but not as they envisioned. They were so sure they were going to get away with it.

Arguably the worst development in our nation, however, is the way the prosperity message has taken over. Appealing to the rich and poor, the message of “name it and claim it”, “believe it and receive it”. Instead of teaching people how to pray and find out for themselves how God answers prayer, I’ll ask you to give your request in the offering plate with a little money – as if their prayers are more effectual than those of ordinary people.

The old Pentecostal movement was born in the belief of God’s manifest presence and power. They saw wonderful things. Early Pentecostals were at the bottom of the socioeconomic level, scoffed at by traditional Christians, neglected if not rejected by the middle class of American Christianity. They were really and truly outside the camp! And yet are not Christians told go “outside the camp” bearing Christ’s reproach (Hebrews 13:13). They carried on as God blessed them more and more. They began to grow faster than all the others. They saw healings. Signs and wonders. Gifts of the Spirit in operation. Yet some today have lost the power in place of slick marketing, beautiful arenas making prosperity teachings the thrust of their services, a teaching that they make to be the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we are to believe some of these people, the reason Jesus died on the cross was mainly for us to have a prosperous and healthy life here on the earth. Some never mentioned that Jesus really died on the cross that we might go to heaven and not to hell when we die. That message does not sell well. So, it is all about the here and now. Existentialism. Money. Strange fire. A lot of these people are godly and sound who love their Bibles and want it preached. They welcome leadership that will focus on Scripture, solid teaching and Christ centered worship. I write this letter to preserve this very thing and, if possible, to help to stop the present trend. The day has come that false teaching has abounded. True. But you don’t have to embrace it.

Arrogance might be defined as overbearing pride indicated by a superior manner toward inferiors. Nadab and Abihu, knowing they were the sons of Aaron felt they were a “cut above” the rest of the priests of the day. They wanted to show that they could get away with their revolt against the prescribed way.

King David conceived of a noble idea to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. He thought this was a righteous thing to do. And that God would reward him perhaps. But there in David also sadly, was an unconscious arrogance, a feeling that he was doing a most wonderful thing for God. It apparently did not cross his mind to consult Scripture or the priests first. So when he arranged to bring the ark to Jerusalem, Uzzah reached out and took hold of it because the oxen that carried it stumbled, the Lord’s anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act and he was struck dead.

This made David himself “angry” because of the Lord’s wrath. It seemed so unfair (2 Samuel 6:6 – 8). Then he humbled himself. He later recognized that God was perfectly just in doing what he did. *“We did not inquire of him how to do it in a prescribed way” – namely, that the ark should be carried with poles on the shoulders of the priests,” as Moses commanded in accordance with the word of the Lord (1 Chronicles 15:13-15).* This shows how seriously God takes his own Word and will not bend the rules for anyone – even the man after God’s own heart.

We noted that Nadab and Abihu could not wait for their time to come. The sons of Aaron were thus impatient with the Lord. Instead of waiting before God and waiting upon God – giving Him opportunity to pour out holy fire as He had just done, the two men went ahead of the Lord and offered their own fire. Never forget the context of this heinous sin in Leviticus. Immediately prior to this fateful event, when Moses and Aaron entered the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people. *“Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed the burnt offering.” When all the people saw it, “they shouted for joy and fell face down” (Leviticus 9:23-24).* Immediately after that glorious moment was when Nadab and Abihu brought their own fire. They did not wait for God to do it.

As I indicated above, this was the kind of impatience that led to King Saul's downfall. If only Saul had waited for Samuel. *"But now your kingdom will not endure," Samuel said to Saul, "the Lord has sought a man after his own heart.....because you have not kept the Lord's command."* (1 Samuel 13:14).

All the previously mentioned depictions of sin can be traced to unbelief. Unbelief is the essential cause of rebellion, rivalry, pride, arrogance, and impatience. Unbelief is doubt that degenerates to a conscious act of the will. It is one thing to be tempted to unbelief. We all face this. Unbelief was at the heart of Satan's appeal to Eve in the Garden of Eden. *"Did God really say, 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"* (Genesis 3:1). Instilling doubt in Eve by that very question. Satan said to Jesus, *"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread"* (Matthew 4:3) implying that Jesus was not really the Son of God. We all face temptation to doubt.

But when we consciously decide that God did not say what He did – and we can do it better, or that He is not going to keep His word – or manifest Himself, and then put ourselves above His Word, we cross over a line. This is dangerous stuff.

Nadab and Abihu did not really believe in the prescribed way. They did not do what they did with fear and trembling but with the smug persuasion they were doing the right thing. Their unbelief led to their revolt. They opted for their own way of worshiping God – offering their own fire before Moses and Aaron and all the priests. They believe that their fire was as good as any fire. But it wasn't.

At any rate God stepped in when Nadab and Abihu offered their unauthorized fire. After the strange fire came the holy fire. *"So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consume them, and they died before the Lord. Moses then said to Aaron, 'this is what the Lord spoke of when He said: "Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored." (Leviticus 10:3). It was a horrible, horrible moment for Aaron. "Aaron remained silent." (v3) the dead sons were carried by their cousins – "still in their tunics, outside the camp, as Moses ordered" (v4-5). They then followed further instructions concerning the worship of God. Moses wanted to make sure that the fear of God was always present. "The Lord's anointing oil is on you," Moses said to those who were to carry on the worship of God (v7).*

As a worship leader, I've seen many talented men come and go, some used by God and some used of God. When I say by, I'm reminded of Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22, when I say of God it's being used based on relationship.

They both are capable of getting the job done at the appointed time, yet the one with a relationship reaps eternal reward and carries with them the anointing to continue getting God's work done. The ass is but used for the moment with no anointing, just accomplishing a task set before them. Most donkeys, burros, asses, call them what you prefer, are stubborn. They don't take direction well. They'll move when they want to, do it how they want to and that's how it's going to be – their own prescribed way. And there will always be Aaron's around to let those "sons" do whatever they want. Sin. Go ahead. It doesn't matter. You won't be struck down. No, maybe not today. But it's coming! Mark it down. God always settles His accounts – whether it be in this life, or on That day in the next one!

Some 1300 years later Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit. This happened while the Spirit of the Lord was present in the early church at an optimal level. They too were struck dead on the spot. Part of the fallout of this notable moment was "great fear" (Acts 5:1-11).

Here's a sobering thing. Aaron's sons were not the last to do "their own thing" in the work of the Lord. And yet God for some reason does not always send supernatural fire to show His displeasure. Moreover, there have been many since then who have lied to the Holy Spirit. But they are not struck dead. Why? Perhaps because this happens only in what I might call "a revival situation", when a maximum level of the Holy Spirit's power is present.

The notion that gifts are more important than character is one that puzzles me greatly here in the prison system. I find it incredible. Now I'm talking about spiritual gifts – tongues, prophecy, words of knowledge, healing, charisma, talents, abilities, oratorical gifts, musical gifts, etc.

The gifts are without repentance – irrevocable (Romans 11:29). This explains why a person's gift continues to flourish despite their personal morality. Never forget that King Saul prophesied on his way to kill David (1 Samuel 19:21-24). It is assumed by some sincere but gullible people that if a person is able to perform miracles, it can only be because God's seal is upon them, or because someone got goosebumps during worship. Wrong! Very wrong. The gifts are irrevocable; God lets you keep them. This is why prophesying proves nothing. Speaking in tongues proves nothing. Performing a miracle proves nothing. Being able to play an instrument or sing proves nothing. If you or anyone you know upholds a teaching contrary to that, they are biblically and theologically ignorant. They are not "immersed" in the Word of God.

**Listen to me. When you and I are not grounded in the Word and disciplined by regular alone time with God, we are going to be vulnerable to all sorts of weird notions in these days when people are carried along by every wind of doctrine.**

Character should always – always – govern a person's life and ministry. Far better to have transparent character and no gifts than to have power to call fire down from heaven when one's personal life is immoral.

If that is known about people in leadership where are you at, pray for them. That God would be merciful to them and that they would repent or that they would be removed from leadership. Get 2 or 3 together and agree about it. Just make sure that your part of the solution and not the problem.

The knowledge of God's Word and His ways is essential to God's favor on us. If we lose His favor, we are finished – and God will raise someone else to uphold His honor. With worship becoming more and more "popular" these days, revivals have always had a 'sound' of worship associated with them. I believe we are moving into the last days church of worshiping saints being what draws His presence to heal and deliver and save. Pray that God will raise up true worshipers who are not just performers but have superb musicianship and skill focusing on theologically sound music. They should be on guard against the need to perform less the worship time appear more like a concert. We don't want people upfront leading worship who, frankly, can't sing. We don't want musicians playing who don't know their stuff.

But if the honor of God is the supreme focus; we'll see that. People will recognize the false because they have become acquainted with the real.

Spend time with the real thing and you'll recognize the counterfeit.

Be Real. Avoid strange fire, and if you see any.....put it out.

Praying for His presence to burn within you,

## ***Chief***

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***Felon***