

Guest Preacher - Rev. Howard Stone

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Preacher: Rev. Howard Stone

[0:00] Let's go back to Leviticus 19. The chapter opens, And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, I speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel, and say to them, you shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

Let's pray for God's help and God's blessing on His Word. Lord, you are a God who speaks. You speak to us in the glories of creation, proclaiming to us what a majestic and wonderful and awesome God you are.

You speak to us in our consciences, making us aware of those things that are wrong, things that are right and good. And you speak to us through your Word.

Thank you so much that we have the Bible freely available to us. It is the most precious thing that any of us can possess, because it is living.

It is powerful. We ask then, Lord God, that as we read these words that you have spoken to us, that your Spirit Himself would take them and apply them to each one of us, that we would see how you want us to live, and that we would be determined to obey you and to live for your glory.

[1:27] We thank you, Lord Jesus, that you lived a life of perfect obedience, and that your righteousness is credited to the account of everyone who simply believes, who confesses their sin and seeks to follow you.

Bless us richly then. Help me to explain these things in a way that is right and good, and God glorifying for your honour. Amen. I would hazard a guess that Leviticus is not your favourite book in the Bible, not something that you would often go to and turn to.

In my daily readings some time ago now, I was going through Leviticus, and the opening chapters are very hard going about the various offerings and sacrifices and rituals and ceremonies, and it is tempting sometimes to think, well, what's the point of these things?

When we come to chapter 19, though, it's more easily applicable to our own situation, in that here was God speaking to the people of Israel and saying, this is how you are to live.

And he starts off by saying, I want you to be holy. Well, more than that, you are to be holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

[2:55] Now, I grew up thinking of holiness as moral right. It's the good, it's the right thing to do, that God never does anything wrong.

That is not what holiness actually means. That's what holiness leads to. But holiness is being set apart from everything else. God, you see, is holy.

He's set apart from everything else. The attributes of God are true of God and of no one else. God is eternal.

He's had no beginning. He will have no end. There is nothing else in existence that has that quality. God is infinite.

There is no limit to our God. God is infinite. I saw something recently on YouTube it was, that was suggesting that the stars that we can see with our eyes, the naked eye, are actually stars in the Milky Way, which is one little galaxy out of hundreds and thousands of other galaxies.

[4:10] But God is beyond all that. He's infinite. There is no limit to him. There's no limit to his knowledge, no limit to his power.

That makes him different from everything else that exists. Everything else is limited. It's finite. God is infinite as well.

Not infinite. He's holy in his being uncreated. There was once a time when I didn't exist and you didn't exist.

But God created you. God created this world that we live in, this universe we live in. There was once a time when it didn't exist. That's not true of God.

God is separate. He's different from everything else that exists. And God is saying, just as I'm holy, I want you to be holy.

[5 : 12] You are to be different from those around about you, those who don't know God, those who aren't following Jesus Christ. You have to live a life that is evidently different from those around about you.

And that's what he's saying to Israel here. I have chosen you, the one nation out of all the nations under heaven, to be my people. And this is the way I want you to live.

And it's going to be different from the other nations around about. I want you to follow my instructions, my commands. Now, some of these commandments are particularly for Israel. We can't apply them directly to ourselves. We don't offer sacrifices. We aren't involved in agriculture in the way that they were.

But we can take principles from these instructions and see how they apply to us today. That's what I want to do this morning. I won't be looking at everything in the chapter, but taking out some of the instructions that God gives us.

[6 : 27] Now, this is not God saying to us, keep my laws and I'll save you. I'll make you my own people.

Israel here had been made God's people. God had chosen. God had taken them out of slavery. And now he says, obey me.

So if you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been taken from slavery, taken out of the slavery of sin. And now God says, this is how I want you to show your love for me.

Show that you are my people by keeping my commandments. When Jesus spoke to his disciples in the upper room, he said, since you love me, the word is often, is translated normally, if you love me, but I think it's better translated, since.

Since you love me, keep my commands. So God is saying to you and to me, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, be holy, keep my commands.

[7 : 35] So let's look at some of the principles here. First of all, in verse 3 there, every one of you should revere his mother and father.

You're going to be different by respecting your parents, those of us who've still got parents in this world. But not, the principle applies to those in authority as well.

We respect those who are over us. That's different from many in our society. I know in our own community of parents whose children have just cut them off, have nothing to do with them.

One of our friends recently went to an old folks home and some of our children have never visited, never made any contact with her at all.

That's the way of the world. You're to be different if you're following Jesus. You are to respect your parents, to revere your parents, to love them, to serve them.

[8 : 52] Be different from those around about you. Next, be different, care for the poor.

If you go to verse 9 here, when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to the edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest.

When you're harvesting your grapes, don't pick them all. Leave them for the poor. The natural inclination, if you were farming, would be to get the maximum yield, to get everything, to reap it right to the edge of the harvest, to go over your vineyard a second time, get every grape that was there.

God says, be different. Leave these things for the poor. Leave them for those who haven't got a field. Look after them, the less fortunate, the less wealthy.

the implication is that we ourselves now are not to be selfish, not to live our own lives in our own little bubble.

[10 : 13] And who cares about the poor of the world? After the earthquake in Venezuela, I think within a day, I got an email from Tearfund who are seeking to bring support and help into that situation.

That's the Christian response, to care for those in need. That's different from those round about us who are just taking up with themselves. Look after their home, look after their car, go on nice holidays.

nothing wrong with these things in themselves, but don't be selfish. Care for the poor. We have many opportunities to help those in need.

There are lots of charities, lots of Christian charities who are seeking to show the love of Jesus to the poor in the world. Be generous. Be content and honest.

Verse 11, you shall not steal, you shall not deal falsely, you shall not lie to one another.

[11:39] Why do people steal? Because they want something they haven't got. They're not content with what they've got.

Godliness with contentment is great gain, says Paul by the Spirit. That's to be different. You are to be different from those around about you who are always wanting more, always discontented, always complaining.

We have so much, we are wealthy people compared to many in the world. So be content with what you've got.

Be thankful for what God has given you. and be honest. So much of what is publicized about those and positions of power in the parliament and the Scottish parliament as well.

There are suggestions of dishonesty and lying. Sometimes these things are true. That's what's seen in the public place.

[12:56] Not to be like that. You should be known as someone who, when he says yes, he means yes. When you say no, the person you're speaking to know, knows that that is true.

Don't lie. It's easy to lie. We were singing there, my sins and faults of you, that oh Lord, forget.

Often when I sing that, I think of my growing years when I lied to my mum.

I'd done something wrong. Was it you? No, it wasn't me. And then you'd have to lie on top of that and tell another lie to cover that one. Don't lie.

In Christ, wonderfully, I'm forgiven for these things. So are you if you're in Christ. But be different from those around about you. Tell the truth. Be honest.

then be different. Don't blaspheme. Don't misuse God's name. If you go to verse 12, you shall not swear by my name falsely and so profane the name of your God.

[14:18] I am the Lord. It seems to me that television authorities have got things wrong in that there is a watershed time.

And after the watershed you're allowed to use four-letter words. But misusing God's name any time of day seems to be acceptable.

People can blaspheme and nobody bats an eyelid. That's the way of the world. People don't notice using Jesus' name, using God's name as a blasphemy.

Actually taking the Lord's name is much more serious than using horrible words. And here is God saying, you are not to be like the rest of the world that profanes my name.

When God speaks of his name, it's not just a label, it's not just a title, it's the whole of his character, everything that God stands for.

[15:35] Don't blaspheme. Don't say, for God's sake, OMG, is another popular phrase that's used a lot, isn't it?

One of our grandsons, he has recently gone to school, people, and I heard him saying, oh my gosh, which I wasn't, when I first heard it, I thought, is he saying, oh my God, but I gathered that it's just that slight change.

But don't use these phrases. I remember speaking to a friend in the village, and just a throwaway comment, there was some, I can't remember the context, it was about something he was confused about, and he simply said, oh God knows.

That was blasphemous. He didn't mean it. It's true, God did know, but it was just a throwaway comment. Don't do that.

Don't be like that. Be different from the world. Recognize God is to be revered, and honored, and loved, and served.

[17:05] Twelve times in that chapter, you might have noticed it, God says, I am the Lord. God is just telling the people of Israel, he's telling us, remember who I am.

I'm not someone to be messed with, so don't misuse my name. Let's keep going. Fifthly, don't, rather, fifthly, be quick to forgive.

Don't take vengeance. It's in verse 18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your people.

We'll come to the next one. Love your neighbor in a moment. Some time ago, our prime minister, he, there was some sort of infighting in the government, as I remember, and he termed what had been done as unforgivable.

That was his attitude. I am not going to forgive this person. I cannot forgive this person for what he's done to me. Here's Jesus, no, here's God, saying to us, don't be like that.

[18 : 31] Be quick to forgive other people. You're not perfect, I'm not perfect, I'm going to hurt people, I'm going to say the wrong thing, I'm going to do the wrong thing to other people, and they're going to do it to me.

So don't take revenge. Don't get your own back. We had a children's club in Castletown, and I remember one occasion, there was two of the children had been hitting one another, and I separated them and told them, if some, well, the story was, he hit me first, and I said, if someone hits you, come and tell me about it.

His response was, my dad said, if someone hits you, hit them back harder. That's the way of the world. God's way is different.

He says, if someone hits you, forgive them. don't take vengeance. One of our late friends, I remember her saying that a cousin, I think it was, or someone she knew had held a grudge against another person for decades, and she made it known that she held this grudge.

Someone had hurt her, done something wrong to her, and she would not let it go. Don't be like that. That's the way of the world. Be holy, be separate, be different from the world round about.

[20 : 15] Secondly, love your neighbor. Now, there's the same verse in verse 18, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

It's remarkable that there is this little instruction in this chapter when Jesus tells us this is the second greatest commandment.

Just tucked away in the list of other things that God has told us to do. First commandment is love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.

love your neighbors yourself. Those you know around about you, those in your family, do them good, love them, care for them.

Love is a concept that we all know what it means, but it's hard to define. the best definition I've come across is to regard someone else as precious.

[21 : 27] You regard your neighbor as precious and if you regard your neighbor as precious, you won't hurt them, you won't do them any harm, but rather you'll do the best for them.

You'll care for them, you'll provide for them, you'll help them, you'll support them. You're loving your neighbor as you love yourself. You think you're quite precious, you're important, you look after yourself, you provide for yourself.

Here's God saying, be different from the rest of the world. They're taken up with number one, with themselves. You're to be different, you're to care for your neighbor.

Look after them, provide for them, do them good, just as you would do good to yourself. Let's keep going.

Number seven is be sexually pure. In verse 20, if a man lies sexually with a woman who is a slave, assigned to another man and not yet ransomed or given her freedom, as distinction shall be made, they shall not be put to death because she was not free.

[22 : 44] the death sentence was God's specification for adultery and in this case it doesn't apply because the woman's not free.

But then if you go to 22, and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the Lord for his sin that he has committed and he shall be forgiven for the sin he has committed.

it. Plainly, what has been described here is wrong. This man has done something wrong in sleeping with this woman.

They're not married. The implication is they are married now. He's to take this woman to be his wife from here onwards.

But it's described as a sin. What he's done is a sin which needs to be forgiven. It's based on the truth that sexual activity is only appropriate in a marriage.

[23 : 54] Anything else is forbidden by God and is wrong and is sinful. That's not the standard of the world. The standard of the world is often moving together.

live together as man and wife but never get married. Never make that commitment. Incidentally, friends, there's nothing special about having a marriage certificate.

What makes marriage special is the commitment that a man and woman have publicly said we're going to be together for the rest of our lives.

Come what me. And it's in that context that sex is appropriate. That's not the way of the world. People live together.

They may decide to get married after a while. but that's not God's standards. Be holy. Be different. Have a high moral standard.

[25 : 07] Recognize that this is what God has created and it is precious and it has to be protected. let's go on.

Be different. Give God his due. Give God what is his due. In verse 24 it's talking about a fruit tree. For three years you're to leave the fruit. You don't eat it. In the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy. That is it's set apart for God.

An offering of praise to the Lord. But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. By doing this they were recognizing the fruit in that tree is actually God's creation.

One of the Psalms speaks about God making the grass grow for the cattle. Do you ever think of that? The grass that you have to cut every couple of weeks.

[26 : 16] It's actually God that makes it grow. God is intimately involved in his creation. That apple is God's making. Everything we have is God's.

And so here are the people of Israel being told they must give to God his due. By giving this fruit from the fourth year.

It was holy. It would have been given to the Levites, to the priests. It was an acknowledgement. This is a gift from God. God's made this. God's given it to me.

And therefore I should give to God. That's our principle is that we too recognize that everything that we enjoy, everything that we have been given, has come from God.

And therefore we should be willing to give some of it back. The principle in the Old Testament was that the Israelites were to give a tenth.

[27 : 28] That proportion is never stated in the New Testament. Rather it is the principle of giving how the Lord has blessed you. If you've been blessed abundantly, give abundantly.

Don't be niggardly. Don't be mean when it comes to giving to the Lord. Everything I've got, everything you've got is a gift from him.

So return some of it for his work. That's different from the world. people may give to charities, non-Christian people may give to charities, they may support good causes, but it's often done reluctantly, or just giving a minimum, just to coppers they don't need.

You're to be different. You're to recognize what I have is God's, and I delight to give it back to him. just three more, we're getting there.

Have nothing to do with occult things. Have nothing to do with occult things. In verse 26, the second part of that verse, you shall not interpret omens or tell fortunes.

[28 : 53] Verse 31, do not turn to mediums or necromancers. Do not seek them out, and so make yourself unclean by them. Our daughter and her family are with us just now.

She was going to, well, she was invited to go out with some friends for one of a friend's birthdays, but she learned that they were going to spend time with tarot cards.

If you know what tarot cards are, they're, I don't know the details of them, but they're ways of telling the future, supposedly telling the future. Friends, I have nothing to do with that, or our daughter wouldn't go along to that event.

I have nothing to do with such things. Anything that suggests there's spiritual insights into the spirit realm, that it hasn't come from God, it's come from Satan himself, have nothing to do with it.

I had a funeral in our own village some months ago, people. And two days after the death of her husband, she was visited by a woman who claimed that she could get in touch with her late husband.

[30 : 21] It was going to cost her 60 quid or something like that. Have nothing to do with that. It's from the pit. God has said, I'm the Lord.

I'm the one who speaks to you. I'm the one who will teach you the truth. I will give you insight into spiritual things. Don't go looking for it anywhere else. Tenth thing here is observe the Sabbath. Observe the Sabbath. It's mentioned in verse three, but then in 30 as well. You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary. I am the Lord.

For Israel, it had particular significance. It was actually a covenant sign that one day in the week was set apart for God.

For the Jews, it was the last day of the week. For us, obviously, it's the first day of the week. This is Exodus chapter 31. The Lord said to Moses, you are to speak to the people of Israel and say, above all, you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your

generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.

[31:49] You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. So there is one day that's holy, it's to be set aside. It's again, the same concept of setting something aside, being different.

You're to have one day that is different from the rest, a day of rest. There's been a change. It used to be Saturday, but the Christian church, in the New Testament times, they changed it to the first day of the week.

Because that's the day that the Lord Jesus rose again. Keep the Sabbath. That's different from the rest of the world. They're washing their car, doing the messages, doing the garden, doing whatever they do on the Lord's Day.

It's just a day like any other day. Be different. Make this day special. Your attendance here this morning is evidence that you're doing that.

You're making this day for the Lord. And then one last one. Keep God's decrees.

[33:06] This really sums it all up in 37. You shall observe all my statutes and all my rules and do them. I am the Lord. Essentially, God is saying, live my way.

Live my way. Not the way of the world, not the way that you think yourself may be right and good. Go my way. As Jesus said to his disciples, we already mentioned it, since you're my disciples, since you love me, keep my commandments.

Bear fruit for me. Be different from the world round it bit. I remember a friend in Aberdeen in my student days, he was a policeman and he showed me a copy of the newsletter for the Christian police organisation and on the front was this little cartoon of a judge and the caption was, if you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Would there be enough evidence to convict you of being a Christian? If you claim to follow Jesus Christ, if you recognise him as your saviour, does it show in the life that you lead?

Are you different? Are you holy? When I say that, what comes to mind is growing up in Helmsdale, my dad was minister there, and my nickname was Holy Howard, which I hated.

[34:56] I wasn't a Christian at the time. But could you say, could that adjective be put to you? Holy Myrtle, Holy Marina, Holy George, Holy Mary is a compliment to be set apart for God.

If your trust is in the Lord Jesus, he's forgiven you your sin, show it by obeying his commands. Let's praise together. Let's Lord God, you have revealed yourself as a holy God who is set apart from everything else that exists.

We want to be set apart for you. We want to be holy. Teach us your ways. Help us to apply your truth to our daily living.

May it be evident that we are following Jesus Christ. May the way we live be a source of blessing to others. Help us to love you with all our heart and soul and mind and strength to love our neighbour as ourselves.

And so we might fulfil your law for your glory and praise. Amen. Psalm 15 in St.

[36:25] Psalms is our closing praise. It's on page 16. Lord, who may stay within your tent, your sacred dwelling place, and who upon your holy hill may live before your face?

Then the answer to that question, who's good enough to share company with you? The answer is whoever walks a blameless path, who acts in righteousness.

So let's praise God with these words. Amen.

Your holy hill May it be For your face Whoever wants A meaningless one Who might be righteous And who will always grow the heart sincerely truth expressed He can't no serve on anyone nor Christ is in our Lord He has no sign with His heart O Slam and all His heart He yoders souls who fear the Lord The worthless deal He He keeps the oath which He did not swear I am high the price [39:34] He lets His money out for charge No pride can he endure!

Those who behave in life like this will always stand secure God Savior Now may the the Lord Christ God the fellowship Holy Spirit all today and forever Amen