

stand in relations of special intimacy with God. The phrase "The fire devoured them" is not to be taken too literally, for in v. 5 they are covered with their cloaks, and carried out. *They died before the Lord*; near the door of the tent, as we learn from v. 4.

V. 3. *I will be sanctified . . . and . . . I will be glorified*; that is, "I will show myself holy—though it be in judgment—on those who draw nigh me, and glorious before all the people." The holiness of God had been offended by this breach of ordinance on the part of Nadab and Abihu; and therefore the sinners must be punished, if that holiness and the glory associated with it are to be maintained. *In them that come nigh me*; the priests. The closer the intimacy, the more stringent the obligation, and the more awful the doom. *Aaron held his peace*; acknowledging the justice of the judgment and humbly bowing before it.

Vs. 4-7. *They carried them in their coats out of the camp*. The corpses and the clothing too, which is unclean, through contact with them, are carried outside the camp. *Uncover not your heads, neither rend your clothes*. Aaron and his two surviving sons are not to indulge in mourning; for the anointing oil is upon them. That gives them the character of holiness, and makes it impossible for them to take part in the burial. *Let . . . the whole house of Israel bewail*. The people, who have not this special character of holiness, are at liberty to mourn. Indeed, they are commanded to do so; for the calamity which has fallen upon their leaders is also in a very real sense theirs.

III. A Solemn Warning, 8-11.

Vs. 8-11. *And the Lord spake unto Aaron*.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, v. 1. High positions in social, financial, educational matters may be sought, if the desire be to glorify God in such things. The light from an eminence is cast further than a light in a valley; but all the more responsibility is laid upon such, that the true light be given. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may . . . glorify your Father which is in heaven."

God speaks directly to Aaron very seldom—only here and in Num. 18:1, 8, 20. Here He does so, probably because what follows is a law of grave importance affecting the priests. Aaron was the high priest. *Do not drink wine or strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle*; that is, during the performance of their official duties. Note that the law, as here laid down, is a law for the priests, and not for the people; and a law which apparently was not to bind the priests at all times, but only when they were officiating as priests. When we think of the reason of the law (vs. 10, 11), we shall see that it would not be unfair to give it wider interpretation than it has here. The law was made because indulgence in wine or any kind of intoxicating liquor tended to interfere with the thorough discharge of the official duties of the priests. That clearness of mind and command of powers which was needed for the service of the sanctuary, would be seriously endangered, if indulgence in strong drink at such a time were permitted. "Wine maketh glad the heart of man," one Psalmist says (Ps. 104:15); and that gladness is apt to show itself in foolish and frivolous ways. Indeed, Hosea in a striking passage says, that "Wine and new wine take away the heart" (ch. 4:11), that is, take away his wits, rob him of his senses. The real risk which is run by any one who indulges in strong drink is the risk of losing his head, or we should say of losing command of his faculties, sometimes at the very moment when he needs them most. The risk is all the more awful, if the man be a leader of the people, especially if he lead them in the worship of God.

APPLICATION

Offered strange fire, v. 1. How many there are who cast away their opportunity, and trample under foot the pearls of influence and position. They submit to the cries of the throng, and think they cannot oppose the majority, so that going with the rest to gain the popular approval, they lose the only means they had of helping their fellows.

Fire from the Lord devoured them, v. 2. At the moment of their exaltation these two are