

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:
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Leviticus 18 “Will America Survive as a Nation?”

Intro. On this date in 1776, our founding fathers declared our independence from King George, and from Great Britain. Soon, a new nation was born after many had sacrificed their lives to gain freedom. A grand, new experiment began in building a new nation. We were a nation founded upon biblical principles. Many of the colonies had already been founded upon Christian principles. When the Pilgrims came in the Mayflower, they gathered below the decks and they drew up the Mayflower Compact. It began with these words, “In the name of God, amen.” Then it said, “For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith.” That was the stated purpose for their colony. In 1740 there was a great spiritual awakening in our land. Tens of thousands became believers. The first great awakening profoundly influenced the religious life of America one generation prior to the Declaration of Independence. From the beginning we were a nation that acknowledged God. In the Declaration of Independence I counted 4 references to God. Our founding fathers also understood that freedom would be preserved only by a God-fearing, moral people. Soon after we gained our freedom, the Constitution was adopted. Our Constitution reflects the laws of the Bible. And for the first 150 years of our history, national & state laws were largely consistent with biblical principles. So with the blessing of God, our nation has prospered more than any nation upon earth. Why? Because Psalm 33:12 says, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD....”

Yet, something has happened to our nation that should be cause of great concern. From 1960 to 1992 the following has changed: Juvenile crime has more than tripled. Violent crime increased more than 4 fold. SAT scores have decline from 975 average to 899.¹ In 1960 3% of white births were illegitimate. In 1992 this had increased to 22%. By the year 2000 an estimated 40% of all births will be out of wedlock. The number of children living in poverty has increased 40% since 1970. Why such a big change in just a few decades?

I believe that secularists, atheists, and the ungodly have made great strides in severing our institutions from biblical principles. They have taken the so-called “separation of church & state” to mean that the Christian faith can only be practiced and expressed in private, or by private concerns. Furthermore, if a law is rooted in the Judeo/Christian tradition, they have sought to remove those laws. Today we are left with an emerging society that does not believe in moral absolutes. Morality is becoming a highly individualized matter.

In about 1400 BC the Lord God established a new nation. And beginning in chapter 18 of Leviticus, we see that this new nation was to be founded upon moral law. As we go through life, we must understand that there are many dangers, many pitfalls. We would be wise to follow the guidelines and laws that God has established for our good. So I believe that we as individuals, churches, communities, and as a nation need to return to God’s absolute moral law, or we will increasingly fall into lawlessness and anarchy. And when we do that, we will loose our freedom, or even loose our nation.

So this morning I want to share with you what we must do to reverse, or at least slow down, our slide toward lawlessness and destruction. That will require a return to following God’s moral law, or moral principles. So first of all, we must:

¹ Statistical Abstract of the U.S.

I. UNDERSTAND THE BASIS OF MORALITY

This section opens with a preamble in vv.1-5. We are living in a day when the moral foundations have been broken up and removed. “Who makes the rules, and what is right and wrong?” asks the sneering skeptic. There is a positive and negative answer to that question. The positive answer is this:

A. The Lord Sets the Standards of Morality - The Lord knows that sinful man resents interference with his liberty in the things of daily life and private actions; therefore, to silence objection, and to win over the will of man, He prefaces the laws He lays down in this chapter. (Argumentation): In v.2 He says, “I am the LORD.” This is repeated in vv. 4 & 5. Remember, the Lord is God. By his Divine authority, He issues these laws. He sets the rules; end of story. And they are still binding. Breaking the Ten Commandments is wrong because *God* says it is wrong. God created this universe and He is the One who is running it. He knows what’s best for His creation. By the way, if you can create a whole universe, then you can make the rules. But as long as you are living in God's world, breathing His air, using His sunshine, drinking His water, walking on His earth, you had better obey *His* commands.

The second basis of God’s right to tell us how to live our lives is His relationship to us. Notice He says, “I am... your God.” God had redeemed them, and made them His own people. He is their God. This argument applies especially to the redeemed people of God. All people belong to God by creation, but only believers belong to God by redemption. And you obey Him out of gratitude. Disobedience would be the greatest ingratitude to God, who had so wonderfully and graciously delivered them.

America is a Christian nation. Something like 80% of American identify their religion as Christian. The Lord God has been our God. He has blessed this nation. We should obey Him. However, there has been a major change in our courts the last 40 years. No longer is the Bible viewed as a primary basis of our law. Now our laws are subject to the whims of judges. We even have one Supreme Court justice that wants to subjugate American law to modern European law! That’s Ruth Ginsburg, the justice that Bill & Hillary Clinton appointed!

We should also apply this truth personally. I am speaking to many here today who were hell-bound sinners. But God reached out to you, forgave you, gave you eternal life, gave you a church family, and has enriched your life. He certainly has the right to establish the moral parameters by which you should live. And you have an obligation to obey Him.

Do you know why so many do not fully obey the Lord, and submit to His moral law? It is because they do not know Him. They do not have a relationship with Him. Pharaoh said in Exodus 5:2, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice....” Most people disobey God for the same reason. They do not know Him. They have no redemptive relationship with Him. Likewise, in Romans 1 Paul attributed the sinful corruption of man to not knowing the true God (vv. 23-29).

Now in answer to the question, “Who makes the rules?” we now turn to the negative answer:

B. The World Does Not Set the Standards of Morality – God is the one who was to control Israel, not the pagan, filth-laden societies around them. So the restrictions are prefaced with a warning not to follow the wicked practices of the nations. He says in v.3, “According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, you shall not do....” The disgusting sins that will be

mentioned were a way of life for the Egyptians, the nation from which God had saved them. It would be the greatest absurdity to retain such an affection for their house of bondage as to follow their ways.

So the Lord warned Israel not to look back and imitate the sins they saw in Egypt, nor to look around and imitate the sins of the Gentile nations where they were going. He goes on to say in v.3, "...and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances." The Canaanites were also immoral. God saw that the children of Israel were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, or between a rock and a hard place. The Egyptians were behind them, the Canaanites were ahead of them, and both of them were grossly immoral. So God told Israel, "You are not to allow yourselves to be dictated by the standards of Egypt, Canaan, or anyone else, but by me." God sets the standard.

America has been following the godless Europeans for too long. They have corrupted our universities and seminaries. We need to tell the French and the Germans to mind their own business.

There is an important principle here for us today. Christians should not follow the world in terms of morality. Why? Well the hard truth for all of us to fathom is that the world is dominated by evil. We who are God's people are to live our lives by God's standards and not to allow ourselves to follow the wicked practices that are tolerated by the evil society around us.

We also need discernment to know the difference between God's way and the world's way, between God's truth, and the world's opinion. You need to be careful about who is shaping your opinions, beliefs, and moral practices. I'm afraid that too many Christians are being shaped by the morality found in TV, movies, music, the Internet, and other media. And what is really sad is the way the world is taking our children away from us. Most Christian kids are receiving far more influence from the world than from the Church, and from Christian teaching in the home. God help us!

So we have seen that God sets the moral standards by which we should live, not the world, and not we ourselves. So this leads to the next step if we are going to preserve freedom. We must:

II. REJECT THE WORLD'S IMMORALITY

Beginning in v.6 God has spelled out exactly what is sin. Nobody can make a mistake about this, friends.

Chapter 18 deals primarily with sexual sins. God starts here because it directly affects the family, which is the most important institution in society. God is setting these standards to protect the home. And folks, this is very relevant, for we live in a sex-saturated society. Fulton J. Sheen was right when he said, "The Victorians pretended sex did not exist; the moderns pretend that nothing else exists." In fact, sexual imagery occurs once every four minutes on network television and three times every four minutes on cable, according to a new study.² We are living in a day when they talk about a sexual revolution. I wonder whether people have read the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. May I say to you, there is nothing new about the sexual revolution at all. It is the same old immorality that they had in Egypt and in Canaan.

Several types and examples of sexual immorality are given in this chapter. God says to us today that all sexual activity apart from a man and woman in marriage is sin. Marriage is a divine institution going all the way back to creation. Since God invented sexual intimacy, and since He

² Study by the Washington D.C.-based *Center for Media and Public Affairs*, March, 2003.

ordained marriage, He has every right to establish the regulations that control both. Few would disagree that unregulated sexual activity is bad for children, bad for families, and bad for society.

Here God deals with the kinds of sexual sins that are especially sinful. When these sins become common, we can know for sure that we have become a decadent society, and such behavior will surely lead to the decline and fall of our nation.

The first prohibition is:

A. Incest (vv. 6-18) - The blanket statement of v.6 is made that no person is to have sexual relations with a near relative. By this prohibition the Lord would hereby preserve purity and peace throughout the wide circle of domestic relations. There is no hint in the New Testament that laws against incest have been repealed; but, on the contrary, Paul's horror, expressed in 1 Cor. 5:1, unequivocally declares that he recognized the precepts as both moral and divine in their authority.

Argumentation: Most modern societies still prohibit incestuous marriages, not because of what the Bible says, but because of the consequences of such unions. There is a tendency for their children to inherit the recessive detrimental genes and bring out the worst in the family tree rather than the best.

Next, he amplifies and gives specific examples of the general principle of v.6. The different human relationships that are established by blood or marriage are dealt with specifically in this section. I am not going to go into detail here. I will simply say that the laws against incest include not marrying or having sexual relations with: father, mother, step-mother, sister, granddaughter, half-sister, aunt, uncle, daughter-in-law, two wives consisting of mother/daughter, or rival sisters.

Now the vast majority of people, Christian and non-Christian alike, believe that such incest is morally wrong. Yet, it is practiced all too often, even in our country. And I believe this is a rise in incest due to the influence of internet pornography.

I believe we would be shocked as to how many girls, and even boys, are molested by family members. If you have been a victim of incest, please understand it is not your fault. God can heal that wound of your past if you will only trust Him. And if you are a current victim, you must report it and stop it.

B. Adultery (v.20) – This is one of the 10 Commandments. The words translated, “lie carnally,” give the picture of laying down seed. The Bible repeats the stern warnings against adultery (see Prov. 2:16-19; 7:5-22; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:19; James 2:11). Fortunately, a Gallup poll found that only about 7% of all people see adultery as morally acceptable.

Often, adultery happens when you start looking for what you don't have. After all, a wife will only have perhaps 90% of what you're looking for. So adultery takes place when a husband looks for the missing 10%. Don't throw away the 90% that you already have! Add to your wife's 90% the 1000% that represents all the years that you have been with each other. The storms you have weathered together. The unforgettable moments of sadness and joy as a couple. Adultery happens when you start looking for what you don't have. But faithfulness happens when you start thanking God for what you already have [Bo Sanchez]

Once you are married, you need to guard your heart against the temptation of adultery. Set appropriate and protective guidelines and limits that you will not cross when it comes to relationships with the opposite sex.

C. Abortion – I say this by way of application, not interpretation of v.21. The actual interpretation is not clear. In this context it is likely that the prohibition has something to do with a

sexual sin. There are some similarities in the language of v.20 & v.21.³ The pagan worship of Molech was closely related with sex. This may have reference to participating in some sex ritual that was associated with the worship of Molech. Or it is more likely that it referred to what happened afterwards, when a child was born. Molech was the national god of the Ammonites, by which they worshipped the sun, that great fire of the world. The image of Molech was heated red-hot, and the bodies of children were placed in its arms, and sacrificed. It is hard to imagine the horror of this. It is possible that the reference here also includes the dedication of children to cult prostitution.

We live in a society that is given over to the worship of the goddess of Immorality. And one so-called right that the sexual revolution fought for and won through judicial activism is the right to privacy, which has resulted in the legalization of abortion, and now the legalization of homosexuality. And since 1973 over 40 million babies have been sacrificed on the altar of the goddess of Immorality. May God help us to turn away from this moral insanity before it is too late! And dear one, if you have had an abortion in the past, rest in the promise of forgiveness. And if you ever find yourself with a problem pregnancy, not add to your sin by getting an abortion.

D. Homosexuality - V.22 says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman." Why is homosexuality prohibited by God. After all, I will acknowledge that some people do have homosexual desires and inclinations. I believe this is largely the result of various factors in how they were raised. Why should they not be allowed to express and fulfill those desires? One reason is that homosexuality is clearly labeled as an *abomination*. God made sure to be very specific of this sin by calling it directly an abomination. That means it is disgusting, offensive to all the senses. Can you think of something in the physical world that is disgusting? How about eating someone's vomit. Even so, such a practice is morally disgusting. Furthermore, this is not just an OT prohibition. The same thing is taught in Rom. 1:24-28 & 1 Cor. 6:9. Furthermore, the way it is commonly practiced, it has brought the plague of AIDS and other deadly diseases, sometimes on innocent victims.

What breaks my heart is the fact that the depravity that is mentioned here is more openly practiced today. The United States is becoming more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah. It makes me weep to see the way my country is going. And what is really bad is the way this sin is gaining more and more acceptance. At first they only wanted to be tolerated. They decriminalized homosexual behavior among consenting adults. Now, they even want society to put their stamp of approval upon this perverse lifestyle. The court in one state has required the legalization of homosexual marriage of all things. Not only that, but they want the Church to put its stamp of approval upon it. The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. came just a few votes short of removing a ban on receiving approval for homosexual clergy by the Presbytery. The Episcopal Church already has a divorced, practicing homosexual as a bishop! This reminds me of Rom. 1:32, "knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."

Friend, we can at least stop the moral insanity of perverting the divine institution of marriage. Soon, the Senate will vote on a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one women, thus banning homosexual marriages. The fact that this vote is happening at all is a victory for grassroots Americans. We need to take back the future of marriage from the courts. I hope you will at least sign the petition that is circulating. Better yet, call or write your senator. They need to hear from millions of people or this will not pass.

³ The Hebrew word *nathan* is used in both verses, meaning "to give, put, set," as well as *zera*, seed.

E. Bestiality (v.23) – This is indeed unspeakable. Such behavior is call “perversion.” It is a violation of nature and divine order. God did not create humans to mate with animals. This was practiced in the fertility cults and nature worship. And if you think this is not being practiced today, then you should talk to the police departments in the major cities of America. Sadly, such behavior is promoted right into the homes of America through internet pornography. You had better make sure your family is protected from Internet pornography. The Supreme Court is more interested in protecting pornography than in protecting America from moral breakdown.

Some argue that these are just antiquated Jewish Laws. But it is clear from this text that these laws are not national, or peculiar to the Jews alone, for the violation of them is charged on the nations of Canaan as a violation of what nature itself teaches (vv. 24-25). It is plain, therefore, that these laws were in force before the Mosaic law & rituals existed. And the things that God said were immoral then are still immoral today.

Yet, we are losing the battle for the hearts and morals of the next generation. In a recent (Dec. '03) Barna poll of 18-19 year olds, 54% said that sex outside of marriage was morally acceptable behavior. Almost the exact same percentage (55%) said that abortion was morally acceptable. Do you see how the two go together? 50% said that pornography was morally acceptable. 75% said that cohabitation was morally acceptable. 40% even said that homosexuality was morally acceptable. However, a Gallup poll found that 55% of young people see homosexuality as morally acceptable.⁴

III. UNDERSTAND THE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH IMMORALITY

At this point God proposes arguments against these and the like abominable wickedness. He that has an indisputable right to command us, yet He condescends to reason with us.

First, He says:

A. Such Sins Defile You – In v.24 God said, “Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled...” The word translated “defile” literally means “to make unclean.” Such sins defile the conscience (1 Cor. 8:7; Titus 1:15). Deep inside you know what you are doing is wrong, and it gnaws away at you. Furthermore, such sins defile the body. The land of the Canaanites was eaten up with venereal disease. Yet, according to the study I referred to earlier, 98% of sex portrayed in media has no physical consequences and 85% has no emotional consequence.⁵ Hollywood is lying to people!

In a study of 23,000 female Army recruits, 9.51% tested positive for the bacteria that cause Chlamydia, which represents a 17% increase in just 4 years. Untreated chlamydia in women can cause pelvic inflammatory disease (that leads to pelvic cancer), and adversely affect fertility. What is especially dangerous about this disease is that in 80-90% of women, there are no symptoms.⁶

Furthermore, Dr. Paul Cameron and colleagues conducted research on 6,714 obituaries from 16 U.S. homosexual journals from 1981-1993 as compared to a large sample of obituaries from regular newspapers. The median age of death of married men was 75. Less than 2% of homosexuals survived to 65. Homosexuals were 116 times more likely to be murdered and 24 times more likely to commit suicide.

⁴ Religious Herald, 9/25/03.

⁵ Study by the Washington D.C.-based *Center for Media and Public Affairs*, March, 2003.

⁶ From “10 Diseases Doctors Miss” by Alice Lesch Kelly in *Reader's Digest*, Feb. '04.

B. Such Sins Destroy Nations (vv.24b-25, 28) – Such sins “defile” the land. The picture here isn’t a pretty one. Sexual perversions make a society and a nation sick. Then the land itself becomes sick and must vomit out its filthy people the way a human body vomits out poison. The land becomes not fit for the presence of God or man. How tragic that people made in God’s image should end up as vomit!

God warns that the nations that had practiced these sins now lay under the curse of God. Please note that these were Gentile nations that were judged—peoples with whom God had not made any covenants, but He still held them accountable for their filthy deeds against nature (Rom. 1:18ff). All of these precepts have a place in the conscience. The law is written on the heart even of these Canaanites; and for resisting that law they are punished.

So when God brought Israel into the land, they had strict orders to be His instrument of judgment upon that wicked people. Don't you think that God put them out for a good reason? After all, if the tenant doesn't pay rent, he can be put out. God happened to own that land. My friend, that is the way you and I occupy this earth down here. The 70 years normally allotted to man is just a lease. The land is God's.

Indeed, these sins will destroy a society. God warns in v.28 that if the people of Israel at large fell into these sins, then they would be treated as the Canaanites. Do you know what happened? They did follow the same practices, and you know that God did? He spit them out of the land into captivity! In fact, after they rejected Jesus, they were thrown out of the land a second time.

Do you think that the God of the Bible thinks any less of the abominations that are being practiced in this country? Not on your life! Over two centuries ago, the American patriot Thomas Jefferson wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, “Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.” God sees the same wickedness in this country and as the sin of the heathen. Since many of these sins are tolerated or condoned in America, our land is defiled, & we shall be judged if we do not repent. My friends, this land in which we live will one day spit us out. My only hope for America is the fact that there are still millions of true believers in America. Hopefully, God will spare us from serious judgment due to the presence of the millions. But if the church becomes corrupt, and the church quits winning people to Christ, then we could be just one generation away from becoming such a significant minority that God’s judgment is no longer withheld! Believe me, friends, the judgment of God is already upon us today to some degree. We can't have peace abroad and we can't have peace at home. Why not? “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked” (Isa. 48:22).

This truth is a call to action in the political realm of our national life. I have printed a half-page action sheet & put on the hall & usher tables. Please pick up one and take action! Furthermore, we need to make sure we do not vote for presidential and Senate candidates who will nominate or confirm radical judges who tear away at the moral basis of our laws.

Conclusion: Have you acknowledged God’s authority over you life? Do you understand that there are moral absolutes laid down by God? Have you rejected the influence of the world as a source of morality? Have you rejected the world’s immorality? Are you doing anything to help stop America’s slide into immorality? Finally, are you living in obedience to God’s moral principles? If not, I call upon you to repent, and initiate change today!

However, there is one thing missing from Leviticus 18. Remember, this chapter is based upon the covenant of Law. God gave commandments, but not the ability to obey the

commandments. Our sin nature, and evil worldly influences, make obedience difficult, and complete obedience impossible. Thankfully, Jesus came to institute the New Covenant. Through His death at Calvary, we can have forgiveness of sin. I want you to know that people who have committed any of these sins can be forgiven and become God's children. This is clear from 1 Cor. 6:9-11 (cf. Mt. 12:31). Yet, salvation also means that God expects you to repent and forsake your old lifestyle. This is clear from 2 Cor. 5:21, Eph. 5:1-10, and Col. 3:1-7. Through the new birth, we have new desires, and He writes His Law on our hearts. And through the indwelling Spirit we have a new power for obedience. Have you received these provisions of God's grace? If not, do it today.

Sources: Sources: Andrew Boner, *A Commentary on the Book of Leviticus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1846, 1978 reprint); Stephen Felker, *Devotional Notes & Explanatory Notes on the Entire Bible* (Col. Hghts, VA: Published by Author), 2004; Matthew Henry *Unabridged Commentary in Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Harley Howard (notes from his sermon on chapters 17-18); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible*; Warren Wiersbe, *Be Holy: Leviticus* (Victor Books/SP Publications, Inc. 1994). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).