

Leviticus 18:1-30 | Sunday July 6, 2025

Up to this point in Leviticus God has given instructions on how to worship Him through the various offerings and instructions on how to be ceremonial clean. Starting in chapter 17 and continuing from there God starts to address specific sin issues. **Chapter 18 follows the form of what a treaty would have looked like for that time.** In the opening God introduces who He is and why He is making this contract with them. God gives the general then specific stipulations of it, while also explaining the blessing and curses of not following the contract. They are His people and He is explaining how different they are to be from the world around them.

Leviticus 18:1-30 ESV

(1) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, (2) "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **I am the LORD your God.** (3) You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes. (4) You shall follow My rules and keep My statutes and walk in them. **I am the LORD your God.**(5) You shall therefore keep My statutes and My rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: **I am the LORD.** (6) "None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. **I am the LORD.** (7) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness. (8) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness. (9) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your sister, your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether brought up in the family or in another home. (10) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your son's daughter or of your daughter's daughter, for their nakedness is your own nakedness. (11) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife's daughter, brought up in your father's family, since she is your sister. (12) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's sister; she is your father's relative. (13) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister, for she is your mother's relative. (14) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's brother, that is, you shall not approach his wife; she is your aunt. (15) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife, you shall not uncover her nakedness. (16) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness. (17) You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, and you shall not take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; they are relatives; it is depravity. (18) And you shall not take a woman as a rival wife to her sister, uncovering her nakedness while her sister is still alive. (19) "You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness. (20) And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife and so make yourself unclean with her. (21) You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: **I am the LORD.** (22) You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. (23) And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion. (24) "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, (25) and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. (26) But you shall keep My statutes and My rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns

among you (27) (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), (28) lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.(29) For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. (30) So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: **I am the LORD your God.**”

As God gives this list of commandments He kept repeating a key phrase “I am the LORD your God.” This phrase would have reminded the nation of a key moment on Mount Sinai about 7 months ago. God descended onto Mount Sinai covered by thick smoke in the presence of the nation. The mountain was on fire, with lighting, great trumpet blasts and the earth shook (Ex 19:16-19). In this amazing setting God spoke to the nation: (Ex 20:22). Often we think about God talking to Moses but here He called to everyone.

Exodus 20:1-2 ESV

- (1) And **God spoke all these words**, saying,
- (2) **“I am the LORD your God**, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Then God gave them the ten commandments. The people were too terrified to hear any more from this glorious God. They sent Moses to talk to God because He was too terrifying for them (Ex 20:19-21).

It is not by accident that God repeats this phrase. He is giving these commandments the same authority the ten commandments came with. They are not random but come straight from the very character of God. Because He is the LORD **He is the one who defines purity and holiness** and because He is your (Israel’s) God **they need to reflect His Holiness**. In essence God is reminding them, **who they are and whom they serve**.

Leviticus 18:3-5 ESV

- (3) **You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt**, where you lived, and **you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan**, to which I am bringing you. You shall not walk in their statutes.
- (4) **You shall follow My rules and keep My statutes** and walk in them. I am the LORD your God.
- (5) You shall therefore keep My statutes and My rules; **if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.**

God did not want His people to look like the Egyptians or the Canaanites. He wanted them to reflect His rules and statues. He wanted their lives to show that He is their God. These commandments come with a promise that if you follow them you will live by them. **All of these commandments were to counter the culture that was around Israel.**

Leviticus 18:6-7; 16-17 ESV

- (6) “None of you shall approach **any one of his close relatives** to uncover nakedness. **I am the LORD.**
- (7) **You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother**; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness.

(16) You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; **it is your brother's nakedness.**

(17) You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and of her daughter, and you shall not take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter to uncover her nakedness; **they are relatives; it is depravity.**

Incest was regularly practiced in Egypt especially within the royal family and was used as a means of consolidating power. God's overall heart is found in verse 6, Israel was forbidden to marry, or have sexual relations with a close relative. God then goes into specifics for the next 12 verses defining out what is viewed as a close relative. As these connections are made God emphasizes the one flesh union that marriage creates. This is why the woman's nakedness is viewed as the man's nakedness.

Ephesians 5:31-32 ESV

(31) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and **the two shall become one flesh.**"

(32) This mystery is profound, and **I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

The one flesh union in marriage is to be an example to the world of the love and unity that the church experiences in the body of Christ. Marriage is to be viewed as sacred.

Scripture is clear that up until this point marriage within the family was regularly practiced. For Adam and Eve and Noah and His family there practically were not other options. The Old Testament is full of examples that break these instructions, Abraham married his half-sister (Gen 20:12), Amram married his aunt (Gen 35:22), and Jacob married sisters (Gen 29:16-30). Jacob in particular shows the conflict and problems that come from these relationships. **Families married from within in part to consolidate power.** As Israel is headed into the promised land specific land inheritance will be tied to each family. God did not want families to manipulate the system and try to become powerful this way. He does give the provision in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 for a widow who does not have a male heir then her brother-in-law must marry her. The focus is for the family name to continue in the land. **God wanted marriage to be honored. And for His people to live pure lives.**

Hebrews 13:4 ESV

(4) **Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled,** for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

Marriage was God's creation and the world will continually try to redefine it, misuse it, and devalue it. In Israel's day it was through incest and using marriage for power manipulation. In the New Testament the culture frowned on incest (1 Cor 5:1) but sinned with other immorality. In our culture incest is taboo but **34% of sexual abuse** is perpetrated by a family member and incest is the fastest growing category of pornography. **Marriage is attacked because it proclaims such an important truth of Christ's union and love for His church.**

Leviticus 18:20 ESV

(20) And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife and so make yourself unclean with her.

Adultery is also forbidden. This chapter is tough to read because it describes all of the ways God's goodness and truth can be manipulated into sin. **Our sin has disastrous consequences.**

Job 31:9-12 NLT

- (9) “If my heart has been seduced by a woman, or if I have lusted for my neighbor’s wife,
(10) then let my wife serve another man; let other men sleep with her.
(11) **For lust is a shameful sin, a crime that should be punished.**
(12) **It is a fire that burns all the way to hell. It would wipe out everything I own.**

Just because our society accepts lust and champions it God’s holy standard has not changed. We change the name to an affair, or I fell in love with someone, to soften what adultery truly is. **The breaking of God’s one flesh union.**

Leviticus 18:21-23 ESV

- (21) You shall not give any of your children **to offer them to Molech**, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.
(22) **You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.**
(23) **And you shall not lie with any animal** and so make yourself unclean with it, **neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion.**

These three verses all describe profane abominations that were all used to worship other gods. Children were burned alive to the idol **molech** and we will discuss this more in chapter 20. The command against bestiality brings us back to the **goat of Mendes** in Egypt. The worship of the goat demon had made the culture so vile Herodotus says *“In my lifetime a strange thing occurred in this district: a he-goat had intercourse openly with a woman. This came to be publicly known.”* (The Histories, Book 2, Chapter 46). The Hittite laws of the day give a list of what animals are allowed and which are not. Chapter 18 becomes much harder to study **when we realize these command are not hypotheticals, but were actively being practiced in the neighboring cultures.** God is telling His people to stop these sins. God calls the homosexual act an abomination. This sexual act was used as part of the worship to **Ashtoreth**. God’s covenant people walked in this sin.

1 Kings 14:23-24 ESV

- (23) For they also built for themselves high places and pillars and **Asherim** on every high hill and under every green tree,
(24) and there were also **male cult prostitutes in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.**

Israel came into the promised land and let the culture and its values influence them. This so permeated God’s people that they built temples to these pagan gods and **worshipped them through these detestable sins. Sin is progressive.** Once a line is crossed then it is no longer taboo and our lust desire the next line to cross. The immortality would have started in heterosexual sin, and then progressed to homosexual sin. A culture never starts with this sin but if it continues in sin long enough it ends up there. We must be careful not to elevate this sin as worst then others. If we are going to be honest we all practice **abominations** in front of God’s eyes.

Proverbs 6:16-17 NKJV

- (16) These six things the LORD hates, Yes, **seven are an abomination to Him:**
(17) **A proud look, A lying tongue,** Hands that shed innocent blood,

Pride, and lying are included as abominations to God. This is the same word used to describe the homosexual act. This sin should not be isolated as more terrible then others. All

sexual sin is against our own body (1 Cor 6:18) and all is to be taken seriously.

There are a few misconceptions that we need to be careful to think biblically about these sins. First this command and others in scripture (Rom 1:24-28, 1 Tim 1:6-11, Jude 1:7) specifically call the homosexual act sinful. We are all born sinners and all have unique sin bents. **Regardless of our specific sin bent God's holy standard does not change.** Second, there is a misconception of how sinful our culture has become. This chapter shows how depraved humanity has been throughout history. Humans are so sinful that twice in scripture society has devolved into homosexual gangs.

Genesis 19:4-5 NLT

(4) But before they retired for the night, **all the men of Sodom, young and old**, came from all over the city and surrounded the house.

(5) They shouted to Lot, "Where are the men who came to spend the night with you? **Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!**"

Judges 19:20-22 NLT

(22) While they were enjoying themselves, a crowd of troublemakers from the town surrounded the house. They began beating at the door and shouting to the old man, "**Bring out the man who is staying with you so we can have sex with him.**"

God's truth is always counter cultural. The heart behind the sins of our society is not new. Sin has a new medium through technology and faster speed yet God's people have always been called to rise above the wicked sins of their culture. **As believers it is always possible to rise above the culture and live for Christ.** We have been given new lives in Christ and are not under the law anymore.

Romans 10:4-5 ESV

(4) **For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**

(5) For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that **the person who does the commandments shall live by them.**

Christ perfectly fulfilled the law. **We cannot cherry pick from the book of Leviticus what laws still apply and what laws do not. Jesus ended the law for us.** If you want to live by the law you have to live by all of it, yet there is no life found in the law.

Galatians 2:16; 20-21 ESV

(16) yet we know **that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ**, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ **and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.**

(20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but **Christ who lives in me.** And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

(21) I do not nullify the grace of God, **for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.**

Salvation is either by the law and following it or it is by grace and the two do not mix. True life is found in Jesus through faith. We trust in His finished work. We are free from the law, yet God does not change. So in these laws we can see God's timeless heart, yet we have to let the New

Testament and grace speak truth into these issues.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ESV

(9) Or do you not know that **the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived: **neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,**

(10) nor thieves, **nor the greedy, nor drunkards,** nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

(11) **And such were some of you.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

This passage **IS NOT** giving a list of sins that keep someone from going to heaven. **These are not people outside of Jesus' reach.** If there are sins that cannot be forgiven then Jesus' work on the cross is not very powerful. **This is a list describing the unrighteous and all the various actions they do.** The Greek is very specific in the sins it mentions to describe both partners in a homosexual act. Yet this passage also addresses the sexually immoral which is the word pornos and even condemns greed. Someone is still defined as unrighteous because they have not accepted the finished work of Jesus. The law shows us our sin and condemns. **The great news is that such were some of us as believers.** It doesn't matter where we come from or what we have done, we are covered by the blood. Jesus came and washed, sanctified and justified us. Unfortunately these sins are still within our reach. This is why Paul finishes 1 Corinthians 6 encouraging believers not to engage in sexual immorality. **We have been given power not to live in these sins anymore but walk in the new life in Jesus which is apart from the law.**

Galatians 5:13-18 ESV

(13) For you were called to freedom, brothers. **Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.**

(14) For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

(15) But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

(16) **But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**

(17) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

(18) **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

The flesh will always want to be like the world but we have been given freedom through Jesus to be able to walk in the Spirit. It is a freedom to love and serve based on truth.