

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Pain's furnace-heat within me quivers,
God's breath upon the flame doth blow,
And all my heart in anguish shivers
And trembles at the fiery glow.
And yet I whisper: *As God will!*
And in His hottest fire stand still.

2 He comes and lays my heart all heated,
On his hard anvil, minded so;
Yet in his own fair form to beat it
With his great hammer, blow by blow.
And yet I whisper: *As God will!*
And at His heaviest blows hold still.

3 He takes my softened heart and beats it;
The sparks fly off at every blow;
He turns it o'er and o'er and heats it,
And lets it cool, and makes it glow.
And yet I whisper: *As God will!*
And in His mighty hand hold still.

4 He kindles for my profit, purely,
Affliction's glowing, fiery brand;
For all his heaviest blows are surely
Inflicted by a Master hand.
And yet I whisper: *As God will!*
And, trusting to the end, hold still.

5 I will not murmur at the sorrow
That only longer-lived would be;
Then end may come, and that tomorrow,
When God hath wrought his will in me.
And yet I whisper: *As God will!*
And, waiting for the end, hold still.

Julius Carl Reinhold Sturm (1816 -1896)

THE DANGER OF STRANGE FIRE

“And Nadab and Abihu ... brought strange fire before the Lord: which he commanded them not and there went a fire out from the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord.”

Leviticus 10:1-2 (Tyndale's Translation)

There is a definite lesson to be learned from this passage. It is clear that human *innovation* is not a replacement for divine *revelation*. Yes, man's good *intent* apart from God's *consent* is an effort *misspent* which excites God's *judgment*. Here we are confronted by two men from a good family, who had been well trained in the priesthood, whose uncle was Moses, and whose father was the high priest which did not insure them from misdirected worship.

The authority of God is essential in a proper and acceptable approach to Him especially in His divine worship. The text solidifies the importance of this truth. One can say without regret that true worship is a life and death situation. There is no room for compromise or doing it our way. There are some questions we need to consider:

What did the two sons of Aaron do wrong? They “brought strange fire before the Lord: which He commanded them not.” The Lord had previously forbidden offering anything strange (Ex. 30:9). What constitutes strangeness? Something is strange when it is not in accord with God's revealed will. These two priests were supposed to use fire from God, that is fire that had been kindled when the Lord sent fire from heaven in acceptance of the sacrifice, which fire they were to keep burning for use in worshipping God through sacrifice, incense, etc. However, they brought strange fire into the Lord's holy presence. “If we reflect how holy a thing God's worship is, the enormity of the punishment will by no means offend us” [Calvin].

The problem was not that they did not know what the Lord expected. They were the well trained two oldest sons of Aaron. There is no reason to think that this act was anything else than deliberate disobedience, for the Lord had “commanded them not” or literally the Lord had “expressly forbidden” them to bring “strange fire.” How many in this modern-day attempt to worship God from self-will or fleshly offerings? How often do people rush into God's presence without thinking, setting forth things that they have not brought before the light of His divine will, but really elevate human flesh; this is “strange fire.”

What was the result of their disobedience? Judgment came from the Lord—“Fire from the Lord ... consumed them, and they died before the Lord.” They refused to use the fire the Lord had kindled from heaven, that is His fire, so they were destroyed by the divine fire from heaven. The end result shows the divine estimate of sinful disobedience. The Lord, we must remember, has the final say on what He accepts or considers appropriate. He is

a jealous God over His worship, glory and honor. The Lord will not be forced by fallen beings!

What is the Lord's requirement? "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (v. 3). Priests who come near to the Lord must sanctify or set themselves apart according to the will of God or suffer the consequences, because the Lord will be glorified! The Lord must be approached in His revealed way! These two sons of Israel's spiritual leader defiled the worship of Jehovah, disobeyed their holy calling, impugned their God before the people, and abused the holy Lord of salvation even Christ Jesus, who was the veritable fulfillment of all the elements in true worship at that time. Christ is to be pre-eminent in all things and that certainly includes divine worship. Without the shedding of Jesus' blood there is no remission. They disrespected God's true worship and God disrespected their persons by removing them with His consuming fire. Strange fire equaled Divine rejection.

Aaron remained silent when his sons were destroyed by God for their sacrilege. We are to be still and know that the Lord He is God. Aaron's grief was in silence, and he did not blame God for he recognized that He was a just and holy God. Someone said, "Rebellion speaks, resignation holds its peace." That which is a savor of life unto one is a savor of death unto another.

Charles H. Spurgeon commented, "These young men were self-willed ... and therefore, daringly violated the Lord's commands in His own immediate presence. They followed their own wills as to time, place, and manner of offering the incense, no doubt considering these to be small matters, but indeed nothing is small in the service of God. He will be worshipped in His own way, and not in ours. There is more sin than they suppose in altering the ordinances as some do in our day. Moreover, there is one fire in the church, namely the Holy Spirit, and one incense, namely the merit of Jesus, and it is a daring impiety to seek other excitement, or offer any other righteousness to God.

The devouring flame ... slew them. Think of that, and remember that they were minister's sons and ministers themselves. Even our God is a consuming fire. They died while offering a vain will-worship, and it is to be feared that thousands will perish in like manner. Let us be careful and prayerful, and walk jealously before the jealous God; seeking even to worship Him as His own Word directs."