

Numbers 15:22–31

²² ‘If you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments which the Lord has spoken to Moses—²³ all that the Lord has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the Lord gave commandment and onward throughout your generations—²⁴ then it will be, if it is unintentionally committed, without the knowledge of the congregation, that the whole congregation shall offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the Lord, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the ordinance, and one kid of the goats as a sin offering. ²⁵ So the priest shall make atonement for the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and it shall be forgiven them, for it was unintentional; they shall bring their offering, an offering made by fire to the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord, for their unintended sin. ²⁶ It shall be forgiven the whole congregation of the children of Israel and the stranger who dwells among them, because all the people did it unintentionally. ²⁷ ‘And if a person sins unintentionally, then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. ²⁸ So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally, when he sins unintentionally before the Lord, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. ²⁹ You shall have one law for him who sins unintentionally, for him who is native-born among the children of Israel and for the stranger who dwells among them. ³⁰ ‘But the person who does anything presumptuously, whether he is native-born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on the Lord, and he shall be cut off from among his people. ³¹ Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be upon him.’ ”

Mercy and Justice Kiss

Main idea: The Lord provides atonement for sin, both for the visible church and for individuals, but He does not tolerate sin in either of them.

Introduction: a reminder like that in Leviticus 4; even unintentional sin needs atonement

1. **Atonement for corporate sin**, v22–26
 1. Merciful to continue after all that Israel has done. A reminder that mercy is entirely from within Him.
 2. Merciful in how little is required of them. A reminder that God Himself is providing what is required for the atonement.
 3. Merciful to provide a process by which the people, corporately, can be renewed in reconciliation and covenant with God.
2. **Atonement for individual sin**, v27–29
 1. Merciful to restore a sinner within a godly congregation (an uncomfortable place to be)
 2. Merciful to restore a sinner within an ungodly congregation (an otherwise dangerous place to be)
 3. Again, the evangelistic purpose of v29
3. **Excommunication for high-handed sin of individuals**, v30–31
 1. High-handed sinning is a blaspheming of God
 2. Despising God’s Word (His expression of Himself) is despising God Himself. There is no loving God without loving the Bible, loving what God tells us to believe (doctrine), loving what God commands us to do (law).

3. Do you sin high-handedly? Tolerance of unintentional sin, and excusing of it, will bring you to the place that you are sinning high-handedly!
4. **The implied warning against corporate, high-handed sin**
 1. This happened to Israel in many “smaller” ways, then in the great way of the exile, and then in the greatest way of a.d. 70, so that for them to come into covenant with God, they must be grafted into the church that is Christ.
 2. Christ Himself will never suffer this, and so the church universal can never suffer this.
 3. But this is still a danger for particular churches. Your church, your presbytery, your synod. Watch and pray for her, lest she enter temptation!

Conclusion: O, let us avail ourselves of atonement by the Lord Jesus Christ, and let us be as intolerant of our sin as God is! His justice hates all our disobedience, and His mercy is worthy of all our loving obedience!

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Numbers 15:22-31. These are God's words. If you send unintentionally and do not observe all these Commandments, which Yahweh has spoken to Moses, All that Yahweh has commanded You by the hand of Moses from the day Yahweh gave commandment and onward throughout your Generations.

Then it will be if it is unintentionally committed without the knowledge of the congregation that the whole congregation shall all. For one, young bull is a burnt offering as a sweet Aroma to Yahweh with its grain offering and its drink offering. According To it. The ordinance. And one kid of the goats is in offering So, the breach shall make atonement for the whole congregation.

Of the children of Israel and it shall be forgiven them. For it was unintentional. They shall bring their offering an offering made by fire to Yahweh. And their sin offering before Yahweh for their unintendeds. And shall be forgiven, the whole Congregation of the children of Israel, and The Stranger who dwells among them, Because all the people did it unintentionally.

And if a person sends unintentionally, Then he shall bring a female goat in its first year as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for the person who sins unintentionally when he sins unintentionally before Yahweh to make atonement for him. And it shall be forgiven him. You shall have one law for him.

Who sins unintentionally? For him, who is native born among the children of Israel and for the stranger Who dwells among them, but The person who does anything presumptuously. Whether he is a native born or a stranger, that one brings reproach on Yahweh. And he shall be cut off from among his people.

Because he has despised the word of Yahweh. And has broken his commandment. That person shall be completely cut off. His guilt. Shall be upon him. Amen. Thus, since this reading of God, Inspired. And And Aaron twerked. The Lord is merciful to us to speak to us of the guilt.

Of our unintentional sin is of course, merciful to us to provide atonement and forgiveness for unintentional sin. But his kindness is better than men's kindness. Many would say, in fact, we would often be tempted to say if we were not being instructed by the Lord and if he was not conforming our hearts shaping our hearts more according to his word, oh it's okay.

Dear, you didn't mean it. For our personal offense. Praise God. Love as at work and cover over a multitude of sins. And we are to bear with one another and forbear. With one another's sins. Against each other. But certainly, this is not permissible when we think of sin as sinful sin as against the Lord.

Um, When we realize that we have sinned, even though it was unintentional, even though it was perhaps an ignorance perhaps, you only realize it when you come to be better, instructed from scripture and you look back on on On what you had done or thought, or felt or said desired Etc.

And you realize how sinful it was. Praise God. He does not say, oh there, there dear. It's no big deal. You didn't mean it. He says, It is such an infinitely, big deal that my son had to die for it. But so great is his love and his Mercy that he has given himself in his son.

To Bear the wrath of God, for our unintentional sins. And to remove all our guilt. So God is entirely favorable toward us. The first place we heard about this or the place that we have most intensely heard about. This was back in. Leviticus chapter four. You remember? When he was introducing the sin offerings and the trespass offerings because there was not only the Ascension and the tribute and the peace, which were the main way of coming near God.

But uh how could you come near God when your conscience was not clean, when your conscience had been defiled? When you realized that you had guilt before God or you just were suspicious that you did. And you didn't know for sure. Even that you were guilty before God, but just could not come because you did not have a clean peaceful conscience before him.

And so God had provided For even unintentional sin and praise God, he is affirming. Now that things have not changed for Israel, due to their latest Rebellion against him a rebellion. So severe. That an entire generation was as it were slowly being excommunicated in the wilderness. That all of the men named uh numbered from 20 years old and upward were to fall and not be brought into the land, the land for which he had.

He has in the earlier part of this chapter given Some special instruction reminding them, he is still bringing his people. Into the land. And so he he provides a tournament for even unintentional, corporate sin, and this should make us ready and free. Uh, as As churches as Presbyteries as synods to look at something in our history that perhaps we did, not realize.

So clearly in the moment was sinful but as as we proceed in hindsight, and we look back how how liberating it is. That God is the sort of Covenant, God who provides even atonement for unintentional, corporate sin for how that enables us to say. We have committed unintentional, corporate sin.

Been guilty before God. And not only guilty before God but as all sin does it causes harm and so forth. Certainly our own Synod has Opportunity to do that and matters that have been before it the last several years. And knowing God to be the god of Leviticus 15.

Would enable us to come clean as it were and enjoy the Forgiveness. And move forward something that Israel here at this point in the wake of the report of the spies and the Rebellion of Israel. Uh, something they certainly needed. This is merciful in many ways. It's not just

merciful to continue the the atonement for unintentional sin, after all uh, that Israel has done and is also merciful in how little is required for this atonement one bull and one kid of the goats to cover the Ascension and the sin offering for the whole congregation of the nation of Israel.

That's amazing. How could that atone for their sins? How could that be the means by which they can again, Ascend unto God. And the answer is well because it's not by bulls and goats It is by the blood. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as after all that Israel has done this Mercy continues.

Why? Because Mercy is based upon what is in God. Not, what is in Israel? And although, Israel is still very much being Israel. God is still very much being God. And now, this Little one bowl and one kid. Uh, offering for this unintentional sin. Is merciful in how little it is, because it's a reminder.

That it's not the Process of offering the bull in the goat and it's not the substance of the bowl or the substance of the goat. But that there is in God himself. That which is required for our atonement. Indeed, if man was to be forgiven, For falling short of the glory of God.

It would be God himself. And it was and is God himself. Who is our atonement? And so, there's wonderful Mercy here being displayed. Atonement for corporate sin. There's also Atonement for individual sin. In this case, the congregation as a whole, Has not committed the unintentional sin, but an individual has Now, this can happen either in a context in which you have a Godly congregation on the one hand or Someone may commit an unintentional sin in a season, and a place in the church, in which the church is not serious about Sin.

Now, in the one case, if you have a season of reformation and Revival and real spiritual life, and godliness is very uncomfortable to have a guilty conscience to go among the The Godly people and praise God, then Has provided atonement for individuals that they may have their conscience cleansed that they may know themselves righteous before God in the Lord Jesus Christ and forgiven and objects of his favor through the completely unmerited demerited opposite.

What we deserve mercy of God So, being clean and free before the eyes of God, enjoyability to walk freely and and not feel self-conscious self-conscious among the godly people. And so there's Mercy for the individual unintentional sinner. In that way. But also then in a season where where the church is not dealing with sin.

Seriously is not therefore preaching the gospel. Carefully and truly and powerfully as God's forgiving Sinners of the despising of his glory. The suppressing of the truth of his glory and our unrighteousness. Although they knew him as God, they'd neither glorified him, nor gave him. Thanks. And there have been times and places even in, what is What professors itself to be the Church of Jesus Christ.

When this Unholiness or anti-holiness this opposition to the law of God antinomian. If you're familiar with that term Season, Have been and someone who has a, a genuinely wounded conscience from their own sin in an age like that. It is very difficult because they have people all around them saying they're there it was unintentional.

But their conscience before God a gift from from their creator, helped sustained by the Holy Spirit. As saying, no, it's not. Okay, stop telling me it is. But then God comes by Jesus Christ. And he says, yes, it was horrible. And this is why the cross was horrible. But, I've taken away your sin and the Lord Jesus, great mercy and so each of us must learn to deal with God.

Individually Not only should congregations and respiratories and synods. Keep a clean slate with God as it were, but every one of you Should maintain a clean conscience before, God should pay attention to what you do and when your conscience is pricked and you feel that guilt before the Lord know that God has provided Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross.

And come quickly. And by him, come clean. And enjoy. Forgiveness. Indeed, you here being Uh not as it were native-born Israelites, although some of you are covenant children were in the tree from birth as it were. The Evangelistic purpose. That we were, we thought about, The last part of last week's portion.

Is emphasized here again? Not only verse 26 covering the stranger who dwells among the congregation for the corporate forgiveness but also verse 29. You shall have one law. For him, who is native born among the children of Israel? And for the stranger. Who dwells among them? But the Lord in his Mercy here, then warns.

About sin. That is not unintentional sin. That is if we use the language of verse 30 in the new King James presumptuous, if we just speak uh if we just translate it more literally with a high hand. Sin that is against God. The way that Israel came out of Egypt.

It was said, he told us there in Exodus that they left Egypt with hand, lifted up with a high hand. Now, he says, but the person does anything high-handedly The one who is asserting himself against the Lord. The one, who knows? It's wrong. But insists on his own way.

Anyway. This would be the one who is not broken, does not have a contrite spirit. The one who is unrepentant and defiant. So, the person, whether native born or a stranger The person who sins that way, he Blasphemes the Lord. Therefore he must be excommunicated. He shall be cut off from among.

His people verse 30 says that person shall be completely cut off verse 31 says and As is true in excommunications Old Testament and new It is a warning and a declaration to the person that They're being put out from among the people of God on Earth. Is an indication to them a solemn testimony by God through his church.

Of the guilt that God declares upon them from Heaven. It is the last part of verse 31, that is the most Dreadful part of the penalty. The part that the congregation can't inflict. His guilt. Shall be upon him. You see, when we High-Handedly or defiantly against the word of God, that we know.

We are blaspheming God because we despise his word verse 31 says. High-Handed sinning is a blaspheming of God, because God's word is an expression of himself. God's law is God telling us, the implications, the difference of that, he makes that his character makes in our lives. The applications of the implications of the character of God And so, when we know what God's commandment says, But we do differently.

Intentionally here. Even you think of the high hand assertively Than what we're doing is we're saying I do not care. That you have revealed yourself to me this way. God, I do not care. That you have not only expressed who you are and what you are like, but expressed to me, the difference that this makes for my life.

You can see now. Why this is considered a blasphemy? Despising, the word of Yahweh. Even as we read and prayed and sang. In the section of Psalm 119 that we are in. I lift my hands. To your statutes. For Psalm, 138 God has exalted his word above all his name.

You see God's word is his expression of himself. And to assertively high-handedly defiantly break. His law is in that moment. A rejection of him. And woe to the one then. Who is unrepentant? In doing so, certainly they must be excommunicated. They who cannot be retrieved from such sin must be put out of the church.

And must know that God has said, what has been bound on Earth will have been bound? In, he

If we tolerate our unintentional sin, If we excuse our unintentional sin, We will grow accustomed to it. If we don't deal with it. By having by coming back to the cross of Jesus Christ and asking God's forgiveness and making application of Christ to ourselves for the cleansing of our conscience.

Then we will go from a defiled conscience to a seared conscience. A conscience that has gone thick and is not sensitive. We put ourselves in the place. Where we will assertively. Rebel against God. And so, Perhaps, you do not sin high-handedly now, But note the progression. In the passage.

Follow the Lord's word. And dealing with unintentional sin as sin. Lest you come to a place where you are sinning high-endedly? Now, there's an implication. Here is something that Uh, missing, we have The atonement for the corporate sin and then we had the atonement for the individual sin and then we have excommunication for the individual high-handed sin.

So, A tournament for the unintentional, corporate sin, and unintentional individual sin. But what's implying here is That God would excommunicate, his When she sins high-handedly. The Lord does warn Israel of this and there are Many smaller ways in which he does this, but most of all in the Exile, As his people.

Uh, send more and more willfully. And rebelliously. And most of all. In the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Who came to his own and his own received him not. The same Christ who grieved and groaned and wept over them. For what would come upon them for their rejection of him?

So that the church, Uh, the Church of Israel, the church under Moses Uh, has ceased to be and God made great display of this. The fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. The 70 A.D that which the Lord Jesus himself prophesied in Matthew chapter 24. So that when we pray for the natural branches to be grafted back in, they're not going to be grafted back into the tree as it was.

For them to be grafted back in. They would be grafted back into Christ. The root from the stump of Jesse though. The one into whom we all now. Are grafted. There is an implied warning here. By what has happened to Israel. Praise God. This will never happen. Universally to the Church of Jesus Christ.

For he is her Prophet priest, and King he is her mediator, he sits on the throne of Glory is sinless. Christ's Administration of the Covenant of Grace, is the last and forever Administration. Of the Covenant of Grace. But the Lord Jesus does warn entire congregations, doesn't he? He gives some discipline for corporate sin.

We hear about one of them. Most weeks, we didn't take the time to read all the way to the end of First Corinthians 11 at the table this morning. But yes, there are churches in which the Lord chastens severely, but then there are also churches From which he removes her lampstand and they cease to be churches at all.

And become synagogues of Satan. And so this is a danger for particular churches. Where the same admonition that we made an application a few minutes ago with Respect to individuals. We should make with respect to us corporately. That we not tolerate any sin. Even unintentional sin. Lest we become?

Tolerant of sin. Someone says oh well you want your church to be intolerant? Absolutely. I would like for us to be as intolerant of sin as Jesus is. Praise God. We have his atonement. We have all of the helps to repentance and assurances of his mercy and his favor towards us.

But there is a danger for particular, churches, that become tolerant of sin. That they will descend into high-ended sin. Perhaps even while calling themselves righteous and thinking that they are serving God and doing good. You remember those who were? Killing Christians in the early church, including the one who became the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Thought that they were serving God by doing so. It is generally speaking in our culture. The month for General assemblies and general conferences. And Uh, and that sort of thing. And some of these churches that we're still preaching the gospel or something, like it, 70 80 90 years ago.

The overlap between. Uh, Synod slash assembly slash General Conference month? And the month of wickedness in our culture, Has been clearly seen. And some of the meanings of the leadership of those churches, They? With a high hand. Their lamp stands have been removed. They're under the condemnation of God.

And such is the danger for all. Once we begin. To be tolerant of sin. And cease to address it. But the atonement that God has Provided. And so this is still a danger. Corporate eye Henderson. Whether for particular congregations or Presbyteries or senates, and so watch and pray. Not only for yourself individually.

That you not enter temptation. But also for your church corporately, That she be preserved. From falling into such sin, such Rebellion, high-handedly, against God. Oh, let us Avail ourselves. Of the atonement that has been given in the Lord Jesus Christ. And let us be intolerant of our sin individually.

And corporately. As goddess. His Justice hates. Of our Disobedience. And as mercy is worthy. Of all of our loving obedience. Let's pray.

We thank you, Lord for Long-Suffering, and patient way. That you called. Israel. Back into Uh, dealing with sin rightly. Even after they had fallen so quickly. And so calamitously. And we thank you that you call us back. To dealing with our sin. Quickly. Truthfully. By the full atonement of Christ.

Give us, we pray. To have Christ applied to Until you have finished that work. And your church is perfected, never to sin again. And every individual within her. Has been saved to sin, no more. For we asking in the name of the Savior, or even your son, our Lord Jesus.

Amen.