

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

NUMBERS 15-18

Once, there was this painter who worked for a pushy and demanding boss.

On one job the boss was pushing the painter to hurry his work. The painter warned that he was under so much pressure an accident was sure to happen.

The boss was unimpressed. The deadline had to be met.

Well, just as the painter predicted a wet brush slipped from his hand and fell 40 feet. As the painter leaned over the edge of the scaffold, he saw that the brush was heading toward his boss. He shouted, “Quack, quack, gobble, gobble.”

The brush smacked the boss right on the noggin.

Later the boss asked the painter, “When you dropped that brush, why didn’t you warn me?” The painter replied, “I did warn you. Didn’t you hear me shout, ‘duck turkey!’” I suppose you could say, that’s a pretty *lame duck*!

Of course, a lame duck is also a bird that’s been shot, but still manages to fly - or a politician who loses reelection, but serves out his term. Both remain in the air, but it won’t be long before they’re grounded... The term again is “a *lame duck*”.

Hey, the adult Hebrews who left Egypt became *the lame duck generation*.

After God’s miraculous efforts to win their freedom, He brought them to Mt. Sinai. There a band of slaves were equipped to become a great nation. God gave Israel His law,

established leadership and organization, and taught them how to worship Him. After 13 months they were ready to enter the land of promise.

But in chapters 13-14 they balked. They caved-in to unbelief. God proved His faithfulness to them over and over, in unmistakable ways. But rather than put their faith in the Lord - Israel acted like a turkey! They failed to enter the land of bounty.

And as a result God told Moses the children would enter the land, but not the adults. The generation of Hebrews that exited Egypt will wander in the wilderness for 40 years until they're all dead and gone. Tonight we're looking at the final term of the lame duck generation. They're still *flying* - but one by one they're *dying*...

Chapter 15 continues the story... **“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you...’”** Note the hopeful wording God uses... He doesn't say *“If you come into the land”*... it's **“when you have come into the land you are to inhabit...”** God did not give up on Israel. The nation will enter Canaan. Israel suffered a *setback* – but God didn't *take back* His promise.

Hey, life is full of setbacks – some are caused by situations beyond our control, others by our own willfulness and unbelief. But God remains faithful to His people.

God never throws in the towel. At times He disciplines us – spank us – like He does with Israel here. But God's grace assures of a new day and another chance.

Hey, it's never *“If you'll make it...”* – it's *“when you make it...”*

This is why we should never let a *setback* cause us to *look back*. Learn from your mistake and focus forward. A *setback* is just a *set up* for a new wrinkle in God's plan.

God tells the younger generation of Hebrews, when you enter the land... "and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock, then he who presents his offering to the LORD shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb."

Moses goes on to explain when you sacrifice a ram you bulk up the offerings. Double the flour - add a more oil - use a third of a hin of wine rather than a fourth.

It takes more grain and wine to permeate the meat and add to its aroma.

And when you offer a *bull* you really *beef up* the offering - triple flour - double oil and wine. And this applies not only to the Israelite, but to the stranger in the camp. Verse 15 says there is one ordinance for Jew and Gentile alike.

But here's what should be obvious to you... once again we see the bread and wine together. Notice we're less than four books into the Bible and we've seen these two communion elements coupled together over and over and over.

In Genesis 14 the High Priest, Melchizedek, met Abraham with bread and wine.

Joseph encountered a baker (*he makes bread*) and a butler (*or wine taster*).

The Hebrews celebrated Passover by eating bread and drinking wine.

Now again we see bread and wine in the *grain offering* and *drink offering*. Throughout the Bible bread and wine appear and always speak of Jesus.

In the Mosaic Law the grain offering and drink offering were supplemental.

They were AFLAC sacrifices – *supplemental sacrifices*. They were placed on top of the animal being offered on the altar. The wine and oil permeated the breaded meat. According to verse 10, they added to the aroma of the sacrifice.

Here's a picture for us... In the New Testament we are the sacrifice. Romans 12:1 tells us to “**present your bodies a living sacrifice**” – but the Christian life is not just about giving up, and turning over, and sacrifice... What makes following Jesus such an intense joy – such a labor of love – is that while we remain on the altar we experience an intimacy and communion with Jesus. Fellowship with Jesus is the aroma that pleases God – that tenderizes us - and keeps life sweet to the taste.

Verse 17, “**Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land to which I bring you, then it will be, when you eat of the bread of the land, that you shall offer up a heave offering to the LORD.'**” Again, God sees what will be, not what is right now.

It reminds me of Mike Westhoff, special teams coach for the Miami Dolphins. When Mike was in the hospital dying of cancer he received a visit from his boss, Don Shula, the Dolphins' head coach. Everyone who'd visited Mike had said their good-byes - but Shula leaned over his bed, and whispered, "Listen Mike, I need you in training camp in July – on the field, ready to go. We're going all the way next year." Mike recovered from cancer and was back at work by July.

Later he recalled his conversation with his boss, "I thought Coach Shula would tuck me in, but he didn't. He treated me the way I could be, not the way I was."

This is what God is doing for the nation in these verses. Yes, they've endured a huge failure, but God is about to tuck them in. God wants them to go all the way.

This is why He keeps saying, "When you come into the land... verse 20, "you shall offer up a cake of the first of your ground meal as a heave offering; as a heave offering of the threshing floor, so shall you offer it up.

Of the first of your ground meal you shall give to the LORD a heave offering throughout your generations." When they do enter the land God wants them to make sure they honor Him with the first of their harvest. It's a heave offering.

This is what we do when we give a tithe of our income to the Lord.

And let me admit, when you first start to tithe it too can be a *heave offering*. Your check weighs just 4/100ths of an ounce, but try to drop it in the offering box and it feels so heavy you have to heave it in. And it's not because of the weight of the

paper, or a weakness in your arm. The problem is our puny faith.

Yet, faith is like a muscle! The more you work your faith the stronger it gets.

Trust God with your money – even if your check gets heavy heave it in – and you’ll see God prove His faithfulness. It’ll become easier and easier to obey.

Verse 22, “**If you sin unintentionally** (And here God differentiates between deliberate and unintentional sins), **and do not observe all these commandments which the LORD has spoken to Moses - all that the LORD has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day the LORD 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 offer one young bull as a burnt offering, as a sweet aroma to the LORD...**” This is in case the whole congregation sins unintentionally. If they offer the burnt offering God requires, He will forgive them. As verse 25 says “**for their unintended sin**”.

Verse 27 deals with the individual who sins unintentionally. “**If a person sins 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 the LORD, to make atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him.**” Verse 29 tells us this applies to the Hebrew and stranger alike.

Notice whether the perpetrator knows it’s a sin or not – it’s

still a sin in God's eyes and it requires the blood of a sacrifice for it to be forgiven. Recall what Jesus said from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Obviously, Jesus became the sacrifice for unintentional sins.

But verse 30 tells us, "But the person who does anything presumptuously..." The word means "*highhanded*". It's the idea of deliberately betraying the Lord.

"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. 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." You forgive an unintentional sin, but for acts of defiance the solution is not forgiveness, but punishment.

A lesson needs to be learned. Discipline has to be administered.

Every parent understands this concept. When a kid slips and makes an honest mistake be quick to forgive. But when a child commits treason and deliberately defies your word if you don't discipline him you'll never regain their respect.

Here's a successful parenting strategy... Forgive childish blunders, but discipline defiant attitudes. This was God's strategy with Israel

And God provides an example of the principle in verse 32, "Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. They put him under guard,

because it had not been explained what should be done to him.” Here’s a guy collecting firewood on the Sabbath – a clear violation of God’s command to do no work on the 7th day.

The man is placed in solitary confinement until they could discern God’s will.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died.” Giving knew meaning to an old saying... “Sticks and stones may break my bones...” In this case gathering sticks did!

Remember, the Old Covenant had no power to transform the sinful nature of man. The Law was an external standard that exposed sin, but it couldn’t change the sinner. A person who was habitually rebellious would only grow worse and more defiant - thus, to protect society God instituted swift and stiff penalties.

Thankfully, under the New Covenant the blood of Jesus covers all our sins – *unintentional and intentional – the subtle and even the high-handed sins.*

The blood of Jesus is far more potent than the blood of bulls and goats. Jesus forgives us of sin - then transforms our inner nature. He turns *callous hearts* into *compliant hearts*. Jesus offers hope to the addict, and the hardcore rebel.

Verse 37, “Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to

put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.” Recall, the Ark was transported under a blue cloth. The robes of the High Priest had a blue hue. Blue was the color of the curtains in the Tabernacle. Blue spoke of heaven.

“And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.” The tassels reminded the people of God’s commandments. Obey God, remember the *tassel*, and life is less of a *hassle*. Even today Jewish men wear these tassel reminders.

The Hebrew name is actually “tzitzit” (zeet-zeet) – which means “to twinkle or to glance”. God says in verse 39, “you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it”. This is why the Jews are forbidden to tuck the tassels into their pants.

And it’s fitting the tassel had a blue thread. God’s commandments are not man’s invention. There not just another opinion. They come from heaven.

Verse 41 sums up the chapter, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD your God.”

Chapter 16, “Now Korah the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, with Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth (The boy was probably a hyperactive child. He was always *On*), sons of Reuben, took men; and

they rose up before Moses with some of the children of Israel, 250 leaders of the congregation, representatives of the congregation, men of renown. They gathered together against Moses and Aaron..." On the heels of their failure enter the land of Canaan they look for a scapegoat. They blame their plight on Moses and Aaron.

I'm always amazed at the turnover among Major League baseball managers.

At the end of every season half the teams fire their managers, and the other half rehire the same guys. The teams just swap the same managers. *And why?*

The manager never walked to the plate, or swung a bat. He didn't field the first ball, or make a single throw... But, it's easier to fire a manager than to fire 25 players. It's a simpler solution just to blame a team's troubles on its skipper.

And this is what happened to the Hebrews.

The people failed to enter the land and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. You could say they had a losing season, and tried to fire the manager!

I see this happen in the church... People fall short of their calling, and rather than take responsibility for their unbelief they blame it on their leaders... *If my pastor had been this... or done that... if the church had a different emphasis...*

Hey, you can't lead people who don't want to be lead.

The leaders of the uprising said to Moses and Aaron, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why

then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" The answer... God Himself called Moses and Aaron to lead.

Originally, Moses didn't want the job. God had to overcome his excuses.

There was no doubt, Moses and Aaron were commissioned by God. And since God called them, God would have to remove them - not Korah, or his cronies.

And this is how Moses resolves the dispute, *"let's just see what God says!"*

Over the years I've discovered God defends His leaders – if His leaders stay devoted to God. Once, a group of ladies left church on a Sunday night, and went to Burger King for shakes, and roasted pastor. One of the ladies confessed to me later they were letting me have it – criticizing all I was up to... when the man at the booth next to them got up, walked over, and said, *"Hey, I know Sandy Adams, and what you're saying is not true. You're spreading lies and gossip. Someone might hear you and believe you. You'd better knock it off."* Then the guy sat down.

To this day I have no idea who the man was. But the ladies got the point – and so did I... If God calls you, He is faithful to defend and validate your position.

Moses throws down the gauntlet, **"Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him. Do this: Take censers, Korah and all your company; put fire in them and put incense in them**

before the LORD tomorrow, and it shall be that the man whom the LORD chooses is the holy one.”

Then Moses adds sarcastically – he echoes Korah’s own words - “You take too much upon yourselves, you sons of Levi!” Korah had overstepped his boundaries.

God allowed the Levites to help the priests in the ministry of the Tabernacle, but now they’re no longer content to simply help... they want to take over.

And what happened to Korah and the Levites often occurs in the Church.

It’s easy to start out wanting to help – thankful for an opportunity to serve - but over time forget your place, and assume more authority than you’ve been given.

Korah *took on* a few duties - now he wants to *take over* the ministry.

Verse 8, “Then Moses said to Korah, "Hear now, you sons of Levi: Is it a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself, to do the work of the tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation to serve them; and that He has brought you near to Himself, you and all your brethren, the sons of Levi, with you?

And are you seeking the priesthood also?” God had already given them an important role in the ministry... They carried the Ark and the holy furniture.

Now they want more... “Therefore you and all your company are gathered together against the LORD. And what is Aaron that you murmur against him?”

“And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, but they said, "We will not come up! Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey, to kill us in the wilderness, that you should keep acting like a prince over us?" They blamed Moses rather than themselves.

“Moreover you have not brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up!" This was a defiant, disrespectful bunch of rebels.

It makes you wonder where these rebels were when God struck Miriam with leprosy for the same sin... questioning Moses' authority.

And Moses got mad! “Then Moses was very angry, and said to the LORD, "Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, nor have I hurt one of them." And Moses said to Korah, "Tomorrow, you and all your company be present before the LORD - you and they, as well as Aaron." He tells them what day – tomorrow. He doesn't tell them what time, but I'll bet it was high noon.

A showdown is about to take place. Moses will draw a line in the sand.

“Each of you take his censer and put incense in it, (tools of a priest) and each of you bring his censer before the LORD, 250 censers; both you and Aaron, each with his censer."

Remember this was formidable opposition – 250 men of renown.

Verse 18, “So every man took his censer, put fire in it, laid incense on it, and stood at the door of the tabernacle of meeting with Moses and Aaron. And Korah gathered all the congregation against them at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the congregation.”

The Lord Himself is about to separate the *pretenders* from the *contenders*.

“And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment.” God was also upset. “Then they fell on their faces, and said, “O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and You be angry with all the congregation?” Moses and Aaron ask God to have mercy on the Hebrews who don’t join the rebellion.

“So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the congregation, saying, ‘Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.’ Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him.

And he spoke to the congregation, saying, “Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins.”

I hope you realize one of the most dangerous places on earth is to hang out with people who are about to be judged by God. This is why Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

When a believer gets involved in a legal relationship with an unbeliever he or she becomes subject to collateral damage. If

your business partner is a heathen and God decides to bring down his company guess who else ends up affected?

If your hubby blasphemes God, and God chooses to humble him you'll also get taken down a notch. If you're hanging out with friends who are doing drugs and God sends the police, guess who else will spend the night in the slammer?

"Depart now from the tents of these wicked men!" is a word to us as well.

Verse 27, **"So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children. Then Moses said: "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will."** Moses was simply a conduit. God had worked through him.

"If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me." These guys ain't dying from old age.

"But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit..." This is why it's a bad decision to merge assets with an unbeliever – what belongs to the person being judged often goes down into the pit with them.

"Then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD."

"Now it came to pass, as he finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them, and the earth

opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods.”

Here’s a major mud slide. Korah was slinging mud, now his name is mud.

“So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the congregation.

Then all Israel who were around them fled at their cry, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up also! And a fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering incense." A mud slide and lightning strike finish the job.

It’s interesting, the Hebrew word translated “pit” is “*Sheol*” or the Old Testament home of the dead. Between His crucifixion and His resurrection Jesus also went to *Sheol*, or its other name, *Hades*. Evidently, Korah and his rebellious clan end up sliding through a warp in space. They died and went to Hades.

Here’s the lesson we learn from the rebellion of Korah... The attitude that works in business has no place in God’s family. Ministry is not a ladder to climb.

Position and authority are not gained by power-plays and takeovers – but handed out by God. Success in ministry is being content where God puts you.

Verse 36, “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Tell Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, to pick up the censers out of the blaze, for they are holy, and scatter the fire some distance away. The censers of these men who sinned against

their own souls...” Hey when you sin - you sin against God, against others, but also against yourself. Sin is self-destructive. The person you hurt most is you!

Eleazar is to gather the censers and “let them be made into hammered plates as a covering for the altar. Because they presented them before the LORD, therefore they are holy; and they shall be a sign to the children of Israel.”

So Eleazar the priest took the bronze censers, which those who were burned up had presented, and they were hammered out as a covering on the altar, to be a memorial to the children of Israel that no outsider, who is not a descendant of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the LORD, that he might not become like Korah and his companions, just as the LORD had said to him through Moses.” You’d think Aaron’s priestly authority would never be questioned again.

But not so, “On the next day (the very next day) all the congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the LORD.” God opens a chasm in the earth and swallows up the rebels, but the people blame Moses! They accuse Moses for being too harsh.

“Now it happened, when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron, that they turned toward the tabernacle of meeting; and suddenly the cloud covered it, and the glory of the LORD appeared.” This time God isn’t going to beat around the bush. He’s going to cut to the chase and finally silence their grumbling.

“Then Moses and Aaron came before the tabernacle of

meeting. And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Get away from among this congregation, that I may consume them in a moment." And they fell on their faces."

So Moses said to Aaron, "Take a censer and put fire in it from the altar, put incense on it, and take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them; for wrath has gone out from the LORD. The plague has begun."

Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded, and ran into the midst of the assembly; and already the plague had begun among the people." Aaron was hoofing it! He was running for his life... at least the lives of His fellow Israelis!

This is an intense situation... Aaron is sprinting while people are dying.

"So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people. And he stood between the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped."

Guys, we don't usually think of it this way, but we're in the same situation as Aaron. We've been commissioned by Jesus to go into all the world and share the Gospel - but while we're strolling along – barely moving – people are dying.

We need to get on the stick. Speed up our efforts, and sprint to the altar – we need to get to God in prayer and get to the people in need with the Gospel.

Verse 49 tallies up the death toll, "Now those who died in the plague were 14,700, besides those who died in the Korah incident. So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, for the plague had stopped."

It's difficult to fathom after the incident with Miriam, with Korah, with the 14,700 victims of the plague there would still be the need to confirm Moses' authority.

But God knows the rebellious hearts of His people. Chapter 17 tells us...

“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, and get from them a rod from each father's house, all their leaders according to their fathers' houses - twelve rods.” Each man brought his shepherd's staff to the Tabernacle. A shepherd's staff was a stick of wood - a former tree limb.

“Write each man's name on his rod. And you shall write Aaron's name on the rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father's house.”

They set aside and identified one rod from each of Israel's twelve tribes...

Then you shall place them in the tabernacle of meeting before the Testimony, where I meet with you. And it shall be that the rod of the man whom I choose will blossom; thus I will rid Myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you." You might say God *goes out on a limb* to decide this question.

“So Moses spoke to the children of Israel, and each of their leaders gave him a rod apiece, for each leader according to their fathers' houses, twelve rods; and the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses placed the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.” Then everybody went

home to a restless night.

Verse 8, “Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds.”

The next day, Moses enters the Tabernacle, and discovers only Aaron’s rod budded. He turns to Aaron, hands him his rod, and says, “*This buds for you.*”

The Lord had confirmed the ordination of Moses’ buddy Aaron with a bud.

“Then Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD to all the children of Israel; and they looked, and each man took his rod. And the LORD said to Moses, “Bring Aaron's rod back before the Testimony, to be kept as a sign against the rebels, that you may put their complaints away from Me, lest they die.”

Thus did Moses; just as the LORD had commanded him, so he did.”

Hebrews 9:4 tells us that along with the two tablets of the Ten Commandments, and a jar of manna, Aaron’s rod was kept inside the Ark of the Covenant as a perpetual reminder that the priesthood belonged to the family of Aaron.

There’s another interesting point about Aaron’s rod.

Of course, a rod or staff was a former branch, or tree limb. It was once alive, but now dead. What God did to Aaron’s rod was to bring it back to life - almonds budded. God resurrected Aaron’s rod to prove he was the chosen intercessor.

And this was a type of Jesus... Our High Priest died, and was brought back to life – and His resurrection is proof that He's God's chosen intercessor for mankind.

Hey, the graveyard is full of dead rods – Buddha, Mohammed, and every other false Messiah lie there dead with no buds. But Jesus is alive - His work blossoms all over the world. Jesus is the only Man whom God has authorized to intercede for you and me. He is the only means by which a person can be saved.

Verse 12, “So the children of Israel spoke to Moses, saying, “Surely we die, we perish, we all perish! Whoever even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD must die. Shall we all utterly die?” At last the message seems to have sunk in.

After Korah’s challenge of Moses and Aaron’s authority, it was necessary to reorder the relationship between the priesthood and the Levites...

This is what God does in chapter 18... “Then the LORD said to Aaron: “You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.” God has confirmed Aaron’s authority. But with authority comes responsibility. And now it's Aaron’s time to be challenged by God.

“Also bring with you your brethren of the tribe of Levi, the tribe of your father, that they may be joined with you and serve you while you and your sons are with you before the tabernacle of witness. They shall attend to your needs and all

the needs of the tabernacle; but they shall not come near the articles of the sanctuary and the altar, lest they die - they and you also.” Notice, submitting to authority and understanding your place in the house of God can be a life or death matter.

I’ve met many people who got involved in ministry only to burn out and die out because they took too much on their own shoulders. Understand your place...

“They shall be joined with you and attend to the needs of the tabernacle of meeting, for all the work of the tabernacle; but an outsider shall not come near you. And you shall attend to the duties of the sanctuary and the duties of the altar, that there may be no more wrath on the children of Israel. Behold, I Myself have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel; they are a gift to you, given by the LORD, to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting.”

Verse 7 is important, “Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death.” Notice how the priest should view his ministry... “as a gift.”

Whenever our service for God is viewed as a duty - or a right - or a job... our attitude is bound to deteriorate. Ministry should always be viewed as a privilege.

Always remember, the opportunity to *serve the Lord* is a *gift from the Lord*.

Verse 8, “And the LORD spoke to Aaron: “Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy

gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever.”

This was God’s way to feed the priests. They got a cut from sacrifices. This was how they fed their families. Verse 12 says the tithes of fruit, grain, and wine also went to feed the priests. *In the church this is also how the pastors and their families are fed...* from the tithes you drop in the offering box each week.

The priests are told in verse 14, “Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours.”

According to the following verses the firstborn of an unclean animal can be purchased by a priest, but not the clean animals – they should be sacrificed.

Yet of the sacrifice the priest got to eat the breast and the right thigh. It was like a two piece dinner from KFC – a piece of white meat and a piece of dark meat.

Verse 19, “All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD with you and your descendants with you.” In ancient times salt was used as a preservative – so a covenant of salt spoke of longevity. A covenant of salt was a promise forever.

“Then the LORD said to Aaron: “You shall have no inheritance in their land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.” The tribe of Levi was the only tribe that would receive no land in Canaan. The Lord not the land was their inheritance.

In verse 21 God also provides food for the Levites, "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting."

Verse 25 is an important verse for pastors, "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak thus to the Levites, and say to them: 'When you take from the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them as your inheritance, then you shall offer up a heave offering of it to the LORD, a tenth of the tithe.

And your heave offering shall be reckoned to you as though it were the grain of the threshing floor and as the fullness of the winepress. Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest."

Notice the principle... The Levites are paid from the tithes of the people - then they're expected to turn around and tithe from the tithes they receive. The same should be true of a pastor. My salary comes from *your offering* - then it becomes *my offering*. A pastor shouldn't just *preach* tithing – he should also *practice* it.