

God Uses The Available

Numbers 3:4; 26:61

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FOCAL TEXTS Responsive Reading Numbers 3:4
And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai, and they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

Numbers 26:61 And Nadab and Abihu died, when they offered strange fire before the LORD.

There are great truths in the Bible that we may miss if we don't slow down and meditate on them. One of the great truths is this: **God uses the available.** We see this truth illustrated in the account of **Nadab and Abihu.**

God set two men over His Israel, the **Prophet Moses** and his brother **Aaron**. Moses acted as chief leader of the people, and Aaron as High Priest. God directed that the leadership of His people pass down through these family lines. This is where Nadab and Abihu come in. Nadab and Abihu were the first and second born children of **Aaron**, and as such were supposed to act as High Priest and Deputy High Priest over Israel. These men were given every blessing of God. Just as the Lord Jesus called **Peter, James, and John** to His side, the Lord called Nadab and Abihu. When Moses made sacrifice before God he took these men with him. Moses told them as he sacrificed the lamb without blemish:

Exodus 24:8-10 "... **Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.**

The center of worship was the Blood of the Lamb, the Atonement, the Lamb of God whose Blood would be a covering for the sin of the people. Nadab and Abihu knew this. When they saw the Burnt Offering performed they also saw their father the High Priest take a portion of the smoking offering and put it in the *golden censer*. The offering was burnt whole, symbolizing the Judgment of God being poured out on the Lamb instead of the people. The coal placed in the censer, as the smoke rose up, symbolized that acceptable offering rising unto God in Heaven. This rich tapestry, a “**shadow of good things to come**”, illustrated the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the **Lamb of God**, sent from the Heaven to save His people (**John 1:36**). Jesus **gave Himself for us, an offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor (Ephesians 5:2)**. Like the Burnt Offering He was **made to be sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21)**. The smoke of the offering rose up to Heaven. Even so, the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary was acceptable to God. **It is Christ Who died and is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, even now making intercession for us who believe (Romans 8:34)**. What the High Priest of Israel did yearly Jesus Christ did but once. The Scripture says:

Hebrews 10:11-12 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: {12} But {Jesus}, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God;

It was so important that Nadab and Abihu make themselves available to God, serving the Lord in the Way that He required. They were taught. They were equipped. They knew what to do. And knowing the right, knowing the seriousness of their office, they did the wrong thing.

They “**offered strange fire before the Lord**”.

What is “**strange fire**”? Nadab and Abihu took incense and placed it in their golden *censers* just as they were shown. But then – rather than take a coal from the Burnt Offering to light the incense – they took a coal from a regular fire. They tried to do their holy office *apart from God's command*. They tried to do what the Lord told them *apart from Jesus Christ*. What was the result? The Bible says:

Leviticus 10:2-3 ... there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. (3) Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spoke, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.

There are many people today trying to get to Heaven in their own power. Like the confused people at the **Tower of Babel** they are building walls of brick and mortar, of self righteousness and self improvement, hoping that they will get into God's Heaven. There are preachers across this country who, like Nadab and Abihu, have preached a Gospel where Christ is never mentioned and

His power never exalted. There are believers who struggle through this life though the Scripture plainly tells us:

1 John 5:4-5 For {whosoever} is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. {5} Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Believers are meant to be overcomers. We are meant by God to walk on water, to stand triumphant no matter what this world and the devil might throw our way. God designed each and every true Christian to have a *know so* salvation, to have a peace and a certainty no matter what might come. God equips those He calls.

Consider **King David**. The boy who would be the great King of Israel was called to that place by God while he was a lowly Shepherd. What better qualification for working with God's people than the learned resources of the Shepherd. The Shepherd, like a King, must be patient, and kind. The Shepherd must be willing to fight off enemies of the sheep – and so must the King. The Shepherd must know how to use a rod to discipline the sheep, and how to use a staff to comfort and save the sheep. **“Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:).** When God called David He equipped David. God equips those He calls.

One day David came over a ridge and heard the armies of the Philistines mocking God's Israel. In the center of the field of battle stood a nine foot tall warrior named **Goliath**. David heard his blasphemies, leapt from his

chariot and raced toward Goliath. **“Who is this man who defies the armies of the Living God? I will fight him, if you will give me permission”**. King Saul gave David permission, but as the unbeliever and the weak believer often do he began to offer his own solutions. **“Wear my armor, David, and you will win”**. David even went so far as to try on the armor of Saul, but in the end he took it off and faced Goliath with tools God gave him. David said, **“A lion and a bear came to my flock one night. The LORD delivered me then – He'll deliver me now. I can't use your armor, King Saul, because I haven't proven it. But I have proved the Lord and His strength in me over and over again – this I will trust”**.

In this life people will discourage you. They will tell you “You can't do this, or you are unfit for that”. Beloved, do not listen to them – listen to God. Avoid those who point you to any direction but Jesus Christ. Avoid the advice of the *unsaved and unbelieving* who say “Try this nightclub, try this hangout, try dating this person I'll set you up with, try Oprah, try Dr. Phil, try, try, try.” Avoid that. Avoid the advice of the confused but *backslidden saved* who say “Get better – you can do it on your own. Just try harder. You can do it!” No Beloved, you cannot do it.

But Christ can. Jesus Christ must be the center of your life, the focal point for your salvation and for your strengthening. You must walk in His Spirit, speak as He directs, live empowered by Him. Do not put on Saul's armor – put on Christ's armor. Let Christ be the coal in your censer, let Him be the fire that lights up your life.

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for sinful lusts (Romans 13:14).

1. Where The Judgment Of God Falls Depends Entirely On You

FOCAL TEXTS Numbers 3:4 And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD.

Nadab and Abihu died before the Lord. What exactly happened here? These two men – trained in serving the Lord – decided to take Christ out of the center of their worship. Rather than take a live coal from the Burnt Offering (symbolic of Christ on the Cross) they took an *unsanctified coal – a coal not centered in Jesus and in the Cross* – and tried to pass this off on the Lord. We read elsewhere in Scripture:

SUPPORTING Leviticus 10:1-2 And Nadab and Abihu ... offered strange fire¹ before the LORD, which he commanded them not. {2} And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

Fire went out from the Lord. Fire literally shot out of the *Holy of Holies* and destroyed them. They did not become ash – nor, do I believe – were their clothes burned - for Moses said in verse 4:

¹ *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*: "instead of taking of the fire from the altar, which was newly kindled from before the Lord and which henceforward must be used in offering both sacrifice and incense (Rev 8:5), they took common fire, probably from that with which the flesh of the peace-offerings was boiled, and this they made use of in burning incense"

SUPPORTING Leviticus 10:4 ... **Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp.**

The Holy Fire may have been something like lightning. Regardless as to what it was, their lives were forfeited. Listen Beloved to this Truth: **Where the Judgment of God falls depends entirely on you.**

God's Judgment fell on Nadab and Abihu because these men *stood in the place where Jesus should have been.*

It was a little thing to them – what did it matter if they took the coal from the Burnt Offering or if they took the coal from a common fire? What is a little thing to us is a GREAT thing to God. When they took the coal from the common fire they *took the glory from God*. The Lord made this clear when He said:

SUPPORTING Leviticus 10:3 ... **I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified...**

A little sin of *omission* destroyed these men. They tried to serve God without Jesus, tried to serve Him in the power of their own righteousness. Solomon said (2:15) **“the foxes, the little foxes, spoil the vines”**. A little rejection of Christ leads to great tragedy. A little rejection of what He calls us to – a little inattention – a little hardening of the heart – and you will find the

Judgment of God poured out on you.

Little sins lead to great destruction. Little self righteousness leads to eternal condemnation!

The Bible is filled with illustrations of this truth. **King David** took back the **Ark of God** from the Philistines, and decided to bring the Ark back to Jerusalem. When God ordained the Ark He decreed that it would be carried by four men and two poles – and that the Ark would never be touched by human hands. David had the bright idea of putting the Ark on *a new cart* (**2 Samuel 6:3**) – and the Bible tells us that he **went with all the people to bring up the Ark**. The concept we see here is that “majority rules” - and David felt that since the entire congregation agreed with his assessment that it would be fine to put the Ark on the cart. David was wrong.

The Priests – the children of **Kohath** – were supposed to carry the Ark on their shoulders. The function of the Priest is to **always glorify the Lord no matter what!** In fact, the Lord forbade the family of Kohath to *even own a cart* (**Numbers 7:9**). **They were to carry the Ark – a very lightweight box – on their shoulders while glorifying God**. They knew better, but went along with the crowd. What happened next? The oxcart hit a hole in the ground and **Uzzah, one of the sons of Kohath**, put out his hand the steady the Ark:

2 Samuel 6:7 **And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.**

We must glorify God, and keep Jesus at the center of our lives. If we will not then we do so at our own peril!

With God it does not matter if “majority rules”, nor does it matter what I think. What matters is what has God decreed, and what has God said.

What has God decreed insofar as our salvation is concerned? You may have the opinion that your efforts, your own righteousnesses, are good enough to get you into Heaven. Yet Jesus has said:

John 5:24 **Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.**

According to Jesus you are in a **state of spiritual death** without Him. You must be **passed from death unto life**. You can only do that by **hearing Christ's Word and by believing on Him**. Your redemption from death to life *must* come through faith in Jesus. The Bible says:

1 Peter 1:18-19 **"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; {19} But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"**

A small rejection of Christ leads to a big eternity in the

Lake of Fire. Jesus stood in the place of God's Judgment for you. Like the Burning Coal of the Golden Censer, you must take Christ and put Him in the framework of your life by faith. Ordinary fire will not do. Ordinary fire in the Golden Censer brought death to Nadab and Abihu. You need the Coal from the Burnt Offering. You need Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

2 Corinthians 5:21 {God the Father} hath made {God the Son} [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

When Jesus is in the center of your life we are **made the righteousness of God in Him**. He has ...

Revelation 1:5-6 ... loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, (6) And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him [be] glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

We who are saved are not saved because we are good, but because we simply bent the knee to Christ. We believed on Him. We trusted our souls to His hands. We know that **He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him, because He continually – as our High Priest – stands between us and the Judgment of God (Hebrews 7:25-26)**. A little sin, a little self righteousness will destroy a life – but a little faith in Christ will save it.

**2. Make Yourselves Available To God
And You Will Be Blessed**

FOCAL Numbers 3:4 And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD ... they had no children: and Eleazar and Ithamar ministered in the priest's office in the sight of Aaron their father.

Here is another great truth:

God uses the available, the willing, and the obedient. He will not use the murmurer, the fault finder, the lazy, or the apathetic.

Nadab and Abihu failed the Lord in their office, so **Eleazar and Ithamar, the third and fourth borne of Aaron**, ministered in their places. Dear friends, God uses those who make themselves available unto Him.

The first generation of Israel out of Egypt was *never available* to the Lord because they were so busy murmuring and complaining. The Lord said of those who did so:

Numbers 14:23-24 Surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: {24} But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.

God uses the available, the surrendered, the willing. **Caleb** was available to God. His friend **Joshua** was also available to God. Joshua was chosen by God over all others in the nation Israel to lead that people into the

Promised Land. The Lord told Joshua:

Joshua 1:3-5 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. ... There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

What wonderful words these are! God says to those who trust in Him **“I will not leave you, I will not forsake you”**.

ILLUSTRATE Too often we think “What can I do, I am only one person?” You can do a lot. You can be obedient to Him Who called you to salvation. You can trust in God, believing, and do what He asks you to do. **Little Samuel** was dedicated by his mother to the work of God, **“a child wrapped round about with a little linen robe, and a little linen coat”**. Here is a little priest with little strength, a child, perhaps just five or six years old. The Bible says that **“in those days there was no open vision” (1 Samuel 3:1)**. The people had wandered from God, and the Lord draws away from those who draw away from Him. The **High Priest Eli**, now an old man, was laying down resting between services, as was his little helper Samuel. The Bible says **the LORD – Eternal and Almighty God – called unto little Samuel. Samuel immediately replied, “Here I am” and, thinking it was Eli calling, he ran to him. (1 Samuel 3:4ff)**. Eli said, “Why are you bothering me, son, I'm trying to rest”. Samuel said, “But you called me”,

whereas Eli said “No I didn't. Go back to sleep”. This happened twice more. The third time old Eli realized what was happening. He said, **“If you hear the call one more time, say 'Speak, Eternal I AM, Your servant hears You.’”** Samuel laid back down and the Lord called – *and he answered*.

Samuel became one of the greatest Prophets who ever lived because he made himself available unto God. David became one of the greatest Kings who ever lived because he made himself available unto God.

If you will make yourselves available unto God then God will bless your lives. Blessing or cursing – it all depends on where you place your faith and your obedience. **Daniel** was told **“Don't pray to God”**. Daniel didn't change a thing. He prayed every day in front of his window, he kept on praying every day in front of his window. Daniel was cast in the **lion's den** – and triumphed – because God is LORD over the lions of life. **Sampson** with his eyes on **Delila** was a beaten, blinded man. Sampson with his eyes on Jesus Christ could not be defeated. **Elijah** focused on the Lord stood before *eight hundred and fifty false prophets* mocking them. Elijah focused on **Jezebel** found himself running away, head bowed, frightened and despondent. Do you not know that **Elisha** who wanted a *double portion of Elijah's power* had to **catch Elijah's mantle when it was dropped**. That mantle symbolized the power of Jesus Christ *wrapping* His people and protecting them. Does not the Scripture say:

Romans 13:14 But **put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.**

The world will tell you - **“What can one person do?”** - to which the Scripture replies:

Philippians 4:13 **I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**

If you will be Elisha, *keep your eyes on Jesus*. If you will be Daniel, *keep your eyes on Jesus*. If you will be Elijah, *keep your eyes on Jesus*. If you will be Joshua, *keep your eyes upon Jesus*. Most importantly,

If you will be saved, keep your eyes upon Jesus.

May God touch your hearts with His Word.

