

Numbers 15:32–41  
Are You High-Handed or Holy?

Friday, June 28, 2024 ▫ Read Numbers 15:32–41

*Questions from the Scripture text: In what context does v32 occur? What did the children of Israel find? What did those who found him do—to whom did they bring him (v33)? What did they do in v34 and why? What did YHWH command (v35)? By whom? How? Where? How does v36 begin? What did they do? What new command do v37–38 now give? What are they to do with these tassels (v39)? What were they supposed to remember? To what are their heart and eyes inclined instead? What is the point of doing all the commandments (v40)? And why is being holy for God so important (v41)?*

**Why is Sabbath breaking so bad?** Numbers 15:32–41 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord's Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we must be holy because we belong to our Creator and Redeemer.**

The Sabbath is so important because it is a commandment given to us, a day and a pattern of life given to us, especially to know and show that we belong to God, our Creator. And it was all the more important for Israel, for in their covenant with Him, they would also be knowing and showing that they belong to God, their Redeemer. Sabbath breaking is not just a refusal of God's good gift. It is a rejection of identifying with Him, a rejection of being His, a denouncing of Him as Creator or Redeemer. It says something about us that Israel is so clear that something horrible has been done (v33), but many professing Christians in our place and time just don't see what the big deal is.

It says something about us that we would think or feel of the living and good and merciful God that He is overreacting in v35. This is how our flesh responds, but by the Spirit we ought to condemn the response of our flesh and seek instead to remember His commandments, and be holy for Him, because He is ours, and we are His. This is how v32–36 are tied to v37–41. We get so accustomed to the "harlotry of our heart and our eyes" that God actually commanded the tassels as a continual reminder—not only upon oneself, but upon everyone else. We don't have prescribed obedience clothing; instead, we have the continual wearing of the Name of the Lord Jesus (cf. Col 3:17)—both upon ourselves and upon each other. What a glorious thing that YHWH has given Himself to us! If He is ours, then let us be holy for Him—completely and always. What a serious, glorious delight the Sabbath will be, then.

How do you keep the Lord's Day? How do you stay continually mindful of belonging to Christ?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for creating us and redeeming us to be Yours. Grant to us to continually remember that we are Yours and live as those who are holy to You, especially on Your day, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP119N "Your Word's a Lamp" or TPH174 "The Ten Commandments"

"(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](http://hopewellarp.org))

Numbers. 15 verses 32-41. These are God's words. 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 six, 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. Then he always said to Moses, the man must surely be put to death. All the congregations shall Stone him with stones outside the camp. So as Yahweh commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones.

He died. Again, you always 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. And you shall have the tassel that you may look upon it and remember all the Commandments of Yahweh 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. I am your father, your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God?

I am Yahweh. Your God. So, for the reading of gods inspired and And Aaron toward, Well, coming out of the previous section in numbers 15. You remember, the? offering for unintentional sin was not something that could be done in the case of the high-handed sin. The sin in which someone asserts himself against the Lord.

And so The scripture here, the Holy Spirit by means scripture. Impresses upon us. That sabbath breaking is High-Handed sin. Of an extreme nature. For was not just to be. Cut off from his people and have his guilt upon him. It was not just excommunication that the Lord commands. In this case, indeed he commanded execution.

And so, we see that sabbath breaking is a high-handed. it would be very tempting. If no one else was gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And if you were in a camp of somewhere between two and six million people and wood was very valuable. you could give yourself all sorts of Rationalizations.

About how necessary it is for you to gather the sticks on this day. because your family never gets enough wood or whatever it is. That you would think to yourself. and yet they find the man and They have a sense perhaps. That this is a great sin.

and perhaps their sense of the greatness of the sin. Increased by the fact that This meant that those sticks would not be. for them on the day after the Sabbath. And yet. However, it is that they That they are instructed by God or brought. the suspicion the sense by God that Sabbath breaking is indeed.

An extreme high-ended. They put him under guard. They ask Moses and Aaron, Moses and Aaron. Are not sure. And they put him under guard and special Revelation comes from the Lord to Moses. Not only telling. Them to execute him. But specifying that the entire congregation, Would be involved in this stoning, and this would do two things.

One, the congregation then would be cleansed. From permitting Sabbath breaking among them.

I was once. Told by a seminary Professor. I was coming to understand scripture more and Ages seasons of Greater. spiritual life, and Theological strength, and nearness to God, and care about his word. And that was kind of horrified at what I used to do. On the Lord's day.

And I asked him about it and, you know, why don't we Have church discipline for this. He said something to the effective. We can barely discipline fornicators. It will take a lot of reformation. before we get to the place where we're able to discipline. For Sabbath breaking. But we ought to desire such Reformation.

We ought to desire. Love for God and commitment to his word and genuine conversion in the churches. Producing genuine Holiness in the people. As it is. when congregations permit. Sabbath breaking or tolerated. When it's linked at or ignored It brings guilt upon the congregation as a whole.

and so here in the Lord's answer in verse 35. He tells them that. The whole congregation. Is to be involved here and that would As it were be a right response. not just a right penalty for the one who did it, but I write response. Of Israel as a church.

that they would not be. defiled. By tolerating Sabbath breaking among them. But then individually personally for each one since the whole congregation would be gathered. And, probably liters of families. We don't know exactly the method by which the stone throwers and the stone throwing occurs.

but each one Would be reminded how serious? How seriously God takes Sabbath breaking. Because, the Sabbath has kept Yes, with the hands. But first with the heart, remember. What the Commandment is it is remember the Sabbath day. And keep it. Holy consecrated. And those are things that are first done in the heart.

And there's penalty worse than being stoned by Israel. And that is being punished by God forever. And so we see the greatness of his Fury against us. And each of them, then would have been ought to have been convicted of their sin, in their hearts. as they observed and participated in.

this Dreadful grave serious. Penalty. And, Verses 37 through 41, then. drive this home. How important it is that each of us recognize. The harlotry to, which Our own heart is inclined verse 39. That each of us. Recognize the harlotry to which our own eyes are inclined.

The Lord commands them all to have these tassels with one blue thread in the tassel at the corners of their garment. It reminds me. Of, Uncle your Uncle, Mark your uncle, Uncle Victor. And I used to have Laundry that we did together. very early in Life.

By the time we were ezekiel's age. I think we were all doing our Own laundry. As you might do have your children, do if you had three rambunctious easily soiled, boys. but when we had our laundry all together, I would get. Socks with a tiny little one thread.

blue. Jay in the big toe and Mark had red M's and Victor had green V's. and if I When I was whenever I was putting a sock on looked down and I would see the blue thread. And remember. And be reminded that this sock does indeed.

Belong to me. Well. They were to have a thread in each of the corners of their garments, not to remind them that their clothes belong to them. But that they belong. To the Lord. Says you shall have the tassel that you might look upon it. And remember, all the Commandments of Yahweh, And do them.

That you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined. In other words, I must do according to the Lord's heart. Not my heart. I must do what is right in the Lord's eyes. Not in my eyes. And so he literally gave them a thread to put in the corner, a blue thread in the corner of all their garments to remind them of this.

The reason for doing the Commandments was not so that they could be the rule, keeping champions of the world. But because God had consecrated them set them apart to himself as holy. So verse 40 says that you may remember and do all my Commandments and be holy for your God.

Now God has not given you blue threads. But he has given you baptism. And he has given you church membership. He gives you every week, the Lord's Supper, which is a visible sign and se He fills your days. With well. by Grace, he's helping your father. he gives you the family worship to mark off each day.

There are many things in the ordinary course of the life that he has given us. And the means of Grace and the signs and seals of his Covenant that tell you, you don't belong to yourself, you belong to the Lord, you've been consecrated, set apart to him. You need to do according to what his heart desires and according to what is right in his eyes.

Indeed, you need to Have the mind and heart and of Christ worked out in you more and more by his Spirit. So that your heart Desires what his heart desires. And so that what is right in his eyes becomes what is right in your eyes. And so, he reminds us that this was the end goal.

what our Salvation was working towards what their salvation was working towards. He says, he says, I am Yahweh. Your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt? See that was the beginning of their salvation. But what was the goal of their salvation? What was it working toward?

Who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God? I am Yahweh, your God. and so yeah, perhaps at this point? On their mind, getting into the land and the generation that was going to live. And die in the wilderness and the other generation that was going to grow up in the wilderness, but come into the land.

And, and they would think that their salvation was especially to be brought into the land. there are believers. who whose idea of heaven and whose idea of Eternity. Features much in the place. They're going to live the stuff. They're going to have there. What they're going to do there.

That is an ordinary reflex of the remaining fleshliness of our hearts. But that is not the ultimate goal. Of our Salvation are all the ultimate goal. The ultimate end of our Salvation is that we are his and he is ours. And we will be holy. that we would be holy to him.

Yes, there's wonderful things. In the new heavens and the new Earth. But the most wonderful thing is that. though, he who sits on the throne and the lamb. Will be among them. And They will be their light and the dwelling place of God is with, man. And man is Holy unto him.

And so that is especially what the Sabbath communicates to us. That we are his And he is ours. And if we even desire, To do something other than Those things for which the day has been set apart. We are rejecting God. And if we act upon that desire, we sin.

High-Handedly. And so let us look to God for Grace. To use all these means that he's given us in our life. Even this one right now that we are Attending upon and enjoying. To remind us for the rest of our time for the whole of our life. Why we exist?

Why he saved us? That we might be his. That we might be. Holy Unto him. Let's pray. Father, thank you for Teaching such a striking lesson. To your people in the wilderness and now by means of them to us, forgive us. for Fleshliness that recoils, from such a penalty.

Make us to Humble ourselves before even To recognize that. In situations like this, it is not that you would overreact. Oh, keep such Blasphemous thoughts from our hearts and minds and mouths. But that we are under reacting to belonging to you. And to the day that you have given us, That is consecrated for that purpose.

Make us remember. The Sabbath and to keep us. Holy. Lord's Day by Lord's Day. And make us to live as those who are marked as yours. That we might constantly remember. To do. According to what is in your heart and what is right in your eyes. So, Grant these things by your spirit more and more until we come to the day of Christ.

And your work will have been completed. And we come into the full enjoyment of that for which you have created and saved us. Do so, we ask in Jesus name, amen.