

# Come to Understanding

**They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,  
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24**

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## Fine Linen, or Strange Fire?

Pride is the subtle tool that Satan uses to destroy God's people. One of the most devastating forms of pride is that which accompanies our feeling that we have earned the right to come into the presence of God. We may feel that we have special talents that help lift us up into His presence.

After Paul established the assembly (church) of Corinth by teaching them the Word of God (see Acts 18:11), he was later disappointed. They had put aside the Word of God to follow after the teachings of various men. Using himself and Apollos as examples, he tried to show the Corinthians the error in thinking that certain men were more important than they are shown to be through God's word:

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. -1 Corinthians 4

Some of the Corinthians had become "puffed up" with pride, thinking that their talents were of there own making. As they had apparently forgotten that all that they had was given to them by God, Paul asked them:

7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? -1 Corinthians 4

Our talents are often called gifts because they *are* gifts, which are given to us by God. When we find that God has given us talents, responsibility, or authority, it is tempting to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. As a result, we can easily deceive ourselves into doing the things that please ourselves instead of doing that which God commands us to do. In doing so, we try to demonstrate our power through our talents or position to achieve our own righteousness or holiness in the eyes of God.

In a clear example of self-righteous disobedience to the commands of God, the sons of Aaron offered incense to Yahweh (the LORD). They had just witnessed a miraculous manifestation of the power of Yahweh as they

assisted their father in worship according to the particular details prescribed by Yahweh through Moses. Among the many specific requirements were that the priests were to wear fine linen garments and make an offering for sin:

2 Take Aaron and his sons with him, and the garments, and the anointing oil, and a bullock for the sin offering, and two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread;  
3 And gather thou all the congregation together unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. -Leviticus 8

Aaron and his sons proceeded to wash themselves, put on fine linen, an ephod, and a turban (sometimes called a mitre). After they had prepared themselves in direct obedience to Yahweh's word:

7 And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy sin offering, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and for the people: and offer the offering of the people, and make an atonement for them; as the LORD commanded. -Leviticus 9

After Aaron, with the assistance of his sons, had performed all of the things Yahweh had commanded, in direct obedience to the specifications of His word, the glory of Yahweh appeared to the people. Fire then came out from before Him and consumed the offering:

23 And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto all the people.

24 And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: *which* when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces. -Leviticus 9

At first glance it seemed that the specific rituals and worship practices that Aaron performed caused Yahweh to reveal His glory and power. It might have appeared that Aaron called down Yahweh from heaven. A closer study, however, reveals that Yahweh's response was not to the rituals and rites performed by Aaron. Instead, He responded to Aaron's obedience to His commands.

As Aaron's two son's witnessed the miraculous manifestation of the glory and power of God, they wanted to show that they also had the ability to make an offering to Yahweh:

**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8**

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1 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. -Leviticus 10

They must have reasoned that Yahweh loves all forms of worship that are offered to Him. However, instead of obeying the commandment of Yahweh and offering in the detail of the manner which He had prescribed, they offered to Him something called “strange fire.” Yahweh’s response was severe:

2 And 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 spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace. -Leviticus 10

Seeking to bring glory to themselves instead of to Yahweh, Aaron’s sons tried to come into His presence by their own abilities and on their own terms. Offering incense to Yahweh without an atoning sacrifice for sin and in obedience to the Word of God, their offering was not acceptable to Him. They offered Him incense while they were in a state of unrighteousness. Therefore, it was rejected as “strange fire.”

Incense offered without an atoning sacrifice for sin, is also called “strange incense:”

9 Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.

10 And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it *is* most holy unto the LORD. -Exodus 30

The odors of incense offered to Yahweh represent the prayers of the believers, called the “saints:”

8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. -Revelation 5

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Many of the prayers offered to God could, perhaps, be called “strange prayers.” That is because they are offered in disobedience to Him and His word. They are, therefore, offered in unrighteousness and without regard for the holiness required of us because of His holiness:

45 For I *am* the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy. -Leviticus 11

When we come before Him in holiness, or righteousness, we are demonstrating our belief in *His* holiness. Therefore, He watches over us and hears our prayers:

12 For the eyes of the Lord *are* over the righteous , and his ears *are open* unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord *is* against them that do evil. -1 Peter 3

How then are we made righteous? Do we trust in our own outward appearance, our pious acts, or our righteous works? How would we respond to the question that Job’s friend, Elihu, asked him?

2 Thinkest thou this to be right, *that* thou saidst, My righteousness *is* more than God’s? -Job 35

Yahweh promised that He would send our righteousness, calling Him a “righteous Branch, and a King” who would bring salvation to His people. He is called YAHWEH (THE LORD) OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS:

5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. -Jeremiah 23

This was a prophecy of the coming Messiah, Yahshua, who is called Jesus. Our righteousness does not come from us. It comes through Him. It is received by faith and cannot be earned by our works:

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. -Romans 4

Yahshua (Jesus) accepted our sin and offered us *His* righteousness. With a repentant heart and by the authority of His name, we receive His righteousness by faith. We are thereby able to enter into the holy presence of God, as a bride who is adorned in the fine linen of righteousness for the marriage of the Lamb of God:

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. -Revelation 19