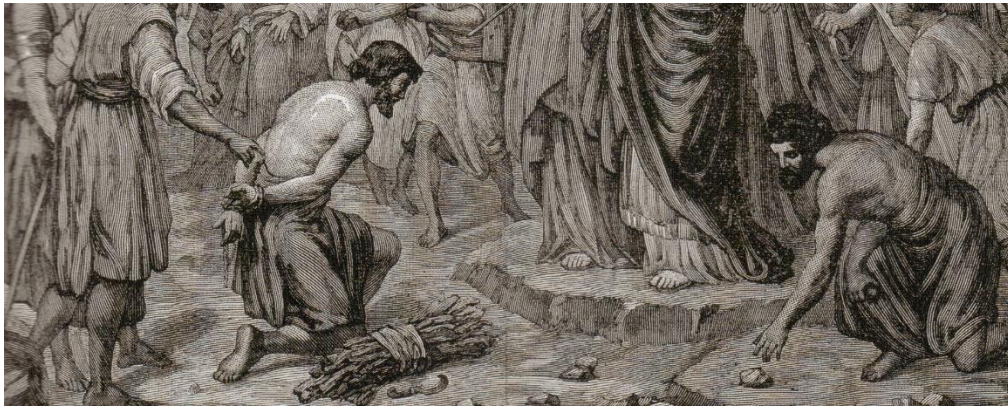




The word presumptuous as the title of this class can be understood as arrogant or deliberate. It refers to an incident described in verses 32 -36, where a man deliberately ignored the laws concerning the sabbath day, and he was found gathering sticks and wood on the day, when the nation had been commanded to rest from their daily toil, and dedicate the day to worship to God. Those who found the man realised that hat he was doing was wrong, but didn't know what to do. The instruction from God was that he had to die, and die by stoning. He was taken outside the camp and stoned.

This may seem harsh. However, his actions which he had decided upon were very soon after the law had been given. He deliberately chose to test God. In doing so, his attitude was in danger of corrupting the whole camp. There had been previous occasions where people had presumed to disobey God, in a deliberate way. For example the time when the nation demanded Aaron make then a golden calf they could worship and dance around. Three thousand men died by the sword on the same day, and a plague also caused the death of many more (Exodus 32). However, in chapter 14, the previous chapter, the nation behaved in a presumptuous way. 44 *But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.* The Hebrew word for presume here is *aphal* which means to swell, to be

lifted up, to be elated. In other words they decided they knew best, despite the instructions from God to the contrary. As a result of that foolish decision the whole nation was punished, as their enemies soundly beat them in battle.

Returning to our chapter 15, the man gathering the sticks had exactly the same attitude. In verse 30,31 God warned that such a mind was in direct opposition to Him: *But the soul that does anything presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproaches the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.*

The word Presumptuous in this case is in the Hebrew expression *b'yad ramah* – which literally translates as acting “with a high hand. The expression means that someone would do something with deliberate defiance, with an arrogance in spite of what the Lord said. It is as if the sinner was about to attack God, or at least lifting his hand against God. The implication of the expression is that it was done in full knowledge of the Law, such blatant defiance could not go unchallenged or unpunished.

In previous examples, the nation had caught the contagious sinful way of thinking collectively. So many had perished because of it.

Now – immediately after God warns of presumptuous sin, and almost on cue to illustrate the problem, a man does exactly what God was warning of. Now Israel were to stone him with stones. This was a collective form of punishment, where many would take part, and no one would know who had thrown the death-imparting stone – it was to prevent collective corruption, where any one of them could have become guilty, and indeed probably were – for who can say they have not sinned despite knowing the law of God? Let alone sins committed in ignorance or being unaware. In stoning with stones the

throwers would have connected intimately with the sinners pain, and witnessed the death. They too would suffer - in seeing what sin does to the body – the whole Ecclesia – if unchecked. It destroys it blow by blow. Instead then, it is better to act even quicker and destroy the sin.

The stone itself has no feeling. There is no space or place for feelings and emotions when it comes to dealing with corruption and blatant disobedience. There can be no compromise. The stone does not yield, hard and implacable it represents the judgement of God. It is why Jesus Christ himself is depicted as a stone which destroys the edifice of the pride of man, symbolised in the image of empires in Daniel 2.

Only Jesus Christ is now qualified to judge in such a way. Even the righteous in their mortal lives cannot presume to act as a stone. They themselves sin defiantly at times – through wilfulness forgetfulness or weakness. It is for this reason that Jesus when a woman was caught *in the very act* (like the man gathering sticks) his warning was one which did not condemn her, but those gathering the stones... let him that is without sin cast the first stone. They all departed one by one.

The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. It shows the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the rigid unmoving nature of the difference between truth and corruption, righteousness and sin. Like the man gathering sticks all deserve to die, and are so condemned.

Christ Jesus took the blows, Isaiah 53:5 *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities:* he died a public death – one man died for the nation as the high priest observed, not a quick death from stoning, but a long and painful one nailed to the tree. But it was a stone which entombed him beneath the ground. He did not deserve to die, but was still condemned as he bore our

nature. He who did no sin was rescued from the grave, because of one thing which triumphed over the law, - mercy. James 2:13:

*For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoices against judgment.* Mercy and forgiveness is the prerogative of the offended, and is more powerful than the law. A hint of it's power is seen in the mind of God in this chapter 15, whereby God commanded the congregation to wear a border of blue on the garments, a ribbon of blue, or tassles as some translations have it. 38 -40 *Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue. That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them ; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring: That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God.*

God in His kindness and mercy was helping the nation build into their lives ways and means to help them avoid falling into the corrupt way of apostacy – blatant disregard for the law of God. The best method He gave them was to learn to control their minds – to remember. In fact the law itself was this reminder, it was the ribbon of blue which would be the fringe or tassles on their garments reminding them to always walk in the law, always they would notice the blue, on themselves and on others, a constant reminder. In the same way the scripture has been preserved as a sign of God's mercy and forgiveness that we must study and read as part of our every days lives to remind us of need to control our minds, our tongues and our actions.

Brother Terry