

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Leviticus 11: 39-47

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. Let's continue to read Leviticus chapter 11. We will read verses 39–47 today.

The dietary regulations were ordinances that God gave to the Israelites through Moses and Aaron, which they were required to follow in their daily lives. The purpose was to set the Israelites apart from the Gentiles, ensuring the purity of the Israelite bloodline. When the fullness of time had come, God's Son, Jesus Christ, could be born in the tribe of Judah, in the family of David, as prophesied by the prophets of the Old Testament. Regarding this arrangement by God, we must recognize that this is God's sovereign authority.

We are created by God, and although God greatly respects humanity and grants us free will, man has no authority to question God's sovereignty. Paul describes this very clearly in Romans 9:20-24: "But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" What is wrong with this?

Paul tells us that God has the sovereignty to call vessels of honor from among the Jews, and He also has the sovereignty to call vessels of honor from among the Gentiles. Even those vessels prepared for destruction, God still endures with much patience and long-suffering, giving them the opportunity to repent. Concerning God's sovereignty, can those who are created dare to argue with God? Not only

should we not question God's sovereignty, but we must also recognize it. Within His sovereignty, God has already established the progression of the Gospel and the path of salvation. In Romans 1:16, Paul tells us: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." This means that the Gospel was to start with the Jews and then be spread to the Gentiles. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is for all of humanity.

The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, including the dietary regulations we have read about, were intended to point to Jesus Christ and serve as a foreshadowing of Him. Now that we are in the New Testament and Jesus Christ has already come, the ceremonial laws have been abolished. Therefore, during His earthly ministry, Jesus told His disciples that they no longer needed to observe the ceremonial laws. The Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, also instructed the church that it was unnecessary to follow the ceremonial laws. As a result, New Testament saints must find the spiritual principles within Leviticus to apply them in their daily lives.

We follow the vision that God revealed to Peter, interpreting the various clean animals mentioned in Leviticus 11 as representing the different environments that New Testament saints will encounter. On the other hand, the unclean animals symbolize Satan and his followers, representing the disturbances and temptations they bring to New Testament saints. We have already read the regulations concerning five types of creatures: land animals, aquatic creatures, birds, insects, and reptiles. Today's passage serves as the conclusion of the dietary regulations.

Verse 39: "And if any animal which you may eat dies, he who touches its carcass shall be unclean until evening."

What we previously read focused on unclean animals, which, if they die, bring about various forms of defilement. This is especially true for reptiles, which unexpectedly can contaminate commonly used tools and vessels in daily life. God gave very detailed instructions to the Israelites on how to handle such situations—some items were to be washed with water until evening, while others were to be

broken. God also reminded the Israelites that living water has cleansing power, and those with strong vitality will not be defiled. This serves as a message to New Testament saints, that they must connect with the source of living water in faith and grow strong in life. By doing so, they will be able to withstand Satan and his cruel attacks.

This verse addresses clean animals, which, if they die on their own, become unclean. If an Israelite touches a dead clean animal, they also become unclean until evening. Clean animals could originally serve as food for the Israelites, but once dead, they become unclean. In New Testament application, clean animals symbolize New Testament saints, and the spiritual death of a saint can also be contagious. For example, if corrupt behavior occurs within the church, the elders must address it. Those who need to be separated must be separated, lest the corrupt situation spreads.

Verse 40: "He who eats of its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening. He also who carries its carcass shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening."

If an animal that is permissible to eat dies on its own, it becomes unclean and is no longer fit for consumption. If someone eats the carcass of this dead animal, they become unclean until evening and must also wash their clothes. Similarly, if someone handles the carcass of the animal, they too become unclean until evening and must wash their clothes. Here we see that whether the animal was clean or unclean when alive, the way its carcass is handled is exactly the same. This shows that death's power to defile surpasses the inherent nature of the living creature.

In New Testament application, the spiritual death of a saint can indeed be contagious. If not isolated in time, other saints may be affected, much like the Israelites in the Old Testament who ate from the carcass of a dead animal, becoming unclean. Those affected saints become unclean until evening and require cleansing by the Holy Spirit. As Ephesians 5:26 says, "that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word" (NKJV). The phrase "with the

washing of water by the Word" in the KJV emphasizes the need to read God's Word in the Spirit, and the spiritual application of God's Word has the power to cleanse a person of their spots and wrinkles, restoring them to holiness.

Therefore, when we read the Bible, we must not remain at the level of the literal text; we need to understand the spiritual meaning behind the verses. Moreover, we should apply these spiritual principles in our daily lives. The water in God's Word, which represents its spiritual application, can wash away the spots and wrinkles on a person's life, restoring them to cleanliness. When there is corruption within the church and the situation becomes serious, if the individuals involved repeatedly ignore counsel, it is akin to spiritual death. To prevent the spread of defilement, it is necessary to address the issue promptly. Those saints handling the matter will also become unclean until evening and will require spiritual cleansing, just as the Israelites in the Old Testament needed to wash their clothes.

Dear brothers and sisters, the church is the house of God, where the saints come together to worship Him and serve one another. This is a joyful and beautiful thing. However, since the saints still live in the world, they inevitably become stained by the dust of the world. Therefore, the church must maintain a rich spiritual atmosphere, and the saints should regularly wash one another's feet, supplying and sharing spiritual life to keep the church clean and free from defilement. If corruption occurs, the elders of the church must address it promptly to prevent the spread of uncleanness.

Generally speaking, the channels of gossip are often through idle talk. If not addressed promptly, this gossip can spread quickly, leading to a cooling of the saints' love and a reluctance to participate in the ministry of the church. Therefore, in the church, the responsible elders and deacons must possess a keen spiritual discernment. Once they detect the scent of death, they must take timely action to maintain the church's purity.

For example, if a saint who has served as a deacon no longer participates in ministry after stepping down, it indicates a serious situation. It is likely that during their time as a deacon, they encountered some form of spiritual death and did not receive

proper spiritual cleansing, resulting in their love growing cold and reluctance to serve. Some saints may even gradually withdraw from the church, which reflects a failure on the part of the elders. When Christ returns, the elders will have to give an account before Him. It is hoped that the saints will learn to be vigilant and strive to maintain the spiritual atmosphere within the church. Any inappropriate matters should be addressed quickly. In this way, the church can maintain a healthy ecological environment, allowing younger saints to grow in a healthy manner.

Verse 41-42: "And every creeping thing that creeps on the earth shall be [h]an abomination. It shall not be eaten. Whatever crawls on its belly, whatever goes on all fours, or whatever has many feet among all creeping things that creep on the earth—these you shall not eat, for they are an abomination."

The creeping things on the earth are detestable, and the Israelites were not allowed to eat them. These creeping creatures either move on their bellies, like snakes and earthworms, or they walk with many legs, like spiders and centipedes. They crawl on the ground and cannot escape the dominion of the earth, making them unclean and forbidden for the Israelites to eat. In terms of our New Testament spiritual application, these creeping things have never represented the saints. The most fundamental condition to become a saint is to receive forgiveness of sins and be cleansed through faith in Jesus Christ.

In modern times, the church often believes that lowering the thresholds for church membership can attract more people to attend. As a result, they intentionally blur the distinctions between Christians and non-Christians. This has led to a situation where the conditions within the church are no different from those in the world. Consequently, while the number of people in the church has increased, the church has also lost the holiness it should possess. Some true saints who genuinely seek to grow in their spiritual lives find themselves busy with administrative duties and, lacking the supply of spiritual nourishment, ultimately lose the motivation for their spiritual lives. Amidst the busyness of service, negative emotions and complaints arise, which is truly unfortunate.

The church should maintain a holy spiritual atmosphere, which will attract seekers and encourage them to continue their search. This can lead them to truly understand the Gospel and accept it. Every Sunday during the breaking of bread gathering, if it is filled with spiritual reality, accompanied by prayers of thanksgiving and testimonies of forgiveness of sins, it can encourage seekers to take steps of faith and experience the peace and joy of forgiveness.

The church's greatest taboo is to lower its standards, ultimately becoming indistinguishable from the world. This results in the loss of the admonitions given by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:13-14 states, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden."

Verse 43: "You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them."

For the Israelites, all creeping things were considered unclean. God instructed Moses and Aaron to warn the Israelites repeatedly not to become unclean through these creeping things, lest they be defiled and become detestable. It is important to note in this verse that three steps of pollution are pointed out: first, it makes a person unclean; next, it fills a person with impurity; and finally, it makes a person detestable. Uncleanness is directed toward God, and an unclean person loses their position of closeness to God; they must first remove the uncleanness to return to God's presence.

Impurity is the nature of Satan, and when a person is filled with impurity, they become friends and accomplices of Satan. Being detestable refers to people; a person filled with impurity can corrupt those they come into contact with. Wherever they go, they spread impurity and death, and those who interact with them also become defiled, turning them into a detestable person. From a spiritual application perspective, an unclean person should have no position in the church.

If such individuals fill the church, they will lead to the church's downfall, making it unclean; they will cause the church to become defiled, ultimately bringing it to a detestable state. May we all take heed of this warning.

Verse 44: “For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; I am the LORD who led the Israelites to Mount Sinai; I am the LORD who commanded the Israelites to build the tabernacle; I am the LORD who desires to dwell among the Israelites. The LORD is the God of the Israelites, and because God is holy, the Israelites must also be holy and not defile themselves because of the creeping things on the earth. The word translated as "holy" in the Chinese Union Version corresponds to the Hebrew word **qadosh**, which is rendered as "holy" in English. The translation as "holy" signifies something that is sacred, and it does not imply cleanliness but rather denotes being set apart and dedicated to God.

When a person comes before God, there are two steps: the first step is to be cleansed, and the second step is to be set apart for God. The creeping things on the earth are unclean and will make a person unclean. An unclean person cannot come before God, let alone be sanctified or set apart for Him. Therefore, in the first step, a person must first be cleansed; those who have come into contact with creeping things must be unclean until evening, and those who have handled creeping things must wash their clothes. Only then can a person be cleansed, and this is the first step.

Next, in the second step, a person must be set apart for God, which means completely dedicating oneself to God. This is what God means when He says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

For New Testament saints, the principle is exactly the same. First, we must repent and confess our sins to cleanse ourselves from all impurities, which is the first step.

The second step is that we need to present our bodies as a living sacrifice so that we can be set apart as holy to God.

Verse 45: “For I am the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

Here, God again declares that it is the Lord who has rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt with the purpose of being their God. Since God is holy, the Israelites must also be holy. Are New Testament saints any different? Each of us has been a slave to sin, dead in trespasses and sins, but it is through the salvation of Jesus Christ that we have been freed from the power of sin. However, this is just the beginning; we must also be set apart for God. This allows God to truly be our God, and for us to become His holy people.

Verse 46-47: “This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.”

These two verses are the conclusion of Chapter 11. The dietary laws clearly define clean animals: those that have split hooves and chew the cud among land animals; those that have fins and scales among aquatic creatures; seed-eating birds that do not touch decaying corpses or darkness; and insects that have wings and legs for hopping. Of course, all creeping things are considered unclean. God instructed the Israelites to distinguish between the clean and unclean, the edible and inedible. Although New Testament saints do not need to observe dietary laws, the spiritual principles behind these laws still apply to us. Because God is holy, we also must be holy.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for giving us the opportunity to read the dietary laws of the Old Testament. Although as New Testament Christians we do

not need to strictly adhere to these laws, we ask You to help us delve into their spiritual significance, especially to find principles that can be applied in the New Testament. Because You are holy, You also call us to be holy.

In Your sovereign authority, Lord, let us experience various environments and grant us the grace to hold fast to the principles of purity, ensuring we do not become defiled. We further ask You to protect our church, creating a beautiful spiritual atmosphere where the impurities of the world and all unclean things will not come into the church. Help the church maintain a healthy ecological environment, allowing every blessed and saved saint to have ample spiritual nourishment. Not only may there be growth in life, but also participation in various ministries within the church. May the church truly be a garden of life, becoming a beautiful testimony of You in this land. We pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.