

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

Leviticus 13:1-8

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for us to read the Bible again. Today, we will continue reading Leviticus chapter 13, verses 1 to 8.

God is holy, and the people of God must also be holy. The Israelites were God's earthly people, so God commanded them to follow the laws He issued in their daily lives to maintain their holiness. Chapter 11 discusses dietary laws, which helped the Israelites distinguish between clean and unclean animals. Chapter 12 is about the laws of purification related to childbirth, showing that human birth, due to Adam's sin, is unclean.

Following this, chapters 13 and 14 focus extensively on dealing with leprosy: chapter 13 concerns the diagnosis of leprosy, while chapter 14 deals with the cleansing of leprosy. At that time, Moses was leading 2 million Israelites in the wilderness, living in close proximity, and contagious diseases like leprosy could cause great harm, even posing the danger of wiping out the entire community. God issued laws for diagnosing and cleansing to prevent the spread of leprosy, addressing a practical health concern.

However, 3,500 years later, medical science has advanced significantly, both in diagnosis and treatment. This is a manifestation of God's common grace, allowing people to survive various diseases and have the opportunity to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ and gain eternal life.

Therefore, when reading Leviticus 13 about leprosy today, its value is minimal if viewed solely from a health and medical perspective. I will look at leprosy entirely from a spiritual perspective and attempt to extract principles that New Testament believers can apply. Today, we will read only eight verses and carefully describe the disease of leprosy, examining its spiritual causes. I hope that as we read these

verses, we can bring out their spiritual meaning and application. The next three days will move faster since chapter 13 contains 59 verses.

First, we must ask: why did God specifically focus on the disease of leprosy? Leprosy is a contagious skin disease, but among ordinary diseases, skin diseases do not seem particularly severe. They do not immediately cause death but affect a person's appearance. In the previous ten chapters, the laws of sacrifices are discussed, and it is repeatedly mentioned that sacrificial animals must be without blemish. How did the priests determine if a sacrifice was without blemish? They examined the animal's appearance—its skin was clean and spotless, without any defect. In Leviticus 7:8, it says, "And the priest who offers anyone's burnt offering, that priest shall have for himself the skin of the burnt offering which he has offered." This specifically points out that when a burnt offering is made, the skin of the burnt offering belongs to the priest.

The skin of the sacrificial animal represents its glory, proving that the animal is complete and perfect. The perfection of the sacrificial animal was determined by its skin, and likewise, a person's completeness can be seen through their skin. The skin can develop various diseases. Leprosy not only spreads but also causes the skin to lose sensation, leading to ulcers, burns, cuts, or exposure to corrosive substances without any pain, making the disease difficult to manage. It quickly manifests visible changes in appearance, diminishing the person's beauty.

From a spiritual perspective, leprosy represents sin that comes from within a person. Sin is defined as deviation from God's will, and leprosy symbolizes a particular kind of sin, specifically disobedience to God's commands. In the Old Testament, there are three examples that help us understand the spiritual cause of leprosy.

The first case is found in Numbers 12:1-16. The context is that Moses married an Ethiopian woman, and Miriam, Moses' sister, believed this was wrong and criticized him. Moses was the authority established by God among the Israelites, and because Miriam slandered Moses, God became angry with her. Miriam immediately developed leprosy, and Moses had to plead with God, who then allowed her to be

isolated outside the camp for seven days before being healed. Here we see that Miriam's leprosy resulted from her disobedience to God's appointed authority.

The second case is in 2 Kings 5:20-27. The context is that the prophet Elisha healed Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, of his leprosy. Naaman wanted to thank Elisha with gifts, but Elisha refused. After Naaman left, Elisha's servant Gehazi ran after Naaman and asked for the gifts. When Gehazi returned, Elisha confronted him and transferred Naaman's leprosy to Gehazi. Here, Gehazi, as a servant, disobeyed his master Elisha and acted on his own, which led to his leprosy. Elisha understood God's principles in doing things and refused Naaman's gifts, but Gehazi's disobedience to these principles resulted in leprosy.

The third case is in 2 Chronicles 26:16-21. The background is that King Uzziah became proud after winning battles and entered the temple to burn incense on the altar of incense. The priest Azariah and others followed him and tried to stop him, but Uzziah insisted and held a censer to burn incense. God's judgment immediately came upon him, and leprosy broke out on his forehead. King Uzziah disobeyed God's ordinance—he had the role of a king, not a priest, and his overstepping to burn incense led to his leprosy.

From these three examples, we can see that the spiritual cause of leprosy is disobedience to God's commands. Whether it is disobedience to God's appointed authority, God's way of doing things, or the priesthood God established, leprosy results from disobedience. With this background, we will now read verses 1 and 2.

Verses 1-2: "And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: 'When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body like a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.'"

There are many types of skin diseases that a person can develop, most of which are not contagious and do not require isolation. However, if leprosy appears, it is contagious and must be isolated. God assigned the responsibility of diagnosing

leprosy to the priests, specifically Aaron or one of Aaron's descendants who serves as a priest. The priests' primary duty was to offer sacrifices for the people, helping them remove the obstacles and difficulties caused by sin. Now, they are also tasked with diagnosing leprosy, which reveals that in God's eyes, the cause of leprosy is disobedience to His decrees, which is a form of sin. When a person develops a swelling, scab, or bright spot—referred to as a bright spot that appears shiny on the skin—these could potentially develop into leprosy. Therefore, when these symptoms appear on the skin, the person must be brought before the priest for examination.

Verse 3: "The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous sore. Then the priest shall examine him and pronounce him unclean."

The priest must carefully examine the skin disease, and if the hair on the affected area has turned white and the disease seems to go deeper than just the surface of the skin, then it is leprosy. The priest must pronounce the person unclean and isolate them immediately. At that time, those with leprosy had to be sent outside the camp, unable to live, offer sacrifices, or worship together with the Israelites. This was considered a serious condition.

Verse 4: "But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall isolate the one who has the sore seven days."

If the bright spot on the skin is white and seems to only affect the surface, without penetrating deeper, and the hair in the affected area has not turned white, it might not be leprosy. Because of the uncertainty, the person must be isolated within the camp for seven days, during which they cannot come into contact with others.

Verse 5: "And the priest shall examine him on the seventh day; and indeed if the sore appears to be as it was, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall isolate him another seven days."

After seven days, the priest must examine the person again to see if the disease has remained the same or if it has spread on the skin. If the disease has spread, it confirms that it is leprosy, and the person must be isolated and sent outside the camp. If the disease has not spread, the person must remain isolated for another seven days. Seven is a number of completeness, and a period of seven days represents a full cycle. Two periods of seven days signify the addition of testimony, as two is the number of witnesses. Here we see that God wants the priests to handle leprosy with great care and caution.

Verse 6: "Then the priest shall examine him again on the seventh day; and indeed if the sore has faded, and the sore has not spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and be clean"

After the second seven-day period, the priest must examine the person again. If the sore has gradually faded and has not spread, the priest can then determine that it is not leprosy but only a scab. The person will be pronounced clean. They must wash their clothes, and once that is done, they can rejoin the fellowship of the Israelites as if nothing had happened before the illness.

Verses 7-8: "But if the scab should at all spread over the skin, after he has been seen by the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen by the priest again. And if the priest sees that the scab has indeed spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is leprosy."

After being declared clean, the person must remain vigilant and check daily to see if the scab has spread. If the scab spreads and covers other areas, he must bring his body again to the priest for inspection. If the priest confirms that the scab has

spread, it indicates that the person has contracted leprosy. The person is unclean and must be separated from the camp and the people of Israel.

This is the first part of chapter 13's description of leprosy. From this description, we can summarize three key factors for diagnosing leprosy. First, the hair on the affected area changes color, turning white. Second, the disease goes deeper than the surface of the skin. Third, the disease spreads. Saints should remember these three factors, as they will reappear in the following verses. We approach this from a spiritual perspective.

As mentioned earlier, leprosy represents disobedience to God's commands—whether it is disobedience to God's established authority, His ways of doing things, or His appointed ministry. This disobedience is a sin, and it manifests in three ways. First, it causes a person to lose the image of God. Man was created in God's image and likeness, bearing God's beautiful image. However, due to rebellion and disobedience, the color of the hair changes, turning white, signifying the beginning of the loss of God's image. Large-scale skin ulcers follow, and if isolation occurs at that stage, it is already too late. Therefore, the change in hair color is an early indicator, and the priest must be vigilant in his examination.

Second, this sinful life initially remains hidden. It is not merely on the surface but is deeper, beneath the skin. This is where rebellion and disobedience can be most destructive to the church. At first, it is difficult to detect because it is deeply concealed. Therefore, priests who serve in the church must have discernment, able to see the hidden things within people. In particular, they must possess the living word of God. As Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Third, the sin of rebellion and disobedience will spread. What begins as a mere discomfort can quickly spread if not dealt with appropriately. In the church, if visible sin is not dealt with seriously, it will spread. If the sinner refuses to repent, he must be separated from the church. As Romans 1:32 says, "Who, knowing the

righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." For this reason, all kinds of evil can quickly become commonplace in the church, causing it to lose its holiness. The church will no longer be God's house, nor the body of Christ.

This chapter's early verses on diagnosing leprosy are crucial for every saint who desires to serve in the church. They must develop keen observation skills to discern whether a saint is beginning to lose the image of God, whether a hidden life of sin is present, and they must understand that sin, if left unaddressed, will quickly spread throughout the church. May God help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. We are so grateful. While we were still sinners, enemies in opposition to You, You saved us. Not only did You give us the wisdom to be saved, but through faith, You cleansed us from all our debts of sin. Furthermore, You placed the saints together to become Your church. Help us to maintain the holiness of the church continuously. Especially grant us grace and spiritual discernment to recognize any disobedience to God's authority, His ways, or His appointed ministry—these are the spiritual symptoms of leprosy. Help us to address these issues appropriately, so that Your church remains holy, a place where You can rest. Bless the church I am a part of. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.