

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

Leviticus 13: 47-59

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 13. We will read verses 47–59 today.

God revealed to Moses and Aaron the five methods for diagnosing leprosy and entrusted the responsibility of diagnosis to the priests. At that time, it was intended to protect the people of Israel from the plague's harm. As for the spiritual meaning behind leprosy, it clearly describes sin, including its cause, symptoms, and the serious consequences it brings.

When we speak of sin, we must return to its essence. In a society that is centered on man, the definition of sin is often relative and is frequently measured by human morality as the standard. This standard is not only relative but also changes with the trends of the world. The same action, from a human perspective, may be considered sin in some regions but not in others; it may have been sin in the past, but in modern society, it may no longer be regarded as sin. However, the Bible's definition of sin is not so narrow.

As we have said, if leprosy is a representation of sin, then its cause is man's disobedience to God's will. This is not defined by human moral standards, but by God's will. When a person rebels against the authority established by God, or when a person rebels against the principles by which God operates, or when a person rebels against the priestly service system established by God, these are sin.

Because the Bible's definition of sin is that man falls short of the glory of God, Leviticus 13 can be considered the most comprehensive chapter in Scripture describing sin. After addressing how to examine and isolate those with leprosy, chapter 14 deals with the regulations for the cleansing of lepers. In between these

two, God specifically includes a section on how to deal with the clothes worn by lepers and the objects they use closely.

From a medical and sanitary perspective, these personal clothing and items would have been contaminated with leprous bacteria and naturally had to be handled with care to prevent the spread of leprosy. From a spiritual perspective, clothing and personal items represent a person's actions. In other words, after dealing with sin, one must also deal with sinful behavior in order for a person to be fully cleansed.

Verse 47-49: “ Also, if a garment has a leprous plague in it, whether it is a woolen garment or a linen garment, whether it is in the warp or woof of linen or wool, whether in leather or in anything made of leather, and if the plague is greenish or reddish in the garment or in the leather, whether in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a leprous plague and shall be shown to the priest.”

The garments infected with the plague of leprosy refer to the clothes worn by the leper, whether woolen or linen. These clothes were also contaminated with leprosy. At that time, Moses was leading 2 million Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years, and clothing was extremely precious and scarce. Each person probably had at least two sets of clothing. In hot weather, they wore linen garments; in cold weather, they wore woolen garments. Whether linen or wool, these fabrics and clothes were made through weaving. In the weaving process, threads were intertwined vertically and horizontally; the vertical threads are called warp, and the horizontal threads are called weft. Fabrics and clothes were woven from the interlacing of warp and weft. When these garments turned green or red, it indicated that they might have been infected with leprosy. The wording in the Bible is quite unique—even the clothes could "break out" with leprosy.

In addition to clothing, there were also personal items such as bags or pouches, which were typically made from woven linen or wool, with added leather components. These items could also become contaminated with leprosy, suddenly

turning green or red. At that point, the priest had to be called to inspect them. From today's understanding, these clothes and personal items were likely becoming moldy. Molds come in various colors, including green and red. If these garments and personal items became moldy and were not handled promptly, they could also spread contagious skin diseases.

As we mentioned earlier, the leprosy described in the Bible is not strictly the leprosy known in modern medicine, but rather a general term referring to infectious skin diseases. There could be various causes for such diseases. Therefore, when clothing or personal items became moldy, it could not be taken lightly, and the priest had to be called to inspect them.

From a spiritual perspective, clothing and personal items typically represent a person's actions. Linen garments signify a person's behavior in times of ease, while woolen garments represent a person's behavior in times of adversity. The warp and weft within the fabric—warp being vertical, signifying the relationship between a person and God; weft being horizontal, signifying the relationship between a person and others.

When clothing and personal items suddenly turn green or red, it signifies an abnormal change in a person's behavior. Whether the individual is in a time of ease or adversity, if they suddenly become indifferent toward God or start complaining about others, it often indicates that this person is entangled in sin. At this point, we need our heavenly high priest to bring healing.

Dear brothers and sisters, in His wisdom, God knows that Christians cannot stand alone, and thus He has prepared the church for us. The saints within the church should build intimate relationships, not only meeting on Sundays but also supporting one another in daily life.

When we notice that the behavior of the saints around us suddenly changes, we must have spiritual sensitivity to recognize that behind these behaviors lies a spiritual battle. We should learn how to help the saints come before our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to seek His assistance.

Verse 50: "The priest shall examine the plague and isolate that which has the plague seven days."

The priest is to carefully examine these garments and items, and then lock away the contaminated clothing or objects within the camp for seven days. The handling of these garments and items is akin to that of a person; they are to be confined for seven days. The principle of this confinement period is to temporarily refrain from making a judgment, allowing the situation to continue to develop over a complete period of time, so that time can reveal the final outcome. We know that time is in God's hands, allowing Him to ultimately disclose the truth.

Verse 51-52: " And he shall examine the plague on the seventh day. If the plague has spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, in the leather or in anything made of leather, the plague is an active leprosy. It is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment in which is the plague, whether warp or woof, in wool or in linen, or anything of leather, for it is an active leprosy; the garment shall be burned in the fire."

On the seventh day, the priest is to examine again. If the signs of leprosy have spread on the garments, in the warp, in the woof, or on the leather, it is to be determined that this is leprosy that consumes. "Consuming" can also be translated as "malignant," or it can be said that this is a malignant mold that will continue to spread. Therefore, these garments and items, no matter how precious or scarce they are, must all be thrown into the fire and burned.

Burning in the fire, from a spiritual perspective, symbolizes the complete removal of sinful behavior, leaving no room for tolerance. While it is true that a person who errs can be cleansed through repentance and confession, such corrupt sinful actions can spread among the community and lead to severe consequences. Therefore, they must be completely eradicated and cannot be tolerated.

Dear brothers and sisters, the church is the house of God, a place where the saints come together to worship Him. While we must accept individuals who may have

engaged in certain coarse and despicable sins, those behaviors must be completely removed; otherwise, they will affect the holiness of the church and hinder the saints from worshipping freely.

Verse 53-54: “But if the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has not spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, then the priest shall command that they wash the thing in which is the plague; and he shall isolate it another seven days.”

If leprosy has not spread on these garments and items and they remain unchanged, neither improving nor worsening, they are to be washed and then locked away in the camp for another seven days. After being washed, they must be observed for another seven days, indicating that these sinful behaviors may be due to a momentary weakness. After being addressed and cleansed by the Holy Spirit, a decision will be made after the observation period.

Verse 55: “Then the priest shall examine the plague after it has been washed; and indeed if the plague has not changed its color, though the plague has not spread, it is unclean, and you shall burn it in the fire; it continues eating away, whether the damage is outside or inside. “

After those garments and items have been washed and locked away for seven days, the priest is to examine them again. If the signs of leprosy have not diminished, the color has not changed, and they remain as they were, then these garments and items are unclean and must be burned in the fire. From a spiritual perspective, what was thought to be a momentary weakness, which could be forgiven through repentance and cleansed by the Holy Spirit, should have been made clean. However, if the sinful behavior remains unchanged, it indicates that this sin has completely taken hold of the person. At this point, it is not only a matter of repentance and confession; they must also be helped to completely remove this sin from their life.

Verse 56: “If the priest examines it, and indeed the plague has faded after washing it, then he shall tear it out of the garment, whether out of the warp or out of the woof, or out of the leather. “

After being washed and locked away for seven days, if the priest finds that the color has faded and there are signs of leprosy diminishing, he is to cut away the leprous area or the moldy part from the garments or personal items. From a spiritual perspective, when a person has made some changes after confession, repentance, and the washing of the Holy Spirit, we must then cut away this sin, which means thoroughly addressing the weaknesses in ourselves that lead us to sin. For example, if you have a pleasing personality that makes it difficult to resist peer pressure, you might find it easy to engage in inappropriate behaviors when with certain friends. At that point, you must completely separate yourself from those friends to avoid falling into repeated mistakes.

Verse 57: “But if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a spreading plague; you shall burn with fire that in which is the plague. “

If after cutting away the originally moldy area the remaining parts begin to mold again, the garments or items must be completely burned in fire. From a spiritual perspective, this is not just a matter of removing weaknesses; rather, it indicates that the whole person needs to be dealt with until this sinful behavior is completely eradicated from their life.

Verse 58: “And if you wash the garment, either warp or woof, or whatever is made of leather, if the plague has disappeared from it, then it shall be washed a second time, and shall be clean.”

If after cutting away the moldy areas the remaining parts no longer mold, then the plague has departed. Sometimes, whether it's wool garments, linen clothing, or leather accessories, they must be washed again at this time to be completely clean.

From the perspective of the Holy Spirit, this aligns with what Titus 3:5 says: "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit." While each of us is saved by grace through faith and baptism only once, the experience we have during baptism is also our first encounter with the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. This renewal needs to occur repeatedly in our lives, washing us anew. This is one of the keys to avoiding sin—continuously experiencing the renewal of the Holy Spirit, just as we were washed at the time of our regeneration, allowing us to remain fresh before God.

Verse 59: "This is the law of the leprous plague in a garment of wool or linen, either in the warp or woof, or in anything made of leather, to pronounce it clean or to pronounce it unclean."

Chapter 13 first addresses how to identify when a person has leprosy. It then outlines the regulations regarding leprosy found in woolen clothes, linen garments, woven fabrics, and leather items. From a spiritual perspective, these clothes and items represent our actions. These regulations help us recognize our behavior, whether in times of prosperity or adversity, in our relationship with God, or in our interactions with others. They guide us in understanding our sins and lead us to repentance and confession. Through the continuous washing of the Holy Spirit, we can regain holiness and live, worship, and serve together with the saints.

Dear brothers and sisters, holiness is a characteristic of the church; without holiness, no one will see the Lord. The church is a place where the saints gather together to approach the Lord, and therefore, each of us must maintain holiness in order to offer true worship and praise to the Lord. Maintaining the holiness of the church is the responsibility of every saint.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord, help us to see that not only must we individually obey Your will from within, but our outward behavior is equally important, and there must be no stain upon Your holiness. We ask for Your blessings upon everything we encounter in life, whether in times of prosperity or adversity, in our relationship with You or with others. Help us to maintain holiness, having no debts to others or to You, so that we may appropriately gather with all the saints to approach and worship You. Bless the church I belong to and our church life, we pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.