

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

Leviticus 14: 21-42

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week we'll be reading Leviticus chapter 14, and today we'll read from verse 21 to verse 42.

A person afflicted with leprosy could not live with the Israelites, participate in their sacrifices, or join in their worship. They had to be isolated outside the camp until they were cleansed of leprosy. After a person was cleansed, they had to go through three stages to rejoin the Israelite community. The first stage involved the leprosy being healed, no longer spreading. The priest, following God's ordinances, had to confirm that the leprosy had been cured and would not continue. In the New Testament application, this represents a person recognizing their sinfulness, being willing to confess, repent, and remove the filth of sin, no longer living in it.

The second stage involved the priest going outside the camp to perform a purification ceremony for the healed person. This person had to shave their hair, wash their clothes, and bathe their body. They were allowed back into the camp but could not return to their own tent. After seven days, they had to shave again, wash their clothes, and bathe, and then they would be declared clean.

In the New Testament application, this reflects the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came outside the camp, bearing the sin of humanity, and was crucified on the cross. He rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit, completing the work of salvation. This shows the work of Christ on one side, and on the other, it speaks to the person who repents and confesses their sins. They must undergo a period of preparation before being baptized, understanding salvation, and desiring to be baptized, cleaning out their old way of life. This period is essential for breaking ties with sin and the world. During this time, they must lay

down their personal glory, their dignity, their outward adornments, and their natural strength.

The third stage of the cleansing process involved the priest offering sacrifices for the person seeking purification. These sacrifices included the trespass offering, sin offering, burnt offering, and grain offering. Only after these offerings were made at the entrance of the tabernacle was the person fully cleansed and accepted by God, allowing them to rejoin the community of Israel.

In the New Testament application, this represents the sinner who has confessed and repented, has come to understand Christ's salvation, and has cleared away the remnants of their old life. At this point, they are ready to be baptized. Baptism serves as a public testimony within the church, symbolizing the person's union with Christ in His death and resurrection. Beyond that, it is also a declaration that their ears have been redeemed to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, their hands to do the work of the Spirit, and their feet to walk in the path of the Spirit.

At this stage, just as the person afflicted with leprosy was fully cleansed and welcomed back into the community of Israel, so too the baptized believer becomes a full member of the church, part of the body of Christ. The passage from verses 21 to 32 outlines specific provisions for the poor Israelites who could not afford three lambs for the trespass, sin, and burnt offerings. God, in His mercy, made allowances for those in poverty. This section reiterates the method of offering sacrifices, and though the details remain largely the same, there are adjustments to accommodate the person's financial limitations.

Verse 21-22: "But if he is poor and cannot afford it, then he shall take one male lamb as a trespass offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil as a grain offering, a log of oil, and two turtledoves or two young pigeons, such as he is able to afford: one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering."

Here we see that if the person seeking cleansing is poor and cannot afford the necessary sacrificial animals and offerings, there are adjustments made to accommodate their situation. However, they are still required to offer one lamb as a trespass offering. This cannot be omitted, as it represents the necessary price they must pay, and it is closely tied to their personal guilt. Therefore, the trespass offering is non-negotiable.

For the grain offering, the amount of fine flour is reduced to 1/10 of an ephah, while the amount of oil remains the same at one log. As for the sin offering and the burnt offering, they can substitute the more expensive animals with two turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Verse 23-29: “He shall bring them to the priest on the eighth day for his cleansing, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, before the Lord. And the priest shall take the lamb of the trespass offering and the log of oil, and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the Lord. Then he shall kill the lamb of the trespass offering, and the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering and put it on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot. And the priest shall pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand. Then the priest shall sprinkle with his right finger some of the oil that is in his left hand seven times before the Lord. And the priest shall put some of the oil that is in his hand on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of the right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the place of the blood of the trespass offering. The rest of the oil that is in the priest’s hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the Lord.”

This long passage outlines the regulations for offering the trespass offering, specifically requiring the sacrifice of a lamb. The instructions given here are identical to those previously mentioned, so there is no need to go into detailed explanation again.

Verse 30-31: “And he shall offer one of the turtledoves or young pigeons, such as he can afford—such as he is able to afford, the one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, with the grain offering. So, the priest shall make atonement for him who is to be cleansed before the Lord.”

If the person is poor and cannot offer a lamb, he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, according to his means. One will be for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering. Along with the burnt offering, he shall also offer the grain offering.

Verse 32: “This is the law for one who had a leprous sore, who cannot afford the usual cleansing.”

This is the conclusion of the passage. Although the person could not offer the required number of sacrifices and offerings, in God's mercy, he could offer turtledoves or pigeons, and he would still be cleansed.

Now, from verses 33 to 53, the next large section deals with the "leprosy" of a house. In the previous chapter, Leviticus 13:47-59, we already read about how to deal with leprosy in garments. For the Israelites of that time, leprosy in garments referred to mold or mildew growing on the clothing, which, if not treated, could lead to contagious skin diseases. We also mentioned the spiritual meaning of leprous garments for New Testament believers. Leprosy symbolizes disobedience to God's will. Whether it is rebellion against God-ordained authority, violating God's ways of doing things, or overstepping the boundaries of roles set by God, all of these are forms of disobedience. When disobedience manifests outwardly in behavior, it is like a garment infected with leprosy. We have already gone through this section of Scripture.

Now we will read the passage regarding leprosy in a house. What is leprosy in a house? After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they built houses and moved in, making them their homes. If a house was infected with leprosy, God had already instructed Moses and Aaron on how to cleanse it. From a spiritual perspective, the

house represents the church, which is God's dwelling place and the gathering of New Testament believers. A house infected with leprosy symbolizes a church infected with spiritual leprosy. If individual believers disobey God, it is like personal leprosy. How should this be dealt with? God has already revealed the methods and principles for cleansing. If the entire church strays from God's will, it is a very serious matter, and this is what the leprosy in a house symbolizes.

Dear brothers and sisters, we all hope for a church life that is sweet and fulfilling, where brothers and sisters love one another, are united in spirit, and work together to advance the gospel. However, if you are an experienced Christian, you have likely witnessed the weaknesses and failures of the church, and perhaps even seen times when the church strayed from God's will. This passage tells us how to cleanse a church that has become infected with spiritual leprosy. This is a serious topic, and as we read this passage, we pray to be filled with God's grace and mercy. These scriptures are directly related to us and reveal God's heart, because the church is His masterpiece.

Verse 33-34: "And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "When you have come into the land of Canaan, which I give you as a possession, and I put the leprous plague in a house in the land of your possession."

If we go back to the first verse of Leviticus 14, concerning the cleansing of an individual with leprosy, it is God speaking to Moses. Moses was the leader of the Israelites, much like the elders in the church today. Although priests assisted in the cleansing process, the responsibility was entrusted to Moses, just as the care of the saints is entrusted to the elders in today's church.

However, in the next passage, when it talks about the Israelites entering the land of Canaan, which God promised to give them as an inheritance, and building houses there, the responsibility shifts. If a house becomes infected with leprosy, how should it be handled? Here, we see that God spoke to both Moses and Aaron. The responsibility for dealing with leprosy in a house was entrusted to both Moses and Aaron.

At that time, the Israelites were still in the wilderness, and entering the land of Canaan was still 38 years away. Later, we will see that even Moses himself was not allowed to enter Canaan. The priesthood of Aaron had already been established, and Aaron's descendants would continue in the priestly role. Therefore, including Aaron in this responsibility was necessary at that time.

From a spiritual perspective, if the church becomes infected with leprosy, the leadership, symbolized by Moses, cannot handle the problem alone. It is possible that the leaders themselves are the source of the problem. This is why Aaron must also be involved. Aaron represents the system of service in the church, and the saints involved in ministry must also take part in addressing the issue of spiritual leprosy in the church.

Verse 35-36: “and he who owns the house comes and tells the priest, saying, ‘It seems to me that there is some plague in the house,’ then the priest shall command that they empty the house, before the priest goes into it to examine the plague, that all that is in the house may not be made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to examine the house.”

The homeowner has the responsibility to manage their house. When they notice signs of leprosy in the house, they must inform the priest. Before the priest goes to inspect, he must command that the house be emptied, as the uncleanness of leprosy is contagious. If there is a suspicion of leprosy in the house, it must be cleared out first, so that the objects inside are not contaminated by the disease. After this, the priest can go in to examine the house.

From a spiritual perspective, the homeowner represents the saints in the church who are responsible for a particular ministry. In the course of their service, if they notice that the church is encountering problems or is spiritually unwell, they should not try to handle the situation on their own. Instead, they should inform the church leaders to address the issue, which includes the elders and those serving as deacons. The church leaders should then pause any activities related to the affliction to prevent it from spreading further.

Verse 37-38: “And he shall examine the plague; and indeed if the plague is on the walls of the house with ingrained streaks, greenish or reddish, which appear to be deep in the wall, then the priest shall go out of the house, to the door of the house, and shut up the house seven days.”

The priest enters the house to inspect the plague. If he sees green or reddish depressions in the walls and notices that the discoloration goes deeper than just the surface, the priest must then go out and seal the house for seven days. From a physical standpoint, this likely indicates mold growth, as the NIV translates the term as "mildew." Mildew is typically gray-green in color, though certain species can appear dark red.

Spiritually, if the church shows signs of illness, and those serving within it notice troubling symptoms, the church leaders must take this situation seriously. They should temporarily pause any ministries related to the affected areas and conduct a thorough investigation. The "walls" of the church represent the structure and expression of the church. If an abnormality is found in these foundational areas—manifesting deeper than the surface and influencing some of the saints—the leaders must cease all church activities and observe the situation for a complete period, symbolized by the seven days.

Verse 39-40: “And the priest shall come again on the seventh day and look; and indeed if the plague has spread on the walls of the house, then the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which is the plague, and they shall cast them into an unclean place outside the city.”

On the seventh day, the priest returns to inspect the house. If the signs of mildew have spread, it indicates a serious problem that requires immediate attention. The priest then commands that the affected stones be removed. The houses of the Israelites were built with stones, and the gaps between the stones were filled with plaster or mortar. Once the stones were set, a layer of plaster was applied over them. If any stones became moldy, the plaster had to be scraped off, and the moldy stones had to be broken out and taken to an unclean place outside the city.

From a New Testament perspective, every believer is likened to a living stone, built together by the Holy Spirit to form the church. Christ is the cornerstone, and the Holy Spirit is the bond that unites the believers, as well as the covering that reflects the virtues of Christ, much like the fruit of the Spirit. If the church becomes "sick," the problematic individuals must be identified and dealt with accordingly, though this process requires careful discernment.

For example, if a believer in the church behaves rudely and offends others consistently, the church must follow the process outlined in Matthew 18:15-17: "Moreover, if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector."

From this passage, we learn that if a person in the church is repeatedly unrepentant, the final disciplinary action is to remove them from the church, treating them like a non-believer, though not as someone unsaved. This is the most severe form of discipline within the church, similar to how the moldy stones in the house were thrown outside the city to an unclean place.

In general, if the church has a healthy disciplinary process, and the elders faithfully carry out this process, the church can avoid the spiritual "leprosy" of sin spreading within its walls. However, if the church fails to address individuals causing problems, and these errors are allowed to fester, over time the church may develop a more serious spiritual illness that is much harder to deal with.

Verse 41: "And he shall cause the house to be scraped inside, all around, and the dust that they scrape off they shall pour out in an unclean place outside the city."

Here we see that not only are the moldy stones removed and thrown into an unclean place outside the city, but the entire surface of the house's plaster is

scraped off, and this scraped plaster is also discarded outside the city in an unclean place. This plaster represents the outward testimony of the church. When the church becomes sick, when spiritual "leprosy" appears, the entire church must repent, not just the individuals involved in the issue, because the church's testimony has been tarnished. All the plaster, which symbolizes the church's appearance and testimony, must be scraped off.

This teaches us that the testimony of the church is unified. It is not just a partial issue affecting only some members; the testimony of the whole church is compromised. In such a situation, the church cannot merely treat the symptoms (like "headache healing the head, foot pain healing the foot"), but the entire church, all the saints, must repent together. They must collectively acknowledge the failure of their testimony and bear the consequences of that failure. Scraping off the plaster symbolizes the need to let go of previous outward strength and success, as these no longer represent the truth of the church's state. Everything must be discarded to make room for a fresh, new start.

Verse 42: "Then they shall take other stones and put them in the place of those stones, and he shall take other mortar and plaster the house."

The house must not be left with gaps or cracks. When one stone is removed, it must be replaced by another stone. In the same way, the church's building must not have any breaches or voids. When certain individuals are removed from the fellowship due to issues, other saints must fill those gaps, ensuring that the church's functioning continues, with people still fulfilling their ministries. Additionally, the house must be replastered with fresh plaster—symbolizing the need for a new beginning in the church. The fresh plaster covering the walls speaks to the church's need for a new start. The Holy Spirit must come and reapply the grace of Christ upon the church, allowing every saint to experience new grace.

It is not enough for the church to merely deal with the problem and remove those who caused issues; the church must also adopt a new approach to help each

member experience fresh grace. Every saint must grow through the challenges, resulting in a stronger, more glorious testimony for the church.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! The church is Your body, the object of Your care and love. If the church becomes sick, Lord, we know that Your heart is the most grieved, for You see the church as Your masterpiece. Each saint in the church is a member of Your body. If the church shows signs of spiritual leprosy, it must be dealt with seriously—not only removing those causing problems but also applying fresh plaster, so the church can once again experience the grace of Jesus Christ and produce a stronger testimony. Lord, bless the church I am part of, that it may walk according to Your will and be pleasing to You. I pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ, Amen.