

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

Leviticus 14:43-57

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue to read Leviticus 14:43-57.

God's handling of leprosy is extremely detailed and complete. When a person contracts leprosy, from diagnosis to cleansing, and finally to the ability to offer sacrifices, restoring communication with God and being accepted back into the community of Israel, every step is attended to by God. Not only that, even the clothing worn by the leper and the house in which they live are covered under God's laws for cleansing.

From a spiritual typology, clothing represents a person's behavior, and the house represents the church. If we compare the Scriptures regarding leprosy in clothing with leprosy in a house, we see that in terms of diagnosis, the two are quite similar. This makes sense because the church is a gathering of saints, while clothing reflects the behavior of an individual. A leprous church represents the corporate manifestation of sin, and naturally, the two would resemble each other.

However, what is particularly noteworthy is that the laws for cleansing are quite different between these two. The laws for cleansing a house are much more complex. In fact, the laws for cleansing a house are the same as those for cleansing a person with leprosy. In this way, God seems to regard the house as a living organism, which further confirms that the house indeed symbolizes the church, for the church is a living organism. Yesterday, we read that when it is confirmed that a house has leprosy, the infected stones must be removed and thrown outside the city into an unclean place. The entire plaster of the house must be scraped off and also thrown into an unclean place, and the stones must be replaced, and new plaster applied.

From the perspective of New Testament typology, when the church is found to have "leprosy," the infected individuals must be cast out of the church, and the entire church must repent for the corruption in its testimony, paying the necessary price. The empty roles in service and ministry must be filled. The whole church must experience a new beginning, going through the anointing of the Holy Spirit and starting a fresh testimony.

The church is God's house, and it must be clean. It cannot harbor filth, nor can it protect or tolerate sin. This is a serious warning for modern churches. Many churches focus on quantitative growth, even adopting worldly methods and forming alliances with profit-driven organizations, losing the holiness that the church should possess. This does not please God. After the house with leprosy has been dealt with, it must continue to be observed.

Verse 43: "And if the plague comes again and breaks out in the house, after he has taken away the stones, after he has scraped the house, and after it is plastered."

If a house has leprosy (a plague), dealing with it is very troublesome. The stones need to be removed, the house scraped, and then replastered with new plaster. In North America, if mildew is found in a house, which is a type of fungus, the law allows the buyer to demand that the seller cleans it up. The cost of the cleanup can be quite high, and the house must pass a strict inspection afterward because if not cleaned thoroughly, the mildew can easily reappear. If the symptoms of leprosy reappear in a large house that has been cleaned, a priest must be called to inspect it.

Verse 44: "Then the priest shall come and look; and indeed if the plague has spread in the house, it is an active leprosy in the house. It is unclean."

If, upon inspection, the leprosy symptoms reappear, with green or red spots on the wall, and these spots go deep into the wall, it indicates that this is not the first time the house has had leprosy. The priest will then determine that this is an active, malignant leprosy, and the house will be declared unclean.

Dear brothers and sisters, if a church has spiritual leprosy, it means the church has deviated from the path God ordained. Returning to God's best will is not easy. Jesus also warned us in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." To reach eternal life, Christ is the only gate, and Christ is the only way. The church can only use Christ's way to lead people to know Christ and enter the gate of salvation through Christ. For "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). When the church no longer centers itself on Christ, regardless of how large its ministries are, how fast its numbers grow, or how deep its influence becomes, our High Priest, Jesus Christ, will say when He returns, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23).

Verse 45: "And he shall break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them outside the city to an unclean place."

Here we see that an unclean house must be demolished. The plaster is scraped off, the stones are removed one by one, the wood is taken down piece by piece, and all the materials, being unclean, are taken outside the city and thrown into an unclean place.

From a spiritual perspective, if a church infected with spiritual leprosy is not fully restored and the leprosy reappears, God will dismantle that church. This is a very severe judgment. The church is God's house, and when God is no longer honored and exalted, He gives opportunities for repentance. However, if the church does not repent, the outcome remains the same. Once infected again with leprosy, that church has no value in God's eyes, and God says it must be torn down.

In Revelation 2:1-7, we read the letter to the church of Ephesus. This church had many good works. They toiled in various ministries, and they were patient. By external measures, it seemed to be a good church. Yet, they had left their first love, which means they no longer placed Jesus Christ in the first position. Therefore, God had the Apostle John write a warning to this church: "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent" (Revelation 2:5). The city of Ephesus still exists today, but the church in Ephesus has long disappeared.

Dear brothers and sisters, if this Sunday, Jesus Himself were to come to our Sunday service, would He commend our gathering, or would He give us a warning? A healthy church requires two conditions: First, vertically, God must always be placed in the first position. Second, horizontally, brothers and sisters must love one another. This is also a symbol of the cross.

Every ministry within the church should embody these two principles: loving God and loving others. Whether in worship through songs, preaching and teaching, children's ministry, or the service of fellowship meals, the same applies. When these two principles are manifested, and if a church becomes infected with spiritual leprosy, God says it must be torn down.

Verses 46-47: "Moreover he who goes into the house at all while it is shut up shall be unclean until evening. And he who lies down in the house shall wash his clothes, and he who eats in the house shall wash his clothes."

This passage addresses three groups of people regarding an unclean house that is set to be demolished. The first group consists of those who enter the house while it is sealed off; they are unclean until evening. The second group includes those who lie down in the house; they must wash their clothes. The third group is those who eat in the house; they must also wash their clothes. Otherwise, they remain unclean. If they go to other houses without being cleansed, they risk spreading the leprosy elsewhere.

From a spiritual perspective, when a church infected with spiritual leprosy is demolished by God, all believers associated with that church must cleanse themselves. If they don't, they might carry the "leprosy" (spiritual corruption) to a new church. These three groups symbolize different types of people within a church facing spiritual decay. The first group refers to those who come into contact with the church during its time of spiritual leprosy. They are unclean until evening, which represents the need for a new beginning. Evening marks the start of a new day, signifying that these individuals need a fresh start. They must leave behind the difficulties of the past and seek new provisions from the Lord, looking forward rather than dwelling on past struggles.

The second group refers to those who "lie down" in the church. The Bible's use of this phrase is interesting—what we now call "lying flat" was already used 3,500 years ago by Moses! Those who lie down in the church are believers who seek comfort and refuse to serve. They have no burden for the church, and when they come, they "lie flat," unwilling to pay the price. These individuals bear some responsibility for the church's leprosy. If they had spoken out when problems were noticed early on, or had acted sooner, the issue might not have escalated into full-blown leprosy. Therefore, this group must "wash their clothes," symbolizing the need to cleanse their passive behavior. If they don't, they may cause trouble for the new church.

The third group refers to those who "eat" in the church. These people only come to church to receive and enjoy. Such believers do not easily grow spiritually because they consume without contributing. True spiritual growth happens when you serve and recognize your shortcomings, allowing you to receive corresponding spiritual nourishment. A believer who only enjoys but does not give will not grow spiritually. Naturally, they also lack spiritual discernment, and when they hear incorrect teachings, they absorb them without question. Thus, when the church faces problems, they become followers who accelerate its decline. This group must also "wash their clothes," representing the need to abandon their self-serving behavior.

God here teaches that a church that does not follow His will must be demolished. He also instructs the believers in such a church to repent, abandoning their past harmful behaviors to avoid bringing problems into their new church.

Verse 48: "When the house has been plastered, the priest shall come and look; and indeed, if the plague has not spread in the house after the house was plastered, then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed."

If the house has been treated and new plaster has been applied, and when the priest goes to inspect it and sees no signs of leprosy, he shall pronounce the house clean, as the leprosy is no longer present. This symbolizes a new beginning, similar to a person who had leprosy and was kept outside the camp until healed. Once healed, the priest would go outside the camp to perform the cleansing ritual. Likewise, when the house is treated and the leprosy removed, the priest will perform the cleansing ritual for the house.

Verse 49: "And he shall take, to cleanse the house, two birds, cedarwood, scarlet, and hyssop."

To cleanse the house, the priest must bring four items. The first is two birds: one symbolizes Christ's death, and the other symbolizes His resurrection. The second item is cedarwood, symbolizing Christ's firm, holy, and glorious humanity. The third item is hyssop, representing Christ's humility and lowly nature. The fourth item is scarlet thread, which is the cord of salvation. The scarlet thread is likely used to bind the cedarwood and hyssop together, like a brush. Here, we see that Christ's salvation is like a cord of love, with His perfect and glorious humanity tied together with His humble and lowly nature. Additionally, the two birds symbolize Christ's death and resurrection. This leads to the cleansing ritual.

Verse 50: "And he shall kill one of the birds in an earthen vessel over running water."

The earthen vessel must contain running water, and the bird symbolizing Christ's death is to be killed over the running water. The bird's blood drips into the water. The earthen vessel represents the saints in the church, the running water symbolizes the Holy Spirit, Christ's blood cleanses sins, and the Holy Spirit gives life. Blood and water collected in the earthen vessel symbolize that, in the church, saints are forgiven of sins on the negative side, while on the positive side, they receive eternal life through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Verses 51-52: "He shall take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet, and the living bird, and dip them in the blood of the slain bird and in the running water, and sprinkle the house seven times. And he shall cleanse the house with the blood of the bird, the running water, the living bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet."

The scarlet thread ties the cedar wood and hyssop together, along with the living bird, and they are all dipped into the earthen vessel containing the bird's blood and running water. These items are then used to sprinkle the house seven times with the mixture of bird's blood and water. The cedar wood and hyssop, bound by the scarlet thread, symbolize Christ's humanity. His death on the cross shed His precious blood, which removes all the problems in the church. Sprinkling the house seven times signifies the perfection of redemption. The living bird represents Christ's resurrection in His divine nature, granting the Holy Spirit, which brings resurrection life. The living water is also sprinkled seven times, symbolizing the power of life bringing a completely new beginning. This is how the house is cleansed, and likewise, the church's "leprosy" is also cleansed.

Verse 53: "But he shall let the living bird loose outside the city in the open field. So he shall make atonement for the house, and it shall be clean."

The living bird, symbolizing resurrection, is to be released in the open field, representing the church being freed from earthly bondage and able to follow God's leading in resurrection life. After all these steps, the house is cleansed, and the leprosy of the church is removed.

Verses 54-57: "This is the law for any leprous sore and scale, for the leprosy of a garment and of a house, for a swelling and a scab and a bright spot, to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy."

These verses conclude chapters 13 and 14, covering various types of leprosy—on people (such as sores, scabs, and bright spots), on garments, and on houses. The regulations for diagnosing and cleansing leprosy are made clear, showing what is clean and what is unclean. Since God is holy, His people must also be holy. This applies both to the Israelites in the Old Testament and to the church in the New Testament.

Let's pray together: Lord, thank You for devoting two chapters in the Bible to teach us about the identification and cleansing of leprosy. This leprosy represents the sin within us, which manifests outwardly in our lives and behavior. You are holy, and You desire that Your church be holy as well. Though we have already received grace and salvation, we must continue to live holy lives, so that we may bear witness to Jesus Christ in our community. Help us to understand the spiritual meaning behind these cleansing laws and apply them to our church life. Bless my church to be a church that is according to Your heart, pleasing to You, and placing Christ at the center of everything. Even if we inadvertently become unclean, grant wisdom to our church leaders to quickly address it, so that our church can remain a pure and shining witness. Bless my church. I pray this in the name of Jesus Christ.