

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

Leviticus 17:10-16

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for us to read the Bible again. We will continue reading Leviticus chapter 17, and today we'll read from verse 10 to verse 16.

Chapter 17 reminds us of three things that must be observed in offering sacrifices: first, the location of the sacrifice must be in front of the Tabernacle; second, sacrifices should only be made to Jehovah God; and third, the sacrifice is mediated through blood. Yesterday, we studied the first two points, so today we will focus on the mediation of sacrifices and the various commandments regarding blood.

Verse 10: “And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people.”

In this verse, God directly declares a prohibition against eating blood. For any member of the house of Israel, or any foreigner dwelling among them, if they consume any blood, God will set His face against that person and cut him off from among the people of Israel, making them no longer one of God's people. God first clearly pronounces this commandment and precisely describes the serious consequences that will result from violating it. Only afterward does He explain why blood is not to be consumed.

This also reveals the attitude we should have toward God's word. When God's word comes to us, we should accept and obey without questioning or following only what seems reasonable to us. Generally, it is only after obeying God's word that we can truly understand the spiritual meaning behind it. For when God speaks to us, His primary intention is not for us to understand, but for us to experience and live out His word in our lives.

Verse 11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

This verse clearly tells us why blood is not to be consumed: because the life of the flesh is in the blood. God is the source and master of life. He has given us the blood of sacrificial animals to be sprinkled on the altar to make atonement for our lives, as blood contains life. The principle of atonement is life for life. When a person sins, they deserve to die, as “the wages of sin is death.”

However, in His mercy, God was willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son to die in our place—this is the will God had established from eternity. Before Jesus Christ came, during the time of the Old Testament, God first used sacrificial animals as substitutes. The life of the sacrificial animals is in the blood, and their blood temporarily covers people’s sins. Because the blood of the animals was for the atonement of sins, it was forbidden to eat it.

We have already read various regulations on offering sacrifices, including detailed instructions on how the blood of sacrificial animals should be handled. For instance, the blood was to be poured out before the altar, sprinkled on the altar, smeared on the four corners of the altar, brought into the sanctuary, sprinkled on the veil, smeared on the four corners of the golden incense altar, and even brought into the Holy of Holies to be sprinkled on the mercy seat. These rich operations are all to bear witness before God through the blood. People’s sins have been covered by the blood of the sacrificial animals, and God temporarily refrains from holding them accountable. This is the blood of testimony; thus, it cannot be consumed.

Indeed, the blood of sacrificial animals was a foreshadowing, pointing to the truly redeeming blood—that is, the precious blood Jesus Christ shed on the cross. If we have spiritual insight, we will see that God’s prohibition on eating the blood of sacrificial animals in the Old Testament also had a positive intention: that when true redemption arrived, people would partake of the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

As recorded in John 6:53-56, "Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.'" To the Jews at the time, Jesus' words seemed utterly inconceivable. They had been taught from childhood not to consume blood, yet Jesus said that without drinking His blood, there was no life, and those who drank His blood would abide in Him.

These words were hard not only for the Jews but even for many of Jesus' disciples, who left Him because they did not understand, and Jesus' words seemed to clearly contradict the Old Testament commandment against eating blood. But Jesus' words are not difficult to understand: for life is in the blood, and to drink the Lord's blood is to partake in His life. Only with the Lord's life can one abide in Him. The reality of the New Testament is that the saved saints can dwell in the Lord's life and be united with Him.

Therefore, not only in John's Gospel does the Lord Jesus command people to eat His flesh and drink His blood, but at His last supper with the disciples, He also personally instituted the Lord's table. This is recorded in Matthew 26:26-28, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" This is Jesus Himself instituting the Lord's table. To this day, on every Lord's Day, God's children gather before Him, partaking of the covenantal blood of the Lord and having fellowship with Him, so that our sins may be forgiven.

Besides the forgiveness of sins, the Lord's blood accomplishes much for us. Through the Lord's blood, we share in His life; we can confidently enter the Holy of Holies and come before the Father; we are reconciled to God and attain peace; we are freed from the sentence of death to serve God; and we can overcome the enemy, for the brethren overcame by the blood of the Lamb. The Lord's blood is truly precious to us who are saved by grace.

Verse 12: “Therefore I said to the children of Israel, ‘No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.’”

God once again solemnly reminds the Israelites not to consume blood. Foreigners dwelling among them are also not permitted to consume blood, as it is for atonement. This commandment not to eat blood is then extended to all living creatures.

Verse 13: “Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust.”

When the Israelites went hunting and caught an animal or bird that could be eaten, such as a dove, pigeon, or pheasant, which were clean birds, or an antelope or deer, which were clean land animals, these were permitted to be eaten. Thus, as soon as they killed it, they were to pour out its blood in the field and cover it with dust, signifying that life comes from dust and ultimately returns to dust. Since the blood contains the life of the animal or bird, while it was still freshly killed and the body warm, the blood could be poured out. If the blood was not poured out in the field and they waited until they returned home, the body would have cooled, the blood would have congealed, and it would remain in the corpse. Even though the animal was clean, the flesh would contain blood, and it could not be eaten.

Verse 14: “For it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.’”

The life of all creatures is in the blood, and therefore, all blood of creatures was not to be consumed. Whoever ate blood was to be cut off from among the people of Israel. God repeatedly emphasized the prohibition against eating blood, as He

greatly values the redemption plan, He established in eternity, which involves atonement for fallen humanity through blood.

Moreover, as stated in Romans 8:19-21: “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Here we are told that God intends, through the redeemed saints whose lives have matured, to display the glory of the sons of God, thereby allowing all of creation to be freed from the bondage of corruption to share in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Because of man’s fall, not only does he face death, but he also drags down all created things, causing them to suffer under the bondage of corruption. Only when God’s children display the glory befitting the children of God can these corrupted creations be restored to the glorious freedom of God’s original creation. This is the responsibility of each saint toward the creatures bound in this world. Thus, here the commandment against consuming blood extends from sacrificial animals to all creatures.

Verses 15-16: “And every person who eats what died naturally or what was torn by beasts, whether he is a native of your own country or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. Then he shall be clean. But if he does not wash them or bathe his body, then he shall bear his guilt.”

If a clean animal died of itself without undergoing the blood-draining process, the blood would remain in the corpse, and it could not be eaten. Similarly, if a clean animal was torn by wild beasts and died without the blood-draining process, blood would remain in the corpse, and it could not be eaten. If Israelites or strangers ate it, they would be unclean until evening and were required to wash their clothes and bathe in water to be purified. If they did not wash their clothes and bathe, they would not be purified and would bear their guilt.

Dear brothers and sisters, for the Israelites under the Old Covenant, God's command was very clear: no blood of any creature should be consumed. God clearly told Israel that anyone who ate blood was to be cut off from the people. However, when God enforces His command, He is still full of grace, considering all circumstances before making a final judgment. The Bible records how God dealt with people who consumed blood in the Old Testament.

In 1 Samuel 14, there is a record of a battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. King Saul, without regard for the people of Israel, had the people swear not to eat anything until evening when they would defeat the Philistines. As a result, his son Jonathan led the people to pursue the Philistines, and they grew extremely weary and hungry. When they entered the forest and saw honey, Jonathan ate some, and his eyes were brightened. But because of their oath, the people dared not eat.

1 Samuel 14:29-32 recount what happened: "But Jonathan said, 'My father has troubled the land. Look now, how my countenance has brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much better if the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now, would there not have been a much greater slaughter among the Philistines?' Now they had driven back the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. So, the people were very faint. And the people rushed on the spoil, and took sheep, oxen, and calves, and slaughtered them on the ground; and the people ate them with the blood."

Jonathan led Israel to attack the Philistines, and when they were extremely hungry, they slaughtered the cattle and sheep they had captured and ate the meat with the blood still in it. Later, when someone told Saul, he became very angry and wanted to hold the offenders accountable. Though it seemed like Saul was upholding God's law, the root of the event lay in Saul's disregard for the people. Therefore, in this matter, God did not hold it against them.

In the New Testament, Jesus Christ came and brought true redemption, and the saints who were saved by grace had their sins forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. Following Jesus Christ's instructions, every Sunday, the saints break bread

to commemorate the Lord and drink the blood of the covenant, enjoying intimate fellowship with the Lord. At this time, the ceremonial laws of the Old Covenant, including those that dictated what could and could not be eaten, were abolished. For the dietary regulations of New Testament saints, Paul gives us a very clear definition in Romans 14:14: "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is uncleaned." In other words, all things are permissible to eat; as long as one does not consider them unclean, they are clean.

Although there is such freedom in eating, in practice, one must consider the conscience of others and the influence it may have on them. Romans 14:20-21 instructs us: "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak." In matters of diet for New Testament saints, there is freedom; however, in our freedom, we should not cause those saints around us to stumble due to our liberty.

In this chapter, God calls our attention to the place, the object, and the means of offering sacrifices. For the saints of the New Testament, the means of sacrifice is the precious blood of Jesus Christ. This covenantal blood of Jesus Christ is what we drink each week when we worship the Lord and partake in the life of the Lord.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. As New Testament saints, we are truly blessed. Every Sunday, we can come to the house of God to offer sacrifices to You. Help us to lay aside anything that entangles us, so that we may come solely to offer sacrifices to You. Thank You, Lord Jesus Christ, for shedding Your precious blood on the cross and completing our redemption. This blood is the basis of our worship. Bless my church, that each Sunday our remembrance, worship, and praise for the Lord may be pleasing to God. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.