

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

Leviticus 21:16-24

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Last week, we read up to Leviticus 21:15, and this week, we will finish chapter 21 and also read chapter 22. Today, let us read Leviticus 21:16–24.

Leviticus 21 contains ordinances about the holy living of priests. Based on the principle that "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48), God gave the Israelites ordinances for holy living. Afterward, He specifically gave the family of Aaron ordinances about priestly holiness, recorded in chapter 21, and ordinances about handling holy things, recorded in chapter 22. Regarding ordinances for the holy living of priests, we have already read about the ordinances for priests and the high priest.

For New Testament believers, every person who is saved by grace has a priestly identity. However, one must grow in spiritual maturity to a certain measure before beginning to fulfill priestly duties. Regarding this measure, God does not give an objective standard but rather provides three subjective measures: 1) Not being tainted by spiritual death; 2) Not following worldly trends; 3) Maintaining purity toward God. In other words, each believer should know in their heart whether they are fit to fulfill priestly duties. This is also a matter between each believer and God.

The building up of the New Testament church depends on every believer fulfilling their priestly duties and working together in harmony under the High Priest, Jesus Christ. Under Christ's leadership, the body is built up in love. We have also read the ordinances for the high priest, which include not being defiled by death under any circumstances and marrying a virgin from among their own people. These ordinances for the high priest point to Jesus Christ. Only Christ has overcome death and cannot be defiled by it because He Himself is the resurrection. Furthermore,

He is currently preparing His bride, that she may be a pure virgin. When the fullness of time has come, He will return to receive the church as His bride.

Leviticus 21:16–24 specifies that descendants of Aaron with physical defects cannot serve as priests or offer sacrifices to God. In Leviticus chapters 1–7, we have read the ordinances for offering sacrifices, where we see that God repeatedly emphasizes that animals with defects cannot be offered to Him. The responsibility of examining the sacrificial animals was entrusted to the priests. God's requirements for sacrifices are very strict: the animals must be without blemish, and likewise, the priests who offer the sacrifices must also be without defect.

From a New Testament perspective, the sacrificial animals typify Jesus Christ. Before Jesus was crucified, He was tried three times before the Jewish council and three times before the Roman court. Finally, the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, publicly declared, "I find no fault in Him" (John 18:38). Through such public testimony, Jesus was proven to be a qualified sacrifice for sin. Afterward, He was crucified. The sacrificial animals typify Christ, and the priests represent all New Testament believers.

In the Old Testament, male descendants of Aaron with physical defects were not allowed to serve as priests. For New Testament believers, these physical defects take on spiritual meanings and serve as warnings about what believers must be mindful of and overcome in their service to God.

Verses 16–17: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to Aaron, saying: "No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God."'"

Aaron, the high priest, was required to marry a virgin from among his own people, and his male descendants were to become priests. The priests were to offer sacrifices for the people in the tabernacle and serve God in the sanctuary. Any of Aaron's descendants with defects could not offer sacrifices on behalf of the people because some portions of the sacrifices were burned on the altar as a pleasing

aroma to God, which is considered the bread of God. To offer food to God, both the sacrificial animals and the priests must be without blemish.

Dear brothers and sisters, every Sunday worship service, when we praise and worship God together, we are offering up a pleasing aroma to satisfy Him. In our worship, not only must our praises come from pure hearts, but we ourselves must also be whole and without blemish. Therefore, in every Sunday service, those leading worship should remind the congregation to purify themselves so as not to offend God in worship.

If the church partakes in breaking bread and drinking the cup every Sunday to commemorate the Lord's sacrifice on the cross, the establishment of the New Covenant through His blood helps each believer affirm their participation in His death and offer worship to God in the newness of resurrection. This avoids the issue of worship being unacceptable to God due to impurity among the saints.

Verses 18–20: "For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch."

Male descendants of Aaron with physical defects could not approach God to offer sacrifices. The Bible lists eleven types of defects here. Upon reading these, we must truly thank God that we live in the New Testament era; otherwise, based on the listed defects, qualifying as a priest would be even harder than becoming a pilot. Among us, very few would qualify to serve as priests.

In the New Testament, when people come to serve God and offer sacrifices, God does not place any external requirements on their appearance. Every saved person has the identity of a priest and can serve God. The physical defects listed in the passage represent spiritual implications. These are precisely the issues New Testament believers must pay attention to and avoid in their service to God to prevent offending Him.

Now, let us examine these defects one by one—there are a total of eleven.

1. Blindness

This refers to a lack of Christ's light, causing one to be unable to see spiritual matters. In John 4:24, it says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." A person living in darkness cannot see their true condition and does not recognize spiritual matters. Someone who does not understand the spirit cannot serve God.

2. Lameness

This signifies the lack of Christ's strength, rendering one incapable of action. Paul declares in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." While we may not have Paul's confidence to do all things, at the very least, we need Christ's strength to enable us to rise up, walk, and serve God.

3. Flat-Nosed (Lacking a Nose)

This indicates a lack of spiritual discernment, unable to distinguish life from death. Paul states in 2 Corinthians 2:15-16, "For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life." Here, we see that Christians carry the fragrance of Christ, which can either bring life or signify death. A person without spiritual discernment cannot distinguish the aroma of life from that of death and thus cannot serve God.

4. Having Extra Limbs

For example, an extra finger or toe, or one hand or foot longer than the other. This signifies overstepping boundaries in spiritual service. Everyone should serve God according to the gifts and limits given by Him. Someone who frequently oversteps boundaries in service cannot serve God. We must guard the boundaries God has set for us, neither saying nor doing too much.

5. Having Crippled Hands or Feet

This represents a lack of completeness in service—work done with the hands is always lacking, and the path walked is often incomplete. Someone who cannot see a task through to the end is not fit to serve God.

6. Being Hunchback

This signifies a lack of heavenly experience, focusing only on earthly matters and being unable to see the heavenly. Paul says in Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Someone who only thinks about earthly matters cannot serve God.

7. Dwarfishness

This represents a lack of growth in spiritual life, being a spiritual dwarf unable to reach the stature of Christ. When someone receives grace, they receive spiritual life, which naturally grows through daily spiritual nourishment. Someone who cannot grow in spiritual stature is a spiritual dwarf and cannot serve God.

8. Defective Eyesight

Whether it is nearsightedness, astigmatism, or blurred vision, this indicates an incomplete understanding of spiritual matters. As a result, their service is incomplete and prone to imbalance or extremism. Such a person cannot serve God.

9. Having Eczema

Eczema is a form of skin disease, often hidden from others but known to oneself. The skin represents one's testimony in daily life. A person with a flawed personal testimony—hidden from others but known to themselves—cannot serve God.

10. Having Scabs

Scabs signify a more severe skin disease, representing visible flaws in one's testimony. A person whose spiritual flaws are evident cannot serve God.

11. Eunuch

The NIV translates this as "damaged testicles," representing the loss of reproductive ability. This signifies a lack of life experiences, resulting in an inability to produce spiritual offspring—unable to share the gospel or lead others to salvation. Such a person cannot serve God.

These 11 physical defects symbolically represent 11 types of spiritual illnesses that New Testament saints may encounter. Saints with these spiritual illnesses cannot

fulfill their priestly duties. They must come before God for healing. Only after these illnesses are removed can they touch matters of service and serve as qualified priests.

Verses 21-22: "No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the Lord. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy."

Among Aaron's descendants, those with physical defects could not offer sacrifices by fire to God because those offerings represented God's food. Both the offering and the priest must be without defect to be accepted by God. However, regarding the portions of offerings assigned to the priests, whether holy or most holy, the defected priests were still allowed to eat.

In Leviticus 6:17-18, it says, "It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it as their portion of My offerings made by fire; it is most holy, like the sin offering and the trespass offering. All the males among the children of Aaron may eat it. It shall be a statute forever in your generations concerning the offerings made by fire to the Lord. Everyone who touches them must be holy."

Here, we see that the grain offering, sin offering, and trespass offering are most holy. Touching these offerings sanctifies the person, so they are called the most holy offerings. Among the portions assigned to the priests, the most holy offerings could still be eaten by the defected descendants of Aaron. Peace offerings, which are holy, also have portions assigned to the priests, and they too could partake of these.

This shows God's special grace. Though these priests were disqualified from offering sacrifices, God still cared for their needs. They, like their families, could partake of the holy and most holy portions of the offerings.

Verses 23-24: "Only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the Lord sanctify them. And Moses told it to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel."

The descendants with defects could not approach the veil, signifying they could not enter the Holy Place to serve God. They could not come near the altar to offer sacrifices for the people because of their defects, lest they profane God's sanctuary. However, they were still included in God's provision.

God adds this statement: "I the Lord sanctify them." From a human perspective, someone unable to serve may seem useless in God's hands. But God says, "I will sanctify them." God still works in their lives, setting them apart for Himself. This demonstrates that God values not just our work but our testimony. He desires us to belong to Him fully, as His witness.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. What You value most is that we are set apart, sanctified for God. Help me to be a qualified priest in the service of the church, removing all kinds of spiritual illnesses. Yet, even in our service, remind us that what You truly value is our testimony—to be wholly set apart for God. May our service adjust us, free us from spiritual illnesses, and bring joy to You, ultimately becoming a beautiful testimony for God. Bless our church and our church life. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.