

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

Leviticus 22: 17-23

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 22. We will read verses 17-23 today.

Chapter 22 is about the regulations for priests handling holy things. In verses 1 to 9 of this chapter, we see that if a priest becomes defiled, he is rendered unclean and cannot eat of the holy things. Verses 10 to 15 show that only the priest's household may eat the holy things. Following this, from verses 17 to 30, the focus shifts to sacrificial animals. In Leviticus chapters 1 to 7, where the regulations for offering the five basic sacrifices are discussed, we repeatedly read that only an unblemished bull or sheep may be offered to be acceptable to God.

Without blemish is a general principle, but how is "without blemish" defined in practical terms? This passage provides a more specific definition of the conditions a sacrificial animal must meet. In the New Testament, saints no longer need to offer bulls or sheep as sacrifices, because the sacrifices were a foreshadowing of Christ. Since Christ has already come, there is no longer a need to offer bulls or sheep as offerings. Instead, the sacrifices we present are our experiences and enjoyment of Jesus Christ. Christ is so perfect and without blemish, and our experiences and enjoyment of Christ must also be balanced and completely without defect to become offerings acceptable to God. As we read the following passages, we should consider the Old Testament regulations while also understanding their application in the New Testament.

Verse 17-19: “ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to Aaron and his sons, and to all the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘Whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers in Israel, who offers his sacrifice for any of his vows or

for any of his freewill offerings, which they offer to the Lord as a burnt offering— you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.”

God instructed Moses to speak to all the children of Israel, including the high priest Aaron, Aaron's descendants—the priests—the people of Israel, and even the sojourners among them. Essentially, this encompassed everyone who followed Moses out of Egypt to Mount Sinai. Here, we see that everyone had the position and privilege to offer sacrifices to God. We must not think that when people offer sacrifices to God, they are giving something beneficial to Him; in reality, it is the opposite. For every beast of the forest is His, and the cattle on a thousand hills already belong to God. God grants mankind all kinds of good things and rich blessings for their enjoyment—this is His general grace, given to both the righteous and the wicked. Just as the sun rises on the evil and the good alike, these blessings are what God has provided for humanity.

However, when people offer to God, there must be qualifications. Only those who belong to God are eligible to present offerings to Him, and even then, it cannot be done carelessly. Only unblemished bulls, sheep, or goats may be offered to be acceptable to God. The mention of "without blemish" here is a general principle, and the subsequent verses will provide a more detailed discussion of what constitutes a blemish.

In the latter part of verse 18, it says, "whoever offers a sacrifice, whether it is to fulfill a vow or a freewill offering, as a burnt offering to the LORD." This phrase can be challenging to understand. The translations in the KJV and ASV are similar to the Chinese Union Version, suggesting that this rendering aligns with the original text. However, after reading it, it may seem somewhat unclear.

The NIV translates this phrase as "a burnt offering to the LORD is to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering," seemingly indicating that there are two types of burnt offerings: one for fulfilling a vow and the other as a freewill offering. However, nowhere else in the entire Bible does it mention that a burnt offering is for fulfilling a vow. In Leviticus 1, burnt offerings appear to be primarily freewill offerings.

Ezekiel 46:12 specifically mentions, "Now when the prince makes a voluntary burnt offering" (NKJV), highlighting the aspect of freewill offerings. For this reason, I do not adopt the NIV translation and instead seek to understand the meaning behind the rendering in the Chinese Union Version.

In offering a peace offering, Leviticus 7:15-16 clearly explains three possible reasons. The first reason is thanksgiving, where a person, having experienced God's grace, feels a heart full of gratitude toward God and thus offers a peace offering. The second reason is to fulfill a vow, where a person first makes a vow to God, seeking a specific grace, and when that grace is granted and fulfilled, they offer a peace offering to repay their vow. The third reason is as a freewill offering, unrelated to any specific experience of grace, where the person offers the peace offering solely out of love for God. Therefore, when it mentions "to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering" here, it seems to refer to these two types of peace offerings that a person may offer to God.

According to Leviticus 7:16-18, the two types of peace offerings—those offered to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering—may be eaten on the day they are offered, and whatever remains may be eaten the next day. However, any leftovers on the second day must be burned with fire and cannot be kept until the third day. This differs from the peace offering of thanksgiving, which must be entirely consumed on the day it is offered; whatever is not eaten must be burned with fire and cannot be left until the next day.

In Leviticus 1:3 and 10, it is mentioned that when a person offers a burnt offering to God, they can offer a bull or a sheep, but it must be a male. With this background in mind, let us attempt to understand the passage here. The main point is about offering a peace offering to God, either as a vow or a freewill offering. If this peace offering is to become a burnt offering, it must be a male bull, male lamb, or male goat, and it must be without defect. This introduces the concept that the peace offering made as a vow or freewill offering should be transformed into a burnt offering, and therefore, the offering must be a male bull or male sheep.

The peace offering is a sacrificial gift shared between man and God. The fat, kidneys, and fat tail of the sacrificial animal are to be burned on the altar as a sweet-smelling fire offering to God, while the remaining parts are to be enjoyed by the person offering the sacrifice. Of course, the waved breast and heaved thigh belong to the priests, while the rest belongs to the one making the offering, who can share it with family and friends. Therefore, this is a sacrifice that both God and man enjoy together. In other words, when a person makes an offering, they consider both God's needs and their own. Viewed strictly, the offering of the peace offering is not complete, because if one were to make a more complete offering, they would place the entire sacrificial animal on the altar, completely burning it up, turning it into a sweet-smelling aroma to fully satisfy God.

Therefore, when offering a burnt offering, it must be a male animal, and it must be completely burned on the altar, entirely for God. The concept presented here is that when we offer a peace offering to God, whether as a vow or a freewill offering, such an experience can lead us forward to the experience of offering a burnt offering. For New Testament saints, this is actually easier to apply.

Every Sunday, when we come to participate in the breaking of bread to remember the Lord, it is actually a peace offering we present to God. It can be out of gratitude, to fulfill a vow, or simply as a freewill offering motivated by our love for the Lord. The two situations of fulfilling a vow and offering willingly express that we are actively engaging with God and having an interactive relationship, with repeated communion. If we want to take our relationship with God a step further, it requires offering ourselves entirely, which is a burnt offering. Therefore, in every Sunday worship, the worship God most delights in is when each saint is willing to elevate their peace offering to a burnt offering, willing to present their whole being to the Lord, allowing the Lord to be the Sovereign in their lives. Among the offerings to God, the peace offering is the least demanding, while the burnt offering is the most stringent. This verse lists both the peace offering and the burnt offering, signifying all the sacrifices presented to God.

Verse 20-21: “Whatever has a defect, you shall not offer, for it shall not be acceptable on your behalf. And whoever offers a sacrifice of a peace offering to the Lord, to fulfill his vow, or a freewill offering from the cattle or the sheep, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.”

The sacrificial animals offered to God must be without defect in order to be accepted by Him. When offering a peace offering to God, whether to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, one must take a pure, unblemished animal from the herd or flock to be accepted by God. From the perspective of New Testament application, both the vow and freewill peace offerings indicate that there has been communion between us and God, and according to our experience and enjoyment of Christ, the fruit produced in us can be offered to God. However, such experiences and enjoyment must be balanced and completely in line with God's will, without deviation, otherwise, they will not be accepted by God. The following verses explain what constitutes a defect.

Verse 22: “Those that are blind or broken or maimed, or have an ulcer or eczema or scabs, you shall not offer to the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them on the altar to the Lord. “

Here, six types of defects are mentioned: blind, broken, maimed, having a growth, having scabs, and having mange. Animals with these defects cannot be offered to God as a peace offering, nor can they be offered as a burnt offering. Therefore, the definition of "without defect" here is much clearer than in Leviticus chapters 1 to 7. In terms of New Testament application, our experience and enjoyment of Christ must be correct, balanced, and complete.

The blind speaks of our unclear understanding of Christ. God does not want us to worship blindly, so we must read God's word with attention, recognizing the person and work of Christ. Only then will our peace offerings and burnt offerings be accepted by God. The broken speaks of our incomplete experience of Christ, which causes us to remain in a state of hurt and failure. Christ Himself has already overcome the one who has the power of death and has triumphed abundantly in

all things. If our experience of Christ is complete, we too will be more than conquerors. However, if our experience of Christ is incomplete, leaving us unable to overcome and still trapped in hurt and failure, then we cannot offer a peace offering or burnt offering to God.

Some saints, when their work is not going well, may consider giving up their work to serve God, but this does not please God. This is the broken. You must overcome abundantly in your environment in order to offer a burnt offering to God. The maimed refers to the limitations of human nature, which result in an incomplete experience and enjoyment of Christ. An incomplete experience cannot be offered to God as a peace offering or a burnt offering.

The next three defects—having a growth, having scabs, and having mange—represent abnormal outward manifestations in a person. They speak of incorrect understanding of Christ, which leads to a distorted experience, resulting in an abnormal testimony in daily life. A growth refers to the abnormal development of certain parts; scabs make a person feel uncomfortable; and mange causes discomfort to others when seen. These are all based on incorrect knowledge of Christ, which results in a poor testimony in life. These cannot be offered to God as a peace offering or burnt offering.

Dear brothers and sisters, every Sunday when we come to the Lord's Day worship, to worship and praise God, we are actually offering up our experience and enjoyment of Christ. We hope that what we offer each Sunday will be accepted by God.

Verse 23: "Either a bull or a lamb that has any limb too long or too short you may offer as a freewill offering, but for a vow it shall not be accepted."

Here, it speaks of cattle and sheep with limbs that are either too long or too short, a phrase whose original meaning is not very clear. It should be understood as being between normal and defective. Darby's translation suggests limbs that are too long or too short, meaning that one can notice something slightly abnormal, yet it does

not reach the level of being considered defective. Such animals can be offered as a peace offering given willingly, but not as a peace offering made to fulfill a vow. Clearly, this tells us that the requirements for an animal offered as a vow offering are higher than those for an animal offered voluntarily.

Why is this the case? Let's try to understand. From the perspective of New Testament application, limbs that are either too long or too short represent an imbalance in our experience of Christ. In some areas, our experience surpasses what we can properly handle, while in other areas, it falls short, leading to a mismatch with our spiritual maturity. In such a case, if you are offering willingly to God, it can be accepted; but if you are offering to fulfill a vow, it cannot be accepted.

A vow, generally speaking, is made to God when we seek His grace. When that grace is fulfilled, we are to offer a peace offering to God to fulfill our vow. Limbs that are too long or too short represent an imbalance in our experience of God's grace. This imbalance means we are not yet ready to offer the sacrifice. If you have had a complete experience of the grace you sought, you will not be unbalanced. In other words, perhaps you made the offering too early. A complete experience of Christ's grace will ensure that your offering is not made with limbs too long or too short.

If the offering is given willingly, without seeking anything specific from God, but simply out of love for the Lord, then it is a peace offering. In this situation, even if our experience of Christ is unbalanced or lacks in certain areas, what God values is our willing heart, the desire to offer to Him. God is willing to accept the surplus or lack in our experience, as long as the offering comes from a willing and loving heart.

1 Peter 4:8 says, "Love covers a multitude of sins." If we love the Lord, God is willing to accept us, even if our experience of Christ is unbalanced or lacking. God does not mind; He accepts us. Dear brothers and sisters, our daily devotions, Bible reading, and prayers are all ways we experience Christ and enjoy Christ. When we come to the Sunday worship, we are able to place what we have experienced and enjoyed

on the altar as an offering to God. This is the sacrifice of the New Testament saints to God.

God earnestly desires that our offerings to Him grow from gratitude to vows and then to freewill offerings, ultimately transforming our peace offerings into burnt offerings—fully dedicating ourselves to God so that He can be Lord and have authority in our lives. Just as Paul says in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." The "living sacrifice" there refers to the burnt offering, where we offer ourselves completely to God in worship, just as He desires.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. After we were saved by Your grace, You placed us in the church, with many sincere and loving saints, to learn and serve together. How grateful we are, Lord, that in the church, spiritual nourishment has never been lacking, and we have spiritual companions by our side with whom we can experience and enjoy together. Every Sunday, we offer sacrifices to God together—what a sweet church life it is! Help me, Lord, to elevate my experience and enjoyment of Christ to the point where I can offer a burnt offering that is pleasing to You. Bless my daily life. I pray in the holy name of our Lord Jesus Christ.