

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

Leviticus 22: 23-33

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 22:23-33.

The priests' responsibility was to assist the Israelites in offering sacrifices to God, which required handling holy things. God dedicated an entire chapter of Scripture to provide regulations for dealing with holy offerings. The animals offered on the altar were holy, and previously, God revealed that the sacrificial animals—such as bulls, sheep, and goats—must be without blemish. In this chapter, from verses 17 to 30, additional details are given, clearly defining what constitutes a blemish in sacrificial animals. Before offering a sacrifice, the priests were required to carefully inspect the animals to ensure they met the criteria for being without blemish as outlined in these verses; only then could the animal be qualified to be offered as a sacrifice.

In the New Testament, believers no longer need to offer bulls or sheep as sacrifices. Jesus Christ has already offered Himself once and for all as the ultimate sacrifice, satisfying God's holiness, righteousness, and glory. Because Jesus has completed the work of redemption, we can receive salvation through faith in Him. Thus, the sacrifices of New Testament believers are no longer animals but rather their experiences and enjoyment of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ Himself is the perfect, flawless, and unblemished offering. However, our experiences and enjoyment of Him may be marred by human limitations and imperfections. The blemishes in the sacrificial animals listed in this passage symbolize the flaws in the believers' experiences and enjoyment of Christ. Such flawed experiences and enjoyment do not please God and therefore cannot be offered to Him as peace offerings or burnt offerings.

Yesterday, we studied six evident physical defects in sacrificial animals: the blind, broken, maimed, those with ulcers, eczema, or scabs. Animals with any of these six

defects could not be offered as sacrifices. The seventh defect is more unique: “too long or too short in limb.” Animals with this condition could be offered as free will peace offerings but not as vow peace offerings. This distinction can be challenging to understand, especially regarding its application in the New Testament. Even though we discussed this extensively yesterday, I feel led to revisit it today with additional examples, which may help believers better grasp the difference between offering a vow peace offering and a freewill peace offering.

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.”

The phrase “any limb too long or too short” is translated in Darby as limbs that are disproportionate, meaning they appear unusual but are not necessarily defective. Spiritually, this represents an imbalance in our experiences of Christ. In some areas, we might exceed our measure, while in others, we may fall short.

If we reflect on our spiritual experiences, we can identify this imbalance. For instance, some emphasize spiritual growth by reading numerous spiritual books daily but avoid serving or sharing the gospel. As a result, they become spiritually overfed, akin to a “spiritual fat man,” which demonstrates an unbalanced experience and enjoyment of Christ.

Others may fall on the opposite extreme, focusing solely on results in their ministry, devoting all their time to work and neglecting personal devotions. Consequently, their life does not measure up to their message, leading to a lack of testimony. Their work may collapse due to a single failed testimony, rendering their efforts void.

The balance between life and work is essential. This concept is relatively straightforward to grasp. The challenging part lies in understanding why such imbalanced experiences cannot be offered as vow peace offerings but can be presented as freewill peace offerings. To clarify, let us consider some examples.

One illustrative case is Jacob in Genesis. His life story is documented in remarkable detail, spanning from Genesis 25, where he first appears, to Genesis 50, where his death is recorded. These 26 chapters narrate Jacob's growth, transformation, and life's journey. Jacob's life provides an excellent resource for understanding the distinction between vow offerings and freewill offerings.

In Genesis 28, Jacob leaves home for the first time, traveling to Padan Aram. When he reaches Bethel, he lays his head on a stone and sleeps in the wilderness. There, he dreams of a ladder reaching heaven—a pivotal moment marking his first encounter with the Lord. Filled with uncertainty about his future, Jacob makes a vow to God. This is recorded in Genesis 28:20–22: “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.” Over the next two decades, we see God faithfully fulfilling His promises to Jacob. When Jacob returns from Padan Aram more than 20 years later, he revisits Bethel and builds an altar to God. This act signifies Jacob fulfilling his vow to the Lord. It is here that Jacob offers a vow peace offering.

In Genesis 32:28, God tells him, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel.” While this appears to be the moment when God changes Jacob’s name to Israel, it is not the first instance. Rather, it is a reminder of Jacob's most significant spiritual experience, described in Genesis 32:22–32. At Peniel, Jacob wrestles with God. This wrestling highlights Jacob's stubborn strength, as he grapples with God throughout the night. Even God does not immediately prevail against Jacob's tenacity. At dawn, God touches the socket of Jacob’s hip, causing him to limp permanently. It is then that God says to him, as recorded in Genesis 32:28: “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.” From that moment, Jacob transitions from being a "grasper" (Jacob, meaning "supplanter") to becoming "Israel" (meaning "prince of God" or "one who prevails with God"). He moves from grasping for his

own gain to extending blessings to others, living out his calling as Israel, a prince among God's people.

Before Jacob's transformative experience at Peniel, his relationship with God was unbalanced. He had not yet been fully worked on by God, which made him unqualified to offer vow peace offerings. It was only after he became Israel—a person shaped by God—that he could rightfully offer such a sacrifice.

Jacob's life is marked by four pillars that symbolize milestones in his spiritual growth. The fourth and final pillar he erected was the tombstone of Rachel. Rachel was the wife Jacob loved, while Leah was the wife God had chosen for him. After Rachel's death, Jacob set up the fourth pillar, signifying the end of his natural preferences. From that point forward, Jacob sought nothing for himself but entrusted everything onto God's hands. After this, every peace offering he made to God was a freewill offering, because he no longer sought anything from the Lord. This shift is evident in Genesis 45:26–28, when Jacob learns that “Joseph is still alive, and he is the governor over all the land of Egypt.” Jacob's reaction was not one of excitement or joy; instead, his “heart stood still because he did not believe them.”

Later, Jacob decided to go to Egypt to reunite with Joseph, but he was hesitant to proceed directly. In Genesis 46:1, we read: “So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.” It was only after receiving confirmation from God that Jacob dared to continue his journey to Egypt.

By this point, Jacob's spiritual maturity had far surpassed questions of balance. He had completely entrusted himself to God, accepting whatever circumstances came his way as part of God's plan. A freewill offering reflects this state of surrender—offering oneself fully to God, trusting in His sovereignty, and knowing that He is pleased with such a sacrifice. May Jacob's journey of spiritual growth help us understand the distinction between vow peace offerings and freewill peace offerings, encouraging us to grow in our own trust and devotion to God.

Verse 24: “You shall not offer to the Lord what is bruised or crushed, or torn or cut; nor shall you make any offering of them in your land.”

The Chinese Union Version translates the term as "肾子" (kidneys), while the NIV translates it as "testicles," referring specifically to reproductive capabilities. Animals with damaged reproductive organs—whether bruised, crushed, torn, or castrated—were considered unfit as offerings to God. This prohibition applies universally, whether the damage occurred naturally or through human intervention.

In modern livestock practices, industrial methods often involve artificial control over reproduction for economic gain. Male animals are castrated, and female animals undergo artificial insemination to produce the most desirable offspring. These practices prioritize efficiency and profit, using unnatural methods. However, animals that have lost their reproductive capability cannot be offered to God, reflecting a principle of honoring natural integrity in what is brought before Him.

From a New Testament perspective, the spiritual application emphasizes that a proper experience and enjoyment of Christ naturally leads to spiritual "reproduction." Jesus says in John 15:5: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” Furthermore, in John 15:16, He declares: “I appointed you to go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”

A healthy Christian life inherently bears fruit, both in personal spiritual growth and in leading others to Christ. Likewise, a thriving church should regularly witness new believers being baptized. This reflects the life-giving nature of a healthy spiritual relationship with God.

When believers lose their ability to "bear fruit," it often points to an unhealthy or imbalanced experience of Christ. Without this spiritual vitality, their sacrifices—whether of peace offerings or burnt offerings—cannot be pleasing to God. This emphasizes the importance of maintaining a vibrant, life-giving connection to Christ that produces lasting spiritual outcomes.

Verse 25: "Nor shall you accept any such from a foreigner's hand to offer as the food of your God, because their corruption is in them, and defects are in them; they shall not be accepted on your behalf."

The translation in the Chinese Union Version seems to suggest that it is not permitted to purchase animals with defects or damage from foreigners to be used as sacrifices. However, this translation slightly diverges from the original text. The KJV translation is closer to the original, indicating that no animals may be bought from the hands of foreigners to serve as food offerings to the Lord. The animals must be bred by the Israelites themselves because the corrupted lifestyle of the Gentiles and their sacrifices to idols are considered defiled and blemished in God's eyes. This corruption and blemish are also reflected in their livestock. Therefore, no animals can be bought from Gentiles since such offerings are not pleasing to God and cannot be sacrificed to Him.

The New Testament application is very direct: you cannot use worldly methods and means to experience and enjoy Christ. The world values efficiency, often employing artificial methods or seeking shortcuts to achieve desired results in the shortest possible time. However, the experience and enjoyment of Christ by the saints are entirely matters of life. Growth in life is organic and often unpredictable; overcoming critical spiritual milestones is often a matter of spiritual enlightenment and is not necessarily proportional to the resources or time invested. A sacrifice that pleases God must come from our living and labor before Him, as well as our experience and enjoyment of Christ in life. Using worldly methods and means does not please God.

Verses 26-27: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'When a bull or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall be seven days with its mother, and from the eighth day and thereafter it shall be accepted as an offering made by fire to the Lord.'"

A newborn bull, sheep, or goat must stay with its mother for seven days, and on the eighth day, it can be offered as a sacrifice to God, a fragrant offering made by fire. This is similar to how male children of Israel were circumcised on the eighth

day after being born. Eight is a number of resurrection, and circumcision signifies the cutting off of the natural flesh, beginning the new life in resurrection.

The New Testament application is that our experience and enjoyment of Christ must reach the level of resurrection to be acceptable to God. Initially, our understanding of Christ begins in our natural state, meaning that our experiences also contain natural elements. Until one day, in the Spirit, we gain a renewed understanding of Christ, transcending our natural condition, we then begin to experience the resurrected Christ.

If the saints are honest, they may recall that when they first started reading the Bible, there were times when they felt the Bible was wrong because it did not align with their views or expectations. This reflects knowing Christ in the natural realm. If you humbly seek, God will surely grant spiritual enlightenment to help you overcome the limitations of your natural perspective. The greatest danger is holding on stubbornly to your natural viewpoint, thinking the Bible is unreasonable; in such a case, you will not have the experience of resurrection at that point. Our experience and enjoyment of Jesus Christ must enter the "eighth day," meaning experiencing and enjoying Christ in the newness of resurrection. Only then will our sacrifices be pleasing to God.

Verse 28: "Whether it is a cow or ewe, you shall not kill both her and her young on the same day."

Both cows and ewes can be offered as sacrifices, and calves and lambs can also be sacrificed after the eighth day. Here, God decrees that the mother and her offspring cannot be slaughtered on the same day for sacrifice. This reflects God's mercy, which surpasses His law. According to the law, both the mother and offspring qualify for sacrifice, but in God's mercy, they cannot be slaughtered on the same day. This serves as a reminder that in handling any matter, even when it is legally justified, mercy should be taken into consideration. Particularly in the church, where saints interact like family, when issues arise, although there may be right and wrong in the matter itself, execution should still be carried out with mercy. This

principle applies even in sacrifices to God. While sacrifices must follow God's ordinances, their execution should be full of mercy. God repeatedly emphasizes, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice."

Verses 29-30: "And when you offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord, offer it of your own free will. On the same day it shall be eaten; you shall leave none of it until morning: I am the Lord."

We know that peace offerings can be offered for three reasons: to fulfill a vow, to offer freely, or to give thanks. The first two types of peace offerings have already been discussed in earlier verses. Here, the focus is on the third type, a peace offering of thanksgiving. Such peace offerings, along with the meat for the priests and people, must be consumed on the same day. Any leftovers must be burned with fire, leaving nothing until the next day, for it to be acceptable to God.

The peace offering of thanksgiving arises when God first acts, and people, recognizing His work, offer thanksgiving to Him. In this process, God is proactive, and people are passive. In such cases, the measure of a person's life is still limited, and they cannot actively seek God. Therefore, the meat of the thanksgiving peace offering cannot be kept until the next day because, at this stage, God earnestly desires people to grow. He frequently bestows grace, and people, in response to the fresh grace they experience, should frequently offer thanksgiving peace offerings to Him.

In this context, God does not delight in people relying on old grace. Newly saved saints often experience abundant grace, and in such times, frequent prayers of thanksgiving are akin to a New Testament saint's peace offering. This marks the beginning of a grateful Christian life. With this, the ordinances regarding the handling of holy things conclude. God adds the phrase, "I am the Lord," as a conclusion. Its underlying meaning is, "I am holy; therefore, you shall be holy." What follows in the next three verses (31-33) is a summary of the holiness ordinances from chapters 17-22. Starting from chapter 16, after the Day of Atonement had removed all uncleanness, God's people were called to live

sanctified lives, leading to the establishment of various holiness ordinances. Verses 31-33 summarize these chapters, and we will read through them as a conclusion.

Verses 31-33: "You shall keep My commandments and do them: I am the Lord. You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the Lord."

"You shall keep My commandments and do them: I am the Lord" indicates that the commandments were established by God, and His people must observe them. God is always watching to see if His people obey His commandments. "You shall not profane My holy name" means that God's name represents who He is and what He does, all for the benefit of His people. Therefore, the people must not profane His name. God desires to be hallowed among the children of Israel. When people honor God as holy, He can sanctify them. Hence, God says, "I am the one who sanctifies you." God gives commandments, knowing that people cannot perfectly keep them. But in God's rich mercy and grace, He can sanctify those who continually turn to Him, as long as their hearts are willing to honor Him as holy. God will work in them to sanctify them.

"I brought you out of the land of Egypt" refers to the fact that the Israelites were once slaves in Egypt, with no hope. God sent Moses to lead them out of Egypt, and now they are at Mount Sinai, receiving His commandments. God desires His people to obey these commandments so that He can be their God. He ends with the phrase, "I am the Lord." In the New Testament, God remains the one who sanctifies His saints, and all the sacrificial ordinances of the Old Testament are meant to point to our experience and enjoyment of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for placing us in the New Testament. Jesus Christ has completed the redemption, and through simple belief, we can become Your children. Through our daily lives, as we receive the provision of Jesus Christ, we can experience and enjoy everything He has done for us. Help us to be balanced Christians in our experience and enjoyment, so that what we offer will be

acceptable to You. Bless the church I belong to and the church life together. We pray in the holy name of Jesus Christ.