

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

Numbers 6: 9-12

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the Bible again. This week, we are going to read Numbers Chapter 6 and today we will read verses 9 to 12.

Among the Israelites, whether man or woman, anyone could make a Nazirite vow, separating himself or herself as holy and wholly devoted to God. During the period of the vow, the Nazirite was required to strictly observe three regulations.

First, the Nazirite was to abstain from wine, as well as everything produced from the vine, whether before or after the making of wine. The New Testament application is to abstain from all earthly pleasures and enjoyments. Second, no razor was to come upon the Nazirite's head. The hair was to be allowed to grow long. The New Testament application is to submit to God's authority, allowing this submission to become a glorious crown upon one's head. It is a process of enduring humiliation while maintaining one's testimony, ultimately resulting in the receiving of God's power. Third, the Nazirite was not to go near a dead body. Even if a close family member died, the Nazirite was not to become ceremonially unclean. The New Testament application is to stay away from spiritual death, to give God the first place, to put Him above one's natural affections and personal preferences, and to live a life of self-denial.

During the period of the vow, the Nazirite was to do everything possible to keep these three regulations. These requirements were even stricter than those imposed upon the priests, indicating that the Nazirite's consecration was more complete than that of the priests. Although all New Testament believers possess the identity of priests, the principle for entering into the priestly ministry is to first pass through the consecration represented by the Nazirite. During a period of consecration, believers should completely separate themselves from earthly pleasures and submit themselves entirely to the lordship of Christ, allowing Christ to reign over

them, overcoming their natural affections and personal preferences, and focusing wholeheartedly on seeking God's will. Through the consecration of the Nazirite, one will surely receive God's calling upon one's life. By responding to that calling and following God's leading, one gradually comes to understand the commission God has entrusted to him. Then, according to that commission, one builds up his ministry. When that ministry reaches maturity, one is able to fulfill the priestly office.

The next section, Numbers 6:9–12, provides a supplement to the Nazirite regulations. It addresses the situation in which, during the period of the vow, an unexpected event beyond the Nazirite's control causes him or her to become defiled. The passage explains how such a situation should be handled.

Verse 9: “And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it.”

If someone suddenly died beside the Nazirite, he had already done everything possible to avoid contact with a dead body. He had even remained ceremonially clean when a close relative died. Yet there were unforeseen circumstances beyond his control—someone suddenly died beside him. As we mentioned earlier, death is the ultimate consequence of sin, and death is even more defiling than sin itself. Although it was not his fault, death nevertheless defiled the head of his separation. The word "separation" is translated in the KJV as "consecration." The underlying Hebrew word is *nezer*.

As we discussed previously, this word carries a rich range of meanings. It can refer to separation, consecration, a glorious crown, or the sign of submission to authority. Here, God does not investigate who was responsible for the incident. Rather, He looks at whether the Nazirite's head has been defiled by death. God's glory cannot be contaminated by death, nor can His authority be stained by death's defilement. Although it was not the Nazirite's fault, the sign of his submission had become defiled; therefore, he himself had to remain ceremonially unclean for seven days.

Seven days represent a complete period. On the seventh day, he was to shave his head because his locks had become defiled. At the completion of those seven days of uncleanness, he was to shave off his hair, thereby removing the defilement. Here we see that God's requirements for the Nazirite were extremely strict. During the period of the vow, the Nazirite had carefully observed the three regulations God had established. Yet because he had been defiled by death through circumstances beyond his control, he still became ceremonially unclean. After completing a full cycle of seven days, he had to shave his head and begin again from the beginning.

This passage shows us that God pays careful attention to every detail throughout the entire process. There can be no flaw whatsoever. Even when a person is not responsible for the situation but is passively defiled by uncleanness, God does not overlook it. I hope that all believers will leave with a deep impression of this truth. God will never use improper means simply to accomplish His purposes. He requires that the beginning of every matter proceed from genuine faith, that the entire process conform completely to His righteous and just standards, and that the end result bring all glory to Him. If we grasp this principle, it becomes much easier for us to discern, as we live in this world, which activities we may participate in and which we must avoid. Especially in today's society, many groups act in God's name while doing things that are inconsistent with God's righteous principles. May God grant us wisdom so that we may exercise clear discernment in these matters.

Verse 10-11: “Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day.”

The period of uncleanness was to last for seven days. On the seventh day, the Nazirite was to shave his head. Then, on the eighth day—the day of resurrection—death had reached its end, and resurrection would naturally follow. Jesus also died on the cross and rose again on the first day of the week, that is, on the eighth day.

On the eighth day, the Nazirite was to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the entrance of the Tabernacle and present them to the priest. Directly in front of the entrance to the Tabernacle stood the bronze altar. There the priest was to offer the two young pigeons or two turtledoves that the Nazirite had brought. One was to be offered as a sin offering, making atonement for the defilement incurred by coming into contact with death during the period of the vow. The other was to be offered as a burnt offering, signifying that God once again accepted the Nazirite's consecration. Having already shaved his head, he was to become holy again through these offerings.

According to the regulations for the offerings in Leviticus, turtledoves and young pigeons were the smallest sacrificial animals. Generally speaking, they were the offerings brought by the poor. Why, then, were turtledoves or young pigeons required? Perhaps it was because this sin was not one that the Nazirite had committed deliberately, nor was it something within his control. Therefore, he was required to offer the smallest sacrificial animals. Or perhaps God intended to teach him that, in the matter of separating himself wholly unto God, he was like a poor man—without strength or ability of his own—and that he must continually depend upon God's grace and mercy. Therefore, he could bring only the smallest offering, asking God, in His grace, to receive and accept his consecration once again.

Verse 12: “He shall consecrate to the Lord the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.”

This verse makes it very clear that the previous days shall be lost. For example, suppose someone vowed to be a Nazirite for three years. He has already completed two years and eleven months, but in the final month, someone unexpectedly dies beside him. Although this is entirely beyond his control, he has nevertheless been defiled by death. All of the effort he put forth during those previous two years and eleven months is in vain; those days are counted as lost, and he must begin again. He must choose a new period for his vow. If he again vows for a period of three

years, he must start over. On the first day of the new period, he is to bring a one-year-old male lamb as a trespass offering (guilt offering) and present it upon the altar. This is because, in the previous period of his vow, he failed to fulfill what he had vowed. That failure itself constitutes his offense. He must offer a male lamb as a trespass offering, and only after God accepts it may he begin a new period of his Nazirite vow.

Dear brothers and sisters, after we have been saved by grace, we too, in principle, need to pass through the experience represented by the Nazirite vow before we can truly understand God's will for our lives and the commission He has entrusted to us. Our most common experience is that, after making such a vow, we fail to keep the Nazirite regulations throughout the period of consecration, so that the previous days become void. Sometimes we truly make every effort to obey God's commands, yet at an unexpected moment we come into contact with spiritual death. We feel that it is not our fault, and we are unwilling to submit to what seems to us to be God's unreasonable leading. As a result, we become stuck at that point and are unable to complete our Nazirite vow.

We must realize this: if we cannot completely entrust ourselves into God's hands, how could God entrust His ministry to us? Most believers become stuck at one stage or another in the matter of the Nazirite vow and are unable to continue forward. As a result, they never come to understand God's will for their lives, nor are they able to receive the commission that He desires to entrust to them.

Today's passage serves as a valuable reminder to us. Do not ask who is right or wrong. Do not question whether something seems reasonable or fair. Rather, ask yourself whether you are willing to submit unconditionally to God's sovereign authority. If the crown upon our heads falls short of God's glory, then we must begin again in the power of the resurrection life. First, we offer a sin offering, acknowledging that we have fallen short of the glory of God. Then we offer a burnt offering, consecrating ourselves anew to God. Finally, we present Christ as our trespass offering, and begin the Nazirite vow afresh.

Perhaps we must go through this process several times before completing the vow. Yet we should recognize that God is always full of grace, and He is always willing to receive us again—as long as we are willing to begin anew. Through the Nazirite vow, God intends to remove from us everything that is unclean and every element that is displeasing to Him. Under His preserving grace, we will ultimately become true Nazirites. How do you know that you have truly become a Nazirite? It is when you clearly understand God's will for your life and recognize the commission He has entrusted to you. Then you are able to rise up and fulfill the priestly ministry.

Let us pray together: Lord, when You led Peter, James, and John up the high mountain, You were transfigured before them. Only after they beheld Your glory were they able to understand Your will and the commission You entrusted to them. In the same way, You led Paul into the wilderness of Arabia, where for three years You caused him to rediscover Your Word and receive fresh light, revelation, and commission. I ask that You would likewise show me Your grace. Through the experience of the Nazirite vow, help me to know You more deeply, to understand Your leading in my life, and to faithfully bear the commission You have entrusted to me. Bless my daily life, that I may live in complete submission to Your sovereign authority. Enable me to bear, together with the saints around me, the commission You have given to the church, so that the church may become a shining testimony, "as lights in the world", and that we may be "blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." Bless the church of which I am a part. I pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!