

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

Numbers 15:1-10

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 will read Numbers chapter 15. Today we will read verses 1 through 10.

Numbers chapter 14 is an important turning point for the Israelites in the wilderness. The ten spies returned from spying out the land of Canaan, and they reported that the land of Canaan was a good place, a land flowing with milk and honey; but giants dwelt there. These are statements of objective fact, and there is nothing at all wrong with them. What produced the problem was their subjective measuring and evaluation. Facing the giants, they saw themselves as grasshoppers; they forgot that it was God who promised them this good land, and that what they should have been comparing was God with the giants, not themselves with the giants. In their measuring and evaluating there was no God — this was their unbelief.

Because of their negative evaluation, the whole congregation of Israel was affected, leading the Israelites to rise up and complain against God: why did He want to bring them to the land of Canaan, to make them fall by the sword? The subjective evaluation of ten spies actually became the reason for the whole congregation of Israel to rebel against God. After the Israelites came out of Egypt, they witnessed many miracles and received exceedingly great grace from God, yet now they actually fell into the trap of unbelief and rebelled against God.

This time God did not allow it; God immediately rose up to judge. The ten spies who brought the bad report were struck down by the plague. Among the twelve tribes of Israel, the males twenty years old and above who were numbered, who complained against God, would all die in the wilderness and could not enter the good land. Joshua, Caleb, and the women and children of the Israelites would

wander in the wilderness for forty years. Afterward, God would bring them into the good land to possess it as an inheritance.

The forty years of wandering are counted from the day of the exodus from Egypt, so the actual time of wandering is about thirty-eight years and several months. In this long span of time, Numbers uses only five chapters of Scripture to record it, from chapter 15 to chapter 19. Chapter 15 speaks of the matter of the Israelites' offerings; chapters 16 and 17 speak of the rebellion of Korah of the tribe of Levi; chapter 18 speaks of the duties of the priests and the Levites; chapter 19 speaks of using the ashes of a red heifer to make the water of purification. Over a long span of more than thirty-eight years, these are the only events recorded.

This week we read chapter 15, which concerns the matter of offerings. First we must ask, why bring up these matters of offering again? In Leviticus chapters 1 to 7, weren't the five basic offerings and the additional offerings already written out very clearly?

For the first generation of Israelites, they were under God's discipline, and God wanted them to come to know God's authority anew. Although they themselves could not enter the good land, their experience of failure could become a warning to their children. For the new generation of Israelites, they could, in the life of the wilderness, come to know God and to know God's principles through the offerings. We will see that God added some details to the offerings; this was to prepare them so that they could enter the good land and inherit God's promise.

Verses 1-2: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you,""

"When you have come into the land you are to inhabit, which I am giving to you" — how great a gospel this sentence was in the ears of the people of Israel. The LORD God had not forgotten the people of Israel; although they had sinned against God and fallen under God's discipline, so that they wandered in the wilderness. The

first generation of Israelites committed a great error and ought to be disciplined, but it also implicated their children in suffering along with them. I believe that in the heart of every parent, besides guilt and self-reproach, there is still the hope that their children can have a better future.

Now, hearing God speak through Moses to the new generation of Israelites, and telling them with certainty that in the future they would come to the land God was giving them to inhabit — God had not forgotten His promise; He would lead the new generation of the people of Israel into the promised land. The old generation of the people of Israel must have been filled with thanksgiving, tears welling in their eyes, ears wide open, listening attentively to God's command. They themselves had been negligent back then, so that they committed a great error; now, for the sake of the new generation of Israelites, they would listen well and teach them, so as not to repeat the same mistake.

The new generation of Israelites knew that they bore the future of the Israelites on their shoulders. Although the days in the wilderness were difficult, it was precisely in this environment of having nothing that they could look to God's provision and learn to know God and God's principles of doing things. When Moses proclaimed God's command, they were to pay even closer attention to what was different about this command compared with what had been said before.

All the regulations for the offerings, God had already taught in great detail in the Wilderness of Sinai; the regulations were all there. But the previous generation of Israelites still committed a great error. This time, God seems to place special emphasis on the application of the offerings. Especially the grain offering and the drink offering that were offered together with the sacrifice — we must therefore understand what special spiritual significance the grain offering and the drink offering have.

Verse 3: "and you make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering or in your appointed feasts, to make a sweet aroma to the LORD, from the herd or the flock,"

This verse places special emphasis on the offering made by fire to the LORD. If a person is willing to take an ox or a sheep from the herd or the flock and burn it on the altar as a sweet-aroma offering by fire to the LORD, this offering by fire may be a burnt offering, may be a peace offering, or a sacrificial animal offered according to the regulations of the appointed feasts.

The burnt offering is one in which the whole sacrificial animal is to be burned on the altar and offered to God; this typifies a person offering himself completely to God. The peace offering is an offering that God and man enjoy together: part of the sacrificial animal is to be burned on the altar for God, part is to go to the priest, and part is to go to the one presenting the offering; so this is a sacrifice that God and man enjoy together. The reason for offering a peace offering may be for the fulfilling of a vow, or it may be offered willingly out of thanksgiving.

In addition, during the appointed feasts of the Israelites, such as the Passover, Pentecost, or the Feast of Tabernacles, sacrificial animals were to be offered according to the regulations of the offerings. The regulations for the offerings have already been very clearly revealed in Leviticus, and the people of Israel had already been taught to keep them, so God does not repeat these details here. However, as for the grain offering and the drink offering presented together with the sacrificial animal, God had mentioned them at that time, but had not given the details.

For example, in Leviticus 2:2, speaking of presenting the grain offering: "He shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD." How much is a handful of fine flour? And how much is some oil? In the beginning, God seems not to have paid attention to the details; there was a handful of fine flour, there was some oil — as long as the meaning was there, God was satisfied. This is God giving man latitude, letting man offer a suitable amount according to his own inward sense; in essence there is no problem with this.

However, in the unbelief and rebellion at Kadesh, it was shown that the Israelites did not know grace at all. They had experienced many miracles and received exceedingly great grace, yet they still did not believe. Therefore, here, God added

details to the grain offering and the drink offering that were presented together with the sacrifice.

Verses 4-5: "then he who presents his offering to the LORD shall bring a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil; and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering you shall prepare with the burnt offering or the sacrifice, for each lamb."

Here it is mentioned that if the sacrificial animal presented is a lamb, whether it is offered as a burnt offering or as a peace offering, one is to present one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour and one-fourth of a hin of olive oil, mixing the fine flour with oil as a grain offering, to be presented together with the lamb; in addition, one is to present one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering, poured on the burning sacrificial animal, making the fire of the offering blaze more fiercely and the fragrance of the offering more rich.

Let us first look at this: the ephah and the hin were both units of volume at that time. One ephah is 22 liters, and one ephah is 6 hins, so one-tenth of an ephah is 2.2 liters of fine flour, and one-fourth of a hin of oil and wine is equivalent to 0.9 liters, or 900 milliliters. In the sharing below, I will use the units of measurement of that time. Why did God reveal the quantities of the grain offering and the drink offering at this time? God did not directly explain, but it is very clear that it was after the Israelites' failure at Kadesh, when they began to wander in the wilderness, that God specified the quantities of the grain offering and the drink offering, which the next generation of Israelites was to carry out after entering the good land.

Perhaps we can understand God's intention from the spiritual significance of the grain offering and the drink offering. The grain offering is fine flour mixed with oil; the fine flour typifies the tender, fine, pure, and good humanity of Jesus Christ, and the oil typifies the Holy Spirit. Fine flour mixed with oil means that through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the beautiful humanity of Christ is to be constituted into a person.

When a person presents a lamb as a burnt offering or a peace offering, it typifies that the person has experienced the grace of Christ, like a lamb. At this time, the person should grow a correspondingly beautiful character — like one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of olive oil. Among the first generation of Israelites, God gave them latitude, and as a result they abused God's grace, yet did not grow a corresponding spiritual life, so that they had no faith, and even less any manifestation of character. Therefore, God here reminds the new generation of Israelites that they must not waste God's grace, but must grow a corresponding faith and character.

If the failure at Kadesh is to be avoided, the offerings can no longer be kept as ritual regulations; at the same time as presenting the sacrificial animal as consecration or thanksgiving, one must also present a fixed quantity of grain offering; this signifies that in daily life, one's words and conduct are to be governed by the Holy Spirit, and one is to live out a life full of virtues, and in addition one must add one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering.

The meaning of the drink offering is to pour out oneself. Jesus Christ on the cross completely poured out Himself to accomplish redemption for us. Paul also says in 2 Timothy 4:6 that he was to be poured out like a drink offering; Paul also poured out himself.

On the road of following the Lord, our self has always been the greatest obstacle. Therefore, when presenting the burnt offering or the peace offering, one must also add one-fourth of a hin as a drink offering, that is, one must have a corresponding experience of pouring out oneself. The failure at Kadesh was that the Israelites were all filled with themselves, and so when they met difficulty they complained, and when they saw the giants they panicked and were afraid. Therefore, for the new generation of Israelites, God wanted them, at the time of offering, to have the experience and the reality of pouring out themselves.

Verses 6-7: "Or for a ram you shall prepare as a grain offering two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-third of a hin of oil; and as a drink offering you shall offer one-third of a hin of wine as a sweet aroma to the LORD."

If a ram is presented as a burnt offering or a peace offering, there must be a corresponding grain offering and drink offering. The grain offering is to use two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, adding one-third of a hin of olive oil, mixed together as a grain offering; the drink offering is to use one-third of a hin of wine poured on the sacrificial animal, as an offering by fire of a sweet aroma presented to God.

The larger the sacrificial animal presented, the more it typifies a more complete consecration or a deeper thanksgiving; naturally, the corresponding grain offering and drink offering must also be increased. The fine flour is to be two-tenths of an ephah, the oil one-third of a hin, and the wine also one-third of a hin. God wants us to treasure every experience of grace, so that each one brings forth a corresponding growth in life, an increase of faith, and the reality of pouring out oneself. In the new generation of Israelites, God wanted them to examine themselves seriously. Every consecration and thanksgiving offered to God must have real growth in life. And for the New Testament saints, is it not the same? Every Lord's Day breaking of bread and drinking of the cup is a time when we remember the grace of Jesus Christ. Are we able to present a corresponding grain offering and drink offering? May God have mercy on us.

Verses 8-10: "And when you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering, or as a sacrifice to fulfill a vow, or as a peace offering to the LORD, then shall be offered with the young bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil; and you shall bring as the drink offering half a hin of wine as an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the LORD."

These three verses speak of the sacrificial animal presented being a young bull. Among the burnt offerings and peace offerings of the Old Testament, the largest sacrificial animal that could be presented was the young bull. The burnt offering

typifies offering oneself to God; the peace offering is an offering of thanksgiving, presented for the fulfilling of a vow or offered willingly. To be able to present a young bull speaks of having received exceedingly great grace from God, and therefore the grain offering and drink offering presented together with it must be the greatest. He is to present three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, adding half a hin of olive oil mixed together as a grain offering; the grain offering is burned on the altar together with the sacrificial animal, and then half a hin of wine is added as a drink offering, making the burning on the altar more fierce and the fragrance of the offering by fire more rich.

Dear brothers and sisters, the failure at Kadesh was that the Israelites made light of God's grace, so that their spiritual life did not grow, their faith was not increased, and in their living there was no manifestation of character. They wasted God's grace.

For the new generation of Israelites, God added the quantities of the grain offering and the drink offering, helping them, after experiencing God's grace, to examine themselves as to whether there was a corresponding growth in life. For the New Testament saints it is the same. Every time we, because of experiencing God's grace, are willing to consecrate ourselves more, or are willing to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God, we should also examine ourselves: is the character of Jesus Christ able to be manifested in us? That is, how much of the fruit of the Spirit can be shown? Do we have a more complete experience of pouring out ourselves? I hope that every time we experience God's grace, it can bring forth growth in our spiritual life.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You! Through the regulations concerning the offerings that Moses charged the new generation of Israelites with, adding fixed quantities of the grain offering and the drink offering, You also help us to examine ourselves: let it be that after we experience God's grace, the mark of grace is left upon us, that is, that we are able to bear the fruit of the Spirit. May God bless my daily life, that I may know that every difficulty in life is an opportunity to help our life grow and our faith increase. Let us learn to take grace, to overcome difficulties, and to grow the measure of life. Bless my daily life. We pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.