

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal study only)
Numbers 15:11–16

Peace be with you, brothers and sisters, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it is time for our Bible reading again. We will continue reading Numbers chapter 15. Today, we will read verses 11 through 16.

God commanded Moses to instruct the children of Israel that once they entered the promised land, whenever they presented a sweet aroma offering made by fire to the Lord—whether a burnt offering, a peace offering, or an offering for their appointed feasts—they were required, in addition to the animal sacrifice itself, to present a specific, prescribed portion of a grain offering and a drink offering. When God first revealed the sacrificial ordinances at the foot of Mount Sinai, He mentioned accompanying grain and drink offerings, but He did not specify the exact quantities. Following Israel's failure at Kadesh, however, God specifically instituted fixed portions, determining the exact amount of the grain offering and drink offering based on the size of the sacrificial animal.

Perhaps the root cause of Israel's failure lay in treating the sacrifices merely as rigid regulations to follow, never grasping their spiritual significance. Consequently, despite witnessing numerous miracles and receiving God's immense grace, they experienced neither spiritual growth nor an increase in faith. Therefore, when the Israelites presented their offerings by fire, God revealed a proportionate grain offering to urge them to live out an upright character in daily life—one worthy of the grace they had received—so that their offerings would be pleasing and acceptable to God. Furthermore, a corresponding drink offering was required as a reminder to pour out and empty themselves before God. God never intended the Law to be merely an outward set of rules to keep; rather, He desired that after experiencing His grace, the Israelites would live lives that fulfilled the spirit of the Law, truly pleasing God.

Verse 11: “Thus it shall be done for each young bull, for each ram, or for each lamb or young goat.”

The sacrificial animals offered in thanksgiving to God could be a bull, a ram, a lamb, or a young goat. In those days, offerings were made according to the worshiper’s means: wealthier Israelites could present larger offerings, such as a bull, followed by a ram, while those of humbler means could offer a lamb or a young goat.

Today, New Testament believers no longer offer animal sacrifices; what we present instead is our personal experience of Jesus Christ. Some possess a rich, deep experience of Christ, comparable to a bull. Others have an experience akin to a ram, while those with newer or simpler experiences are like lambs. Yet whatever our spiritual experiences may be, they must bring forth a living testimony in our daily walk—manifested in a corresponding Christlike character and the reality of pouring out ourselves.

Whoever offered a bull was required to present three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of olive oil as a grain offering, alongside half a hin of wine as a drink offering. For a ram, the grain offering was two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour with one-third of a hin of olive oil, accompanied by one-third of a hin of wine for the drink offering. For a lamb or a young goat, the grain offering was one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour with one-fourth of a hin of olive oil, alongside one-fourth of a hin of wine for the drink offering. Each sacrifice had to be accompanied by its precisely corresponding grain and drink offerings.

Verse 12: “According to the number that you prepare, so you shall do with everyone according to their number.”

Even if someone presented many sacrificial animals, each individual sacrifice required its own matching grain and drink offerings without exception. Dear brothers and sisters, God repeatedly emphasizes these corresponding offerings to remind us that whenever we experience God’s grace and come to Him in thanksgiving, we must examine ourselves: Has His grace left a lasting mark upon

our lives? Is the fruit of the Holy Spirit growing within us? Out of the nine flavors of the fruit of the Spirit, how many have we produced? Do we possess the genuine reality of emptying ourselves?

Galatians 2:20 states, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” It is no longer I, but Christ living in me. If this is truly our reality, then we must crucify the flesh with its passions and desires. We should ask ourselves: How much victory have we gained over the bad habits and old tempers that have long troubled us? Putting off the old self and putting on the new cannot remain a mere slogan; it must be demonstrated as a living testimony in our everyday lives.

Verse 13: “All who are native-born shall do these things in this manner, in presenting an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.”

The “native-born” in this verse refers to the generations born to the Israelites after entering the promised land. Whenever these Israelites presented an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord, they were to do so in this exact manner; it was to be an ordinance observed throughout their generations. Here, God had already promised in advance that upon entering the good land, the Israelites would multiply; God reminded them to diligently instruct their children, passing down the sacred heritage of sacrifice and worship entrusted to them.

Verse 14: “And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do.”

This verse is very important, yet it is often overlooked. When many people read the Old Testament for the first time—especially the accounts of Israel entering the good land, waging war, and driving out the inhabitants—they struggle with what

seems like sheer ruthlessness. Yet the saints must always remember Genesis 15:16, where God revealed to Abraham why his descendants had to wait four hundred years before inheriting the land of Canaan: because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet complete.

God is a righteous God, and He is also a loving God. In His lovingkindness, God continually bears with human sin, until the point when His righteousness no longer permits Him to hold back—when His love and righteousness reach their divine balance. At that moment, God acts in judgment, and the Israelites were the instruments of His judgment. When the inhabitants of Canaan had filled their measure of wickedness, God led the Israelites into Canaan to drive them out.

Against this backdrop, God specifically noted that if a stranger dwells among you—referring to Gentiles who chose to live alongside Israel—or whoever is among you throughout your generations (referring to the mixed multitude that left Egypt with Israel and remained among them), whenever these foreigners desired to present an offering made by fire as a sweet aroma to the Lord, God's ordinance was that they were to do exactly as the Israelites did, with no distinction whatsoever.

Here we see that God receives all people without partiality. This becomes abundantly clear in the New Testament, where it is underscored repeatedly. For instance, John 3:16 declares: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Likewise, 1 Timothy 2:4 states that He “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” These passages clearly reveal that the salvation of Jesus Christ is for all peoples; this is God’s eternal purpose.

In the execution of God's redemptive plan, however, there was a progression of time. God’s plan required His only begotten Son to become incarnate as a man; only as a man could He bear the sins of humanity, die on the cross, rise from the dead after three days, ascend into heaven, and bestow the Holy Spirit, so that through faith everyone might be born again of the Spirit. For this reason, God chose Israel in the Old Testament as His chosen people, requiring them to preserve their distinct lineage so that in God’s appointed time, Christ could be born of a virgin.

This fulfilled Genesis 3:15, where God promised in Eden that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, and the serpent would bruise His heel. God chose Israel with the specific purpose of bringing forth Jesus to accomplish His redemptive plan.

God specifically gave the Law to encircle Israel within its boundaries, setting them apart as a unique people among all nations, separated from the Gentiles. Yet even though Israel enjoyed a special status under the Old Covenant, whenever a foreigner sought God and was willing to live among Israel, they too could offer a sweet aroma offering to the Lord, and their sacrificial regulations were identical to Israel's: as you do, so shall they do.

Verse 15: "One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord."

God gave only one ordinance for sacrifice and worship. The congregation of Israel and the stranger residing among them were governed by the very same ordinance, established as a perpetual statute throughout their generations—not merely for that generation, but for all generations to come. Before the Lord, as you are, so shall the stranger be, for God's salvation was always destined for all nations.

Verse 16: "One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you."

God truly shows no partiality. Throughout these verses, God emphasizes again and again that Israel and the stranger dwelling among them were to observe the same law and follow the same customs. In human pride and prejudice, of course, people are always inclined to regard their own nation as superior. The Israelites, uniquely blessed in the Old Testament as God's chosen people, looked down on the Gentiles,

which directly contradicted God's core values. Consequently, Israel's history became rife with rebellion and divine discipline.

As the Church—God's chosen people under the New Covenant—we must bear firmly in mind that salvation is for all peoples. Before His ascension, Jesus Christ commanded His disciples to proclaim the gospel to all inhabited lands, giving all people the opportunity to hear the gospel, believe, and become children of God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Today, God has established churches in every city in the hope that each church will be a blessing to its community, so that through the church's testimony, local residents may come to know the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the commission God has entrusted to us. Having received the grace of Jesus Christ, may we live out a beautiful testimony in our daily walk and become a channel of blessing to others.

Let us pray together: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for Your grace. Because of Your sacrifice, we have been saved through faith, and through the Holy Spirit indwelling us, You lead us each day to live a life pleasing to God. Help us, having experienced Your grace, to bear the corresponding fruit of the Holy Spirit. Bless also the local church where we serve; may the saints dwell together in unity and love one another, so that anyone who does not know Jesus Christ may come into our midst and declare that God is truly among us. Help the church to be a radiant testimony for You. In the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray, Amen.