

The Book of Leviticus

Lesson 9: Cleansing of Disease and Bodily Discharges -- Leviticus 14:1–15:33

Picture a man who has lived outside the camp. For months, maybe years, he has worn torn clothes, kept his hair unkempt, and cried out “Unclean, unclean” so that anyone approaching would veer away. He has eaten alone, slept alone, worshiped no one in person, and watched the tents of Israel from a distance like a child pressed against a window he cannot enter. Leprosy did not only attack his skin. It severed him from his family, from the table, and from the tabernacle where God met His people. Now imagine the morning the disease begins to fade and the skin clears. Hope flickers. Could he go home?

Leviticus 14 opens with that very moment, and it opens with grace. “This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing” (14:2). God does not leave the healed man guessing at the door. He gives a way back. A priest goes out to him, outside the camp, and inspects, and if the cleansing is real, an elaborate and beautiful ritual begins. Two birds, cedar wood, scarlet thread, hyssop, running water, blood, oil. Step by careful step, the outsider is washed, examined, anointed, and welcomed home. The law of the leper is not a law of rejection. It is a roadmap of restoration.

Then chapter 15 turns to the more private and ordinary uncleannesses of the body, the discharges of men and women that touched every household in Israel. These are not glamorous verses. We may be tempted to skim them. But they teach us something we badly need to relearn, that holiness reaches into the bedroom and the sickbed and the most hidden corners of life, and that the God who dwells in the midst of His people takes seriously what defiles and what restores. Nothing about us is too small or too embarrassing for His care and His call to cleanness.

We come to these chapters as Christians who are not bound by their ceremonies, for the Lord has declared all foods clean and torn down the wall of ceremonial law at the cross (Mark 7:18–19; Colossians 2:16–17). Yet we do not skip them, for they were written for our instruction (Romans 15:4). Every bird that bled, every drop of oil on the ear and thumb and toe, every washing in running water whispers of a deeper cleansing to come. They point past themselves to the blood of Christ, which cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7), and to the Savior who reached out His hand, touched the untouchable, and said, “I will; be thou clean” (Mark 1:41).

Group Discussion: Why do you think God required the priest to go outside the camp to the healed leper, rather than making the man come to the tabernacle first? What does that movement reveal about how God deals with the unclean?

Personal Reflection: Is there an area of your life you have quietly walked outside the camp over, assuming you are too unclean to come home to full fellowship with God and His people? What would it look like to let the blood of Christ bring you all the way back?

Read Leviticus 14:1–15:33

Study Questions

1. What does the cleansing ritual of the healed leper in Leviticus 14, with its two birds, blood, and running water, teach us about how God provides a way back to fellowship for the unclean?
2. When have you experienced the relief of being restored to fellowship after a season of feeling cut off, and how did you respond to those who welcomed you back?
3. The blood and oil were applied to the right ear, thumb, and toe of the cleansed leper, the same places anointed at the priests' consecration (Leviticus 14:14–18; 8:23–24). What does this parallel teach about what God's cleansing is meant to produce in a person?
4. Which part of your life right now most needs to be consecrated to listening, doing, and walking with God, and what is one concrete step toward setting it apart for Him?
5. What does the law for a house with spreading mold (Leviticus 14:33–53), including tearing out stones and even pulling the house down, reveal about the thoroughness and seriousness with which God deals with defilement?

6. Where in your life have you been tempted to scrape the surface of a sin or problem rather than dealing with it thoroughly, and what has that cost you?
7. Chapter 15 brings holiness into the most private and bodily areas of life. What does it teach us that God's concern for cleanness extends even into the hidden and ordinary corners of a person's daily existence?
8. How does knowing that no part of your life is hidden from God or beneath His concern change the way you live when no one else is watching?
9. Hebrews 9:13–14 says the blood of bulls and goats sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, but how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience. Drawing on all of Leviticus 14–15, explain how these ceremonial cleansings were shadows pointing to the full and final cleansing accomplished by the blood of Christ, and why His cleansing reaches what theirs never could.
10. Looking across these two chapters, the healed leper, the cleansed house, the washings and the welcome home, name one specific way the Christ who touches the unclean and makes them whole is forming you to both receive His cleansing and extend His welcome to others.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Mark 1:40–42, Jesus touches the leper and the man is immediately cleansed, fulfilling the hope behind Leviticus 14; Hebrews 9:13–14, the blood of Christ purges the conscience where animal blood could only purify the flesh; 1 John 1:7, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin; Acts 10:9–16, God declares clean what was once unclean, freeing Christians from the ceremonial code; 1 Peter 1:15–16, the call that flows from cleansing is to be holy in all manner of living.

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