

God's Handbook on Holiness - Part 4

by Roy Hession

Leprosy is a picture of the breaking out of the will of the flesh in a deliberate way, in a persistent way, in words, actions and attitudes.

Duration: 52:55

Scripture: Leviticus 14:3

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of three witnesses to establish the truth of God's word. They discuss priestly action and the belief that the priest would have all believed them. The purpose is not to kick someone off, but rather to gain back a brother who has strayed. If the person refuses to listen, the matter should be brought to the church or wider fellowship. Breaking fellowship is necessary for the purity of the testimony. The speaker also discusses the ritual of cleansing a leper, highlighting the symbolism of the shedding of blood and the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing the finished work of Jesus. The sermon concludes with a call to discernment and the need to pray for spiritual insight.

Transcript

The reading is from Leviticus chapter 13, commencing at verse 1. Reading from verse 1, And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons, the priests. And the priest shall look on the plague in the skin of the flesh. And when the hair in the plague is turned white, and the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of his flesh, it is a plague of leprosy, and the priest shall look on him and pronounce him unclean.

If the bright spot be white in the skin of his flesh, and in sight be not deeper than the skin, and the hair thereof be not turned white, then the priest shall shut him up that hath the plague seven days, and the priest shall look on him the seventh day. And if the plague in his sight be at a stay, and the plague spread not in the skin, then the priest shall shut him up seven days more, and the priest shall look on him again the seventh day. And behold, if the plague be somewhat dim or dark, not so inflamed, and the plague spread not in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean.

It is but a scab, and he shall wash his clothes and be clean. But if the scab spread much abroad in the skin, after that he hath been seen of the priest for his cleansing, he shall be seen of the priest again. And if the priest see that, behold, the scab spreadeth in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him unclean.

It is a leprosy. And when the plague of leprosy is in a man, then he shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall see him. And behold, if the rising be white in the skin, and if it have turned the hair white, and there be quick raw flesh in the rising, it is an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh.

And the priest shall pronounce him unclean, and shall shut him up, for he is unclean. And then it goes on to speak of how leprosy can be not only in a man's skin, but in verse 29, he can have leprosy upon the head, or the beard. And later, leprosy can even be in a garment.

Quite what sort of leprosy or disease this was, nobody is quite sure, I think. But apparently, a garment could have some horrid spreading growth in it, and there are instructions later in this chapter as to how you are to deal with that. And in chapter 14, even a house can have some such infection.

Not an infection as we know, which is invisible, but some growth. And also there are instructions as to how that is to be dealt with. But going back to the individual man who has been found to be a leper, you have in verse 44 the sad lot of such a man.

Verse 44, he is a leprous man, he is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him utterly unclean. His plague is in his head.

And here is his plight. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare. And he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry unclean, unclean.

All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled, he is unclean. He shall dwell alone without the camp, shall his habitation be. And so that chapter deals with the diagnosis of the leper, of leprosy, and the sad exclusion of the leper from his fellows.

And then in 14 we have the bright prospect of that leper being healed, and what is to take place as a ceremony with regard to him in the day of his healing. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought unto the priest, and the priest shall go forth out of the camp, and the priest shall look, and behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper, then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed, two birds, alive and clean, and cedarwood, and scarlet, and hyssop.

And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedarwood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.

And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. And after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days. But it shall be on the seventh day that he shall shave all his hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off.

And he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean. And on the eighth day he shall take two he-lambs without blemish, and one ewe-lamb of the first year without blemish, and three-tenth deals of fine flour for a meal offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean and those things before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

And the priest shall take one he-lamb and offer him for a trespass offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. And he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin offering, and the burnt offering in the holy place. For as the sin offering is the priest's, so is the trespass offering, it is most holy.

And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot. And the priest shall take some of the log of oil, and pour it into the palm of his own left hand. And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in the left hand, and shall sprinkle of the oil with his finger seven times before the Lord.

And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand, shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, upon the thumb of his right hand, upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering. And the remnant of the oil that is in the priest's hand, he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed, and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord. And the priest shall offer the sin offering, and make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness.

And afterward he shall kill the burnt offering. There you have the sin offering and the burnt offering. First the sin offering, but not left until the burnt offering has also been offered.

And the priest shall offer the burnt offering, and the meal offering upon the altar, and so on. That more or less completes that piece of ritual. Now here we come this morning to the solemn matter of the presence of leprosy among the people of God, among the congregation of God.

We've read of how this disease was to be diagnosed by the priest, of the exclusion of the leper from his tent, and from the privileges of the congregation, as long as he had this disease. We've read too the possibility of grace healing that leper, and of the ritual of restoration, which was to be performed on his behalf by the priest, when he was healed. Now here we have again another case of what we may call God creating an artificial uncleanness, in order to picture for us the real uncleanness caused by sin.

There was nothing really unclean as such, or defining about leprosy. I think you don't regard measles as unclean, it's infectious. But not unclean, not shameful.

But here leprosy is regarded as unclean and shameful. It's only artificially so, because God is picturing something bigger. And actually this matter of leprosy is an embarrassing thing, especially in countries where it exists.

We can talk about leprosy as a type of sin, and nobody has a shock in their heart. But in Africa and elsewhere it's difficult, because there may be some lepers in your congregation. And in any case, there's always the fear of anybody there contracting it.

Supposing in the Bible cancer was given as a picture of leprosy. Would you like your preachers to be always talking about the cancer of sin, when maybe someone in your family is suffering from it? Would you like it to be put out that the cancer is a picture of sin, which renders the sinner unclean? Would somehow not that conception get over to the actual disease? It would. We wouldn't appreciate it.

And a cancer patient would feel very terrible. And I have sometimes taken leprosy as a picture of sin, and had someone who suffered from leprosy come up to me and said, Brother, you mustn't do it. I'm thinking of a doctor from East Africa, who in his work among lepers himself contracted leprosy.

And he finds it very difficult to hear people talk about leprosy in these terms, as a defiling thing. And the trouble is it gets over into people's thinking. But actually it is not defiling in itself at all, save medically.

But then lots of other things are so. The common cold. But we don't think there's anything very defiling about it.

But God here has elected to take this particular disease and call it rendering a man unclean. It's only artificially so, because he's picturing something else. And if perhaps you think, well, it's certainly contagious, all right.

But then there are other things in the book of Leviticus, which are said to be defiling, about which there's no medical suggestion of a thing being contagious at all. And so here you have in this book one of the several things which are said to render a man ceremonially unclean, only because it's picturing a greater uncleanness. And it pictures, too, a greater cleansing than anything that was performed over the leper.

And the reason, as I say for this, is that this is really a handbook on holiness. And God was teaching the people in those days, in picture form, what holiness was. And they got some sort of conception, I'm sure.

We may have a fuller conception. And God wants us to see what holiness is, as we see this that made a man unclean and unfit for living in his tent among the people. Well, now, what are we, do you think, is to, what are we to take leprosy as a picture of? Now, we don't want to be superficial.

We want to try and get the whole message of these two chapters. Well, I'm going to suggest to you, and I've given this thought and have been helped by one or two writers on the subject, that leprosy is a picture to us of the breaking out of the will of the flesh in a deliberate way, in a persistent way, in words, actions and attitudes. Now, let's define what the flesh is.

The flesh in the New Testament isn't merely the worst part of you. Someone has said, if you drop off the last H and spell it backwards, you've got it. S-E-L-F.

It's human nature with self as its centre. And that, of course, is the normal condition of human nature. And we have various definitions of human nature in the New Testament, of the flesh in the New Testament.

Turn to Romans 8 for a definition of the flesh. Romans 8, verse 7. There we have the carnal mind is enmity against God. Well, now, the revised versions all make that a little clearer.

And they put it, the mind of the flesh. The carnal mind is literally the mind of the flesh. And the mind of the flesh means the disposition of the flesh.

The disposition of that nature that you've inherited from Adam. What is its disposition? The disposition of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God.

Neither, indeed, can be. Though sometimes it tries, but it never succeeds. Now, that is the fallen nature with which you and I are born.

Now, I think to get the full message of this passage, one doesn't regard leprosy merely as a picture of the flesh. We all have that. And there are other pictures that tell us of the sacrifices, of the judgment of self, which is necessary.

But I suggest to you that leprosy is the breaking out, in ostensible ways, in determined ways, of the will of that flesh. The coming out into evidence in a pronounced way of the will of the flesh. They had to discern whether it was leprosy or whether it wasn't.

They had to be very careful they didn't make a mistake. That a man was not excluded just for a scab. It had to be the real thing.

And so it was, they had to discern, was this leprosy, was this a case where it made his continued dwelling among their midst impossible? Did he have to be excluded? Now, in the Old Testament there are three cases, terrible cases where men became lepers consequent upon their sin as an act of judgment. Of course, within that dim period before grace has been fully revealed, it's so lovely that under grace Jesus Christ never made a man a leper. He healed them.

He never struck anybody dead. He never made anybody blind. His miracles are all consistent and illustrative of the purpose of his coming was to set captives free and to save sinners.

But here in the period before grace was fully revealed you have these terribly solemn acts of judgment and we've got to learn from this to what God thinks of us and our sin. There are three such cases of people who were struck with leprosy because of their sin. You can remember them, can you not? You have Miriam and she became a leper as a chastening on her for her sin.

Her sin of being jealous of Moses and criticizing him. She criticized him because of the wife he married. He married a colored woman and she criticized him as his elder sister.

But if you look at the story again you see the real reason was jealousy. Has the Lord only spoken by Moses? Has he not spoken by Arian and by me, said Miriam? And the Lord spoke on Moses' behalf and Miriam became a leper. And I can think we can regard leprosy as the breaking out of jealousy in a persistent, a pronounced, and a determined way.

And you can. I've had problems with that myself. It isn't just the passing thing, it's the thing cherished, the thing indulged in, the thing that even determines your actions and attitudes.

Of course we don't call it jealousy, we have other reasons, but that's the basic thing and it's something persistent which makes our continued fellowship with the other saints virtually impossible. Something's got to be done about that and done very often by the saints. There was Gehazi who corrupted the free grace of God by asking for those gifts from Naaman.

Elisha wouldn't touch them. He wanted Naaman to be obligated entirely to God and grace obligated to God in a way that law never does. Grace asks nothing as an obligation from you but you find you've got to give yourself and you want to.

And Gehazi spoiled the whole thing by covetousness, wanting that gold and those garments. And he was struck down with leprosy. And perhaps we can regard that as another way in which the will of the flesh may break out in a deliberate way.

We set ourselves upon courses which are prompted by covetousness. We find ourselves doing wrong things, not always utterly honest, compromising because we want gain, we want money, we want advancement. And though people have told us of the danger of the course we're on, we persist in it, that's leprosy.

And then there was the third case of King Uzziah who presumed to go into the holy place to offer incense which was permitted only by the priest but he said, why shouldn't I? And he pushed himself into the priest's office and he was arguing with them when suddenly they saw the spot of Piraeus horrid and he went out a leper to the day of his death. And there was pride that pushed itself. I'm going to suggest to you that the leprosy spoken of here is not those movements of pride that we do have, we can go to Jesus with.

But that which is cherished, that which is persisted in, that which becomes a motive, that which makes us so difficult, that which sometimes causes parties and factions among the saints, it's really what we call a personality problem which is really a sin problem. It's the breaking out of the flesh in persistent courses. And something's got to be done about it by the man himself and if he won't then what's to happen? And sometimes as I say the priest says, we shall see who they are in a moment, have to do something.

Now while we are expressing the will of our fallen natures in persistent ways along various lines, there are three things that happen. First, the whole man is characterized by it. That becomes his characteristic.

It isn't just an incursion, an occasional thing. When you think of that man you think, well that's him. There may be other features about him but they're lost sight of in this, which now characterizes the whole man in other people's eyes and in God's.

This man wasn't just a little scab, he was a leper. Secondly, he was unclean with regard to God. Ceremonially in the case of the leper but with us actually so.

Unable to hold communion with that holy God, whose eyes are as a flame of fire. We may kid ourselves we're all right. We may get those backing us up in whatever course it is.

We get those agreeing with us. But that man is unclean, a persistent expression of the will of that flesh in various ways and we lose that sweet fellowship with the one who dwells with those that are of a contrite and broken spirit. But that's not ours.

And then we are rendered unfit for fellowship with God's people. We become a trouble to them, concern to them, sometimes a source of division. Any of us may find ourselves responsible for that.

Don't think of the other man who's a source of division in your church or in your fellowship. You, I, we can very soon attract to us. Birds of a feather flock together.

And talking on a rather wider line, I've been amazed how birds of a feather do flock together. You know in one day a rebellious person, fighting against the gospel there in this house party, is attracted to the other rebellious person they've hardly met by an extraordinary attraction. You reveal yourself by the very people that you attract to yourself.

And if you've got a rebellious spirit, you'll find somebody else will start talking about it. They'll dump their rubbish on you and you say, yes, yes, yes, I feel the same. And we find we're spoiling the fellowship of God's people.

And we've rendered ourselves unfit for our place in the congregation of the Lord. And it was expressed by the fact that that man had to leave his tent outside the camp. We read, shall his habitation be.

I'm not building up a doctrine of excommunication on this. We excommunicate ourselves. It's patent and obvious.

Though we aren't actually going around saying unclean, unclean. It's going out to my lives and it's patent to other people too. Unclean.

Outside the sweet fellowship of those that love the Lord. There has been manifested in us a persistent, rebellious, determined will of the flesh along one line or another. And you're outside the congregation of the Lord.

Not by anybody's action other than our own. Now the interesting thing is that the priests had to take action. First of all, their real purpose was to be the friend of this leper.

Not his foe. And if they were called into diagnosis, it wasn't merely to say it was leprosy. But more often to say that it wasn't.

They were there, one of the kindly laws of God, lest injustice should be done. Lest a man might lose his place in the congregation for what wasn't leprosy at all in your superficial scab. And then of course their ministry came into its own as it never did in any other way when the leprosy was healed.

They were the friend of the leper. They went outside the camp. They were the ones who loved him.

They were the ones who were the first to rejoice at the signs of healing. And they were the ones who brought him in and performed on his behalf the ritual that symbolized his complete restoration to God and the people of God. The priesthood of all believers is a phrase among us.

It's been coined against the wrong doctrine that there's a special class of priests. In Rome or in certain parts of even the Protestant church there's an exaltation of the ordained ministry and slowly, slowly you get the idea that they're priests and they really act. They come between us and God.

And rightly and properly, those who have rediscovered the gospel from the Reformation onwards have refused all such vain pretensions. No priest but Christ, no altar but Calvary, and no confessional but the throne of grace. And the man who believes the Bible must absolutely refuse every such vain pretension.

There is nothing unique about ordination. We're all sheep among sheep. And so it's come to be coined this phrase the priesthood of all believers.

But I'm afraid the priesthood of all has degenerated to the priesthood of none. If there is such a thing as the priesthood of all believers, what am I doing about it? And I have to confess very little. Here's a sphere which I know I've experienced and know very little of.

We're meant to do for one another as priests what these priests did for the poor leper. There are times when, alas, we must discern leprosy. There are other times when we say, no, no, that's not leprosy.

Let's go on tearing with him. Let's encourage him. It's no good taking any other line.

And then there are times when grace has worked in a man's life as priests. We're to be his friend and to encourage him on the way back to God as never before. And so those were the two great works that the priest had to do to diagnose what really was leprosy, but always as his friend.

And then to help the restored, healed leper back to his place. Now, I haven't had time to count up the number of times that a phrase comes here, the priest shall look. The priest shall look.

And in the revised versions even more, the priest shall see in some places. But in every such case, it's a repetition of the same word, the priest shall look. The priest shall look.

The priest shall look. And here is emphasized for us the need for discernment. Because every one of us has some measure of leadership given to us.

The moment you become a Christian, you have a sphere. You become in some measure your brother's keeper. We are responsible for one another.

You ought to grieve us when a brother gets wrong with God. But if we don't look, if we haven't eyes to see, we'll say, oh no, no, that's nothing, nothing to be worried about, we didn't pray about that, he's all right. We've got to be people.

The priest shall look. I remember Joe Church recognizing in me this terrible lack of discernment. He said, Roy, he said, pray for x-ray vision.

And as believers, we need to pray for x-ray vision. We need to be able to look. Does it discern? What isn't a lawless breaking out of the will of the flesh? But something not so deep as that.

On our occasion, we need to be able to discern what is. Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction.

Does it discern? What isn't a lawless breaking out of the will of the flesh? But something not so deep as that. On our occasion, we need to be able to discern what is. And then the discernment to see the signs of grace working in a man's heart, the softening of his heart, and then the encouraging of that.

Well, I thank God that I've been the subject of the priesthood of some believers. I thank God for their loving discernment of me in my hour of need, how they've rallied round, how they sought to help me, how they've been faithful with me, and how they were the first to rejoice when my heart began to be softened, I began to repent and judge myself. And they encouraged me back to the cross.

So, there's quite a lot here about the part played by the priests. Now, we're told here the symptoms by which they were to discern leprosy. And we've only read part of it.

You could read it more carefully sometime. There seem to be three symptoms, evidences of leprosy. The first was, the basic thing was there was an inflammation.

That was the thing. Well, what is that inflammation? It could be anything. But that's the thing.

It's an inflammation when the flesh gets inflamed. Do you know what an inflammation is? Do you know something that's stewing inside? It's a bright spot, a red spot. Your feelings against another, your feelings are up in arms, you're wanting the things of the world, being attracted to a path of compromise.

Well, there's an inflammation. But what is it? And leprosy was discerned if the inflammation had three things about it. First, if there were white hairs in it.

Normally a man's hair, especially among the Jews, would be dark. But if in the midst of that inflammation the hairs were white, that was a telltale sign. And white hairs was, of course, a picture of death coming in.

The color was dying out from those hairs. And I would suggest to you that picture's the fact that this inflammation may be something much more serious if there's death in it, if I'm unresponsive to grace. I imagine, it is a fact, doctors will bear me out, I know so little of it medically, that one of the great dangers of leprosy is insensitiveness.

And I'm unresponsive to the grace of God. I'm not touched by the sweetness of that message. There's a death in my heart, an insensitiveness.

I'm going on with that attitude. And the sweet message of grace does nothing to touch me. There's an unresponsiveness, I suggest, to grace pictured by this.

And then you will notice that the second thing was if, verse four, if in sight, verse three, when the hair in the plague is turned white, and secondly, the plague in sight be deeper than the skin of its flesh. When it's deeper than the skin. You see, we have to discern, is this just an infirmity of manner? Is this the giving way to irritability along certain lines? It's sin, we're not excusing it.

But it doesn't partake of that character of leprosy, I suggest. The determined persistence in this is not deeper than the skin. Now, if it didn't seem deeper than the skin, then they would shut the man up to see if there was some improvement.

And under grace, there is a working of God all the time toward healing. You may get worked up. You may be up in arms.

You may feel bitter. But normally the grace of God is at work and you begin to say, well, perhaps I am a bit wrong. And after all, I'm as bad as he is.

I've done the same thing that he is. And after all, he is my brother. And after seven days, or perhaps we trust seven hours, or better still, seven minutes, or best of all, seven seconds, grace is softening your heart.

And the thing doesn't spread. And it really is something on the surface. And you take it to Jesus and you're reconciled.

Ah, but there can be some things that are deeper than the skin. There's will behind it. I will hold it against him.

I will regard myself as wrong. I will take it out of him. I will go the way of the world.

I'm not going to. It isn't just a young person's passing fascination with some of the things that perhaps they ought not to be fascinated with, but there's will that's deeper than the skin. This is leprosy.

This is what's going to make that man unclean. And he's going to excommunicate himself outside the congregation of the Lord. And then a third, where is it? Raw flesh.

Verse 10. And behold, if the rising be white in the skin, and it hath turned the hair white, and there be quick raw flesh in the rising, it is an old leprosy. And sometimes the flesh is real raw, isn't it? My goodness, you touch them.

They're up in arms. There's no doubt about the persistence of it and their intentions. They're going to persist in that course.

Well, now this is it. What a terrible thing. A man persists in treating his wife in a certain way.

A man persists in sticking to his guns over a thing that's causing trouble. A person persists in going the way of compromise in spite of all the loving entreaties of those that love him or her best. It's the breaking out of the will of the flesh in a determined way, I suggest.

And the only thing was, he had to be excluded. Once again, I'm not suggesting there's any doctrine of excommunication, but the very fact that we're in that state, we do communicate to ourselves. And yet, there is a part for brethren to play even here.

Look at Matthew 17, 15. Matthew 17, 15. Matthew 18, 15.

If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. And if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

Here is priestly action. The priesthood of all believers. And the purpose is not to kick that man off.

Thou hast gained thy brother. We've lost him. We want to get him back.

We love him. But if he won't be won back, then let another person come. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church, the assembly, the fellowship, whatever the wider group may be.

And if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man in the public. And sometimes, breaking fellowship, it needn't be done in any official way, it's just there in the spirit, is essential for the purity of the general testimony. We've got to disassociate ourselves sometimes with something.

And how terrible if I'm the man occasioning all this sorrow of heart, all this exercise of heart because of my persistence and unwillingness to break. It's leprosy. You see, I'm not trying to put onto this passage the old, old message.

You say, well, whatever these fellows take, the old, old message, any old scripture, put the old message on it. No, I'm trying to find for myself. It's as much a discovery for me as for you what really is meant to be.

The teaching, the emphasis from this passage. Well, now we come to the restoration of the leper. Leviticus chapter 14.

Now, will you please notice that the ceremony of cleansing in chapter 14 only takes place after the leper has been healed. That cleansing not even pictorially produced any healing in the man. The man had to be healed by the grace of God.

Now, of course, until modern drugs came, we thought leprosy was incurable. Well, it's possible that the leprosy mentioned here may not be the leprosy that we talk about leprosy. So say those writers.

I mean, how could leprosy be in a garment or in a house? It was something else maybe. You could say that here was a ceremony that was only used when Jesus came, when the first leper was healed. But it is possible there were things that they generally classified as leprosy which weren't of the same incurable disease that we know it.

There was doubt it was the incurable sort then. But maybe this word includes a much wider range of diseases. I don't know.

But this much is clear. This man's been healed. And he's been healed by the grace of God.

There outside the camp, a miracle takes place. And it is to that place outside the camp when the news comes that the priest hastens with joy to bring his brother in. And the cleansing of the blood of Jesus is effective only after you've been healed.

Now healing in this sense I take to be when grace is so worked in our hearts that we've judged ourselves. You see this in Isaiah 6. When at last he said, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in a people of unclean lips. Woe is me for I've seen the Lord.

He's healed. In the sense that he's judged it. He's repented.

Now there can be cleansing afterwards. Then through one of the seraphim. And let's get it clear.

This matter of cleansing is something that happens after grace has worked in our hearts, softened our hearts, and we've judged ourselves, and we've repented. Oh, you say, that's all right when I've repented. Oh, no, no.

As much has got to happen afterwards. But first, grace has got to help us to repent. And only grace can.

When we've been persisting in some course, justifying ourselves, thinking everybody's wrong, we're the only ones that are right. It's grace that does this work. It's a wonderful thing.

Not rightly do we sing, glory, glory, hallelujah. Thank God for the ways and the times when grace has worked in your life and grace has worked in mine. I've been outside the camp, feeling out of touch with my brothers.

Everybody's wrong except me. And you know, we get so miserable that in our misery, oh, God, do something for me. Do you really mean that? Yes, Lord.

And he does it. And we don't know how it happens. We reverse our attitude.

We who were so right, now we see to be wrong. And grace has reached the leper. Do you remember what happened when a leper was healed by Jesus when he said, Right, now the first thing you've got to do is go show yourself to the priests.

And isn't that true to experience? When there's been something wrong and God's softened your heart, you know the first thing you've got to do is go and tell your brothers, Brethren, I'm sorry. God's made me. But don't be surprised if the priests want to go deeper with you.

Sometimes I put something right and thought they'd all praise, etc. But they said, Yes, brother, that's very good. Praise God.

But now, did you see this? Oh, I said, Wait a minute. I don't want to be dissected. I don't want you to.

Now, have you really seen what it costs Jesus? You see? Oh, no. You go show yourself to the priests and the priests may take a rather deeper view of it than even we have. Thank God for the healing.

But it's all to our completest restoration. And so we have here, have when they saw when the priest looked and discerned that the grace had worked this miracle, then they performed the restoring ritual upon him. Well, now, this is more familiar to us perhaps than the other.

Perhaps it isn't familiar to any of us, to some of us at all. But we've often heard messages on this part. But I like to see all this with the background, this rather solemn background.

Well, praise God. Grace has reached this man. And so the priest commands to take for him that it is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean with cedarwood, scarlet and hyssop.

And one of the birds is killed in an earthen in an earthen vessel over running water. There's the running water in the vessel and the blood drips into it. And then that blood and water mixed is sprinkled on him that is to be made clean.

And then the living bird is dipped into the blood and water and allowed to escape in the sky. Well, there you have the two sides of the work of our Lord Jesus. Two sides of it.

First of all, the shedding of that precious blood for my sin. Oh, I've repented. But I've yet to come to the cross.

I've yet to get this really right with God. I've really yet to see the blood of the Lord Jesus. And will you notice it's mingled with water.

Water is ever a picture of the Holy Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit that witnesses to the blood. It's the Holy Spirit that reveals the finished work of Jesus.

He has shed his blood. The work's been done to put me right with God. But until the Spirit reveals that to me, I'm still mourning.

I'm still chastening myself. Oh, how many times the Holy Spirit has pointed me to Jesus and the blood. It's the Spirit that applies the precious blood to me.

And then I see that other bird, that other side of the work taking my sins far away. Living, he loved me. Dying, he saved me.

Buried, he carried my sins far away. Rising, he justified freely forever. One day he's coming.

Oh, glorious day. And having done that ceremony upon him. Of course, no other man can do it for me.

He can encourage me, counsel me. I, who'm now feeling so sad and down about myself, he can point me to Jesus and pray with me, maybe. But it's something the Spirit has to do.

Then, this man was pronounced clean. But I want you to notice I've underlined two words. Verse seven, and shall pronounce him clean.

Verse nine, he shall be clean. There was a period between being pronounced clean and actually being clean. Ten to eight, seven days.

And in that period, he who had been pronounced clean was, in verse eight, required to wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and wash himself in water. And I believe the washing of the clothes means that the man who has repented and come for cleansing to the Lord Jesus must then be willing to deal with his

habits and his associations. If you and I have been in a persistent act of self-will and rebellion, it's bound to affect lots of things, courses of action, things I'm involved in, habits, associations.

And I've got to be willing for God to show me and quit them and cleanse myself by repentance and restitution or putting things right or giving up or writing letters. This is the other side. It wasn't only the blood sprinkled and the conscience given peace, but the outer life had to be dealt with.

That's what you get in Hebrews 10, having your conscience cleansed from an evil conscience and your body washed with pure water. It's this washing of the clothes. And then there had to be the sharp razor shaving off all the hair, even the eyebrows, which might have been affected.

The razor of self-judgment on this, on that. And then, on the eighth day, he shall be clean. It doesn't mean to say that our restoration to God has got to take seven or eight days.

I think seven means the job's got to be complete. Seven is a perfect number. But please don't talk to yourself saying, I don't think it'll ever be complete.

He wants it in the realm of your... Lord, I'm willing for you to show me everything that's got contaminated in this period when I've been a leper. We wash our clothes and we're to use the razor of self-judgment upon ourselves. This, that and the other.

Oh, my dear friend, the ramifications. God had to show me how certain things, things I'd written, were all shot through with jealousy. I had an awful... just to trace it all back.

That's it, washing the clothes, using the razor. All had been cleansed. But this was an essential part for my fullest restoration to God.

Even then it wasn't over. Oh, you say, not more. Are you still talking to me? Still trying to counsel me? Isn't it all over? There was then the trespass offering.

That's the fifth of the offerings, a variant of the sin offering. And if there was any difference between the trespass offering and the sin offering, it was the trespass offering dealt with more specific acts of sin. Anyway, there comes the trespass offering and the oil.

We can't go into too many details for the time is nearly gone. But the trespass offering, the lamb or the kid of the goats is offered, and the blood sprinkled before God, as ever. And then here's an interesting thing.

Part of that blood was put on the ear and the right thumb and the right big toe of the leper. In other words, this man who'd been outside the camp is claimed for God, claimed for the will of God. This man is going to be a saint.

He's not going to be just restored and get in by the back door. He's going to be made as right with God as the blood can make him, and more than that, his whole capacities are going to be claimed for God in a way they never were before. And other people didn't have this ceremony.

It was lepers. Why, lepers seem to be more separated from God after they were healed, separated to God after they were healed than anybody else. And oh, how wonderful grace is.

You seem to be brought to a place further on than you ever were before things went wrong. In fact, that man knows the grace of God now more than other people do who've never failed as he has, and he's

characterized by devotion. His heart's been won by the grace of God that perhaps other people don't, but more than that, than the oil.

Oil was put on the same place, ear, thumb, and toe. And will you notice verse 17, last phrase, upon the blood of the trespass offering was put the oil. If water is a picture of the Holy Spirit, so also is oil.

And the oil was not put upon his flesh direct. First the blood, then the oil. The blood speaks of cleansing upon repentance.

Then comes the Holy Spirit. This man is not merely going to be cleansed. He's not merely going to be devoted to God.

He's going to become Spirit-filled. Think of Peter. No one failed more than he, but no one was more conspicuous to be filled more than he on the day of Pentecost.

My dear friends, the gift of fullness of the Spirit isn't for super saints. It isn't for people fulfilled a lot of conditions. It's a gift of grace for failures who confess their failure.

They come to the cross and such is the value of the Holy Spirit, the value of the precious blood, that there's nothing to impede God filling that poor old heart with the Holy Spirit, lighting up the page, filling his heart with visions of Christ, empowering him for service. First the blood, then the oil. Will you notice? The water had blood in it and the oil had blood under it.

Water and oil were associated with blood. And I think this is so important. I believe we must be very careful that in any experiences that we seek from the Holy Spirit is based on the precious blood of Jesus and on the repentance of sin that that blood implies.

I don't think we need worry too much about unusual gifts and experiences of the Holy Spirit, some may have, provided the oil is placed upon the blood. I think we need to worry a great deal when people seem to have experience of the Holy Spirit which isn't based on a new repentance and a new cleansing of sin. But I believe if we're going to be those that be what anything else God may give us I'm going to go on this old way of the blood.

God will see to those experiences and where they are psychic or partly psychic as I go on repenting that will vanish away. If they're wholly psychic they will wholly vanish away. If they're partly psychic that which is partly psychic will vanish away.

And if they're not psychic at all that which is the spirit will remain. What a wonderful safeguard. What a wonderful safeguard.

If I'm seeing when I get proud, when I think perhaps I have a spirit of one-upmanship because I have something that other people don't do. When I see that I'm tempted to display things I think the possession of any gift is a very dangerous thing. Happy the man who's willing to walk in the light with Jesus and let Jesus show him.

And anything that may be extraneous will quietly drop off and that which is of him will remain. I'm not saying for a moment necessarily that all such charismatic experiences are psychic. They may be.

They may partly be. I don't know. But I know this is a safe way.

When the oil is all the time placed upon the blood and so often the flesh does get in I know if I had some spectacular gift I might be awfully difficult because I think I'd have something something someone hasn't got. It's really quite good not to have some special gift. To have nothing to glory in but Jesus.

On the other hand he does give all sorts of wonderful experiences. And if we do glory we know what to do. There's the precious blood.

I can go to the cross. And what could have gone astray? What could have become difficult to other people? Nothing. And so this is our centre.

The oil all the time upon the blood. We need the oil. Oh let's not be content with anything less than the spirit revealing Christ which is powerful to my soul and powerful to other people.

All I say, this seems to be the emphasis here the blood upon the oil and then we're safe. And will you notice one last thing? And it's this. The remnant of the oil was put upon the fellow's head.

He was anointed with the oil. And you know apart from the leper there were only three people who were anointed with the oil. Prophets they were anointed to their place by the pouring of oil on their heads.

Priests were anointed to their office by being anointed on their heads and kings and then along with them lepers. Prophets, priests, kings and poor old lepers were given this wonderful anointing. It means two things.

Spiritual understanding. Oh my dear friends no matter what failures you and I may have grace is such they can all be swallowed up. And a man who is in such dire straits is now anointed.

He's been given an understanding. He's been in the ministry. He's got something for other people.

If he's in ordinary secular work he's got something for people. He isn't only a minister. He's anointed.

But it also means commissioned. Commissioned. As never before to be God's man.

And this is what grace does. For those who at one time or another manifested such terrible traits of the flesh and wouldn't give in but grace has won and the blood of Jesus has brought us back to God and we're anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit. And the whole ceremony ends up the sin offering and the burnt offering just to culminate it.

Nothing but what comes from Calvary. And we saw the significance of those two offerings that so often go together. So praise God for this grace to let us.

One last sentence from a hymn. He maketh the rebel a priest and a king. He hath taught us and bought us this new song to sing.

Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus thou knowest all we've tried to think about. We ask thee pardon all that's been ineffective and even muddling if such it has been.

And fasten in our hearts that only which you want us to meditate upon. And make us those that see when the will of the flesh is becoming dominant on an issue. Work in our hearts by grace and lead us again and again to Calvary to thine own dear self.

How we thank thee for what grace does for people like us. We give thee praise in the name of the Lord Jesus. And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.

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