The Leper Who Was Poor Considered; Leprosy in a House

Peace and Communion · Leviticus 14

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Considered If he be poor (Lev. 14:21).

In the restoration of the man that was to be cleansed and restored to the privileges of the camp of Israel, God was so considerate of his circumstances, that a special provision was made for one who was poor. This principle runs throughout Scripture; for God looks for, and accepts from us, according only to our ability:

uncleanness did thereby confess and acknowledge his trespass, and saw it all put away by the death and blood-shedding of the spotless lamb. The application of the blood to the ear, and thumb, and toe, and also the anointing of these parts afterward with the oil, as well as the pouring of the remainder of the oil on the leper's head, were the same in every instance.

It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not {2 Cor. 8:12}.

The real poverty of the Israelite came out in the sinoffering and burnt-offering. Being out of his power to provide so many lambs, God graciously accepted instead a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering. These the poor man brought for his offerings:

In the ordinance of cleansing the leper, this consideration for the poor leprous man in reference to his being reinstated in the camp of Israel is touchingly set forth. The ordinary sacrifices to be brought were two he lambs, one ewe lamb, three tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, and one log of oil. But it can easily be understood that some in Israel might be unable to procure three lambs, &c. It is therefore added: If he be poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one lamb for a trespass-offering to be waved, to make an atonement for him, and one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat-offering, and a log of oil; and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin-offering, and the other a burntoffering. (Lev. 14:21, 22).

It is well to observe here, that there is no difference whatever in the former part of the process of restoration: at his first appearance before the priest the leper has nothing to provide, whether he be poor, or whether he be rich. The two birds typifying the foundation truth of being justified from all things by Him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, are not provided by him; he simply looks on. He stands still, and sees the salvation of God. The priest commands that the birds be taken for him. Neither is there any change for the poorest in Israel as to his cleansing himself, washing his clothes, or cutting off his hair; for it is evident that such exercises are

totally irrespective of the state of a man's earthly circumstances. All through the complete (seven days) period of being under the action of the word (washing) as to himself, and his clothes, (near surroundings), and also his deliberate laying aside of all idea of creature-comeliness (cutting off all his hair), all in Israel were directed precisely alike. It is clear too, looking at the typical instruction, that selfexamination, self-judgment, and self-abhorrence become every one under such circumstances. It is only on the eighth day (the beginning of a new epoch) that this difference begins, and even then there must he one lamb for a trespass-offering provided by every returning leper, be he ever so poor. In both instances this lamb was to be waved alive before the Lord. This was the only time in Israel that it was waved alive, to show that the man who had lost all his privileges by

And he shall offer the one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can get; even such as he is able to get, the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burntoffering, with the meat-offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before Jehovah (Lev. 14:30, 31).

There are some now who are rich in faith {James 2:5},

whose apprehension and enjoyment of the perfections and glory of Christ are far beyond that of others; but the feeblest in the faith, the most trembling babe, whose estimate of Christ, compared with that of others, would only be like comparing the value of a young pigeon with a lamb of the first year {Lev. 14:10},

are alike accepted. Yes, God is so considerate and gracious as to accept the offerings, and to give the leper all the atoning value of the sin-offering, and to accept him in all the acceptability of the burnt-offering; not according to the measure of his faith and intelligence, but according to His own estimate of Christ, which the offerings prefigured. We now leave the man who was to be cleansed, whether poor or rich in Israel, restored to the camp, to his tent, to his brethren, and to all the privileges of association with the sanctuary, where God dwelt. It remains for us to briefly glance at the leprous garment, and leprous house, and to hearken to the teaching of the Spirit in our contemplation of these mystic lines of divine instruction.

Leprosy in A Garment The plague of leprosy was sometimes found in a garment. The garment so infected might be made of linen, or woollen, or skin. Our garments are not our persons, but they are our nearest associations and surroundings. A man might be personally clean; and yet have a garment defiled with leprous

spots; so now a Christian man may be personally free from deep and foul workings of fleshly lusts breaking out in open uncleanness to the dishonor of God, and yet be associated with that which is loathsome and forbidden of God. What was to be done, when a garment was found spotted? We read, If the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be shewed to the priest (Lev. 13:49).

How important to observe here again that the first step is to bring the matter before the priest, even as we should at once go to our Lord Jesus, and bring before Him any question as to the purity of that with which we have surrounded ourselves! What trouble and sin would be spared if we were more in

the habit of going to the Lord, and waiting on Him to decide for us every question of clean and unclean that arises in our path! This suspected garment was to be looked at by the priest, according to Jehovah's instructions in writing by the hand of Moses: And the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up it that hath the plague seven days: and he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woollen or in linen, or in anything of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire. And if the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague be not spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; then the priest shall command that they wash the thing wherein the plague is, and he shall shut it up seven days more: and the priest shall look on the plague, after that it is washed: and, behold, if the plague have not changed his colour, and the plague be not spread; it is unclean; thou shalt burn it in the fire; it is fret inward, whether it be bare within or without (Lev. 13:50-55).

Can we fail to admire here the patient waiting, and yet strict scrutiny, before arriving at a conclusion as to the real nature of the spots in the garment? How solemn to a pious Israelite must this priestly discernment have appeared -- this shutting up for seven days, then the washing and shutting up for seven days more -- and all about a garment! He surely could not fail to learn that God would have His people not only personally free from the loathsome plague of leprosy, but also without a spot on that which surrounds their persons! And is the rule for us, who are redeemed in Christ and by His precious blood, less stringent than it was with the Israelite? Are those in whom God now dwells by His Spirit, who are members of the body of Christ, to be more lax? Are we not enjoined to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27), hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23)?

Can it be according to the mind of Him who is the holy and the true, that, provided we fall not personally into sin, we need not be exercised in conscience as to our near surroundings? Far from it. The Corinthian saints were taught to touch not the

unclean thing, and were not even to eat {1 Cor. 5:11}

with, but to put away from among themselves (think what this involves!) the wicked person; for, as we have before seen, no one can touch evil, not even a little, without being defiled. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump {1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9}.

And yet how many in these last days are allowing themselves to be mixed up socially, commercially, politically, and even religiously with what they admit to be evil, and yet never bring the spotted garment to our Priest for His inspection; but are excusing and even embracing the leprous robe, instead of hating the spotted garment, and burning it in the fire. We are assured that the subject is of all importance, and that few things are more damaging to true children of God at this moment than the unsound and corrupting doctrine, that, provided they are personally sound and moral, they need not be exercised about things wherewith they have surrounded themselves. Nothing can be more contrary to the revealed will of God, or few things more offensive to Him. Were His voice heard as to our

garments, how many would soon be tested by His word? How many times they would be brought under the Lord's searching investigation! and how often He would have to say, It is a fretting leprosy {Lev. 13:52}! Thou shalt burn it in the fire {Lev. 13:55}!

How many an unclean association would be broken up! What ways of separation and distinct testimony for the Lord would be chosen! How many of us would find unknown blessing, if, with reference to our persons and our surroundings, we were so obedient as to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, and for the glory of God! The garment so spotted was not to be mended, but burnt. Such loathsome and unclean surroundings cannot be repaired, nor transferred, but must be destroyed. How many a child of God, having found himself in unclean and unholy associations, is trying to reform, to improve, or to transfer to others, yea, to do anything, so that he could be free himself before the Lord! But if it be leprosy; if it be the outward manifestation of the deep and inward workings of fleshly lusts; if, when washed by the word of God, and brought before the discerning eye of the Lord (our Priest) for His inspection, it be pronounced to be a fretting leprosy {Lev. 13:51},

there is but one way of deliverance, and that is, giving it up, breaking up, consuming. It must be burnt with fire. May the dear children of God be more than ever exercised about near surroundings; for it is written, Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11).

Some spots in garments may be removed by washing (Lev. 13:58), but a leprous garment must be burnt with fire (Lev. 13:57). Some spots may be removed also by rending the defiled piece out of the garment; but if it spread after that, it is a spreading plague: thou shalt burn that wherein the plague is with fire {Lev. 13:57}.

All these details are most suggestive. By bringing the action of the Word to bear upon our surroundings, the unclean spots may disappear, and the association may then be continued. Other spots are so manifestly leprous, that the longer they are brought before the Lord for His judgment, and washed with His searching word, the more evil and inveterate the uncleanness appears. In such cases there is but one alternative for a faithful man -- the surrounding must no longer be acknowledged; it must be completely set aside, according to the judgment of God. Oh that our souls might be more truly awakened to the fact of being so truly set apart in Christ, and through His blood, and by His Spirit, that not only ourselves, but all we put on, and everything we have to do, may be done to His glory! When we are really in communion, and happy in the Lord, how we delight to glory in Him, and boast of His love! We can point to Jesus then, and resist the devil. In the face of all our adversaries we can exultingly say -"Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin, Then tell me I'm unclean: Nay, for He purged my guilt By His own precious blood, And such its virtue, not a stain E'er meets the eye of God"

Leprosy in a house is another line of instruction. It seems typically to refer to the house on earth now -- a local assembly. It did not contemplate any application till Israel got into the land. Canaan to us is typical of heavenly places; not heaven, but heavenly places; where we are spoken of as now having our standing. Though actually living on earth, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly

places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6).

We are not yet in heaven, but as to life and standing we are in heavenly places, and have conflict (like Joshua in Canaan) to stand consciously in this place of blessing, where God in grace has set us, and which Satan would keep us from possessing now by faith if he could. This is why the Israelites in Canaan are figurative of us while now on earth, and why therefore the instruction of a leprous house has a strong typical bearing on an assembly on earth. We therefore read, When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession (Lev. 14:34).

Leprosy in a house, then, was a direct infliction from Jehovah, and about it His directions were most explicit and decided. If found to be really leprous, the plague must be got rid of, even if it necessitated the pulling down of the house. This was imperative. No faithful Israelite could go into a leprous house without becoming unclean; and so now, Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

In the case of suspected leprosy in a house, the first thing enjoined, as we have seen with a leprous man and a garment, was to tell the priest.

The owner of the house being the most interested, and most responsible as to the house, was to tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house (Lev. 14:35).

When sin appears in an assembly, the first thing is to go to the Lord Jesus about it, and to ask Him to make manifest its real character; and those who feel responsibility to the Lord about the state of His assembly will be the persons who will do so. They will spread it all before His all-searching and omniscient eye. Then, according to the priest's command, there would be the greatest activity and diligence in so emptying or preparing the house, that all that is in the house be not made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house (Lev. 14:36).

And so now, when the Lord is appealed to, and supplicated to shew the real character of the evil, all in the assembly are troubled and moved about it, and fear, lest, if it be a case of leprosy, it should spread and infect others. If saints in an ordinary condition of things were enjoined to be looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, &c. {Heb. 12:15, 16},

how much more care is called for when any godly soul says, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house {Lev. 14:35}.

The inspection takes place. It is not an imaginary case, not one of mere suspicion, which Christian charity always forbids; for love thinketh no evil {1 Cor. 13.5}.

But there are found to be on the walls of the house hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall {Lev. 14:37},

and the house is shut up for seven days {Lev. 14:38}.

This shutting up of the house is very solemn, inasmuch as it so brings before us God's mind as to practical holiness, that faithful ones are not permitted of Him to have to do with a local assembly in which flagrant evil is being solemnly investigated, so that it may be dealt with according to His mind. There is never uncertainty in the ways of faith. We see also, as we have been taught over and over again, both as to dealing with supposed cases of leprosy, whether personal or in a garment, that there is to be no haste in arriving at a sure conclusion in the matter. On the seventh day, (the close of a complete period of time, when patience has had her perfect work), the house is again inspected, and the plague being found to be

spread in the walls of the house, THEN the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city: and be shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place: and they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaister the house (Lev. 14:39-42).

This reads to us lessons plain enough. The priest commands the stones to be removed. The Lord says, Put away from among yourselves that wicked person {1 Cor. 5:13}.

Certain persons, after patient investigation and unquestionable proof, having been found guilty of loathsome workings of fleshly activity, are therefore removed from fellowship -- put away. They are left outside in an unclean place -- the world, the place of uncleanness in God's sight. That being done, a process of humiliation and self-judgment goes on all through the assembly, when much uncleanness is scraped from the house; the old leaven being purged out, it all becomes a new lump, as the newly-plastered walls give a new character to the house. Though a stone had been removed at Corinth, yet the apostle intimates they had not scraped within round about,

as they should have done; and he fears he would be humbled by God among them on account of it, when he comes to them again (2 Cor. 12:20, 21). Nor does it always follow that the removal of some from fellowship would be enough. The leprosy might have more widely spread than former inspections had disclosed. The evil may have so permeated the assembly that it must be entirely disallowed, and treated altogether as an unclean place; no longer to be regarded as connected with heavenly places, or as a corporate witness on earth of Him, and His truth, who is the holy

and the true {Rev. 3:7}

And thus we read, If the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered {Lev. 14:43}, THEN the house must be inspected again.

The priest must be called in again, and the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean {Lev. 14:44}.

It (that is the house) is unclean. It must be entirely disallowed; it must be razed to the ground. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house;

and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place (Lev. 14:43-45).

Does not this clearly show that a local assembly may be in happy fellowship with other local assemblies gathered to the

Lord's name, and practically acting on the ground of God's one assembly on earth, and afterwards become so leavened by allowed and unjudged evil, as to be entirely disowned by faithful saints, as no longer endeavoring to keep the Holy Spirit's unity? It is well to notice the purity that God's order of discipline demands, while evil is being investigated and judged. If a man entered the house while it was shut up, he would be unclean till the even. If a man lieth in the house, he would have to wash his clothes; and if a man ate in the house, he shall wash his clothes (Lev. 14:46, 47).

Such would have to bring their near surroundings under the searching, cleansing action of the word after such an impure association. How repeatedly it is said in Scripture, Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

In the instruction concerning a leprous house, there is also a provision for a house that is healed of the plague. This is the happy side of the narrative: If the priest shall come in, and look upon it, and, behold, the plague hath not spread in the house, after the house was plaistered: then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed (Lev. 14:48).

We know who is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and how happy it is to have His approval, even as to separation from what is evil in His sight. He who said to some, Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate {Rev. 2:6},

and to others, Thou . . . hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my name {Rev. 3:8},

and who commended a few in Sardis because they had not defiled their garments, is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

If, on the one hand, the heart is sad and humbled, because we find a house shut up on account of grave fears as to evil, on the other hand the spirit is relieved and cheered by the decided way in which an assembly has cleared itself; so that the Spirit's testimony as to its having cleared itself is most unmistakably made known. Though it had been a time of mourning and tears; though the removal of the stones, and putting them away in an unclean place, had been with anguish of heart; though scraping the walls, and carrying away the dust, had not been without much self-judgment and brokenness of heart; and though bringing in, according to the word of God, new material to give freshness and purity to the house had been connected with much diligent labour; yet how blessed it is, even under such circumstances, to have the Lord's approval, and to have the testimony of the Holy Ghost saying by His servant, I have confidence in you in all things (2 Cor. 7:16).

Of the faithful at such a time it may be truly said, Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought

in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this

matter (2 Cor. 7:10, 11).

The house having been healed of the plague, it remains only for the priest to make an atonement for the house, and thus pronounce it to be cleansed. The two birds, with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, are used, as we saw in the beginning of the chapter, when the healed man was first brought before the priest; the house is sprinkled with the blood seven times; the living bird, marked with the blood of the dead bird, is let loose in the open fields: an atonement is made for the house, and it shall be clean. For an individual who had had leprosy, and for a house in which the plague had been, a sacrifice was offered. Both were sprinkled with blood; and, atonement being made, they were pronounced clean. Not so the garment; and why? Because we are looked at as redeemed by the precious sacrifice of Christ, both individually and collectively. Individually we can say, He loved me, and gave Himself for me (See Gal. 2:20);

corporately we read, Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it (see Eph. 5:25).

We are never told that Christ gave Himself for our circumstances, our surroundings, that with which we connect ourselves, our garments. Oh, no! But we know that, being children of God, redeemed from all iniquity, and having received the Holy Ghost, we are not to touch the unclean thing, not to connect ourselves with what is dishonoring to God. The omission, then, of any sacrifice as to a leprous garment which was never healed, and only to be consumed by fire; the long details that are given for the cleansing of a leper, first by blood, then cleansing himself, his clothes, &c., &c., for seven days, and also the atonement for a leprous house without such washings and other sacrifices, only show the perfection of holy Scripture, and the reality of its typical instruction. That Christians have this threefold responsibility to the Lord, Scripture clearly marks out. Individually, we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service {see Rom. 12:1},

and to do all for His glory, because we are not our own, but bought with a price. Corporately, we are to be subject to His rule who is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, each filling up the place of a member of His body in which His grace has set us. Then as to our surroundings, the Word abounds with instructions in reference to family order and piety, business transactions, separation from the world as not of it, not to be yoked with unbelievers, not to touch even the unclean thing, nor to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Our houses, family arrangements, social ways, necessary business, and labors of every kind, should all be done for the glory of God. The difficulty is to have such a continual sense in our souls of being redeemed, and of our

standing in Christ in all His acceptability, and of having God dwelling in us by His Holy Spirit, as to answer to His desire in all our various obligations to Him. How often you see a man careful about his own soul, but with personal surroundings unclean! Or, you may see another most zealous for the truth in a corporate sense, and yet loose as to his circumstances. What need have we to cry, Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe {Psa. 119:117}!

for -“It is the Lord, enthroned in light, Whose claims are all divine, Who hath an undisputed right To govern me and mine.”

As it is clear that discipline in regard to God's assembly on earth, can only be carried out, according to the Lord's mind, by such as are really gathered together in His name, we propose in our next paper to consider what Scripture teaches on this important point.