

Issues from the Body (Leviticus 15)

Expository Lessons from the Book of Leviticus

I. Review and Introduction to This Lesson

- a. In **Leviticus 1-7**, we discussed the rules and regulations regarding five different types of sacrificial offerings that the priests would make.
- b. In **Leviticus 8-9**, we learned about the process of ordaining Aaron (the High Priest) and his four sons (the priests), the beginning of their ministry of service, and the consecration of the tabernacle. This culminated with the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle and fire from the Lord consuming the offerings.
- c. While we are no longer under the Levitical rules (which were abolished at the cross, with the death of Christ), all of these things still have significance for us, since they foreshadowed things that were yet to come.
 - i. The High Priest, Aaron, foreshadowed Jesus, as explained in **Hebrews 8-10**.
 - ii. His sons, the priests, foreshadowed us, the Christians. As Peter stated in **1 Peter 2:1-10**, we have become the new priesthood.
 - iii. The ordination and ministry of the sons of Aaron (**Leviticus 8**) foreshadowed the markings of our own priesthood. We, like they, have been:
 1. *Washed* (foreshadowing baptism),
 2. *Clothed* with special clothing (foreshadowing our being clothed with Christ, with humility, etc.)
 3. *Anointed* (foreshadowing our being anointed with the Holy Spirit);
 - a. The Christ is *the* Anointed One, and we as Christians have become the *anointed ones of God*, as well.
 4. *Offer sacrifices and prayers* to the Lord (foreshadowing how we, as Christians, now offer ourselves as living sacrifices, as Paul said in **Romans 12:1**).

- iv. In **Leviticus 11** we looked at the dietary restrictions and designation of clean vs. unclean animals, in which early Christian writers saw spiritual lessons for us.
- v. **Leviticus 12-14** addressed laws regarding childbirth and leprosy of the skin (infectious disease), garments and house (like mold and mildew). We discussed how this treatment is a foreshadowing of how seriously we are to deal with *sin*, which is *spiritual leprosy*.

II. Laws Related to Certain Discharges from the Body

- a. **Warning:** Portions of this lesson may be unsuitable for children to listen to. Parental discretion is advised!
- b. Years ago, when reading through the English language translation of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, I noticed a section that was translated *into Latin!* (Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor*, in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 2, pp. 259-262).
 - i. At first, I wondered why these pages were translated into *Latin* (rather than English). Then I realized the subject matter of those pages touched on matters associated with *sex and procreation!*
 - ii. Unfortunately, I am unable to teach this next segment of **Leviticus** in Latin. However, neither do I think it is appropriate to skip over it just because I am uncomfortable with the material covered!
 - iii. Actually, when I told a friend that we would be going through Leviticus, that person replied, “Great! I have some unanswered questions about... (then referred to one of the uncomfortable subjects addressed in this chapter)”.
- c. For teaching this chapter, I am switching from the Orthodox Study Bible (OSB, which we normally use) to the New King James Version (NKJV).
 - i. The language in the NKJV is a little less explicit than it is in the OSB.
 - ii. A certain word in the LXX that has a range of meanings is translated in one particular way in the OSB (in **Leviticus 15:1-15**) may not be the best rendering of that word.
- d. Read **Leviticus 15:1-15**.
 - i. It says that when a man has “a discharge from his body”, he is unclean.
 - ii. **Question:** *What kind* of discharge is this referring to?
 - 1. One of the Greek words used several times in the LXX in this passage is γονορροΐς (gonorrhoeis).

2. From the *English-Greek Lexicon of the Septuagint*, that Greek word can mean:
 - a. Discharge of *some fluid from the body* (in particular, male reproductive seed or blood); OR
 - b. Gonorrhea (a *sexually transmitted disease* that often has a discharge associated with it).
3. From an article in a Jewish encyclopedia:
 - a. "**Leviticus 15**... covers several topics: **verses 2-15** state the laws concerning... a man with an abnormal genital discharge, often and *probably correctly translated as gonorrhea*..."
 - i. [Source: Online; *Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women*, article on 'Female Purity (Niddah)', section on **Leviticus 15**, by Tirzah Meacham]
4. Therefore, for multiple reasons, it seems to me that there is good reason to conclude that **Leviticus 15:1-15** may be addressing a discharge that could come from a disease (such as a sexually transmitted disease like gonorrhea).
5. The man who has this problem is told:
 - a. He is unclean while this persists.
 - b. He must keep from touching other things and people.
 - c. After it stops, he must wait seven days and wash in water.
 - d. On the eighth day, he is to bring a sacrifice to the temple; the priest will make atonement for him.
6. Recall that Paul said that the things contained in the Law of Moses were "... a shadow of things to come" (**Colossians 2:17**, NKJV). If leprosy (infectious disease) represented or foreshadowed sin in general, perhaps sexually-related disease foreshadowed *sins related to improper sexual activity*.
 - a. Read **1 Corinthians 5:9-12** and **6:9-20**.
 - b. We are called to flee sexual immorality.

- c. All sin is destructive, but sexual sins involving our bodies, sins against our own bodies (which are members of Christ and temples in which the Spirit dwells) are especially destructive.
 - d. Paul says that many of the Corinthians came out of sexual sins like fornication, adultery and homosexual relations. God is merciful and had forgiven the sins of those who repented of those sins, turned to Him, and remained on the paths of righteousness.
 - i. This should encourage those who have come out of very sinful backgrounds, even including homosexual lifestyles. Several of the Christians in Corinth had come out of those sins, but had been washed and sanctified in baptism, by the blood of Christ.
 - e. I am inspired by the example of Joseph in the area of sexual purity in the face of temptation. As a young single man, he *fled from* Potiphar's wife when she tried to seduce him (**Genesis 39**).
 - i. Joseph ran away, literally, from the sexual temptation, even leaving his clothing (which Potiphar's wife had grabbed) behind.
 - ii. I strive to have this intense attitude whenever faced with sexual temptation, including especially regarding internet pornography, which has enslaved so many men!
 - f. **Challenge:** Take inventory of your life in this area. Repent and confess to God (and preferably also to a close, spiritual brother or sister; see **James 5:16**) if there is *any form of impurity in your life*.
- e. Read **Leviticus 15:16-33**.
- i. Several different situations are addressed in this chapter. A breakdown taken from the article previously quoted (referenced in the notes above), from a Jewish encyclopedia: "**Leviticus 15**... covers several topics:
 1. "**verses 2–15** state the laws concerning... a man with an abnormal genital discharge, often and probably correctly translated as gonorrhoea;
 2. "**verses 16–17** deal with a man who ejaculates semen;

3. “**verse 18** refers to semen impurity due to coitus;
 4. “**verses 19–24** state the laws concerning menstrual impurity;
 5. “**verses 25–30** concern... a woman with a uterine discharge of blood not at the time of her period, or as a result of a prolonged period.”
- ii. One of the things I noticed here is the lengthy discussion regarding the situation of a woman who has an unusual discharge, namely one that extends beyond the time of a normal monthly menstrual period.
1. Details of her uncleanness include:
 - a. Every bed she lies on becomes unclean.
 - b. Anything she sits on will be unclean.
 - c. Anyone who touches those things also will become unclean.
 2. After she is cleansed of her discharge, she is to wait seven days and then bring an offering to the priest, who will make atonement for her.
 3. In light of this, consider the story of the woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, who was healed by Jesus, in **Luke 8**. With a knowledge of **Leviticus 15**, we can better appreciate the affliction and rejection she had faced for many years!
 - a. Read **Luke 8:40-48**.
 - b. According to **Leviticus 15:19-27**, a woman bleeding was *not supposed to touch anyone*, lest she thereby make the other person become unclean.
 - c. This woman appears to be breaking the Law of Moses by touching someone (in this case by touching Jesus) yet is healed by her faith.
 - d. Tertullian (early Christian writer from Carthage, North Africa, writing c. 213 AD) commented on some of the wonderful we can learn about God, Christ, and the Law of Moses, from this story.
 - i. “Jesus is touched by the woman who had an issue of blood, He knew not by whom. ‘Who touched me?’ He asks, when His disciples alleged an excuse. He even persists in His assertion of

ignorance: 'Somebody hath touched me,' He says, and advances some proof: 'For I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.'

- ii. "What says our heretic? Could Christ have known the person? And why did He speak as if He were ignorant? Why? Surely it was to challenge her faith, and to try [= *test*] her fear. Precisely as He had once questioned Adam, as if in ignorance: 'Adam, where are you?' (**Genesis 3:9**) Thus you have both the Creator excused in the same way as Christ, and Christ acting similarly to the Creator. But in this case He acted as an adversary of the Law; and therefore, as the Law forbids contact with a woman with an issue, He desired not only that this woman should touch Him, but that He should heal her.
- iii. "...Her touch at least was an act of faith. And if of faith in the Creator, how could she have violated His law, when she was ignorant of any other God? Whatever her infringement of the law amounted to, it proceeded from and was proportionate to her faith in the Creator. But how can these two things be compatible? That she violated the law, and violated it in faith, which ought to have restrained her from such violation?
- iv. "I will tell you how her faith was this above all: it made her believe that her God preferred mercy even to sacrifice (**Hosea 6:6**); she was certain that her God was working in Christ; she touched Him, therefore, not as a holy man simply, nor as a prophet, whom she knew to be capable of contamination by reason of his human nature, but as very God, whom she assumed to be beyond all possibility of pollution by any uncleanness. She therefore, not without reason, interpreted for herself the law, as meaning that such things as are susceptible of defilement become defiled, but not so God, whom she knew for certain to be in Christ.
- v. "But she recollected this also, that what came under the prohibition of the law was that

ordinary and usual issue of blood which proceeds from natural functions every month, and in childbirth, not that which was the result of disordered health. Her case, however, was one of long abounding ill health, for which she knew that the succor of God's mercy was needed, and not the natural relief of time.

- vi. "And thus, she may evidently be regarded as having discerned the law, instead of breaking it. This will prove to be the faith which was to confer intelligence likewise. 'If you will not believe,' says (the prophet), 'you shall not understand.' (**Isaiah 7:9**) When Christ approved of the faith of this woman, which simply rested in the Creator, He declared by His answer to her, that He was Himself the divine object of the faith of which He approved."
 - vii. (Source: Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 4, chapter 21; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 3, pp. 379-380)
- e. Points made by Tertullian here include:
- i. Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" for the same reason He (the Son of God) had asked Adam, "Where are you?". It was to test the person being asked: to see if the person would come forward voluntarily.
 1. Recall that no one can see the Father, who dwells in unapproachable light (**John 1:18, 1 Timothy 6:15-16**). However, the Son of God can take on bodily form and can be seen.
 2. Early Christians understood that the Son of God was the One who was walking in the Garden, who addressed Adam in **Genesis 3**. See also *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, article on 'Theophany' (appearances of God).
 - ii. It was against the Law of Moses for the woman to touch Jesus. Yet it was acceptable for her to do it because:

1. Her touching Jesus was an act of faith in the Creator, who made the Law.
 2. She understood the meaning of the statement: “For *I desire mercy and not sacrifice*, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.” (**Hosea 6:6**, NKJV)
 3. She understood that since Christ was divine, *He could not become defiled*. It was impossible for Him to become polluted from touching her.
 4. She was saved and healed by her great faith.
- f. **Question:** Do any of these rules still apply to Christians?
- i. They were not included in the instructions given in **Acts 15**.
 1. Gentile converts were not required to become circumcised. Based on the decision made at the Council of Jerusalem (**Acts 15:22-29**), the *only* requirements of the Law of Moses that Gentiles were required to keep were to abstain from the following four things:
 - a. Abstain from things offered to idols.
 - b. Abstain from blood.
 - c. Abstain from things strangled.
 - d. Abstain from sexual immorality.
 - ii. Read **Colossians 2:16-23**.
 1. We are no longer to subject to the regulations, “Do not touch...do not handle...” (**Colossians 2:21**).
 2. Note that the rules of **Leviticus** were not included among the short list of things from the Law that Gentile Christians are still called to observe.
 - iii. This question apparently came up in the early Church. Some disciples wondered if Christian women could read/touch a Bible or take communion during the time of their monthly menstrual period, as if they were “unclean” during this time. Consider the response to this in the *Apostolic Constitutions* (a list of general church rules, compiled near the end of the fourth century, but much of which is pre-Nicene in origin).

1. "OF SOME JEWISH AND GENTILE OBSERVANCES.
2. "Now if any persons keep to the Jewish customs and observances concerning the natural emission and nocturnal pollutions, and the lawful conjugal acts, let them tell us whether in those hours or days, when they undergo any such thing, they observe not to pray, or to touch a Bible, or to partake of the Eucharist? And if they own it to be so, it is plain they are void of the Holy Spirit, which always continues with the faithful.
3. "For concerning holy persons Solomon says: 'That every one may prepare himself, that so when he sleeps it may keep him, and when he arises it may talk with him.' (**Proverbs 6:22**) For if you think, O woman, when you are seven days in your separation, that you are void of the Holy Spirit, then if you should die suddenly, you will depart void of the Spirit, and without assured hope in God; or else you must imagine that the Spirit always is inseparable from you, as not being in a place. But you stand in need of prayer and the Eucharist, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, as having been guilty of no fault in this matter.
4. "For neither lawful mixture, nor childbearing, nor the menstrual purgation, nor nocturnal pollution, can defile the nature of a man, or separate the Holy Spirit from him. Nothing but impiety and unlawful practice can do that. For the Holy Spirit always abides with those that are possessed of it, so long as they are worthy; and those from whom it is departed, it leaves them desolate, and exposed to the wicked spirit.
5. "Now every man is filled either with the holy or with the unclean spirit; and it is not possible to avoid the one or the other, unless they can receive opposite spirits. For the Comforter hates every lie, and the devil hates all truth. But every one that is baptized agreeably to the truth is separated from the diabolical spirit, and is under the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit remains with him so long as he is doing good, and fills him with wisdom and understanding, and suffers not the wicked spirit to approach him, but watches over his goings.
6. "You therefore, O woman, if, as you say, in the days of your separation you are void of the Holy Spirit, you are then filled with the unclean one; for by neglecting to pray and to read you will invite him to yourself, though he were unwilling. For this spirit, of all others, loves the ungrateful, the slothful, the

careless, and the drowsy, since he himself by ingratitude was distempered with an evil mind, and was thereby deprived by God his dignity; having rather chosen to be a devil than an archangel.

7. "... Neither the burial of a man, nor a dead man's bone, nor a sepulcher, nor any particular sort of food, nor the nocturnal pollution, can defile the soul of man; but only impiety towards God, and transgression, and injustice towards one's neighbor;
8. "... but they have honored marriage, and have called it blessed, since God has blessed it, who joined male and female together. And wise Solomon somewhere says: 'A wife is suited to her husband by the Lord.' (**Proverbs 19:14**) And David says: 'Your wife is like a flourishing vine in the sides of your house; your children like olive-branches round about your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.' (**Psalms 128:3-4**) Wherefore 'marriage is honorable' (**Hebrews 13:4**) and comely, and the begetting of children pure, for there is no evil in that which is good.
9. "Therefore, neither is the natural purgation abominable before God, who has ordered it to happen to women within the space of thirty days for their advantage and healthful state, who do less move about, and keep usually at home in the house. No, moreover, even in the Gospel, when the woman with the perpetual purgation of blood touched the saving border of the Lord's garment in hope of being healed, He was not angry at her, nor did complain of her at all; but, on the contrary, He healed her, saying, 'Your faith has saved you.'"
 - a. (Source: *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, Book 6, Section 5, chapters 27-28; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 7 pp. 462-463)
 - b. Points made in this text include:
 - i. For Christians, there is no sin or spiritual uncleanness associated with the physical discharges of **Leviticus 15**.
 - ii. God made men and women the way they are. Christian marriage and lawful relations within that are good and holy.
 - iii. The Holy Spirit resides within all baptized believers who continue to walk in the light.

- iv. It is only *sin* that defiles us. Touching dead bodies, emissions, etc. will not.
- v. Remember the woman with the longstanding issue of blood, who was healed by Jesus. He was not angry with her, but had compassion and said: "Your faith has healed you."