

“Cleansing the Healed” (Lev. 14:1-32)

1. Initiation (1-3a)
 - a. Those who had recovered still needed cleansing not unlike those inside the camp had to maintain cleanness.
 - b. The priest had to come outside the camp. Heb. 13:12 Jesus the clean High Priest left the holy place and came to us outside the camp in order to restore us.
 - c. It was God who initiated our redemption cf. Ro. 5:8 & Lu. 19:10.
2. Examination (3b)
 - a. It is the Priest who is the arbiter of what is clean and unclean. Those who handle the Word of God know that it is the Word – the living Word and High Priest Himself and the Spirit of conviction (e.g. Heb. 4:12) who examine our condition.
 - b. Too many of us conveniently look to those who affirm us and fail to truly examine our condition (spiritually). We compare ourselves with others and or have contemporary pop therapists tell us that we are not the problem but victims of our relationships, dispositions, and other circumstances.
 - c. The truth of the matter is that we are the perpetrators who have made ourselves unclean by offending a righteous and perfect God.
3. Purification (4-32)
 - a. Preparation (4-7) The initial cleansing to enter into the camp required sacrifice.
 - b. Participation (8-9)
 - i. The Prerogative: After the initial ceremonial cleansing, the former leper was to shave, and cleanse his body. We are to maintain a clean heart and motives.
 - ii. The Pictures: “The meaning of several aspects of this ceremony is elusive, but there are enough hints about the elements involved to make some sense of it. The birds, as clean creatures, can bear the uncleanness of the excluded person, and birds are chosen rather than other animals because they fly up and away, removing the weight of impurity ‘to far-off distances whence the impurity cannot return’.¹⁸ The stick of *cedar wood* and the thread of *scarlet yarn* are chosen because they were both red, symbolizing the cleansing power of blood and to underline the use of the actual blood that one of the birds would shed.¹⁹ *Hyssop*, though a tiny plant, was said to have roots that could penetrate the heart of rocks. So it came to symbolize a deep cleansing of the inward stains of sin, as mentioned in Psalm 51:7.²⁰ *Fresh water* was crucial if a thorough cleaning and removal of impurities was to take place. Stagnant or stale water would aggravate impurity rather than cure it.”¹ ¶ Furthermore, Re: v. 5 Jesus took on an ‘earthen vessel’ and tabernacles among us because we could not come to the Tabernacle unclean.
 - c. Purification (10-13)
 - i. V. 10. After seven days a new week emerges and the cleansed leper is to offer an array of offerings.
 - ii. After we have been cleansed we are able to offer acceptable sacrifices cf. Ro. 12:1-2.
 - iii. V. 11. Note also the Priest and sacrifice are indispensable to atonement cf. 2 Cor. 5:21.

¹⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, p. 834.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 835.

²⁰ Cassiodorus, in ‘Exposition of the Psalms’ 50:9, in Lienhard (ed.), p. 181.

¹ Tidball, D. (2005). *The Message of Leviticus: Free to Be Holy* (A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.; pp. 177–178). Inter-Varsity Press.

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- iv. Vv. 11-13. Upon the new week several offerings followed. “The gravity of the occasion is made obvious by the need for all of the required sacrifices (burnt, grain, sin, and trespass) to be presented with this offering. Only the peace offering, which is almost always voluntary, is not required.”² “The grain offering was a pledge of renewed commitment and dedication to God. The sin offering was to cleanse the sanctuary of any uncleanness the disease may have caused, and the burnt offering was essential to the person’s reconciliation and rededication to God. But the trespass offering calls for our attention.”³ Warren Wiersbe briefly explained: “He was now back in the camp at the door of the tabernacle. He offered a trespass offering, a sin offering, and a burnt offering. The sin offering took care of his defilement; the burnt offering represented his renewed dedication to God. Why the trespass offering? Because while he had been defiled, the man had not been able to serve God as he should, and he owed God a great debt. The trespass offering was his only way to repair the damage done by that wasted segment of his life. Every lost sinner is robbing God of the honor due His Name, and each day the debt becomes greater.”⁴
4. Application (14-20)
 - a. Symbolic ceremony of blood reminded them that they were purchased and redeemed unto holiness.
 - b. Practical application is aptly stated by Wiersbe, “He was to listen to God’s Word [ear], work for God’s glory [thumb], and walk in God’s ways [toe].”⁵ Note that Lev. 8:22-24 required the same for priests indicating the same prerogatives i.e. all of the redeemed have the prerogatives of holiness and a mission of priesthood.
5. Mitigation (21-32)
 - a. These concluding verses follow the established pattern of fairness to the poor. The same process of atonement applied yet for lesser cost.
 - b. The payment for sin is the same price – blood – and thus Jesus atoned for all of our sins as His sacrifice fulfills all of the sacrifices from cleansing to forgiveness, to reparations, to fellowship to peace.
6. Consideration
 - a. Nobuyoshi Kiuchi articulated the main point: “The series of purificatory rites in vv. 2–32 reveal varying degrees of cleanness and make clear that the cleanness associated with mere physical recovery does not qualify a person to approach the Lord.”⁶ He subsequently noted, “hopelessness hovers over all humanity regarding the salvation of their hearts and souls, and casts a dark shadow on both the preceding and following chapters. The only way to salvation is to uncover oneself before the Lord (13:12–13).”⁷ He then partially (I’m only quoting it partly here) concludes: “Indeed the Gospels appear to convey the message that it is more miraculous to be spiritually revived than to be healed from *ṣāra* ‘at [leprosy] At the same time, Jesus’ ministry to the sick is part of his overall mission to the poor and needy who live on the periphery of society, so on the whole his ministry casts irony on the ‘people of God’ inside the camp, who show disrespect towards, and discriminate against, *ṣāra* ‘at-afflicted

² Demarest, G. W., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1990). *Leviticus* (Vol. 3, p. 142). Thomas Nelson Inc.

³ Demarest, G. W., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1990). *Leviticus* (Vol. 3, p. 142). Thomas Nelson Inc.

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Le 14). Victor Books.

⁵ Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Le 14). Victor Books.

⁶ Kiuchi, N. (2007). *Leviticus* (D. W. Baker & G. J. Wenham, Eds.; Vol. 3, p. 265). Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

⁷ Kiuchi, N. (2007). *Leviticus* (D. W. Baker & G. J. Wenham, Eds.; Vol. 3, p. 267). Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

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persons. Those people inside the camp must, in the first place, be those who have gone through such a complicated purificatory process, but the reality is that they simply ‘plaster’ their outside rather than their inside (cf. Matt. 23:27; Acts 23:3). ¶ It is in the Pauline epistles, particularly in Rom. 7:7–23, that the symbolic meaning of *ṣāra* ‘at finds its concrete and definitive illustration. Paul knows God’s law, but somehow does what he does not really want. This is the very condition referred to by the term ‘unclean’. But he makes this confession consciously by recollecting his past or contemporary experience, hence his painful conscience. There is a world of difference between being conscious of one’s own uncleanness and being unconscious of it: the former state is one of cleanness, while the latter is the very meaning of uncleanness. It is by his grace that Jesus saves Paul in the state the apostle is in. Paul is saved because he uncovers himself before the Lord. ¶ This is not the place to discuss the NT idea of cleanness and holiness, but uncovering oneself is the way to cleanness and the prerequisite to holiness, unlike the popular idea that one becomes clean by improving one’s own conduct. Indeed Paul’s frequent mention of the believer’s outward conduct has led many theologians to infer that cleanness results also from remedying outward conduct.”⁸

- b. As mentioned, failure to acknowledge holiness and to diagnose defilement is detrimental and fatal.
- c. The priests did not heal nor offer healing but merely examined, diagnosed, and then performed the sacrifices for those who had been healed. They were not physicians but more like health inspectors. The Prophets were to convey the same realities and yet many failed or refused to give a proper diagnosis of bad news. They only served to curse themselves with such defilement. See Jer. 6:14.
- d. The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart (cf. Jer. 17:9). Wiersbe summarized it this way: “By the time God sent the Flood, the earth was *filled* with wickedness, evil, violence, and corruption (Gen. 6:5, 11–13); and things haven’t become any better since then. Scientific progress has made life more comfortable, but it hasn’t made the world less corrupt. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores” (Isa. 1:5–6, NKJV).
- e. For nearly fifty years, Alexander Whyte preached God’s Word at Free St. George’s Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, and gained a reputation for exposing the sins of the human heart and bringing them under the scrutiny of the Word of God. “Surgical preaching” people called it. At one time, he had an assistant named Hugh Black who preached at the evening service and was much more liberal and optimistic in his message. The congregation said they were blackened by Whyte on Sunday mornings and whitewashed by Black on Sunday evenings!”⁹
- f. One may be healed yet unclean and one may have infirmity yet be cleansed cf. Mat. 9:1-2.

PC if applicable:

Our goal is not health and wealth. Our objective is not even to appear or perform better. God does not discipline those who are not His own. “If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons” (Heb. 12:8 ESV). We ought to long for healing, health, and true prosperity and even to sin less and do justly. However those realities can only occur when we have been cleansed and accepted into God’s household. We must first be cleansed and adopted by the One who sacrificed for us and then our objective is to become like Him (cf. Ro. 8:29).

⁸ Kiuchi, N. (2007). *Leviticus* (D. W. Baker & G. J. Wenham, Eds.; Vol. 3, pp. 268–269). Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

⁹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Holy* (p. 58). Victor Books.