

NOTES
ON
THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

by

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"Things new and old."

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by

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Leviticus 15

This chapter treats of a variety of ceremonial uncleannesses of a much less serious nature than leprosy.

This latter would seem to be presented as the expression of the deep-seated energy of nature's evil; whereas, chapter 15 details a number of things which are merely unavoidable infirmities, but which, as being, in any measure the outflow of nature, were defiling, and needed the provisions of divine grace. The divine presence in the assembly demanded a high order of holiness and moral purity. Every movement of nature had to be counteracted. Even things which, so far as man was concerned, might seem to be unavoidable weaknesses, had a defiling influence, and required cleaning, because the Lord was in the camp. Nothing offensive, nothing unsightly, nothing in any way uncomely, should be suffered within the pure, unsullied and sacred precincts of the presence of the GOD of Israel. The uncircumcised nations around would have understood nothing of such holy ordinances; but the Lord would have Israel holy, because He was Israel's GOD. If they were to be privileged and distinguished by having the presence of a holy GOD, they would need to be a holy people.

Nothing can be more calculated to elicit the soul's admiration than the jealous care of the Lord over all the habits and practices of His people. At home and abroad, asleep and awake, by day and by night, He guarded them. He attended to their food, He attended to their clothing, He attended to their most minute and private concerns. If some trifling spot appeared upon the person, it had to be instantly and carefully looked into. In a word, nothing was overlooked which

could, in any wise, affect the well-being or purity of those with whom the Lord had associated Himself, and in whose midst He dwelt. He took an interest in their most trivial affairs. He carefully attended to everything connected with them, whether publicly, socially, or privately.

This, to an uncircumcised person, would have proved an intolerable burden. For such an one to have a GOD of infinite holiness about his path, by day, and about his bed, by night, would have involved an amount of restraint beyond all power of endurance; but to a true lover of holiness, a lover of GOD, nothing; could be more delightful. Such an one rejoices in the sweet assurance that GOD is always near; and he delights in the holiness which is, at once, demanded and secured by the presence of GOD.

Reader, say, is it thus with you? Do you love the divine presence and the holiness which that presence demands? Are you indulging in anything incompatible with the holiness of GOD's presence? Are your habits of thought, feeling, and action, such as comport with the purity and elevation of the sanctuary?

Remember, when you read this fifteenth chapter of Leviticus, that it was written for your learning. You are to read it in the Spirit, for to you it has a spiritual application. To read it in any other way is to wrest it to your own destruction, or, to use a ceremonial phrase, **"to seethe a kid in its mother's milk."**

Do you ask, "what am I to learn from such a section of Scripture? What is its application to me?"

In the first place, let me ask, do you not admit that it was written for your learning? This, I imagine, you will not question, seeing the inspired apostle so expressly declare that, **"whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning"** (Romans 15:4).

Many seem to forget this important statement, at least, in so far as the book of Leviticus is concerned. They cannot conceive it possible, that they are to learn ought from the rites and ceremonies of a by-gone age, and particularly from such rites and ceremonies as the fifteenth of Leviticus records. But, when we remember, that GOD the Holy Ghost has written this very chapter - that every paragraph, every verse, every line of it **"is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,"** it should lead us to inquire what it means. Surely, what GOD has written His child should read.

No doubt, there is need of spiritual power to know how, and spiritual wisdom to know when, to read such a chapter; but the same holds good with respect to any chapter. One thing is certain, if we were sufficiently spiritual, sufficiently heavenly, sufficiently abstracted from nature, and elevated above earth, we should deduce nought but purely spiritual principles and ideas from this and kindred chapters.

If an angel from Heaven were to read such sections, how should he regard them? Only in a spiritual and heavenly light; only as the depositories of the purest and highest morality. And why should not we do the same? I believe we are not aware of what positive contempt we pour upon the sacred Volume by suffering any portion of it to be so grossly neglected as the book of Leviticus has been. If this book ought not to be read, surely it ought not to have been written. If it be not **"profitable,"** surely it ought not to have had a place assigned it in the canon of divine

inspiration; but, inasmuch as it hath pleased "**the only wise God**" to write this book, it surely ought to please His children to read it.

No doubt, spiritual wisdom, holy discernment, and that refined moral sense, which only communion with GOD can impart - all these things would be needed in order to form a judgment as to when such Scripture ought to be read. We should feel strongly disposed to question the sound judgment and refined taste of a man, who could stand up and read the fifteenth of Leviticus, in the midst of an ordinary congregation. But why? Is it because it is not divinely inspired, and, as such, "**profitable?**" By no means; but because the generality of persons are not sufficiently spiritual to enter into its pure and holy lessons.

What, then, are we to learn from the chapter before us?

In the first place, we learn to watch, with holy jealousy, everything that emanates from nature. Every movement of, and every emanation from, nature is defiling. Fallen human nature is an impure fountain, and all its streams are polluting. It cannot send forth ought that is pure, holy, or good. This is a lesson frequently inculcated in the Book of Leviticus, and it is impressively taught in this chapter.

*But, blessed be the grace that has made such ample provision for nature's defilement! This provision is presented under two distinct forms, throughout the entire of the book of GOD, and throughout this section of it in particular - namely, "**water and blood.**"*

Both these are founded upon the death of CHRIST. The Blood that expiates and the water that cleanses flowed from the pierced side of a crucified CHRIST (Comp. John 19:34, with I John 5:6). "**The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (I John 1:7). And the Word of GOD cleanseth our practical habits and ways (Psalm 119:9; Ephesians 5:26). Thus, we are maintained in fitness for communion and worship, though passing through a scene where all is defiling, and carrying with us a nature, every movement of which leaves a soil behind.

It has been already remarked that our chapter treats of a class of ceremonial defilement's less serious than leprosy. This will account for the fact that atonement is here foreshadowed, not by a bullock or a lamb, but by the lowest order of sacrifice - namely, "**two turtle doves.**"

But, on the other hand, the cleansing virtue of the Word is continually introduced, in the ceremonial actions of "**washing,**" "**bathing,**" and "**rinsing.**"

- "**Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.**"

- "**Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.**"

Water held a most important place in the Levitical system of purification, and, as a type of the Word, nothing can be more interesting or instructive.

Thus we can gather up the most valuable points from this fifteenth chapter of Leviticus.

We learn, in a very striking manner, the intense holiness of the divine presence. Not a soil, not a stain, not a speck can be tolerated, for a moment, in that thrice-hallowed region.

"Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, that they die not in their uncleanness, when they defile my tabernacle that is among them" (Ver. 31).

Again, we learn that human nature is the overflowing fountain of uncleanness. It is hopelessly defiled; and not only defiled, but defiling. Awake or asleep, sitting, standing, or lying, nature is defiled and defiling. Its very touch conveys pollution. This is a deeply-humbling lesson for proud humanity; but thus it is.

The Book of Leviticus holds up a, faithful mirror to nature. It leaves "**flesh**" nothing to glory in. Men may boast of their refinement, their moral sense, their dignity. Let them study the third book of Moses, and there they will see what it is all really worth, in GOD's estimation.

Finally, we learn, afresh, the expiatory value of the Blood of CHRIST, and the cleansing, purifying, sanctifying virtues of the precious Word of GOD.

When we think of the unsullied purity of the sanctuary, and then reflect upon nature's irremediable defilement, and ask the question, "However can we enter and dwell there?" The answer is found in "**the blood and water**" which flowed from the side of a crucified CHRIST - a CHRIST who gave up His life unto death for us, that we might live by Him.

"There are three that bear record in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and," blessed be GOD," **these three agree in one.**"

The Spirit does not convey to our ears a message diverse from that which we find in the Word; and both the Word and the Spirit declare to us the preciousness and efficacy of the Blood.

Can we not, therefore, say that the fifteenth chapter of Leviticus was "**written for our learning?**" Has it not its own distinct place in the divine canon Assuredly. There would be a blank were it omitted. We learn in it what we could not learn in the same way, anywhere else.

True, all Scripture teaches us the holiness of GOD, the vileness of nature, the efficacy of the Blood, the value of the Word but the chapter upon which we have been pondering presents these great truths to our notice, and presses them upon our hearts in a manner quite peculiar to itself.

May every section of our Father's Volume be precious to our hearts. May every one of His testimonies be sweeter to us than honey and the honeycomb, and may "**every one of his righteous judgments**" have its due place in our souls.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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