

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 12

This brief section reads out to us, after its own peculiar fashion, the double lesson of "*man's ruin and GOD's remedy*." But though the fashion is peculiar, the lesson is most distinct and impressive. It is, at once, deeply humbling and divinely comforting.

The effect of all Scripture, when interpreted to one's own soul, directly, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is to lead us out of self to CHRIST. Wherever we see our fallen nature - at whatever stage of its history we contemplate it, whether in its conception, at its birth, or at any point along its whole career, from the womb to the coffin, it wears the double stamp of iniquity and defilement. This is, sometimes, forgotten amid the glitter and glare, the pomp and fashion, the wealth and splendour of human life. The mind of man is fruitful in devices to cover his humiliation. In various ways he seeks to ornament and gild, and put on an appearance of strength and glory; but it is all vain. He has only to be seen as he enters this world, a poor helpless creature; or, as he passes away from it, to take his place with the clod of the valley, in order to have a most convincing proof of the hollowness of all his pride, the vanity of all his glory. Those whose path through this world has been brightened by what man calls glory, have entered in nakedness and helplessness, and retreated amid disease and death.

Nor is this all. It is not merely helplessness that belongs to man - that characterizes him as he enters this life. There is defilement also.

"**Behold,**" says the Psalmist, "**I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive**

me" (Psalm 51:5). **"How can he be clean that is born of a woman?"** (Job 25:4).

In the chapter before us, we are taught that the conception and birth of **"a man child,"** involved **"seven days"** of ceremonial defilement to the mother, together with thirty-three days of separation from the sanctuary; and these periods were doubled in the case of **"a maid child."** Has this no voice? Can we not read, herein, an humbling lesson? Does it not declare to us, in language not to be misunderstood, that man is **"an unclean thing,"** and that he needs the blood of atonement to cleanse him? Truly so.

Man may imagine that he can work out a righteousness of his own. He may vainly boast of the dignity of human nature. He may put on a lofty air, and assume a haughty bearing, as he moves across the stage of life; but if he would just retire for a few moments, and ponder over the short section of our book which now lies open before us, his pride, pomp, dignity, and righteousness would speedily vanish; and, instead thereof, he might find the solid basis of all true dignity, as well as the ground of divine righteousness, in the Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST.

The shadow of this cross passes before us in a double way in our chapter; first, in the circumcision of the **"man child,"** whereby he became enrolled as a member of the Israel of GOD; and, secondly, in the burnt offering and sin offering, whereby the mother was restored from every defiling influence, rendered fit, once more, to approach the sanctuary, and to come in contact with holy things.

"And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtle dove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest; who shall offer it before the Lord, and make, an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female" (Ver. 6, 7).

The death of CHRIST, in its two grand aspects, is here introduced to our thoughts, as the only thing which could possibly meet, and perfectly remove, the defilement connected with man's natural birth. The burnt offering presents the death of CHRIST, according to the divine estimate thereof; the sin offering, on the other hand, presents the death of CHRIST, as bearing upon the sinner's need.

"And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for a burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean."

Nothing but blood-shedding could impart cleanness. The Cross is the only remedy for man's infirmity, and man's defilement. Wherever that glorious work is apprehended, by faith, there is perfect cleanness enjoyed. Now, the apprehension may be feeble - the faith may be but wavering - the experience may be shallow; but, let the reader remember, for his soul's joy and comfort, that it is not the depth of his experience, the stability of his faith, or the strength of his apprehension, but the divine value, the changeless efficacy of the Blood of JESUS. This gives great rest to the heart.

The sacrifice of the Cross is the same to every member of the Israel of GOD, whatever be his status in the assembly. The tender considerateness of our ever gracious GOD is seen in the fact that the blood of a turtle dove was as efficacious for the poor, as the blood of a bullock for the rich. The full value of the atoning work was alike maintained and exhibited in each. Had it not been so, the humble Israelite, if involved in ceremonial defilement, might, as she gazed upon the well-stocked pastures of some wealthy neighbour, exclaim, "Alas! what shall I do? How shall I be cleansed? How shall I get back to my place and privilege in the assembly? I have neither flock nor herd. I am poor and needy." But, blessed be GOD, the case of such an one was fully met. A pigeon or turtle dove was quite sufficient.

The same perfect and beautiful grace shines forth, in the case of the leper, in Leviticus 14: **"And if he be poor and cannot get so much, then he shall take, &c . . . And he shall offer the one of the turtle doves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can get; even such as he is able to get . . . This is the law of him in whom is the plague of leprosy, whose hand is not able to get that which pertaineth to his cleansing"** (Ver. 21, 30-32).

Grace meets the needy one just where he is, and as he is. The atoning blood is brought within the reach of the very lowest, the very poorest, the very feeblest. All who need it can have it.

"If he be poor" - what then? Let him be cast aside? Ah no; Israel's GOD could never so deal with the poor and needy. There is ample provision for all such in the gracious expression, **"Such as he can get; even such as he is able to get."** Most exquisite grace! **"To the poor the Gospel is preached."** None can say, "the Blood of JESUS was beyond me." Each can be challenged with the inquiry, "how near would you have it brought to you?" "I bring near my righteousness." How "near?" So near, that it is **"to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly"** (Romans 4:5). Again, **"the word is nigh thee."** How "nigh?" So nigh **"that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"** (Romans 10:9). So also that most touching and beautiful invitation, **"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money"** (Isaiah 55:1).

What matchless grace shines in the expressions, **"to him that worketh not,"** and, **"he that hath no money!"** They are as like GOD as they are unlike man. Salvation is as free as the air we breathe. Did we create the air? Did we mingle its component parts? No; but we enjoy it, and, by enjoying it, get power to live and act by Him who made it. So is it in the matter of salvation. We get it without a fraction, without an effort. We feed upon the wealth of another; we rest in the work finished by another; and, moreover, it is by so feeding and resting, that we are enabled to work for Him on whose wealth we feed, and in whose work we rest. This is a grand Gospel paradox, perfectly inexplicable to legality, but beautifully plain to faith. Divine grace delights in making provision for those who are **"not able"** to make provision for themselves.

But, there is another invaluable lesson furnished by this twelfth chapter of Leviticus. We not only read, herein, the grace of GOD to the poor, but, by comparing its closing verse with Luke 2:24, we learn the amazing depth to which GOD stooped in order to manifest that grace.

The Lord JESUS CHRIST, GOD manifest in the flesh, the pure and spotless Lamb, the Holy One, who knew no Sin, was **"made of a woman,"** and that woman - wondrous mystery! - having

borne in her womb, and brought forth, that pure and perfect, that holy and spotless human body, had to undergo the usual ceremonial, and accomplish the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses. And not only do we read divine grace in the fact of her having thus to purify herself, but also the mode in which this was accomplished. **"And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons."**

From this simple circumstance we learn that the reputed parents of our blessed Lord JESUS were so poor, as to be obliged to take advantage of the gracious provision made for those whose means did not afford **"a lamb for a burnt offering."** What a thought! The Lord of Glory, the most High GOD, Possessor of Heaven and earth, the One to whom pertained **"the cattle upon a thousand hills"** - yea, the wealth of the universe - appeared in the world which His hands had made, in the narrow circumstances of humble life.

The Levitical economy had made provision for the poor, and the mother of JESUS availed herself thereof. Truly, there is a profound lesson in this for the human heart. The Lord JESUS did not make his appearance, in this world, in connection with the great or the noble. He was pre-eminently a poor man. He took His place with the poor. **"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"** (II Corinthians 8:9).

May it ever be our joy to feed upon this precious grace of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, by which we have been made rich for time and for eternity. He emptied Himself of all that love could give, that we might be filled. He stripped Himself, that we might be clothed. He died, that we might live. He, in the greatness of His grace, travelled down from the height of divine wealth into the depth of human poverty, in order that we might be raised from the dunghill of nature's ruin, to take our place amid the princes of His people, for ever. Oh! that the sense of this grace, wrought in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost, may constrain us to a more unreserved surrender of ourselves to Him, to whom we owe our present and everlasting felicity, our riches, our life, our all!

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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