

Sanctification, sacrifice & Spirit or, Vigilance – the price of eternal freedom from sin

Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need for another priest to arise ...? – HEBREWS 7:11

Analysis

A. (14:1-32) Cleansing the sinner ... not without water and blood

[14:1-7] The whole treatment of leprosy is parabolic. Leprosy itself is a 'parable of death.' The horrible loathsomeness, the contagiousness, the non-curableness, etc. So the man was shut out from camp and from sanctuary. There was a double process in the cleansing rite, restoring to each. [Maclareni 247]

[14:7] Harrison [149] draws to our attention the analogy of the freed bird, allowed to return to its nest, and the restored man, again admitted to family and community life, as well as restored to full privilege before his God. Kellogg, however, has doubts about this symbolism, pointing out [347] that a bird was also set free at the ritual cleansing of the house (v 53).

[14:14] Now, the meaning of all the things here mentioned is not clear to myself, and I would not have my readers too curious respecting them. Some may be probably accounted for; the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot, were sprinkled with the blood of the offering, because the leper was restored to the ordinary habits and customs of life, so as to have freedom of walk and action, and free conversational intercourse; for in the ear there is a mutual correspondence between speaking and hearing. [Calvin ii26]

[14:20] The oil is put on the man's ear, as if to say, "Lord, I will hear for thee", and on his right hand, as if to say, "Lord, I will act for thee," – and on his right foot, as if to say, "Lord, I will go up and down, to and fro, for thee." He then pours all that remains on his head (ver. 18), that, as it ran down in copious streams over all his person, he might hear every drop cry, "Thou art his that saves thee." But farther; there is a double type here, as in the case of the two birds. Inasmuch as the oil was to be put upon the blood of the trespass-offering, there was implied the glorious truth, that the blood which cleanses also sanctifies. If you are forgiven, you are not your own. If the price is paid for you, you are now the Lord's; he bought you. If pardoned by Jesus, then you are inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Jesus cleansed away the guilt that there might be a fair tablet on which the Spirit might re-write his holy law. If freed from guilt and Satan, you are handed over to the Lord, to serve him in holiness and righteousness. [Bonar 275]

Work, Walk and the Word
Are we entirely sanctified?

[14:31] Harrison [153] wants to emphasize the community worship context of the leper's restoration. There can be no true forgiveness, no ongoing communion with God – without community.

B. (14:33-57) Even the house is cleansed in blood!

[14:33-53] The cleansing of the home suggests the need of a pure environment if we are to live aright. True social life, true family life, true church life, must be, and will be, the outcome of personal cleansing and consecration. [Thomas 123]

[14:34] The Israelites were taught monistic theology and the philosophy of monism long before the Greeks discovered even the science of philosophy. In a world where a whole range of supernatural beings were thanked or blamed for various aspects of life and reality, Israel was taught to recognize, as in this verse, that only the true

God was ultimately responsible for all phenomena. Just as surely as He gave them Canaan, He could be said to give the leper his disease, the house its disease! In this way God's people learned never to become preoccupied with intermediate causation – only God should they fear! [see Harrison 155 and Isaiah 45:7]

[14:34] The sense, then, was that. they should each of them diligently endeavor to keep their houses pure, and chaste, and free from every stain. [Calvin ii 28]

[14:35] The owner of the house is to tell. It is the head of the family that is to be on the watch at all times, in regard to whatever takes place in his house. Upon him rests the authority, and so also the responsibility. [Bonar 279]

[14:48-53] For the time then present, one can hardly fail to see in this ceremonial, first, a merciful sanitary intent. By the observance of these regulations not only was Israel to be saved from many sicknesses and various evils, but was to be constantly reminded that Israel's God, like a wise and kind Father, had a care for everything that pertained to their welfare; not only for their persons, but also for their dwellings, and even all the various articles of daily use. The lesson is always in force, for God has not changed. He is not a God who cares for the souls of men only, but for their bodies also, and everything around them. His servants do well to remember this, and in this imitate Him, as happily many are doing more and more. Bibles and tracts are good, and religious exhortation; but we have here left us a Divine warrant not to content ourselves with these things alone, but to have a care for the clothing and the homes of those we would reach with the Gospel. In all the large cities of Christendom it must be confessed that the principle which underlies these laws concerning houses and garments, is often terribly neglected. Whether the veritable plague of leprosy be in the walls of many of our tenement houses or not, there can be no doubt that it could not be much worse if it were; and Christian philanthropy and legislation could scarcely do better in many cases than vigorously to enforce the Levitical law, tear down, re-plaster, or, in many cases, destroy from the foundation, tenement houses, which could, with little exaggeration, be justly described as leprous throughout. [Kellogg 362-63]

[14:54-57] As leprosy, regarded as a decomposition of the vital juices, and as



WILLIAM WILBERFORCE
(1759-1833)

One who knew that the water
and the blood must cleanse
more than the dead soul – even
to the tearing down of houses
and strongholds!

putrefaction in a living body, was an image of death, and like this introduced the same dissolution and destruction of life into the corporeal sphere which sin introduced into the spiritual; and as the leper for this very reason as not only excluded from the fellowship of the sanctuary, but cut off from intercourse with the covenant nation which was called to sanctification: the man, when recovered from leprosy, was first of all to be received into the fellowship of the covenant nation by a significant rite of purification, and then again to be still further inducted into living fellowship with Jehovah in His sanctuary. Hence the purification prescribed was divided into two acts, separated from one another by an interval of seven days. [Keil ii 384]

C. *(Summing up) Pointing forward – no cure, only diagnosis*

No magic, as **Wenham** points out, could take away sin. Nor could the blood of animals, according to Hebrews.

To use a modern analogy, the priest in ancient Israel was more like a public health inspector than a physician. He determined whether a person was infected; he did not attempt to cure him. In this respect Israel differed from her neighbors, who went in for exorcism and magical rites in attempts to cure disease. In Israel a man had to seek help directly from God in prayer, not rely on the dubious remedies of folk medicine. [Wenham 207]

In that the blood of the bird is mingled with water, the symbol of the Word of God, is symbolised the truth, that with the atoning blood is ever inseparably united the purifying energy of the Holy Ghost through the Word. Not the water without the blood, nor the blood without the water, saves, but the blood with the water, and the water with the blood. So it is said of Him to whom the ceremony pointed (1 John v. 6): "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood." But the type yet lacks something for completeness; and for this reason we have the second bird, who, when by his means the blood has been sprinkled on the leper, and the man is now pronounced clean, is released and flies away heavenward. What a beautiful symbol of that other truth, without which even the atonement of the Lord were nought, that He who died, having by that death for us procured our life, was then released from the bonds of death, rising from the dead on the third day, and ascending to heaven, like the freed bird, in token that His life-giving, cleansing work was done. Thus the message which, as the liberated bird flies carolling away, sweet as a heavenly song, seems to fall upon the ear, is this, "Delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification" (Rom. iv. 25; see Gr.). [Kellogg 354-55]

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