

True wholeness

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Preacher: Benjamin Wilks

[0 : 00] I hope you're sitting comfortably. Now we come to Leviticus 13 from verse 1. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a shiny spot on their skin that may be a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest.

The priest is to examine the sore on the skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling skin disease. When the priest examines that person, he shall pronounce them ceremonially unclean.

If the shiny spot on the skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep, and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days. On the seventh day, the priest is to examine them, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to isolate them for another seven days.

On the seventh day, the priest is to examine them again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them clean. It is only a rash. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean.

But if the rash does spread in their skin, after they have shown themselves to the priest to be pronounced clean, they must appear before the priest again. The priest is to examine that person, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce them unclean.

[1 : 18] It is a defiling skin disease. When anyone has a defiling skin disease, they must be brought to the priest. The priest is to examine them, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white, and if there is raw flesh in the swelling, it is a chronic skin disease, and the priest shall pronounce them unclean.

He is not to isolate them, because they are already unclean. If the disease breaks out all over their skin, and so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the affected person from head to foot, the priest is to examine them, and if the disease has covered their whole body, he shall pronounce them clean.

Since it has all turned white, they are clean. But whenever raw flesh appears on them, they will be unclean. When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce them unclean. The raw flesh is unclean.

They have a defiling skin disease. If the raw flesh changes and turns white, they must go to the priest. The priest is to examine them, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the affected person clean.

Then they will be clean. When someone has a boil on their skin, and it heals, and in the place where the boil was, a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, they must present themselves to the priest.

[2 : 30] The priest is to examine it, and if it appears to be more than skin deep, and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce that person unclean. It is a defiling skin disease that has broken out where the boil was.

But if, when the priest examines it, there is no white hair in it, and it is not more than skin deep, and has faded, then the priest is to isolate them for seven days. If it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them unclean.

It is a defiling disease. But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce them clean. When someone has a burn on their skin, and a reddish-white or white spot appears in the raw flesh of the burn, the priest is to examine the spot, and if the hair in it has turned white, and it appears to be more than skin deep, it is a defiling disease that has broken out in the burn.

The priest shall pronounce them unclean. It is a defiling skin disease. But if the priest examines it, and there is no white hair in the spot, and if it is not more than skin deep, and has faded, then the priest is to isolate them for seven days.

On the seventh day, the priest is to examine that person, and if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce them unclean. It is a defiling skin disease. If, however, the spot is unchanged, and has not spread in the skin, but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce them clean.

[3 : 52] It is only a scar from the burn. If a man or woman has a sore on their head or chin, the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep, and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce them unclean.

It is a defiling skin disease on the head or chin. But if, when the priest examines the sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep, and there is no black hair in it, then the priest is to isolate the affected person for seven days.

On the seventh day, the priest is to examine the sore, and if it has not spread, and there is no yellow hair in it, and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, then the man or woman must shave themselves, except for the affected area, and the priest is to keep them isolated another seven days.

On the seventh day, the priest is to examine the sore, and if it has not spread in the skin, and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce them clean. They must wash their clothes, and they will be clean.

But if the sore does spread in the skin after they're pronounced clean, the priest is to examine them, and if he finds that the sore has spread in the skin, he does not need to look for yellow hair. They are unclean. If, however, the sore is unchanged, so far as the priest can see, and if black hair has grown in it, the affected person is healed.

[5 : 03] They are clean, and the priest shall pronounce them clean. When a man or woman has white spots on the skin, the priest is to examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin.

They are clean. A man who has lost his hair and is bald is clean. If he has lost his hair from the front of his scalp and has a bald forehead, he is clean. But if he has a reddish-white sore on his bald head or forehead, it is a defiling disease breaking out on his head or forehead.

The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like a defiling skin disease, the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head.

Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face, and cry out, unclean, unclean.

As long as they have the disease, they remain unclean. They must live alone. They must live outside the camp. As for any fabric that is spoiled with a defiling mold, any woolen or linen clothing, any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, any leather or anything made of leather, if the affected area in the fabric, the leather, the woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish.

[6 : 26] It is a defiling mold and must be shown to the priest. The priest is to examine the affected area and isolate the article for seven days. On the seventh day, he is to examine it, and if the mold has spread in the fabric, the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a persistent, defiling mold.

The article is unclean. He must burn the fabric, the woven or knitted material, of wool or linen, or any leather article that has been spoiled. Because the defiling mold is persistent, the article must be burned.

But if when the priest examines it, the mold has not spread in the fabric, the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, he shall order that the spoiled article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days.

After the article has been washed, the priest is to examine it again, and if the mold has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean. Burn it, no matter which side of the fabric has been spoiled.

If, when the priest examines it, the mold has faded after the article has been washed, he is to tear the spoiled part out of the fabric, the leather or the woven or knitted material. But if it reappears in the fabric or the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is a spreading mold.

[7 : 36] Whatever has the mold must be burned. Any fabric, woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mold must be washed again. Then it will be clean.

These are the regulations concerning defiling molds in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article for pronouncing them clean or unclean.

The Lord said to Moses, these are the regulations for any diseased person at the time of their ceremonial cleansing when they are brought to the priest. The priest is to go outside the camp and examine them.

If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedarwood, scarlet yarn, and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed.

Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. He is then to take the live bird and dip it together with the cedarwood, the scarlet yarn, and the hyssop into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water.

[8 : 37] Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the defiling disease and then pronounce them clean. After that he is to release the live bird in the open fields. The person to be cleansed must wash their clothes, shave off all their hair and bathe with water.

Then they will be ceremonially clean. After this they may come into the camp, but they must stay outside their tent for seven days. On the seventh day they must shave off all their hair.

They must shave their head, their beard, their eyebrows, and the rest of their hair. They must wash their clothes and bathe themselves with water and they will be clean. On the eighth day they must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an effort of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering and one log of oil.

The priest who pronounces them clean shall present both the one to be cleansed and their offerings before the Lord at the entrance to the tent of meeting. Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering along with the log of oil.

He shall wave them before the Lord as a wave offering. He is to slaughter the lamb in the sanctuary area where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest.

[9 : 51] It is most holy. The priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot.

The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour it in the palm of his own left hand, dip his right forefinger into the oil in his palm and with his finger sprinkle some of it before the Lord seven times. The priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot on top of the blood of the guilt offering.

The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed and make atonement for them before the Lord. Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from their uncleanness.

After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering and offer it on the altar together with the grain offering and make atonement for them and they will be clean. If, however, they are poor and cannot afford these, they must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for them together with a tenth of an effort of the finest flour mixed with olive oil for a grain offering, a log of oil and two doves or two young pigeons such as they can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

[11 : 08] On the eighth day, they must bring them for their cleansing to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting before the Lord. The priest is to take the lamb for the guilt offering together with the log of oil and wave them before the Lord as a wave offering.

He shall slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot.

The priest is to pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand and with his right forefinger sprinkle some of the oil from his palm seven times before the Lord. Some of the oil in his palm he is to put on the same places he put the blood of the guilt offering, on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of their right hand and on the big toe of their right foot.

The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed to make atonement for them before the Lord. Then he shall sacrifice the doves or the young pigeons such as the person can afford, one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering.

In this way the priest will make atonement before the Lord on behalf of the one to be cleansed. These are the regulations for anyone who has a defiling skin disease and who cannot afford the usual offerings for their cleansing.

[12 : 21] The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, when you enter the land of Canaan which I am giving you as your possession and I put a spreading mold in a house in that land, the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, I have seen something that looks like a defiling mold in my house.

The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mold so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this the priest is to go in and inspect the house. He is to examine the mold on the walls and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall the priest shall go out of the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days.

On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mold has spread on the walls he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town.

He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town. Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house.

If the defiling mold reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered the priest is to go and examine it and if the mold has spread in the house it is a persistent defiling mold.

[13 : 35] The house is unclean. It must be torn down. It's stones, timbers and all the plaster and taken out of the town to an unclean place. Anyone who goes into the house while it is closed up will be unclean till evening.

Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash their clothes. But if the priest comes to examine it and the mold has not spread after the house has been plastered he shall pronounce the house clean because the defiling mold is gone.

To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedarwood scarlet yarn and hyssop. He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. Then he is to take the cedarwood the hyssop the scarlet yarn and the live bird dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water and sprinkle the house seven times.

He shall purify the house with the bird's blood the fresh water the live bird the cedarwood the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house and it will be clean. These are the regulations for any defiling skin disease. For a sore for defiling molds in fabric or in a house and for a swelling a rash or a shiny spot to determine when something is clean or unclean.

[14 : 47] These are the regulations for defiling skin diseases and defiling molds. Amen. Let's pray.

Did I not tell him? There we go. Leviticus are grappling with questions of wholeness and asking what does it look like to be whole?

What does it look like to be complete? What are the consequences of not being whole? Asking is there any way for restoration when problems arise?

These are the questions that we are grappling with here. We will grapple together with them in just a moment once I have a microphone that is a little bit better behaved.

If we can manage one complete microphone from these two. If you mute this one please. Now folks, it is certainly true that these detailed and frankly somewhat repetitive regulations about skin disease that these are not immediately the most gripping and dramatic of things to consider.

[16 : 04] But remember this has behind it the question of how people may have fellowship with a holy God. How close can you come to the burning, consuming holiness of God?

Who can come into God's presence? How and when? Remember these basic divisions. There is the holy and there is the common and then within that common ordinary zone things can be either clean or unclean.

And that which is holy should not come into contact with that which is unclean. Both because that the holy will be tarnished by the presence of the unclean and also because the unclean thing coming into the presence of that which is holy is potentially subject to destruction as a result. Now these regulations about clean and unclean these are specified for us in a sort of parenthesis almost between the deaths of Nadab and Abihu who were killed for approaching a holy God in an improper manner back in chapter 10 and then the regulations for the day of atonement in chapter 16.

Why do I say it's a parenthesis? Well because chapter 16 is introduced with these words. The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the Lord. [17:30] So all of these regulations fit in in between as the laws of Leviticus are presented to us this is kind of compressed into a brief period between their deaths and then the regulations for the day of atonement.

And these regulations that we're considering tonight they have a purpose. The priests are told back in chapter 10 that their job is to distinguish between the holy and the common.

To distinguish between the unclean and the clean. These regulations give them the means to do that. They must make these distinctions so that people will not die.

They must make these distinctions so that God's holiness will not be profaned. So we'll start with a little bit of time on the nature of skin disease as it's understood in Leviticus and then we'll be reflecting on the seriousness of defilement in this way.

So we're exploring wholeness holiness and we'll return particularly to that question of true wholeness at the end of our time together this evening.

[18:44] So skin disease in Leviticus. Chapter 13 describes a number of different conditions. If you were getting lost in all the to-ing and fro-ing there there's a few different situations all under this broad heading of defiling skin disease.

A number of different subcategories as it were and therefore the symptoms being used to diagnose each condition they vary. So this isn't all one different disease or condition being considered.

If any of you are looking at a Bible that uses the word leprosy or leprous disease in 13.2 it's just a bad translation. There's probably a footnote next to that word that says something like leprosy was a term for various skin diseases.

I suppose that's true but what they really mean is that the Hebrew word covers a variety of diseases. Not that the English word leprosy meant a variety of things. What they mean is the word that's used in writing Leviticus covers far more than anything we use the word leprosy for today.

So it is a misleading term to use. The term for skin disease here may well cover leprosy or Hansen's disease to give it a proper medical designation but actually there's some debate about that.

[19:57] Leprosy may not be even any of the conditions that are being discussed here because archaeological evidence says Hansen's disease wasn't actually a known condition at the time. The symptoms that are described here are much more likely to be diseases like psoriasis, leukoderma and so on.

It will be no surprise to you that you can read endless scholarly articles trying to pin down exactly which diseases are in view. It doesn't really matter a great deal for our purposes and it didn't matter a great deal for the priests or the Israelites either because their objective in working their way through these regulations, their objective isn't to pin down okay is this psoriasis or is this eczema and therefore what's the proper treatment?

That's not what they're trying to do. Gordon Wenham says that the symptoms as such were what caused a man to be pronounced unclean not the underlying cause of these symptoms.

If a man looked bad he was declared unclean. It was not that the disease as such was thought to be infectious or that it would result in his death but the symptoms, the outbreak in his skin, the symptoms were incompatible with full membership of the covenant people.

What matters isn't why is there raw flesh, verse 10 what matters is simply that there is raw flesh the rawness results in being unclean.

[21:22] The other angle that we need to understand on the nature of skin disease here is that it's broader than just skin. The law moves smoothly from rules about priests inspecting people to priests inspecting clothes and leather and so on and then in chapter 14 on into inspections of buildings.

things. And maybe it seems a little bit strange to lump these together but it's not just that they're kind of lumped together in a couple of chapters, you know, kind of piled into one bucket.

Actually it goes deeper than that because it's the same word. When verse 47 speaks of a defiling mold, it's exactly the same word as in 13.2, the defiling skin disease.

And the same again in 14.34, the spreading mold in the house. leprosy of the house. If it wasn't already obvious that leprosy is a bad translation, we can see that now.

So in the Israelites' mind, there is enough similarity between dry rot in the wall and mildew in the cloak and psoriasis in the skin that they all have the same name, the same term, and all of them are unclean.

[22 : 31] all of these can be recognized by a discoloration of the surface and also by the fact that they're affecting part of the object, not the whole. But it is more than just superficial.

It's not just, you know, a little kind of mark on the top. It goes deeper into the skin, deeper into the object. And also, they all have in common that they're actively spreading.

So these symptoms, they disfigure people and objects. And in that disfiguration, they destroy the wholeness. They destroy the totality.

They destroy what should characterize creation. They destroy how things were made to be. These are aberrations from the norm, and therefore, they are unclean.

Same as we talked when we were thinking about the animals. A fish without scales is unclean because it's an aberration from what a fish is supposed to be. These are aberrations from what people and clothes and the buildings should be.

[23 : 38] That wholeness, completeness. You can't be whole if the surface of it is interrupted. It is erupting, marred, oozing, foreign objects growing in something. It's not part of how things are meant to be.

It is unclean. Why do we care about unclean clothes and buildings as well as people? Well, first, because God claims authority over all creation.

He has authority over everything that he's made. He's the one who decides, and his standard is perfection. Remember that the fall causes not only humanity, but all of creation to be tainted, marred, now subject to decay and to death.

Adam and Eve in the garden, I don't think there was anything unclean there at that point. God came and walked around in the garden. And the role of Adam and Eve was originally meant to be to extend that garden.

They're given the command to go and to fill and subdue the earth, to extend the holiness of the garden, if you like, extend that throughout the world. And here in Leviticus, there's the same objective.

[24 : 48] Remember both holiness and uncleanness. Both of them spread. Both of them affect other things when they touch. You become unclean because you touched something that was unclean, but also you might become holy by contact with something that is holy.

They affect other things by their touch, and therefore you have to take radical steps to avoid ending up in a situation where the whole earth has been defiled because all of it has come into contact steadily, steadily, steady with things that are unclean.

And if holiness is going to win, then the unclean has to be quarantined, actively avoided. Serious action has to be taken. So in all of these cases of severe skin disease, whether that's in the skin of the person, the skin of the garment, or the skin of the house, in all of them, the danger is contagion. A mildewed garment can cause people in that environment to become unwell. Skin diseases can be communicated by touch, but even more than the communicability of the medical condition, the bigger concern is the communicability of the uncleanness.

And I think that communication of uncleanness requires more radical steps to avoid here with the skin conditions and the mold and mildew and things, because it is medical.

[26 : 13] So where, you know, uncleanness caused by discharges, well, that doesn't cause a disease within the person who's touched it, and therefore all they need to do to remove their uncleanness is wash and wait till evening and they're clean again.

But here with these conditions, if you become yourself unwell because of the contact with this that was unclean, then you're then stuck in that situation of uncleanness.

And therefore more radical steps have to be taken to avoid this uncleanness spreading than was required in what we considered last week and indeed with unclean animals and so on.

So John Currid points out, at least part of the danger with the garments, part of the danger surely is that they might be worn in the sacred precincts. You might go to the tabernacle wearing this garment that's infected with mildew into the temple precincts where uncleanness should be nowhere near.

If you're going to keep those kind of unclean fabrics out of God's presence and in order that men and women aren't going to become unclean from contact with that fabric and then approach God themselves to prevent this, you have to root it out at the source.

[27 : 30] According to how much it spreads, whether it fades with washing and so on, maybe you can rip out a section and patch the garment or maybe the whole thing must be burnt. Or if washing does away with the mold, then the garment can be washed again and returned to use well and good.

So it's relatively straightforward with the fabrics. It's comparatively economically unproblematic. But that's not to say the matter isn't serious. If nothing else, for your average Israelite, a second garment stored at home, actually that could be a not insignificant part of his total net worth. He hasn't got a cupboard full of clothes. He's doing well to have two shirts. Serious business. But the seriousness with which this has to be taken, it's even more apparent when we start talking about buildings and people, isn't it?

In the case of the house, that second half of chapter 14, well first you have to empty absolutely everything out of the house. And assuming that the priest agrees there's reason for concern, you then have to live somewhere else for seven days to wait for that second inspection.

And if it doesn't spread during those seven days, then great, breathe a sigh of relief. But if it has, then you're off tearing a whacking great hole in the side of your house in order to remove these contaminated stones.

[28 : 47] And scraping all of the plaster from all of the walls through the whole house and taking it all to be dumped. You can then fix the house. Takes some time, but you can come back.

But if that mould then reappears in that same house, the whole thing has to be torn down. Stones, timber, plaster, all of it unclean, all of it dumped outside the town. Start again from scratch. New house. Serious stuff. But even more, well think about the case of the person found to be unclean due to a skin condition.

All of that diagnosis kind of filters down into the bluntness of chapter 13 verse 45. Anyone with such a defiling disease must wear torn clothes, let their hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of their face and cry out, unclean, unclean.

As long as they have the disease, they remain unclean. They must live alone. They must live outside the camp. Most of these things that they have to do in response to being declared unclean in this way, most of these responses are elsewhere in God's word associated with death.

[29 : 59] These are mourning rites. You tear your clothes to mourn the death of a relative. You leave your hair unkempt as a mourning act. Ezekiel 24 talks about covering the mustache as a sign of mourning.

Symbolically speaking, in what they're expected to do, symbolically, these people are dead. Living alone outside the camp is a calamity.

The idea of getting away from it all for some time, it is a peculiarly modern idea. A solitary existence, as far as Leviticus is concerned, is a source of great distress.

This is painful. Gordon Wenham says, the person so diagnosed experienced a living death. His life as a member of God's people, experiencing God's blessing, it comes to an end.

Genesis 3 gives us a similar picture. Man warned that disobedience to God's command means death. And in fact, physical destruction was not the immediate consequence of the fall, but exclusion from Eden was.

[31 : 06] With the loss of the benefits thereof. That followed at once. As Adam and Eve experienced a living death in that expulsion from Eden. So every man diagnosed as unclean suffers a similar fate.

Now again, as we said last week, it's not that uncleanness is always a consequence of sin. Those afflicted in these ways, whether in flesh, in garment, or in stone, the afflicted might well do well to ask themselves if this disease is in some sense a punishment, a chastening.

But that is by no means always the case. And certainly the consequences of being unclean, the expulsion from the camp, the loss of property and so on. This is not punishment.

This is not retribution. This is not telling somebody off that they've been bad. Painful though this might be, the purpose is to prevent the spread of contagion, both physical and ceremonial. And we can tell it's not punitive. Because remember the house is allowed to be emptied before the priest comes in order that contents don't have to be pronounced unclean. We can tell it's not punitive because sometimes you just have to tear out part of the garment and you can patch it. [32 : 24] You don't always just have to burn the whole thing. But still there's no escaping the fact that this is really serious. It's not always a direct result of sin but it is fair to say that the skin disease and the treatment thereof, it's regarded in Leviticus and throughout God's Word and on into the New Testament.

It's regarded as symbolic of sin and its consequences. There are people who very clearly do have skin diseases inflicted on them as punishment for sin.

And so because of this symbolic link with sin, then we find that when healing occurs, sacrifice is appropriate. And the first half of chapter 14 sets out that process in some detail.

The person's examined. Assuming they're found to have been healed, then in a process that's really quite reminiscent of the Day of Atonement that we'll come to next week. Similarly, one animal is killed and the other is set free, this time with birds rather than lambs, goats.

And then the cleansed person is sprinkled with blood and water. All this is outside the camp. Then they wash, they shave, and then they can come in, but still outside the tent for seven days.

[33 : 42] After which all four of the main types of compulsory sacrifice, all four of them have to be offered. The purification offering, the burnt offering, the reparation offering, and the cereal offering.

All of them expected in this situation. As is often the case, the sacrifice should be a lamb where possible, but a bird where finances are tight, which you would think they might often be after a period of isolation.

Four sacrifices expected as the means of cleansing or the response to cleansing. So serious is this situation. Now folks, on the one hand, on the one hand, we tend towards a trivialization of sin and holiness.

We tend towards thinking that the situation isn't really that serious. We tend towards saying we are basically good people. And when we tend in that direction, the weight of the law shows us otherwise.

Sin is serious business. On the other hand, we're sometimes inclined to see the law as the answer.

[34 : 53] Inclined towards legalism. Inclined towards thinking that if we keep the rules, everything will be okay. Thinking, I can do it. I just do all the right things, and there we are.

Well, when we're tempted that way, the weight of the law shows us we cannot. We are incapable of it.

John Currid, in his helpful commentary, he points to the example of the man called Christian in Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, who one day leaves the path to seek help from a certain Mr. Legality. There he ventures to a hill that symbolizes Mount Sinai and the law. And Christian is afraid, however, that Mount Sinai will fall on his head. Bunyan writes, His burden now seemed heavier to him than while he was in his way.

There came also flashes of fire out of the hill that made Christian afraid that he should be burned. Here, therefore, he sweat and did quake with fear. The law can be toilsome and burdensome, and it simply cannot be kept in all of its intricacies and all of its principles.

[36 : 08] Folks, if reading through Leviticus, if hearing all of those regulations read to you, if it doesn't show you your inadequacy to keep God's holy standards, then I think you and I are reading different books.

We cannot do it. But the wonder of it is, the wonder is that when Jesus came, he took all that weight on himself.

The full weight of the law, all of its requirements in the finest possible detail, every intricacy, every jot and tittle, he took it all on himself in full force, kept it perfectly.

The only man who ever did so, the only man who ever could, he did that on your behalf and mine.

And therefore, no longer do you and I carry the weight of the law.

Instead, we hear the invitation of our Savior. Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[37 : 27] In Christ, we will not be put outside the camp. In Christ, we are purified. We are clean. And if you want any further confirmation that Jesus is greater by far than anything Leviticus offers us in itself, if you want more confirmation, consider this.

What do the priests actually do? They examine. They test. They determine. They consider. They judge between what is holy and what is common, what is clean and unclean.

Some commentators call them priest physicians. Well, they aren't really, are they? Because healing is no part of the priest's remit.

He is not there with an ointment to ease the pain. He is not prescribing a course of antibiotics. The priest looks at one man and says, you are clean. He looks at another and says, it has spread. You are unclean. And from time to time, he looks and says, it has cleared up. Come make the sacrifices and be clean. He assesses what is already the case.

[38 : 36] He doesn't really have any power to change it, does he? But Jesus met a man with a disfiguring skin disease in Matthew 8. The man we traditionally call a leper, though the translation is not really any better there than in Leviticus.

Jesus met a man who had been dwelling outside the town, unclean because of his skin disease.

And the man said, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. I am willing, he said. Be clean. Immediately, he was cleansed of his leprosy. Jesus does not just observe.

Jesus doesn't look at what is already the case and say, okay, here's what you have to do in response. You're stuck with it. Jesus makes a change. Jesus produces healing.

Folks, you and I, we don't have the option of taking our sins and our impurities to the priest and offering sacrifices.

[39 : 37] But instead, we know the one who is able to make us truly whole. The one who can actually restore us and do so completely.

We know the one who has the power to cleanse us, to say, be clean, to command cleanness and produce it.

The one who cleanses us from the inside out, who heals, forgives, redeems, restores. Folks, we know the Savior who offers life to the full.

It is glorious. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, where we are in danger of trivializing sin.

Show us its seriousness. Show us the weight of our impurity before you. Show us our inclination, our propensity towards uncleanness.

[40 : 46] And where we are tempted to think that we have the answer, that we can do the right things and be righteous in your eyes, show us the seriousness of the situation.

Show us that we cannot. And as you show us the seriousness and our inability, show us to our Savior.

Lord Jesus, show yourself to us each day. May we open our eyes each morning with a fresh vision of you in all of your loveliness.

Because you are the one who makes us clean. The one who makes us whole. The one who gives us life to the full. Give us that hope in you tonight, we pray.

Amen.