THOROUH EXAMINATION

Leviticus 12:1-13:59

Key Verse: 13:8

“The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease.”

In chapter 11, the LORD said, “Be holy, because I am holy.” The LORD wanted the Israelites to know their identity as those who were brought out of Egypt, the land of slavery and to live as the holy people of God with a clear concept of “clean” and ‘unclean.” Particularly, the LORD God wanted them to be holy, set apart from the people of the world, in the matter of eating done in obedience to his command. How important it is to have daily remembrance of who we are in Christ Jesus! Today’s passage is the continuation of the idea of cleanness and uncleanness for God’s holy people. We see God’s deep concern for childbearing women and for people with an infectious disease, in the hope of the restoration of the cleanness, and also his concern for the whole community of his people.

In 12:1-5, the LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.”’” First of all, we are to know that childbearing is God’s blessing. Genesis 1:28 says, “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth…” Even after the flood judgment this blessing continued. In Genesis 9:1, God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.”

After giving birth to a son, the mother is ceremonially unclean for seven days, and after giving birth to a daughter, the mother is unclean for two weeks. This uncleanness is because of her bleeding. The time of purification in the case of delivering a son is 33 days and 66 days in the case of a daughter. So altogether the mother would have 40 days or 80 days accordingly. Definitely it is not a time of punishment, but a time of purification and restoration. How mindful the LORD is for a woman who gave birth to her child! No one but the LORD would know her pain of childbearing and also the joy of having the child. And the LORD knew that she needed such a time of recovery and restoration, both in body and spirit. We know that 40 days are a meaningful time in the Bible. For example, Moses stayed on the mountain of Sinai forty days and forty night (Ex 24:18), certainly having close fellowship with God. The woman here might have a personal time before God, meditating on the reason of the birth pain and how to raise the child. Then why for 80 days in the case of delivering a daughter? We don’t know. Just we can think that she needed more time of restoration.

Then in verses 6-7 it says, “When the days of her purification for a son or a daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.” God then provided a way of being ceremonially clean so that she would be able to go the sanctuary and restore all the activities as a member of the community. Particularly it is written, “to make atonement for her” through the burnt offering and the sin offering.

One woman of God confessed that her pain of child birth was so great that it was like tasting the momentary suffering of hell. In that extreme pain, she just cried out, “Forgive me, forgive me.” She did not commit a specific sin, but that was her cry from her soul, probably for the forgiveness from the fundamental sin as a woman. And the burnt offering includes the new dedication of her life to God. Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:14-15, “Adam was not the one deceived; it was a woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing…” The point is not that a woman is a worse sinner than a man, but God’s way of working for a woman in the consideration of the childbearing. It is very important to understand the Scriptures from God’s viewpoint.

God continues in verses 7-8, “These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.” The LORD was mindful of the poor so any woman would not be an exception for this ceremonial restoration because of her poverty. This was the case of Mary, the mother of Jesus as written in Luke 2:24, “to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: ‘a par of doves or two young pigeons.’” The LORD is truly holy and delicately caring.

Now let’s move to chapter 13 with 59 verses. In verse 1, “The LORD said to Moses and Aaron” recognizing Aaron’s position as the priest. The LORD says, “When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest.” Here “an infectious skin disease” is in ESV “a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body” and in NASB “an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body.” We can try to imagine the situation of the Israelites of around 2 million people living together in the desert with no medical care or a well-developed sanitary system at all. An infectious disease would be critical for the community. The LORD continues to speak, “The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean.” We see that one of the priest duties is to examine the skin disease whether it is infectious/leprous and pronounce clean or unclean, which is not a pleasant but necessary job for the lives of the people.

The LORD says continually in verses 4-8, “If the spot on his 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 put the infected person in isolation for seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another seven days. On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. But if the rash does spread in his skin after he has shown himself to the priest to be pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again. The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease.” In dealing with this one case of the infected person the priest is to examine five times with two times of insolation by seven days. What a tremendous job for the priests, at that time! In the whole passage of this chapter the word “examine” is written 25 times. It was to make a correct diagnosis thorough the thorough and repeated examination. In this procedure for the right judgment the person must work together with the priest, appearing and showing himself to the priest. The LORD God truly cares for an individual who is not well and concerns the whole community.

And in verses 9-11 the LORD continues to speak, “When anyone has an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to the priest. The priest is to examine him, 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 him unclean. He is not to put him in isolation, because he is already unclean.” Here “a chronic skin disease” is “a chronic leprosy in the skin of his body” in ESV and NASB and “an old leprosy in the skin of his flesh” in KJV. It seems that the priest had to know the history of the disease of the person, how long the person had been infected, and whether it was old or new.

In verses 12-17 the LORD continues, “If the disease breaks out all over his skin and, so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the infected person from head to foot, the priest is to examine him, and if the disease has covered his whole body, he shall pronounce that person clean. Since it has all turned white, he is clean. But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he will be unclean. When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; he has an infectious disease. Should the raw flesh change and turn white, he must go to the priest. The priest is to examine him, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the infected person clean; then he will be clean.” Here the word “raw flesh” is written four times. God wanted the priest to go through the careful examination with a watchful eye and make the correct diagnosis to the end, clean or unclean. Again, what intensive and consistent care for a diseased person!

In the following verses, the LORD deals with the case of having boil on the skin (18-24), of having a burn on the skin (24-28), of having a sore on the head or on the chin (29-37), of having white spots on the skin (38-39), and of losing hairs and being bald (40-44). It seems that the LORD does not miss any case for the perfect care.

What can we think further in this passage? We are to know that sin is like an infectious/leprous disease. Sin must be dealt with as quickly as possible. First of all, we need self-examination. How amazing it is that we have the written words of the Bible; so we can examine ourselves in light of God’s word. Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” David said in Psalm 139:23-24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” And 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” A life with repentance and correction before God’s word is a beautiful and blessed life, repenting of the sin of just, pride, rebelliousness and disobedience. These sins may not grow and spread in anyone. And we should watch out for the sin of unthankfulness, which is a root of all sin. Hebrews 12:15 says, “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” The spirit of thanklessness and grumpiness is to be eradicated. It is good to remember the words of God in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Be joyful always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances, for it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

We really need correction in life. A husband and a wife can give good advice to each other. Each one should listen to the other and correct. M. Sarah often says to me, “use the internet and find solutions when you have practical problems. Necessary information is there, including for simple plumbing problems.” That’s really a good advice. However, I did not correct myself easily, doing things in my own way and causing much trouble. Parents can give good advice to their children, and if the children listen, they are blessed and their lives are much easier. Proverbs 1:8-9 says, “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.”

How much de we need correction in life! However, many neglect and even hate correction. It is written in Proverbs 5:11-12, “At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, ‘How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction!’” What a terrible life! Proverbs 12:1 says, “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.” 15:5 says, “A fool spurns a parent’s discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.” 15:10 says, “Stern discipline awaits anyone who leaves the path; the one who hates correction will die.” And 15:32 says, “He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding.” In the fear of the Lord and wisdom of life, one can correct himself or herself, his or her bad habit today, or it can go through one’s lifetime with tremendous trouble and loss. Again, correction is wisdom and life. God knows the path, blessed and best, we should go at each time.

In this passage, we also learn how to shepherd God’s flock of sheep. A shepherd should make every effort to solve their sin problem, knowing their spiritual condition. Proverbs 27:23 says, “Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds.” Thank Jesus who knows his sheep and cared for them to the point of his giving his life for the sheep. And Apostle Paul said to the elders of the Ephesian church in Acts 20:31, “Be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” He also said in 2 Timothy 4:2, “…correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”

And God’s community should be protected from the yeast of sin. In Numbers 14 when all the people of the community of the Israelites raised voices and wept aloud the whole night, when they heard the bad report about the land of Canaan by the ten spies, rejecting the good report of Joshua and Caleb. The grumbling and unbelieving and fearful spirit spread the entire community like a wild fire. Because of this they had to wander in the desert for forty years as God’s training, while the ten spies were put to death right away. In 1 Corinthians 5, the Corinthians church could not deal with one immoral sinner. They were just accepting of him when there was no even a hint of repentance, still thinking that they were doing good in great tolerance. Paul could not bear with their compromising spirit and their human proudness and said, “…Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (5:6-7). We should protect God’s community from sin and the contamination from the world.

Now in verses 45-46 it says, "The person with such an infectious disease/the leprous person who had the disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ As long as he has infection he remain unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside camp.” What a lonely life with life-time isolation! Yet, this kind of human isolation is an opportunity for divine grace.

In verses 47-59, God even cares for the clothing that might be contaminated with the leprous disease/mildew. When the mildew is destructive, the article must be burned up, which cannot be done to the person. And in verse 57, “…whatever has the mildew must be burned with fire.”

We thank the LORD who is so careful and thorough in his delicate caring. May we live in his loving care and learn correction and caring in life.