HEALED AND RELEASED

Leviticus 14:1-15:32

Key Verse: 14:7

“Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields.”

In the last lesson we could learn how the LORD carefully and delicately cares for a woman who gave birth to her child and for an infected person through thorough examination in the hope of restoration of cleanness. At the same time, the LORD God protects the whole community of his people. In today’s passage, Leviticus chapters 14 and 15, we will see the procedure of a healed person’s release. We can perceive God’s longing and joy of the restoration of cleanness of each diseased person among his people.

In 14:1-3 it says, “The LORD said to Moses, ‘These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing, when he is brought to the priest. The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease…” Here is no description of how the person was healed, where the healing came. The sentence is written in a passive voice. It is truly divine grace that a lifetime quarantined person has been healed. The healing must have come from above, not below, as divine healing.

The LORD says continually in verses 4-7, “the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yawn and hyssop be brought for the one 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 cedar wood, the scarlet yawn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields.” What a beautiful order of God for the person to be cleansed! In short, two live cleans birds were to be brought and one bird was to be killed over fresh water and the live bird was then to be dipped in the blood of the killed bird and released into the open field. It would be done after the one to be cleansed was sprinkled seven times and pronounced clean. It seems that God knew the joy and the freedom of the person healed from his lifelong disease, and wanted to participate in that joy and freedom. God expressed in this way his yearning heart for such a joyful and liberated life of the person.

Again, the live bird was not to be released, but after being dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. Then the bird would fly high and freely across the expanse of the sky. Isn’t it the very expression of the gospel? We were dead in our transgressions and sins with no hope to be quickened and made alive. But because of God’s great love in the richness of his mercy we were made alive in Christ Jesus who was sacrificed in our place shedding his whole blood (Eph 2:1-3). We became like the bird released in the open field, being freed from all the bondage of sin and condemnation.

Once I could not move freely; though I was a young man, I walked like an old man, when my heart was deadened. I could not speak freely, just murmuring and whispering like a mosquito, being oppressed by a sprit of fear. I could not think freely, for it was suffering itself, like falling into a bottomless pit with no anchor at all, when I had not even one truth of God’s word; finally I had a nervous breakdown. I could not read the Bible freely, even one chapter, though I had the Bible in my hand. But being made alive in Christ Jesus, now I can read the Bible freely with joy, going through the whole Bible the second time until now this year. I can think freely meditating on the word of God. I did not know how to meditate on God’s word. So for a long time I prayed that God might give me meditating power and an understanding mind for his word. In his mercy, I can now think freely, memorizing and meditating on the words of God. I can speak freely, proclaiming God’s word. I can walk freely like a young man, going to U of T and sharing the gospel. I can travel freely, not to the nations of the world, but throughout the world of the Bible to find treasures. My one earnestly prayer topic is to serve 1:1 ministry freely. Truly our life in Christ Jesus is like a bird released and flies high, freely moving across the expanse of the sky. Jesus said in John 15:13, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” Our true and best friend Jesus laid down his life for us so that we might be made alive and live a new life in glorious freedom. Praise Jesus!

The LORD says continually in verses 8-9, “The person to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. After this he may come into the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. On the seventh day he must shave off all his hair; he must shave his head, his beard, his eyebrows and the rest of his hair. He must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and he will be clean.” What a thorough process so that no hint of the disease might return! In the gospel story, Jesus said to an invalid man who had been sick for 38 years and then healed, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (Jn 5:14). God does not want anyone to go back to his or her past life after receiving the grace of Jesus. It is by having a clear attitude toward sin. Apostle Peter was so troubled to see the believers become like a dog that returns to its vomit and like a washed sow that goes back to wallowing in the mud (2 Pe 2:22).

The LORD says continually in verses 10-11, “On the eighth day he must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil. The priest who pronounces him clean shall present both the one to be cleansed and his offerings before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.” And in verse 12, “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.” It draws our attention that a guilt offering is to be offered. The guilt offering contains the idea of compensation, paying pack. In the book of Philemon, Onesimos was a slave of his mater Philemon. But he ran away from his master, stealing money. Then he met Paul who was in a Roman prison and was changed through the gospel and Paul’s shepherding. Formerly, he was useless but then became useful. Paul wanted to send him back to his master Philemon, which was right in God’s sight so that their relationship would be restored as dear brothers in Christ Jesus. Paul assured that Onesimos would be very useful to Philemon, and he was willing to pay back for any wrong that Onesimus had done (Phil 11, 17). Likewise, God’s desire for the person to be cleansed is that he might be a very useful person in his new life as one belonging to God. His new life might fully compensate for what was lost in the past. Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 4:2-3, “…he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do…”

In verses 13-17, one particularly thing is stressed. The priest is to put some of the blood of the guilt offering on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, and also put some of the oil on the same parts of the person on top of the blood of the guilt offering.” The stress is the assurance of the consecration of the person’s ears and hands and foot useful to God as instruments of the Holy Spirit. God wanted him to be fully alive to God. Apostle Paul said in Romans 6:11-13, “…count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ, Jesus…Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness, but rater offer yourselves to God…offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.” In this way, the person is to bear his regained freedom. Paul also said in Galatians 5, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery…13You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love…16So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desire of the sinful nature.” We see that the gospel truth is hidden in this beautiful passage of Leviticus: being released, dipped in the blood, no returning to one’s past life, a new life as compensation to God, and consecration for freedom in Christ Jesus.

In verses 18-20 it says, “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 him before the LORD. Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his 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 him, and he will be clean.” Here “make atonement for him” is written 3 times, assuring this grace of atonement. We thank and praise Jesus who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2). God’s wrath was poured out on him through which we might have forgiveness of sin in him and peace with God. We should keep this grace of atonement in our hearts. And we are to know that the burnt offering and grain offering are the expression of dedication to God.

In verses 21-31, God deals with the poor, who cannot afford the offerings of two male lambs and a ewe lamb. They are to bring a male lamb for a guilt offering, which is the same, but two doves or two young pigeons, which he can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.” The offerings would be different but God’s grace upon the person to be cleansed is the same in the repetition of the long description. One’s poverty cannot take away God’s grace from anyone. The LORD is the God of all.

In verses 33-53, God concerns houses where the Israelites would live when they entered the land of Canaan, which he was giving them as their possession. They are the regulations concerning a house with a leprous disease, mildew, which was to be examined thoroughly. Surprisingly, for the purification of the house, the same things, two birds (not necessarily clean birds) and some cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and hyssop were to be brought. And the procedure for purification was the same. One bird was killed over the fresh water, and the house sprinkled seven times. Then in verses 52-53 it says, “He shall purify the house with the bird’s blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields outside the town.” It seems that God also is sharing the joy of the person whose house was purified. It is true that when God’s people seek his kingdom and his righteousness first, he is willing to give all necessary things to his people.

Chapter 15 is about the bodily discharge, whether it continues flowing or is blocked. It is private and unseen different from the infectious skin disease/the leprous diseases, which is clearly seen. The LORD says in verses 4-6, “Any bed the man with a discharge lies on will be unclean, and anything he sits on will be unclean. Anyone who touches his bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.” What a powerful spreading of uncleanness! The LORD continues in verses 7 and 8, “Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.” The spreading of uncleanness goes further and further. In verses 9-10 it says, “Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean, and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.” The spreading of uncleanness seems uncontrollable. Verses 11 says, “Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean until evening.” Finally verse 12 says, “A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water.” The LORD says of the spreading of uncleanness in 7 cases in 9 verses. And the LORD deals with the emission of semen. Then the LORD explains regarding a woman’s bodily discharged. The spreading of uncleanness is also written in detail.

God also provided the way of making atonement when a man or a woman is cleansed from the discharge – two doves or two young pigeons, one for a sin offering and the other for a burning offering.

Then the LORD says in verse 31, “You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.” What a serious warning!

In our time, people think that their sexual life is private and no one should interfere with it. Yet, in reality the spreading of the uncleanness is uncontrollable through highly-developed technology, SNS. This spreading sweeps over the whole world regardless of age, and the age affected is decreasing continually, even under 10 years of age. On the surface, everything goes fine, but in even a bit depth, known and unknowns diseases kill people, young and old, and destroy families and our society and nation. God’s words are true to all ages of all generations. People should not make light of this rapid spreading of uncleanness.

Genesis 2:24 says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” This is the truth of God regarding the marriage. It is two becoming one in body and soul and spirit. Physical union is the expression of love and commitment one man or one woman through the holy matrimony. This boundary is so critical in life, and those who pass this boundary will bear terrible consequences throughout their lives. But those who keep this truth of God will live in God’s blessing.

We thank and praise God who sacrificed his own Son Christ Jesus on the cross so that we might be healed and released and live a new life with costly freedom as the holy people of God. In this grace, we may have consecrate ourselves in this contaminated world and live a life that flies high and is really useful to God and a blessing to others.