

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS LESSON 8 LEVITICUS CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the laws on uncleanness. It deals with discharges from the reproductive organs of both a man and a woman. The outline of the chapter shows four cases: two for the man and two for the woman. Interestingly the literary style is *chiastic*. In other words, it is a mirror-effect pattern that can be expressed thus: *AB-BA*. The first two cases deal with the discharges of the man—the first an abnormal condition and the second a normal condition. The next two cases deal with the discharges of the woman—the first a normal condition, and the second an abnormal condition. The arrangement is balanced and symmetrical. This is interesting because the literary style is definitely not without a purpose. The chiastic pattern or mirror-effect intimates the unity and interdependence of a man and woman expressed in the marital act which is discussed in verse 18. It reminds us of God's creation of Man in His image, male and female created He them (Genesis 1:17). It shows that in the sight of God, the man is not superior to the woman and vice-versa. Their standing before God is equal.¹ Man and

¹ The role and function of a man and a woman is different in the context of a family.

woman differ in their role and function in the family—man being the head of the house.

As this chapter deals with secretions from the male and female organs, there is a tendency for some people to view that sex is dirty. There is no Scriptural support for this. On the contrary, sex within the limits as permitted by God is beautiful and ordained of God. The study of this chapter is both instructive and edifying as we see the real purpose behind these regulations which God gave to His people at that time.

OUTLINE

- A. The Law Concerning An Abnormal Emission From the Sexual Organ of Man (15:1-15).
 - 1. The LORD gave Moses and Aaron the law to be given to Israel (v.1).
 - 2. The law concerning an Israelite who had a prolonged emission from his genital (vv.2-15).
 - a. He was unclean (vv.2b-3).
 - b. Everything on which he lay became unclean (v.4).
 - c. Anyone who touched his bed was unclean, and he had to wash his clothes, bathe and would remain unclean until the evening (vv.5, 6).
 - d. Anyone who touched him became unclean, he had to wash his clothes, bathe and would remain unclean until the evening (v.7).

Man is the head of the house (1 Corinthians 11:3).

- e. The person he spat on became unclean until the evening after he had washed his clothes and bathed himself (v.8).
 - f. The saddle that he sat on became unclean (v.9).
 - g. Whatever thing that was under him became unclean until the evening (v.10).
 - h. If he touched another clean person, the latter became unclean until the evening, provided he had washed his hands, clothes and bathed (v.11).
 - i. Any earthenware that he touched became unclean and must be destroyed, but the wooden ones had to be rinsed with water (v.12).
3. The law concerning the Israelite who was cured from his abnormal emission (vv.13-15).
- a. He had to perform seven days of cleansing, wash his clothes and bathe in running water (v.13).
 - b. On the eighth day he should bring two turtledoves or pigeons for a sin offering and a burnt offering to the priest to make an atonement for him (v.14).
 - c. He would be declared ritually cleansed before the LORD (v.15).
- B. The Law Concerning The Normal Emission Of Semen (15:16-18).
- 1. In the case of normal emission of his semen, the Israelite had to wash his genitals and he would be unclean until the evening (v.16).
 - 2. Every attire and part of his body that was stained with the semen should be washed and he would be unclean until the even (v.17).
 - 3. The woman with whom he had sexual intercourse would also be unclean until the evening (v.18).
- C. The Law Concerning A Woman Having Her Menstrual Period (15:19-24).
- 1. A woman who was having her monthly menstruation would be separated for seven days (v.19a).
 - 2. Anything or person who touched her would be unclean (vv.19b-24).
 - a. Anyone who touched her would be unclean (v.19b).
 - b. Anything on which she lay would be unclean (v.20).
 - c. Anyone who touched her bed or anything that she sat on should wash his clothes and himself and be unclean until the evening (vv.21-23).
 - d. The man who had sexual intercourse with her during the period of her menstruation would be unclean for seven days, and the bed that he lay on would be unclean (v.24).
- D. The Law Concerning An Abnormal Issue of Blood Beyond Her Normal Period Of Menstruation (15:25-30).
- 1. The woman would be unclean for the duration of the period of the issue of blood (vv.25-27).

- a. Every bed and every place that she sat on would be unclean for the period of the duration of the issue of her blood (v.26).
 - b. Whoever touched those things would be unclean, and had to wash his clothes and bathe and would be unclean until the evening (v.27).
2. The law concerning the woman who had been cured from her abnormal condition (vv.28-30).
- a. She would be separated for seven days before she was clean (v.28).
 - b. On the eighth day, she must bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest at the door of the tabernacle (v.29).
 - c. The priest would offer a sin offering and a burnt offering before the LORD to make an atonement for her uncleanness (v.30).
- E. The Purpose Of The Law (15:31-33).
1. The rest of the children of Israel should be separated from their uncleanness (v.31a).
 2. The children of Israel would not then defile the tabernacle and be struck dead (v.31b).
 3. This was the law concerning the man who had an emission from his genitals, and the woman who had her period of menstruation (vv. 32, 33).

COMMENTARY

Uncleanness of Discharges

The LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron to instruct the people concerning uncleanness as a result of “a running issue out of his flesh” (v.2). The Hebrew word *basar* which usually means body or flesh is also used as a euphemism for the male sex organ.² It is stated that if a man had an abnormal secretion from his sex organ, he would be unclean.³ The man’s unclean condition would pollute his bed and everything that he sat on or come into contact with. And if anyone touched his bed, he must wash his clothes, bathe and he would be ritually unclean until the evening. And if the man who had the discharge spat on another who was clean, the latter would be ritually unclean until the evening. He must also wash his clothes and bathe. Every earthen container that he touched had to be destroyed. Any wooden vessels must be washed in water.

When he was cleansed from these discharges, he should wash his clothes and bathe himself (including his male organs) in running water (v.13). He had to wait for seven days before he was clean. On the eighth day, he must take two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest who would offer a sin offering and a burnt offering to make an atonement for him before the LORD (vv.14, 15).

In the case of a normal discharge—“seed of copulation” the sense of this

² Some suggest that this discharge from the ‘flesh’ can refer to haemorrhoids. But this is unlikely because the loss of blood is not mentioned. Verse 19 uses the same word for the woman’s vagina. So the word is correctly understood as the male organ in this context.

³ Demarest, 162. “It has long been assumed that the abnormal long term discharge described here (vv.2-15) is gonorrhoea.”

expression (Hebraic) is “a flowing of semen”. This could refer to “an involuntary emission of semen” or a nocturnal emission.⁴ He would be ritually unclean till the evening and he had to wash himself, his clothes and any object that had been spilled with the semen (vv.16-17). In the case of emission in the marital act, both the husband and the wife must wash themselves and would be ritually unclean until the evening (v.18).

For the woman, the expressions “her issue in her flesh be blood” and “in her separation” referred to her menstrual period which lasted for seven days. The fact that she was unclean for seven days, which was more than for a man with a normal discharge, did not mean that she was more unclean than the man.

The chapter concludes with the fundamental purpose of these laws (v.31). First the children of Israel were separated from those who had these discharges. The purpose could be for hygiene and health reasons. But more importantly, those who had these discharges were ritually unclean. They were forbidden to come near to the tabernacle to worship the LORD until they were cleansed. And anyone who was polluted by them was unclean and they too would not be allowed to come to the tabernacle to worship until after the prescribed period of uncleanness. If they broke this rule, they would be struck dead. The case of Uzziah is an example. Uzziah touched the Ark which was a breach of the commandment of the LORD. God’s judgment fell upon him and he was struck dead (2 Samuel 6:6-7).

⁴ Levine, 95.

The Message To Us

The theological focus is clear. The utter holiness of God is manifested. Unless a person is cleansed, he or she cannot draw near to God or worship Him. Its application in the New Testament means that as sinful men and women, we may not approach God. Our sins have alienated us from God. But there is hope for us because there is a cleansing that is thorough and complete in the Lord Jesus Christ who is our sin offering and our burnt offering. All those who come to Jesus Christ in repentance and believe in Him will have their sins washed away by His blood that flowed from Calvary’s cross. Believers are cleansed and declared righteous before the LORD God. The incident of the woman who suffered an issue of blood for 12 years as recorded in the Gospels comes to mind (Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). She was ritually unclean. Yet she displayed courage and faith against public displeasure to seek healing from the One who had the power to heal her. She touched the Lord Jesus Christ and she was healed. Christ came to save sinners who do not have any hope of being saved or healed from the terrible sickness of sin. The law separates but Christ reconciles us to God.

As God is holy, His people ought to be holy. That is the commandment of God. These laws were given to single out Israel as a special and peculiar people in the midst of pagan nations. The heathen nations surrounding Israel indulged in sexual promiscuity and orgies. The Israelites were not to copy the ways of the pagans. God’s people must be different from the world.

Some may read and form the impression that sex is dirty. Far from denigrating sex, the laws in this chapter

elevate sex to a higher plane in a number of ways. Men are to respect women when they have their natural menstrual cycle. They are not to use them to satisfy their sexual desires. Both men and women are to show respect, consideration and exercise self-discipline in the marriage relationship. Sex is something to be respected. These rules also curtailed the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.⁵

PRACTICAL VALUE

Although the ceremonial and ritual laws are no more, the principles underlying these laws still stand. An unclean person cannot approach or worship God. He must first be cleansed, and that is only possible through the Lord Jesus Christ.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: Leviticus 15:1-15; Psalm 147:19, 20; Deuteronomy 4:5-10.

Tuesday: Leviticus 15:16-18; Genesis 2:18-25; Hebrews 13:4.

Wednesday: Leviticus 15:19-24; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

Thursday: Leviticus 15:25-30; Mark 5:25-34.

Friday: Leviticus 15:31-33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-20; Romans 7:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

Discussion Questions

1. Besides being declared ritually unclean, what other reasons can you give concerning God’s law and judgment on the man who had “a running issue out of his flesh”?

2. What was the difference in the judgment between that of the man who was afflicted with ‘leprosy’ and that of the man mentioned here?

⁵ Tidball, 121.

3. What was the judgment on the man who had a normal discharge?

4. What ritual was the man exempted from? What did it mean?

5. Did the fact that the woman who had a normal discharge was unclean for seven days imply that she was more unclean than the man who had a normal discharge?

6. What was the judgment on a woman who had an abnormal discharge?

7. How did the judgment on the woman compare with the man's? What does this imply?

8. How is your answer to Q7 supported further by the outline of the chapter?

9. With reference to Romans 7:12, what specific evidence for the assessment have you seen so far in this chapter?

10. How many times were the following mentioned in the chapter? Are they a source of encouragement for you?

a. unclean:

b. touch:

c. water:

d. wash:
