

## A Holy People

Leviticus 11:1-15:33, Leviticus 11:43-44, Leviticus 13:45-46, Leviticus 15:31, Hebrews 9:11-14

### Slide 1

I want to start this mornings message by reading a few selected verses which will lay the foundation for our focus today.

Leviticus 11:43-44a, *“Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.”*

Now look at Leviticus 13:45-46, *“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.”*

And finally, Leviticus 15:31, *“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.”*

We tend to mark people as “untouchable” because of their past mistakes, and sometimes because they just don’t fit our idea of what’s acceptable.

We distance ourselves from people who don’t measure up to our standards, whether it’s because of lifestyle choices, social standing, or something else entirely.

It’s easy to look at someone whose life choices have left them in a mess and think, *“They brought this on themselves,”* or see someone whose past mistakes are still visible to everyone around them and quietly decide, *“That’s not someone I want to get too close to.”*

Now imagine that same sense of being untouchable magnified to a whole new level; where it's not just a social label, but a spiritual reality that declares you unclean.

In the book of Leviticus, God instituted a system of laws that distinguished between clean and unclean, pure and impure.

Those laws were more than just rules for healthy living; they were about how to live in relationship with a holy God.

Being declared unclean meant being cut off from worship, community, and ultimately, from the presence of God Himself.

But, as we'll see today, these laws weren't just about outward cleanliness. They pointed to a deeper truth about the human heart and our need for inward purity.

No matter how hard we try to clean ourselves up on the outside, we can't deal with the deeper problem on the inside, which brings us to the core truth for today: Only Jesus can make us truly clean, freeing us to live in holiness.

So, where does that leave us? If outward purity can't address the deeper issue, then what's the real problem?

That's exactly what the law in Leviticus sets out to show us. It exposes the problem of impurity; not just on the surface, but at the core of who we are.

## **Slide 2**

Leviticus, chapters 11 through 15, meticulously addresses ceremonial impurity; everything from unclean animals to skin diseases and bodily discharges.

And honestly, if you read through these chapters, it feels overwhelming; like an exhaustive and exhausting list of everything that could make someone unclean and what to do about it.

On the surface, it seems excessive and even strange at some points. Why would God be so meticulous about something as seemingly minor as touching a dead animal or a skin infection?

But that's the point. The reality of uncleanness wasn't just about personal hygiene or physical contamination; it was about demonstrating that God's holiness permeates every aspect of life.

Nothing is left untouched by His standard. Every area, from diet to disease to daily hygiene, was subject to His call for purity.

Leviticus 11:44, *"I am the Lord your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy."*

God's holiness is so complete and so absolute that even the smallest impurity would defile a person, making them unfit to come before Him.

It wasn't just about ritualistic purity, it was about being distinct, set apart, and completely devoted to Him. A holy God demands a holy people, and this is not just an Old Testament concept either.

Peter echoes this same truth reminding believers under the New Covenant that God's standard of holiness remains essential.

1 Peter 1:15–16, *"But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'"*

Here Peter quotes from Leviticus 11:44, emphasizing that holiness is fundamental to our relationship with God. Holiness isn't just about following rituals; it's about reflecting God's character in our daily living.

We can't brush this off as just an ancient, outdated system. It's a sobering reminder that God's holiness demands more than outward compliance—it demands inward transformation.

The problem is that we often settle for the appearance of cleanliness rather than the reality of purity in our lives.

### **Slide 3**

Despite the rigorous purification practices laid out in Leviticus—sacrifices, washings, inspections—none of it could address the root problem.

Those rituals dealt with the symptoms of impurity, but they never cured the disease of sin.

It was like trying to clean a deep wound with a damp cloth. It might wipe away some of the dirt on the surface, but the infection underneath remains.

That's why the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 9:13, *"The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean."*

Notice what it says: those sacrifices could make them *"outwardly clean."* They addressed the external impurity, but they couldn't touch the conscience. They couldn't reach their heart.

The Old Covenant rituals were never designed to be the ultimate solution; they were just a shadow, pointing to the deeper need for inward cleansing, and that's where the frustration comes in for so many of us.

We get caught up in our own version of ritualistic purity—trying to keep up appearances, performing religious duties, and checking all the boxes—thinking that if we just do enough good things, we'll feel clean on the inside.

But the problem of impurity goes far beyond what we can fix with our own efforts. If we're honest, we know that no amount of good deeds can erase the guilt and shame of past mistakes.

No amount of church attendance, charitable giving, or outward obedience can cleanse a stained conscience.

Rituals might make us look good on the outside, but they'll never heal what's broken on the inside. That's why the insufficiency of rituals points us directly to Jesus.

He didn't come just to clean our lives on the surface. He came to transform us from the inside out. He dealt with the very core of our impurity.

Only Jesus can make us truly clean, freeing us to live in holiness. We needed something more than ritual, we needed a Savior, and that's where the promise of cleansing becomes not just good news but essential news.

The law showed us the problem, but Christ came to bring the solution. The kind of cleansing that goes beyond rituals and reaches the heart. So, what does that promise mean for us today.

#### **Slide 4**

Hebrews 9:11-14, *"But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for*

*all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*

This is the key difference. While the Old Covenant's rituals only cleansed outwardly, Hebrews shows us Christ's sacrifice cleanses us inwardly.

The blood of Jesus doesn't just purify our bodies, it cleanses our consciences, freeing us from the burden of guilt and shame that no ritual could ever touch.

This is where the power of Christ's sacrifice becomes not just a theological concept, but a personal reality.

Unlike the Old Covenant sacrifices that needed to be repeated over and over again, His sacrifice doesn't merely cover sin, it cleanses our guilt and transforms our hearts.

It's not just a surface-level cleaning, it's a total renewal from the inside out.

Think about what that means. His blood purifies us from within, setting us free from dead religious works. It opens the way to serve the living God.

That means no more trying to earn God's favor by checking off religious boxes. No more striving to cover up past failures with good deeds.

Christ has done what no ritual could ever accomplish. In Christ we can be made truly clean.

Jesus demonstrated this kind of cleansing during His ministry with His encounter with a leprous man. It's recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This man, covered in sores, was completely ostracized by his community.

Breaking every social and religious boundary just by being there, he dared to approach Jesus and his followers. With desperation in his voice, he says, *"If You are willing, You can make me clean."*

When Jesus healed him, He didn't just remove outward uncleanness, He restored relationship and community.

Jesus crossed every barrier to show that His cleansing power goes beyond the surface. It reaches the heart.

That's the kind of Savior we have. A Savior Who's willing to touch the untouchable and make the unclean clean, but His touch doesn't just leave us the way we were. It transforms us.

His grace moves us from being outcasts to being welcomed into God's family. That's the kind of purity only Christ can give; one that restores, reconciles, and sets us free to serve the living God.

That's the beauty of the life-changing gift of grace. Holiness under the New Covenant isn't something we achieve by ritual or self-effort; it's a free gift that transforms us from the inside out.

The Levitical laws were never meant to be the solution; they were only meant to highlight the problem. Christ's sacrifice delivered the solution—true and lasting purification.

Grace does what rituals never could. It changes us at the core and makes us acceptable before God. When we grasp that kind of grace, it doesn't just leave us standing still, it propels us into action.

Hebrews 9:14 tells us that the blood of Christ will “...*cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*”

That’s the life-changing gift of grace. It doesn’t just change us—it changes how we see and love others.

Just as Jesus touched the leper, He calls us to move toward those whom society might consider untouchable and unclean.

He calls us to reach out with His love, seeing people as He sees them: worthy of His grace and His love.

Christ made us clean, not just to remove our guilt but to transform our lives. So, how should we respond to the cleansing grace we've received? That’s where the pursuit of holiness comes in.

## **Slide 5**

Being made clean in Christ isn’t just a status we receive, it’s a lifestyle we pursue. Holiness means living differently because we belong to a holy God.

Just as Israel’s distinctiveness pointed to God’s holiness, our lives should reflect His purity and righteousness.

In Leviticus 11:45, God repeats this call to live set apart for Him. God said, “*I am the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.*”

Holiness isn’t optional for believers. It’s an essential reflection of God’s character. The Israelites were called to be holy because they belonged to a holy God, and the same is true for us.



Just as Israel's distinctiveness pointed to God's holiness, our lives should reflect His purity and righteousness. We're not called to fit into the world's mold but to stand out as ambassadors of a holy God.

It means that our priorities, our values, and our choices are shaped by God's standard, not the world's. It means that our lives should reflect the transformation Christ has brought in us.

It means choosing integrity when it would be easier to compromise; showing kindness when it would be easier to dismiss; pursuing purity when the culture around us is anything but.

Holiness isn't just about big moral decisions; it's about our everyday choices. It's about living out the identity Christ has given us.

And so, as believers, we must be vigilant guarding our purity; guarding against attitudes, thoughts, and actions that can corrupt our witness and hinder our fellowship with God.

Holiness isn't automatic, it requires intentionality and perseverance. We must guard our hearts and minds against influences that would compromise our purity, whether that's what we watch, listen to, or dwell on.

Living as a holy people isn't about ritualistic purity but about reflecting Christ's purity in every aspect of our lives.

It's not just about saying the right things or following the right rituals, it's about being transformed from the inside out.

When we truly grasp this life-changing gift of grace, it propels us into action. As Hebrews 9:14 says, the blood of Christ will *"...cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*

## **Slide 6**

### **Conclusion**

The pursuit of holiness isn't about perfectionism, it's about transformation.

It's not about trying to live up to a standard in our own strength but allowing Christ's power to shape us daily. We are to live every day with the desire to reflect the holiness of the One who made us clean.

The call to holiness in Leviticus finds its fulfillment in Christ, who made us clean and calls us to live as His holy people.

Just as Jesus restored the leper by removing impurity and bringing him back into community, He restores us. He takes our guilt, our shame, and our sin. Only Jesus can make us truly clean!

But He doesn't stop there. He frees us to live in holiness. He calls us to live set apart for His glory, reflecting the purity that He alone can give.

We're not to just talk about being clean, we must live it out. Let's be the kind of people whose lives shine with the holiness and grace of Christ.

We must reach out to the broken, the outcast, and the hurting with the same compassion He's shown us.