

# Leviticus 13 -15

Moses continues to give instruction regarding those who are considered ceremonially unclean and thus forbidden from access to worship and fellowship with others.

Last time we learned the principle behind it clean and the unclean.

*Haggai 2:12-14*

*"If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?" ' "*

*Then the priests answered and said, "No."*

*And Haggai said, "If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?"*

*So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."*

*Then Haggai answered and said, " 'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.*

Essentially Haggai is explaining that when what is clean comes into contact with what is unclean, the clean is defiled. We see this concept in action every day and it is equally as true in the realm of the spirit.

- Because of this principle
  - Certain foods were forbidden
  - Contact with certain rodents and dead bodies were forbidden
  - And those with contagious diseases must be separated from the camp.

The primary purpose of these chapters is to give the law regarding communicable skin diseases.

This passage of scripture is the most detailed medical description of leprosy from the ancient world. It will deal with the problem of leprosy and related diseases and how Israel was to deal with them. Because they were contagious the person who contracted any of these disorders was to be quarantined.

Chapters 13-14 deal with what is commonly translated as leprosy

The word leprosy or leper is used 19 times in these two chapters

Leprosy - Gets its name from the Latin word Lepra - meaning scaly

- The noun *ṣāraʿat* was translated *lepra* in the LXX and thus “leprosy” in earlier English translations
- *Lepra* refers to various skin diseases and even mildews and molds
- The term as it is used in the Bible is a broader term than the word used today. Strong's defines it this way
  - leprosy in people, malignant skin disease (Le. 13-14)
  - leprosy in clothing, a mildew or mould (Le. 13:47-52)
  - leprosy in buildings, a mildew or mould (Le. 14:34-53)

The section can be divided this way

- 13:1-46 - Leprosy and other skin disorders
- 13:47-59 - Leprous garments or garments contaminated with contagious diseases
- 14:1-32 - Offerings for those who are healed
- 14:33-57 - Leprous houses or molds that can cause illness or death
- 15:1-33 - Various bodily discharges that make a person ceremonially unclean

## Exposition

We will walk through the text seeking to understand the ceremonial laws as they are presented. Then we will return to look for applications for our lives today.

Chapter 13 - the law of leprosy

The passage is summarized

*Leviticus 14:54-57*

*“This is the law for any leprous sore and scale, for the leprosy of a garment and of a house, for a swelling and a scab and a bright spot, to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy.”*

Without doctors and hospitals the responsibility for examining someone with the disease felt to the priests. If a person had a skin disorder they were brought to the priest and examined. Chapter 13 told them what to look for and how to respond to what they found.

Ministry is often like this. When the priests were first chosen, then set before the people, clothed in Special garments and anointed for the ministry they probably did not consider that being a priest would include examining the various diseases of the people. Later we will read that they will make home visits to those who claimed to be healed to examine them.

When I was hired as an assisting pastor at a local my first ministry was to make frames for sound boards at would be installed in the studio. I spent two weeks cutting wood and using a pneumatic staple gun. I learn right away that ministry would include much more than reading the Bible and teaching people what it says.

## Outline

Whenever a person found a peculiar skin rash they were to go to the priest and be examined.

Leviticus 13:1-8 -

*Leviticus 13:2*

*“When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body like a leprous sore, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.*

Once it was found the priest was to examine the spot, isolate the individual, re-examine the spot, and finally pronounce them either clean or unclean.

*Leviticus 13:3*

*The priest shall examine the sore on the skin of the body; and if the hair on the sore has turned white, and the sore appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a leprous sore. Then the priest shall **examine** him, and pronounce him unclean.*

*Leviticus 13:4*

*But if the bright spot is white on the skin of his body, and does not appear to be deeper than the skin, and its hair has not turned white, then the priest shall **isolate** the one who has the sore seven days.*

*Leviticus 13:8*

*And if the priest sees that the scab has indeed spread on the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him **unclean**. It is leprosy.*

If found unclean they were removed from the camp and forbidden to participate in worship. Again it is important to note that there are things that can make us unclean and create distance between us, God and the fellowship of the saints

Leviticus 13:12-44 gives other symptoms to look for in an individual

Leviticus 13:12-17 - If a skin rash appears all over the body. This may have been something like shingles, measles or chicken pox.

Leviticus 13:18-23 - a boil

Leviticus 13:29-39 - Marks on the scalp or in the beard were examined

Leviticus 13:40-44 - If a person began losing their hair

It seems that people have always been overly concerned with hair loss. Moses explained:

*Leviticus 13:40*

*"As for the man whose hair has fallen from his head, he is bald, but he is clean.*

*Leviticus 13:41*

*He whose hair has fallen from his forehead, he is bald on the forehead, but he is clean.*

Leviticus 13:45-46 explains the result when a person was diagnosed as leprous

*"Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'*

*He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.*

They would bear the shame of leprosy evidenced by covering themselves, they were forced to announce their presents to others, and they had to do well outside of the camp alone.

Leviticus chapter 13 closes making reference to leprous garments. This would be a lot more like a mildew or a mold that would grow in the fabric.

Today we have a bacterial staff infection commonly known as MRSA, this infection can live in fabrics and be transferred from one person to another. Garments, towels bedding etc. are not adequately cleaned they become a host to pass the bacteria from person to person.

According to the CDC the following guidelines have been incorporated to reduce the spread of MRSA

- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient.
- Carefully clean hospital rooms and medical equipment. •
- Whenever possible, patients with MRSA will have a single room or
- Will share a room only with someone else who also has MRSA.
- Healthcare providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over their clothing while taking care of patients with MRSA.
- Patients are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas

Sounds very similar to many of the guidelines given in Leviticus

Chapter 14 addresses the law of the offering a person who was healed of leprosy would give.

- The offerings included birds, and lambs.
- The cleansed leper was anointed in an identical manner as the priests

Leviticus 14:33-57 refers to leprosy in a house.

This would probably be some sort of dangerous mold. The affected areas were to be removed, and the underneath areas cleaned. If the mold returned, then they were to destroy the house and take the rubble outside the camp.

Again this is very similar to how molds are dealt with today. In our area many new homes were infected with a black mold that was in the drywall from the manufacturer. In some cases people had become seriously ill and even hospitalized. The only solution was to deconstruct the homes down to the studs and start over.

Chapter 15 deals with a variety of different discharges from a person that was sick. The sick person was considered unclean and was isolated from others he could not come into fellowship or partake in worship.

## Applications

This is primarily a medical passage and has no counterpart in the ministry of the church. If you have an illness, you can and should come to the elders and have them pray for you while anointing you with oil. But it is not the job of the pastor to diagnose your illness or to give prescription for its remedy. That is the job of the medical professional. That being said there is a definite parallel between the symptoms and affects of leprosy and that of sin. Therefore this passage becomes a valuable asset for illustrating the damaging affects of sin as well as its supernatural cleansing.

That being said, when sick we should,

Have the elders pray for us

Also recognize that sometimes there are spiritual problems behind physical symptoms.

Often the difficulties we face in life have spiritual causes but we only look for natural remedies. A person wonders why they are unhappy or even depressed and they fail to examine their relationship with God. Often the same symptoms that reveal themselves when a person is clinically depressed are also evidences of a spiritual problem.

WebMD lists the following symptoms of clinical depression

- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism

- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment
- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

I am not attempting to diagnose your mental state but it is possible that our real problem may be a spiritual one

A person living in sin will experience sadness, isolation, guilt, fear, inability to sleep and more.

These are very similar to the way David described himself when he was in Sin.

*Psalms 6:3*

*My soul also is greatly troubled;*

*But You, O Lord—how long?*

*Psalms 6:6*

*I am weary with my groaning;*

*All night I make my bed swim*

*I drench my couch with my tears.*

*Psalms 32:3*

*When I kept silent, my bones grew old*

*Through my groaning all the day long.*

*Psalms 32:4*

*For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;*

*My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.*

*Psalms 32:10*

*Many sorrows shall be to the wicked;*

*But he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him.*

And Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit would convict us of sin.

If we are living in sin, or are involved in sinful practices, they will have an effect on other areas of our life. The solution is to come to the cross confess your sin, receive forgiveness from the Lord, and change your behavior.

The main reason why leprosy is talked about so much in the Bible is that it is a graphic illustration of sin's destructive power. In ancient Israel leprosy was a powerful object lesson of the debilitating influence of sin in a person's life. Thus as we study these chapters, we can learn what sin is like and how God wants us to deal with it.

Sin is often compared to natural things to help us better understand its nature

- Referred to as leaven

*Galatians 5:9*

*A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*

- It is also referred to as dirty clothing

*Isaiah 64:6*

*But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags: We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.*

- And it is compared to sickness.

*Mark 2:17*

*And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

That does not mean that sickness or leprosy were sin. Anymore than dirty clothes or sourdough bread is sin.

In fact there are at least two cases within the Scriptures where lepers are the heroes of the story. The more famous is the story of the rich Man and Lazarus. The other is found in the Old Testament narrative of



*2 Kings 7:8*

*And when these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they went into one tent and ate and drank, and carried from it silver and gold and clothing, and went and hid them; then they came back and entered another tent, and carried some from there also, and went and hid it*

A careful look at the details of this section will illustrate for us what leprosy teaches us about the nature of sin.

Sin is multifaceted

There were lots of types of leprosy all of them have the same effect.

In the same way we cannot say that we are not sinners because we don't do things that others do.

The Pharisee in one of Jesus' stories tried that to no avail

*Luke 18:11*

*The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.*

Not everything that looks like sin is sin. It must be examined by the word.

A basic principle will be applied to this passage of Scripture, that is the beginning of health is to know the disease, how can you prescribe effectively if you don't diagnose accurately?

Sometimes a person looked as though they had leprosy however when examined by the priest and compared to the word it turned out not to be leprosy.

In the same way some things that we think of as sin might actually fit within Christian liberties or may actually be a sign of a person's immaturity.

Over the years the church has cried wolf too many times for the culture to take us seriously. At one time women were demonized for wearing pants and drummers were condemned as spreading the devil's music. We must be careful to call sin, sin but we must also be careful not to use the word where it does not apply.

We need to give opportunity and time for people to grow in Christ.

Sometimes a new believer may be doing something wrong not out of a heart of rebellion but rather because they have not been instructed regarding what is

acceptable behavior for a child of God. That is why the focus of the church should be to provide a healthy diet of the Word of God so people can grow to maturity

Sin is deeper than the skin. It actually stands from the heart.

Leprosy is not so much a skin disease as it is a nervous disorder. The spvarious skin irritations were symptoms of a much bigger problem. Putting lotion on the rash might make it feel better but it did nothing to cure the illness.

Sin is the same way. We practice sin because we are sinners. We need much more than reform, we need to be converted from sinner to Saint.

*Matthew 15:19*

*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.*

*Jeremiah 17:9*

*"The heart is deceitful above all things,*

*And desperately wicked; Who can know it?*

Wicked is a word that means sick, or incurable. The problem with mankind is a problem at the deepest level. We need a new heart and can only receive one through faith in Christ

Sin Spreads -

The underlining principle of the leprosy laws was that the disease is contagious and as a result people must be quarantined. Sin is the same, like leprosy it will not remain dormant

Sin spreads within an individual

A small spot on the skin of a person would grow to destroy his whole person. In the same way a little sin will grow in our lives if it is not taken to the cross, confessed, repented of and forgiven

*James 1:14-16*

*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*

Sin will spread from person to person

How often we read of the kings that they "sinned like their father..."

We are warned by Paul

*1 Corinthians 15:33*

*Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."*

And Solomon wrote

*Proverbs 12:26*

*The righteous should choose his friends carefully,*

*For the way of the wicked leads them astray.*

And sin spreads through society

Scientific progress has made life more comfortable, but it hasn't made the world less corrupt.

This was true in Noah's day

And it is true as the world speeds toward the end

The cure is the Gospel for it alone can transform a man

*Matthew 24:14*

*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

Sin defiles

The word "unclean" is used fifty-four times in Leviticus 13–15.

Warren Wiersbe wrote:

*When you read Psalm 51, David's prayer of confession, you can't help but notice how his sins defiled every part of his being: his eyes (v. 3), his mind (v. 6), his ears (v. 8), his bones (v. 8), his heart (v. 10), and his mouth (vv. 13–15). His hands were stained with Uriah's blood (v. 14), and all he could do was throw himself on the mercy of God and cry out, "Wash me!"*

Many have thought leprosy to be a disease of the skin. It is better classified, however, as a disease of the nervous system because the leprosy bacterium attacks the nerves. Leprosy's agent *M. leprae* is a rod-shaped bacterium related to the tuberculosis bacterium. Leprosy is spread by multiple skin contacts, as well as by droplets from the upper respiratory tracts, such as nasal secretions that are transmitted from person to person.

The symptoms of leprosy includes granulomas of the nerves, skin and eyes. Granulomas form when the immune system attempts to wall off substances it perceives as foreign but is unable to eliminate. This may result in a lack of ability to feel pain and thus loss of parts of extremities due to repeated injuries or infection due to unnoticed wounds. Weakness and poor eyesight may also be present

In other words leprosy can damage the peripheral nerves which can lead to:

Inability to feel as well as weakness of the eyelids, preventing proper closure of the lid and protection of the eye, which can lead to blindness.

Sin will have the same affect upon us. Continual sin will sear our conscience making it difficult to discern the prodding of the Spirit and will blind us to what sin is actually doing to our life and the lives of those who we love.

Leprosy has no cure -

Putting lotion on leprosy would do nothin to cure it, it must be removed. Making reforms to our lives will make for a better life but will never deal with the sinful heart and make us fit for heaven. We must be born again

The entire text gives no solution to the one that is affected only the consequences ey would suffer

Those Consequences include

Separation

Leviticus 13:46. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. (KJV)

The same is true of sin

Isaiah 59:1. Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither [is] his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities

have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (KJV)

Destroy the dwelling

*Leviticus 14:45*

*And he shall break down the house, its stones, its timber, and all the plaster of the house, and he shall carry them outside the city to an unclean place.*

Same is true of sin.

How many spouses and children left in the rubble of a person in pursuit of their own self centered happiness.

Burn the garments

*Leviticus 13:57*

*But if it appears again in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof, or in anything made of leather, it is a spreading plague; you shall burn with fire that in which is the plague.*

In a similar way unpardoned sin will result in the fires of an eternal hell. Jesus said

*Mark 9:47-48*

*And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'*

We have seen that leprosy illustrates sin, but what is sin?

Sin -

- σκανδαλίζω, skandalizō - to entrap, trip up, stumble or entice to sin
- ἁμαρτία, hamartia - to miss the mark, to make a mistake, or to wander
- ἡτᾱ'â; or תּחַטֵּחַ chattaçth - an offence

John defined Sin as lawlessness

*1 John 3:4*

*Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.*

This is evidenced when a person says, I know what the Bible says but...

The Bible gives us several lists of sins

*Galatians 5:19-21*

*Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*1 Corinthians 6:9-10*

*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.*

As well as the 10 commandments

The Bible also explains that we are all sin

*Romans 3:23*

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

And that we do so because we are all sinners

*Romans 5:12*

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

Biblically speaking we have all sinned and are all under the penalty of sin and like the leper of old have no hope of ever being saved. No hope that is unless God steps in and does something supernatural

The biblical narrative records the following persons as being afflicted with leprosy

Moses and Miriam (Both afflicted briefly as a supernatural sign)

Numbers 12:10

And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aaron turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper.

Joab's family (No actual record of them being leperous only a promise that his would follow their family due to his sin)

2 Samuel 3:29

Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread."

King Azariah (Uzziah) 2 Kings 15:5 (Again the cause was not natural but spiritual)

2 Chronicles 26:19

Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the incense altar.

Naaman the Syrian (The only Biblical case of healing prior to the coming of Christ)

2 Kings 5:1

Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor, but a leper.

Jesus declared that none of the lepers in Israel were healed

Luke 4:27

*And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet," said Jesus, "and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian"*

Jesus did what no one else could do

Jesus ministry was marked with the healing of lepers. We read of incidents where lepers were healed.

Mark 1 records the healing of a leprous man, Luke describes him as being "Fullmof leprosy."

Mark 14 refers to Jesus b ing in he home of Simon the Leper. Because of the laws associated with leprosy we know this to be Simon who had been a leper.

Luke 17 records the divine healing of 10 lepers

Healing of the lepers was a proof that Jesus was the messiah

*Luke 7:22*

*Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.*

This all shows that the Laws regarding cleansing lepers recorded in Leviticus 14 had never been used in Israel until Jesus showed up. We might go so far as to say these laws were written to Caiaphas as a way for him to recognize Jesus as Messiah.

## CLEANSING THE LEPER

In a very interesting turn of events, Moses gives instructions for what offering a person should give if they are cured of an incurable disease

The consequences of leprosy were temporal, but the consequences of sin are eternal. The Jews knew no cure for leprosy, but there is a remedy for sin—faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world.

*John 1:29*

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

*Romans 8:3*

*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,*

*2 Corinthians 5:21*



*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

*Matthew 26:28*

*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*

There are some vivid pictures of our relationship with Christ tipped away in these laws

Leviticus 14:3

And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper,

The priest had to be willing to leave the camp to reach out to the leper

Jesus was willing to touch the unclean in order to make him whole

We must be willing to "get our hands dirty" bringing the gospel to others. The world will not be reached while we hide inside the church

The unclean man was to be sprinkled seven times and the live bird released (14:6–7). This action probably indicated that the impurity had been carried away (see 16:10).

When we put trust in Christ our sins are removed as far as the East is from the West

*Leviticus 14:8*

*He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days.*

After the leper was cleansed, he had to wash himself

*1 Peter 2:24*

*who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.*

*John 5:14*

*Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."*

*Romans 6:1-2*

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*

*Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

*Hebrews 12:1*

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

*2 Cor. 7:1)*

*Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"*

Leviticus 14:17-18

And of the rest of the oil in his hand, the priest shall put some on the tip of the right ear of him who is to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand, and on the big toe of his right foot, on the blood of the trespass offering.

The rest of the oil that is in the priest's hand he shall put on the head of him who is to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement for him before the Lord.

Finally, the cleansed leper was anointed in the same way as the priests. Who could be a better witness for the Lord than the one who had been healed from the incurable.

