

Sermon #36 — *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*

Title: **“IN THE DAY OF HIS CLEANSING”**

Text: Leviticus 14:1-57

Subject: *The Cleansing of the Leper*

Date: Sunday Morning — February 17, 2019

Reading: *Job 25:1-6 and Psalm 24:1-10*

Introduction:

What a horrid disease leprosy is! Even that which is observed in leprosy today is horrible. But, as I have shown you, leprosy in our modern world, particularly that form of leprosy observed in the modern Western world, cannot be rightly compared to the leprosy God sent into the land of Canaan among the Jews to be a type and picture of sin. **That leprosy, the leprosy dealt with in Leviticus 13 and 14 was both a real disease of the most horrible kind and a disease distinctly intended by God to be typical of sin. Even more specifically, it was intended by God to represent the believer’s experience of Holy Spirit conviction by which sinners are convinced of sin, by which we are made to know we are sinners.**

Leprosy was a disease that caused a person virtually no pain. In fact it had a numbing effect,

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deadening the senses. It was unknown until the priest identified it. **Once it was identified, once the man was made to know he was a leper, he was marked as a defiled, corrupt, unclean man.**

CUT OFF FROM MEN

The wife he loved, the brothers and sisters with whom he was raised, friends who had loved him as their own souls, all immediately cast him off. He was unclean. The leper became at once an outcast and an alien from family and friends, hearth and home. These things were painful, deep, cutting strokes, but there was a keener and more cutting stroke still in reserve.

CUT OFF FROM GOD

The leper was driven from the people of God, banished from the camp of Israel. He was not allowed to come with God’s people into his house. For the leper there was no access to God, no gate open by which he might draw near to the Holy One. As far as

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he was concerned, being shut out from the camp of Israel, the poor, unclean, corrupt leper was without hope. There was no altar for him, no sacrifice, no sweet incense, no hope. He was a man cut off, cut off from man and cut off from God!

INCURABLE

Leprosy was completely incurable, except by a miracle of grace. So the leper had no prospect before him but to die a miserable death, the flesh rotting off his bones, and limb dropping from limb. The leper was a dead man, just waiting to die.

THE PICTURE

All these things show leprosy to be a vivid type and picture of sin, in the experience of it, as it is made known in the heart and conscience of the child of God by the Holy Ghost, when he convinces chosen, redeemed sinners of sin.

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Once the hand of God touches a sinner, once God almighty puts leprosy in your house, once sin is laid bare in the soul, the sinner finds himself cut off both from man and from God. Let a man or woman become convinced of sin, I mean their own sin before God, and his family and friends, those who know nothing about sin, who know nothing about Christ, who know nothing about the gospel, those who have nothing but that which looks a little like leprosy (a rising, a bright spot, a scab), will immediately cut you off. Husband or wife, sons and daughters, companions and friends will renounce you as a gloomy fanatic. The more you discuss your pain with them the more they will distance themselves from you.

- **Job** — *“He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called*

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my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me, I arose and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me”
(Job 19:13-19).

- **Heman** — *“Lover and friend hast Thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness”*
(Psalm 88:18).
- **David** — **The Lord Jesus** — *“My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off”* (Psalm 38:11).

Painful as those things are, that which far exceeds them, that which continually torments the soul awakened to a sense of sin, is the separation from God which is the result of sin.

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Joseph Hart wrote many very, very good hymns. One of his best and most instructive hymns deals with this very thing.

“When Adam by transgression fell,
And conscious, fled his Maker’s face,
Linked in clandestine league with hell,
He ruined all his future race.

The seeds of evil once brought in,
Increased and filled the world with sin.

But lo! The Second Adam came,
The serpent’s subtle head to bruise;
He cancels his malicious claim,
And disappoints his devilish views;
Ransoms poor sinners with His blood,
And brings the sinner back to God.

[To understand these things aright,
This grand distinction should be known:
Though all are sinners in God’s sight,
There are but few so in their own.

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To such as these our Lord was sent;
They're only sinners who repent.]

[What comfort can a Savior bring
To those who never felt their woe?
A sinner is a sacred thing;
The Holy Ghost hath made him so.
New life from Him we must receive,
Before for sin we rightly grieve.]

This faithful saying let us own,
Well worthy 'tis to be believed,
That Christ into the world came down,
That sinners might by Him be saved.
Sinners are high in His esteem,
And sinners highly value Him.”

I want to talk to you today about the leper **“IN THE DAY OF HIS CLEANSING.”**

(Leviticus 14:1-7) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) This shall be the law of the

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leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest: (3) And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, *if* the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper; (4) Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive *and* clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop: (5) And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water: (6) As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water: (7) And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.”

Proposition: I want you to see that as the leper in Israel was cleansed only by God’s priest, and only by blood, oil, and water, so Christ alone cleanses the

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leprous souls of poor, guilty sinners by the blood of his sacrifice, the grace he bestows, and the Holy Spirit who brings grace to the soul.

THE PRIEST

Be sure you do not miss this. — **Under Mosaic Law, in the Old Testament, leprosy was cleansed and lepers were healed only by God’s priests.** No doctor was called. No exercises were prescribed. No therapy was administered. No medicine was prescribed. Moses did nothing. The people did nothing. The leper did nothing. **The priest did everything. The leper was totally passive.** He did not even come to the priest. The priest came out to the leper and the leper was brought to the priest.

THE PLACE

The man was not brought into the camp of Israel, lest he defile the camp. The priest came out to the place

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where lepers were isolated, called for the leper; and the leper was brought to him.

- Christ comes to us. We do not come to him.
- Christ calls for us.
- The Holy Spirit brings the sinner to the Savior.

THE PRONOUNCEMENT

The priest comes out to the place where lepers are found and calls them. (That speaks of the preaching of the gospel!) Lepers are brought to the priest. The priest examines them one by one. He identifies their malady and pronounces them either clean or unclean. One leper is brought before God’s priest and then another, and another. Can you see the proceedings?

Here comes a man with a spot that looks like leprosy. The priest looks at him, and there is a spot on that leper which is not leprous, a bit of raw flesh, but the rest is healthy. The priest puts him aside. He is an unclean leper. **Here is another leper.** He has one or two red spots appearing beneath the skin. The rest

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of his body is perfectly sound. The priest puts him aside, too. He is an unclean leper. **Here is a third man.** He is covered from head to foot with a scaly whiteness of the filthy disease. His hair has all turned white, because the disease has killed the roots. There is not so much as a single speck of health in him from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. He is one ugly mass of pollution and filth. The high priest says to him, “You are clean.” And after certain necessary ceremonies he is brought into the camp, and afterwards into the very sanctuary of God.

If there had been found in him any soundness of body or any place unaffected by the disease, he would have been unclean. But when the leprosy had covered him completely, the man was made clean by the sacrificial ceremonies described in this 14th chapter of Leviticus.

Now let’s apply the passage to ourselves. Is there a leper here today? Is there a sinner in this house? Here you are before the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest.

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Some of you, I do not doubt, are ready and willing to confess that you have done many things that are wrong. Yet, you think, “Though I have done much that I can neither excuse nor justify, I have done some good things. I have been charitable. I try to help the poor. Yes, I do have my faults, I know. I have my sins, too. But, at the bottom, I am basically a good person.” God’s High Priest says, “You are unclean.” There is no promise for you. There is no grace for you. There is no mercy for you. There is no sacrifice for you. There is no salvation for you.

Some of you admit with candor that you are guilty of many things. You acknowledge many evil thoughts. You confess that you have committed terrible, immoral deeds. Still, though you have no good works of which to boast and no righteous deeds to trust, you do hope by repentance and the help of God’s good grace to do better. You are unclean. There is no fountain opened for you, no sacrifice for you, no cleansing for you.

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I see another leper standing far off. I don't know, you may be a much better man than either of the others, but not in your own opinion. Your heart is heavy. Your conscience is tormenting. With broken heart you confess, your sin. You cry, “*Unclean! Unclean!*” You look upon your righteousnesses as filthy rags. Your goodness you see to be corruption. You count all those things that you once thought your most excellent distinctions but dung.

You are convinced that if ever there was a sinner who deserved the hottest depths of hell and everlasting condemnation that sinner is you. You think in your soul, “I fear that I am damned. I deserve to be damned. I am without a shred of hope. Much as I hate my sin and hate what I am, I know that I can never do any better than I have done. If I am healed of this plague that consumes my soul, it must be by grace alone. I can no more change myself than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his

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spots.” You are covered with sin, from the inside out, from the top of your head to the soles of your feet.

Wait. — **I think I hear the Priest of God.** — What does he say? “You are clean!” You are a clean leper. Your sins are forgiven you Your iniquities are put away. Through the blood of Christ, who died upon the tree, you are saved.

As soon as the leprosy had covered him completely, the man was clean,; and as soon as your sin is fully manifest, so that in your conscience you know yourself a sinner indeed, there is a way of salvation for you. Then by the sprinkling of blood and the washing of water you are made clean. Salvation is yours!

- As long as a man has anything to boast of, there is no Christ for him. But the moment he has nothing of his own, Christ is his.
- As long as you are anything, Christ is nothing to you. But when you are nothing, Christ is everything.

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FAITH’S WARRANT

“All the warrant that a sinner needs in coming to Christ is to know that he is a sinner. For ‘*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*’ Do I know myself to be a sinner? Then he came to save me, and there I rest and there I trust. If I have any good feelings or good works which take away from me the power to call myself a sinner, or if they diminish the force and emphasis which I put upon the word when I use it, then may I fear that I have no right to come to Christ. Christ died ‘*the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.*’ Am I unjust? Must I honestly declare I am? ‘*Christ died for the ungodly.*’ Am I ungodly, is this my grief and sorrow that I am ungodly? Then Christ died for me. — ‘I do not know,’ said Martin Luther, ‘when men will ever believe that text in which it is written Christ died for our sins. They will think that Christ died for our righteousness, whereas he died for our sins. Christ had no eye to our goodness when he came to save us, but to our badness.’ A physician,

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when he comes to my house, has not an eye to my present health; he does not come there because I am healthy, but because I am sick, and the more sick I am, the more call for the physician’s skill, and the more argument does my sickness yield why he should exercise all his craft and use his best medicines on my behalf. Your only plea with Christ is your guilt; use it, sinner, use it!” (C. H. Spurgeon)

Use your guilt, even the greatness of it, like David of old, as argument for mercy. Cry out, like him, *“For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great”* (Psalm 25:11).

“Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, joined with power.

Come, ye sinners, come to Jesus!
He alone your soul can save!
Not the righteous, not the righteous,

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Sinners Jesus came to save!

CLEANSING

You will notice that the leper was healed first (v. 3). Then he was cleansed. He was miraculously healed before he was ceremonially cleansed. In other words, the cleansing was purely a ceremonial thing, intended to picture for us the sinner’s experience of grace in salvation. — This ceremonial cleansing had nothing to do with the leper’s healing. But the things pictured here show us the only way sinners can ever be healed of our spiritual leprosy and made clean before God.

The cleansing of the leper who had been healed of his plague was done in three distinct stages.

THE LEPER’S SEPARATION

1st — **The cleansing of the leper in his separation** (vv. 1-8). — This ceremonial cleansing without the

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camp involved the killing of a bird, the sprinkling of the bird’s blood upon the leper, the shaving of the leper’s hair, and the washing of his clothes. —

SUBSTITUTION!

The priest took for the leper who had been healed, the leper who was to be cleansed “two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet and hyssop”

(v. 4).

- **The leper did not bring this sacrifice.** It was all brought by the priest himself.
- **These two birds,** alive and clean, represent our Lord Jesus Christ, our Lord who is both life and holiness.
- The **cedar wood** also speaks of Christ. It represents both magnificent fragrance and incorruptibility.
- The **scarlet,** of course, speaks of our Savior’s precious blood.
- The **hyssop** was a small herb. It was used much like we might use a small, bristly brush, for dipping in blood and for sprinkling the blood. —

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Moses, “*took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people.*” — The Israelites in Egypt sprinkled the door posts and the lintels of their houses with blood, using hyssop. — David cried, “*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean!*” — The hyssop clearly refers to “*the blood of sprinkling!*”

One of these birds had to be killed.

(Leviticus 14:5) “And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water.”

What a blessed picture this is of Christ dying upon the cursed tree as our Substitute! The bird had to be killed “*in an earthen vessel.*” — Its blood was not to be spilt in vain! Every drop must be caught, as a very precious thing, in the earthen vessel, lest it fall upon the ground and be mingled with the dirt.

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O how valuable, how precious, how unspeakably precious is the blood of Christ! — By his precious blood our sins are washed away. By his precious blood justice is satisfied. — By his precious blood all the chosen are reconciled to God. — By the precious blood of Christ we are redeemed!

Not one drop of Immanuel’s precious blood falls to the ground!

- Particular redemption is the blood in the vessel.
- Universal redemption would be the blood in the dirt!

Now, watch this. — **The bird had to be killed “over running water.”** This connects the substitutionary work of Christ at Calvary and the gracious work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and conversion. “Running,” or “living,” water commonly refers to God the Holy Ghost. — *“He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.”*

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Look at verses 6 and 7. — **The living bird was tied to the piece of cedar wood with the scarlet cord and dipped in the blood of the dead bird.** Then the priest sprinkled the leper who was to be cleansed seven times with the blood, pronounced him clean, and set the living bird free.

(Leviticus 14:6-7) “As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water: (7) And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.”

The living bird was dipped in the blood of his fellow. When he spread his wings and flew up into heaven, sin atoning blood, as it were, was scattered through the earth. He carried with him into heaven the blood of his slaughtered companion. So the Lord Jesus,

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when he ascended up on high, went into heaven wearing our nature. And as the high priest, on the Day of Atonement, he entered within the veil not without blood, but with his own blood, and obtained eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:12).

All this was done before the leper’s eyes. Every minute detail spoke to him. He saw all, heard all, and felt all. The entire ceremony said, “All this is for you. The bird that died, died for you. The bird flying in yonder heavens with blood on its wings flies for you. This is your cleansing. This God has commanded that you may be restored to the sanctuary.”

When by God given faith we see Christ crucified, the blood, death, sufferings, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus — When we see him, as Paul puts it, “*crucified before our eyes,*” as the healed leper saw the one bird dying in agony and the other soaring upward in liberty, we hear God himself say to our souls, “He died and rose again for you!”

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Next, the priest had “to sprinkle the blood upon him that was to be cleansed seven times,” and then “pronounce him clean” (v. 7). — The leper not only saw the blood fall drop by drop from the slaughtered bird. He must be sprinkled with it seven times. How clearly does all this point to *“the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel”* — the application of atoning blood and dying love to the soul!

The man was now virtually clean, for we read, when he had been sprinkled seven times (a perfect number), *“the priest shall pronounce him clean.”* — Still, there is more.

The leper, when he was pronounced clean, must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and take a bath (v. 8).

(Leviticus 14:8) “And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean:

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and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days.”

He was “to wash his clothes.” — *“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”* (2 Corinthians 7:1). — He was no longer to wear the rent garments and filthy tatters of the leper, but the clean garments of God’s salvation, pure and white, the garments of Christ’s perfect righteousness.

Then, he had to shave off all his hair. — This was done twice. *First*, it was done here, while he was still without the camp. Then it had to be done again on the seventh day, the day before he was presented before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle (v. 9).

Now, let’s go with the leper into the camp. This is the second stage of his cleansing.

THE LEPER’S RESTORATION

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2nd — **The cleansing of the leper in his restoration is seen in verses 8 and 9.** — Once he was restored to the camp of Israel, but while he was still required to dwell outside his own tent, on the seventh day, the leper was required to shave himself again. This time he had to shave all the hair off his body, beard, eyebrows, all the hair had to be shaved. He was also required to bathe himself and wash his clothes. — **REGENERATION!**

(Leviticus 14:8-9) “And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days. (9) But it shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean.”

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In verse 8 the command is simply that he should “*shave off all his hair.*” But **on the seventh day** (Seven always speaks of grace, perfection, and completion.) he had to “*shave all his hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows.*” Here, there is the complete removing of the old hair that there might be a fresh growth of entirely new hair. I cannot imagine that representing anything less than old things passing away and all things becoming new in Christ in the new creation of grace (2 Corinthians 5:17). By this means, the Lord Jesus seems to have said, “*Behold, I make all things new!*”

The leper was also required to wash his flesh in water and be clean. This seems to signify the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. — I have no doubt that Paul was referring to this very thing in Hebrews 10, when he wrote, “*Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*” — The body washed with pure water does not refer to

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baptism, but to the washing of regeneration, as our Lord speaks of us being “*born of water and of the Spirit.*”

Now, from verse 10 through verse 32, we see the leper in the third stage of his ceremonial cleansing.

THE LEPER’S CONSECRATION

3rd — **The cleansing of the leper also speaks of his consecration** (vv. 10-32). — In these verses we see what the priest did to and for the leper on the eighth day at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. — The 8th day is the day of new beginning. —

SANCTIFICATION — CONSECRATION!

(Leviticus 14:10) “And on the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour *for* a meat offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil.”

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On the eighth day the leper brought three lambs to the tabernacle.— Two males and one female were selected, the first for a burnt offering, the second for a trespass offering, and the third for a sin offering. — The two males for the burnt and the sin offering, and the female for the trespass offering. — **FAITH!**

This brought before his eye and heart the great cost with which he had been redeemed. Let it so speak to us!

- The lamb offered whole as a **burnt offering** represented the Lamb of God burned in flames of divine wrath.
- The **trespass offering** represented Christ, too, but in a different way. — In the trespass offering the inward parts of the animal, primarily the fat around the kidneys and entrails, were burned in the fire. This speaks of the wrath of God we deserve. — The fires of hell are fueled by that which is in us!

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- As the smoke and flame of the burning fat of the trespass and **sin offering** ascended in the sight of the leper from the brazen altar, he saw in picture the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ accepted of God as a sweet savor to satisfy offended justice.

The leper also brought “a meat offering also of one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil.” — **THANKSGIVING!** — This was a thank-offering, to be presented by the priest for his cleansing, representing the thankful heart of the sinner for God’s immaculate, undeserved mercy by which we are saved.

Next, we are told that **the blood of the trespass offering was to be taken and applied in a very special manner.** — **CONSECRATION!** — It was to be “*put upon the tip of the right ear of him that was to be cleansed, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot.*”

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As we saw back in chapter 8, in the consecration of Aaron and his sons, this speaks of consecration to God. But watch this. — **There is a log of oil (a little less than a pint) involved in this ceremony.** Oil symbolizes God the Holy Spirit and the grace of God he brings to us. — Learn the meaning of the picture.

- The oil was applied, like the blood, by God’s priest.
- The oil was put on the blood. — Redemption and Grace have the same objects. — Justification and Sanctification belong to the same people.
- Our consecration to God is a deliberate act of faith, arising from hearts of love and gratitude to Christ. — Yet, our consecration to God is the fruit and operation of his own grace.
- The blood and the oil are put on the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot of every leper. — The message is clear.

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(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20) “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (20) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Illustration: “*Help me! Help me! Won’t somebody, please, help me!*”

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Amen.