

## Adam Clarke:

## Introduction

Laws concerning uncleanness of men, Leviticus 15:1-12. Mode of cleansing, Leviticus 15:13-15. Of uncleanness, accidental and casual, Leviticus 15:16-18. Laws concerning the uncleanness of women, vv. 10-27. Mode of cleansing, Leviticus 15:28-30. Recapitulation of the ordinances relative to the preceding cases, Leviticus 15:31-33.

## Verse 2

When any man hath a running issue - The cases of natural uncleanness, both of men and women, mentioned in this chapter, taken in a theological point of view, are not of such importance to us as to render a particular description necessary, the letter of the text being, in general, plain enough. The disease mentioned in the former part of this chapter appears to some to have been either the consequence of a very bad infection, or of some criminal indulgence; for they find that it might be communicated in a variety of ways, which they imagine are here distinctly specified. On this ground the person was declared unclean, and all commerce and connection with him strictly forbidden. The Septuagint version renders  $\chi\prime\chi-\chi\prime$  (hazzab), the man with the issue, by  $\acute{\alpha}\frac{1}{2}\bullet\text{ἰσὺς ἡμῶν ἡ ἀκαθάρτης...ἡ}$ , the man with a gonorrhea, no less than nine times in this chapter; and that it means what in the present day is commonly understood by that disorder, taken not only in its mild but in its worst sense, they think there is little room to doubt. Hence they infer that a disease which is supposed to be comparatively recent in Europe, has existed almost from time immemorial in the Asiatic countries; that it ever has been, in certain measures, what it is now; and that it ever must be the effect of sensual indulgence, and illicit and extravagant intercourse between the sexes. The disgraceful disorder referred to here is a foul blot which the justice of God in the course of providence has made in general the inseparable consequent of these criminal indulgences, and serves in some measure to correct and restrain the vice itself. In countries where public prostitution was permitted, where it was even a religious ceremony among those who were idolaters, this disease must necessarily have been frequent and prevalent. When the pollutions and libertinism of former times are considered, it seems rather strange that medical men should have adopted the opinion, and consumed so much time in endeavoring to prove it, viz., that the disease is modern. It must have existed, in certain measures, ever since prostitution prevailed in the world; and this has been in every nation of the earth from its earliest era. That the Israelites might have received it from the Egyptians, and that it must, through the Baal-peor and Ashteroth abominations which they learned and practiced, have prevailed among the Moabites, etc., there can be little reason to doubt. Supposing this disease to be at all hinted at here, the laws and ordinances enjoined were at once wisely and graciously calculated to remove and prevent it. By contact, contagion of every kind is readily communicated; and to keep the whole from the diseased must be essential to the check and eradication of a contagious disorder. This was the wise and grand object of this enlightened Legislator in the ordinances which he lays down in this chapter. I grant, however, that it was probably of a milder kind in ancient times; that it has gained strength and virulence by continuance; and that, associated with some foreign causes, it became greatly exacerbated in Europe about 1493, the time in which some have supposed it first began to exist, though there are strong evidences of it in this country ever since the eleventh century.

## Verse 11

And whomsoever he toucheth - Here we find that the saliva, sitting on the same seat, lying on the same bed, riding on the same saddle, or simple contact, was sufficient to render the person unclean, meaning, possibly, in certain cases, to communicate the disorder; and it is well known that in all these ways the contagion of this disorder may be communicated. Is it not even possible that the effluvia from the body of an infected person may be the means of communicating the disease? Sydenham expressly says that it may be communicated by lactation, handling, the saliva, sweat, and by the breath itself, as well as by those grosser means of which there is no question. But the term unclean, in this and the following cases, is generally understood in a mere legal sense, the rendering a person unfit for sacred ordinances. And as there was a mild kind of gonorrhea that was brought on by excessive fatigue and the like, it may be that kind only which the law has in view in the above ordinances.

## Verse 18

They shall both bathe themselves - What a wonderful tendency had these ordinances to prevent all excesses! The pains which such persons must take, the separations which they must observe, and the privations which, in consequence, they must be exposed to in the way of commerce, traffic, etc., would prevent them from making an unlawful use of lawful things.

## Verse 24

The common sense of all mankind has led them to avoid the gross impropriety referred to in this verse - and it has been a general opinion, that off-spring obtained in this way has been infected with leprous, scrofulous, and other deeply radicated diseases, from which they and their posterity have been scarcely ever freed. In Leviticus 20:18, persons guilty of this are condemned to death; here only to a seven daysâ€™ separation; because, in the former case, Moses speaks of the act when both the man and woman were acquainted with the situation: in the latter, he speaks of a case where the circumstance was not known till afterwards; at least, so it appears these two places should be understood, so as to be reconciled.

#### Verse 29

Two turtles, or two young pigeons - In all these cases moral pollution was ever considered as being less or more present, as even such infirmities sprang from the original defection of man. On these accounts sacrifices must be offered; and in the case of the woman, one of the birds above mentioned must be sacrificed as a sin-offering, the other as a burnt-offering, Leviticus 15:30.

#### Verse 31

Thus shall ye separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness - By this separation the cause became less frequent, and the contagion, if it did exist, was prevented from spreading. So pest-houses and fever-wards are constructed for the purpose of separating the infected from the sound; and thus contagion is lessened, and its diffusion prevented.

That they die not - That life may be prolonged by these prudential cares; and that he who is morally and legally unclean, may not presume to enter into the tabernacle of God till purified, lest he provoke Divine justice to consume him, while attempting to worship with a polluted mind and impure hands.

1.How unpromising and how forbidding, at the first view, is this chapter! and yet how full of wise, humane, and moral regulations, manifesting at once the wisdom and kindness of the great Legislator! Every word of God is pure in itself, and of great importance to us. He who cannot derive instruction from the chapter before him, and be led by a proper consideration of its contents to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, must have either a very stupid or a very vitiated mind.

2.In all these ordinances we may plainly see that God has purity of heart continually in view - that the soul may be holy, he cuts off the occasions of sin; and that men may be obliged to keep within due bounds, and possess their vessels in sanctification and honor, he hedges up their way with briars and thorns, and renders transgression painful, shameful, and expensive.

3.Preventing grace is not less necessary than that which saves and which preserves. These three chapters, avoided and neglected by most, contain lessons of instruction for all; and though many things contained in them belong exclusively to the Jewish people as to the letter, yet in their spirit and gracious design they form a part of those revealed things which are for us and for our children; and although they cannot be made the subject of public oral instruction, yet they are highly necessary to be known, and hence the advantage of reading the Scriptures in regular order in private.

May we read so as to understand, and practice what we know, that, being wise unto salvation, we may walk as children of the light and of the day, in whom there shall be no occasion of stumbling!