

“Will Jesus Cleanse Me?”

Matthew 8:1-4

Scripture Ref: Is 1:4-6; Lev 13:45-46; Rom 5:12; Rom 7:9; Rom 1:21; 1 Tim 4:2; 1 John 1:6-7; James 4:3; Heb 9:11-12; Rev 5:10; Eph 4:4-6

When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Healing the Leper

When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. 2 And behold, a leper came

1. Interesting that right after what might have been the highpoint of His ministry, and certainly an awesome message, Jesus comes across a problem – a big problem – a leper!
2. Leprosy was the worst sickness at the time of Jesus ministry
 - a. The leper was considered **unclean**, defiled.
 - b. You never, under any circumstances, **touched** a leper.
 - c. He could not live with others, he was outcast from the town
 - d. **Outcast**: If he came to town, he had to cry out “unclean, unclean” so that people would stay back from him.
 - e. The rabbi’s taught that leprosy was a **judgment** from God, that you must have been a terrible person if you were struck with it.
3. Yet interestingly, leprosy was also used as a **picture of sin** –
 - a. Isaiah the prophet made a comparison of sin :

Isa 1:4-6

4 Alas, sinful nation, A people laden with iniquity, A brood of evildoers, Children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, They have provoked to anger The Holy One of Israel, They have turned away backward. 5 Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints. 6 From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.

4. Am I saying that God makes you sick when you sin? **NO!**

- a. **But all sickness is a result of sin – the fall of man**
 - i. **Adam and Eve were created in a perfect world, with perfect immortal bodies**
- b. **Sin brought with it death – there was no death before man sinned**
 - i. **After sin – God allowed death to enter in**

Rom 5:12 ...through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned

- c. **Sin bought physical decay – as a result of sin everything is in a state of decay – 2nd law of thermodynamics – entropy**

1 Cor 15:42 The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

- i. **Our bodies produce new cells constantly – there is no reason that we should get old and die**
 - ii. **But scientists have discovered that there is a genetic clock programmed into all life – that causes us to slowly stop regenerating – we are slowly corrupting in the physical realm**
- d. **Sin bought sickness**
 - i. **There was no sickness after creation – no one got a cold or the flu or cancer early on – they lived to be 800-900 years old**
 - ii. **Yet over the millennia virus and bacteria and genetic decay has brought us to the place that 15% of our GNP – over \$2T last year alone – on healthcare.**
- e. **So – as an affect – all sickness originates from sin**

Leprosy & Sin

Lev 13:45-46

*45 "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!'
46 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.*

- 5. **Leprosy is caused by the bacteria Mycobacterium leprae, and there are some interesting correlations**
- 6. **Leprosy begins as a small white spot on your skin, you might see it and think it is “no big deal”, but it begins to spread.**

- a. Sin also starts small, a little compromise, we rationalize it as “no big deal, everybody does it”
- b. And then it spreads

Rom 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

7. Leprosy, once started, begins to spread

- a. Sin, once allowed in, will spread into other areas of our life
- b. Haven't you ever experienced that? You compromise in one area, then another temptation comes and you think “I might as well...”

James 1:15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

8. Leprosy does its destructive work INSIDE the body.

- a. The Leprosy bacteria attacks the nervous system, eating away at the outside layer of the nerves in your body – you don't even feel it.
- b. Sin, once allowed in, also begins its destructive work in your heart and mind, eating away at your spiritual never center.

Rom 7:9 I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

9. Leprosy causes defilement

- a. The outward signs of untreated Leprosy are pretty gross
- b. In the same way, sin defiles us – inside and out.
- c. Leprosy destroys the nerves and causes loss of sensation in your extremities
- d. Leprosy does not make your body parts fall off. When your hands and feet are numb, you injure yourself – fingers are cut, smashed, burnt, toes nibbled by rats! SLOWLY EATEN AWAY!
- e. Once sin has taken root, your conscience becomes numb to the Holy Spirit – you feel no different doing right or wrong.

Rom 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

1 Tim 4:2 ...having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

10. Leprosy causes isolation

- a. In earlier times Lepers were not allowed to dwell with the general population
- b. Even now, with drug treatments, if people thought you had leprosy you would not be invited to dinner!
- c. In the same way sin isolates us:
 - i. From fellowship with God – when we sin we don't lose our salvation, but our fellowship is broken...

1 John 1:6-7

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

- ii. Does God pull away from us when we are in sin? **NO! We pull away from God!**
- iii. Just like as a parent, you can always tell when you kids are up to no good – they will avoid you, they'll pull away.
- iv. Sin also breaks fellowship with other Christians – when unconfessed sin has taken root in our lives we will pull away from other Christians – we don't want them to find out what is really happening!

Leprosy & Jesus

11. So how does this interaction go...

Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

12. The leper did not doubt Jesus' *ability* to make him clean, but he was unsure of Jesus *willingness* to make him clean.

- a. How many people today are defiled with their sin, and they think "I believe Jesus can heal me," or "I believe Jesus can give me victory,"
 - i. but they are not sure if Jesus is *willing* to cleanse them!
- b. So they say "when I get my life together, I am going to come to Jesus," "when I deal with my sin, then I'll let Jesus cleanse me."
- c. But they are missing a very important point – **WE CANNOT DEAL WITH OUR SIN!** The leper could not cure himself!
- d. Without a touch from Jesus, we'll stay in our sin, we'll remain lepers. We need Jesus!

13. And guess what - Jesus is not embarrassed or shocked by your sin, He can handle it!

3 Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

14. Jesus touched the leper

- a. **Social taboo! Religious no-no!**
- b. **Under no circumstances would a person touch a leper, but Jesus said "I will!"**
- c. **You have to stop and think about this – no matter how disgusting or vile a person has become, when you reach out to Jesus, He will always touch you!**
 - i. **This man had probably been shunned by his friends, his family, and even the priests and religious leaders – no one would have anything to do with him.**
 - ii. **But Jesus says "I am willing." How cool is that!"**

15. There are those who sometimes say "touch me Jesus, cleanse me, but don't change me, I like me just the way I am."

- a. **Here is another important point – if you ask Jesus to touch you, to cleanse you, YOU WILL CHANGE!**
 - i. **My younger son hates taking a shower, "Go take a shower... but I just took one.... When? ... on Sunday.... But its Thursday!"**
 - ii. **Like taking a shower but not wanting to turn the water on**
- b. **But if you don't want to be changed – seeking his touch is in VAIN**
- c. **I believe that many Christians never are cleaned because they come to Christ with a half-hearted request –**
- d. **wanting God to take away the problems that the sin has caused, but not really wanting to deal with the root.**
 - i. **HIV is a perfect case in point: If you don't want to get HIV, then change your behavior.**
 - ii. **"OH no! We want to DO what we want, but not have the ramifications!"**

***James 4:3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.*

16. But the point of this is: Jesus WILL touch you, and he WILL cleanse you!

Tell no one

4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

17. Present yourself to the priest

- a. Jesus instructs the man to follow the law – if a leper were cured, then they were to follow a process that was given in Leviticus 14:

Cleansing the Leper

18. ... the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds:

- a. In this cleansing ceremony, one bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water, and its blood was applied to a living bird, to some cedar wood, to some scarlet fabric, and to some hyssop.
- b. Then the blood was sprinkled on the one who was cleansed from leprosy, and the living bird was let go.

19. This is a picture of Jesus' death and its spiritual application;

- a. Jesus was placed into an earthen vessel – a human body, while remaining clean (the running water – the Spirit).
- b. At Jesus death, His blood was applied to the altar in the most Holy Place – heaven.

Heb 9:11-12

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. 12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

20. He shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows:

- a. After the sacrificial ceremony with the birds, the cleansed leper had to wash their clothes and shave off all of their hair.
- b. They started all over again, as if they were a brand new baby.
- c. An illustration of being “born again” - a completely new start.

21. On the eighth day he shall take two male lambs without blemish:

- a. A trespass and sin offerings were made on the eighth day and sacrificial blood was applied to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right big toe, to sanctify and consecrate the cleansed leper.
- b. This was the same way that the priest was consecrated.

Rev 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

22. 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:

- a. **On the eighth day, oil was also applied to the cleansed leper. It was both sprinkled on his body in general and then applied to the ear, thumb, and toe just as the blood was.**
- b. **Therefore, a cleansed leper had a special calling and a special anointing. One could not go through such a ritual as this and not be changed.**

Eph 4:4-6

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Col 1:21-22

*21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to **present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight***

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