

**The
Healing
Of
A
Leper**

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Table of Contents

Preface	3
Introduction	4
The Leper's Plight	6
The Leper's Perseverance	9
The Leper's Plea	10
The Leper's Pardon	12
The Leper's Praise	14

Thousands of sermons have been preached on the healing of a leper. This is just another one of those sermons preached that hopefully will bring out the plight of this leper in a way in which we can empathize as well as share his eventual joyful pardon and praise. This is also a sermon of the five Ps of the leper. These five Ps are the leper's plight, perseverance, plea, pardon and praise. There are many lessons we can learn from this episode on the healing of a leper. Perhaps we can see sin in a new perspective and appreciate the Lord's who is rich in mercy dispensing mercy to those who are willing to come to Him for mercy. So here is a short booklet from a sermon to edify the saints on how compassionate of our Saviour is to lost, hopeless and helpless sinners like us with spiritual leprosy we cannot see. May the Lord bless the preaching and studying of His holy words!

And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth. And he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee, and cast out devils. And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter. (Mark 1:38-45)

There were many lepers in Israel. Some were healed while others were not. The most famous leper that was healed was not even an Israelite. He was a Syrian captain by the name of Naaman whom Elijah healed. This man was singled out by the Lord who sarcastically told the children of Israel that many lepers were not healed in Israel but only a Gentile leper was healed instead. **And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. (Luke 4:27)**

This no doubt provoked the children of Israel and marred their nationalistic pride. How come so many lepers were not healed in Israel during those days of Elijah and instead a Gentile enemy was healed instead? Were they in a position and condition to obtain mercy from Jehovah God? Or were they already out of favour with their God? Have they considered what they have done to lepers so far? Did they bring any relief to lepers and their families? Nothing much to shout about as far as their laws were concerned.

In the gospel, lepers were healed by the Lord in an instant. This shows how powerless the Law of Moses was and how efficacious the healing of our Lord's law is in a new age of grace and truth. The religious leaders found themselves completely helpless in the light of diseases due to sins and other infirmities as a result of the fall of man. They provide no hope and offer no relief.

The setting of the healing of this leper is outside one of the towns in Galilee. The name of this leper is unknown but the episode of his healing is not of any less significance. This leper was just like the lepers facing starvation during the times of Elisha living outside the city. But those lepers during the days of Elisha turned out to be the salvation for the people in Samaria when they found food left behind by the fleeing Syrian armies.

However, this leper was no hero to the people there during his time. Nonetheless, he was a picture of God's miraculous saving grace to lost sinners like us. After he was healed, he published his healing in the city bringing too much attention for the Lord who could no longer enter into the city to minister to the people there.

Firstly, let us consider the leper's plight. How long was this leper in this condition, we could only speculate. It could have been a very long time since he was a leper as he was so overjoyed that he became an instant news item in the city. The city folks probably knew him very well and were excited about his healing so much so that Christ could no longer enter the city to preach. The leper's suffering is beyond what we normal healthy people could imagine. To say it is very embarrassing to be a leper would be an understatement. Many people would complain even if there were a few pimples on one's face. But for a leper, his condition is many times worse than just having a pimple on the face. The nation of Israel in her rebellious state is likened to a very sick man with leprosy described by Isaiah. **From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. (Isaiah 1:6)**

Leprosy is an incurable disease during those days. Nothing short of divine healing from above will bring a leper back from the leper's colony. The manifestation of this disease is very disgusting to say the least. Actually what is leprosy? How many of us have had contact with someone who is leprosy? It is quite difficult to comprehend what leprosy is unless we have some firsthand knowledge of the disease.

Leprosy is a slowly progressing bacterial infection that affects the skin, peripheral nerves in the hands and feet, and mucous membranes of the nose, throat, and eyes. Destruction of the nerve endings causes the affected areas to lose sensation. Occasionally, because of the loss of feeling, the fingers and toes become mutilated and fall off, causing the deformities that are typically associated with the disease. Inadequate care causes infection of open wounds. Gangrene may also follow, causing body tissue to die and become deformed. During those days, leprosy could be a lot worse than what is described here.

Do you wish to go near a leprosy person? Under the Law of Moses, these people must be shunned and in fact banished. They had to live outside the camp. Not only that, adding insult to injury, the poor leper had to publicize his horrible condition to the world at large according to **Leviticus 13:45: And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.**

Can you imagine what terrible plight it was to be leprous? You have to go around warning others not to come near you. You have to cry to everyone that you are unclean to warn others. How shameful to be unclean! It is a lot worse than telling others that I am ugly and being made fun of and laughed at. You see people covering their nose and mouth moving away from you to avoid you. Some may be shaking their head at you. Some may even mock you. You have to be a marketing exhibit of what leprosy is like to warn others. The embarrassment of such a debilitating condition is beyond what we could imagine. Suicide may be a better option for some. It is a terrible burden to family members having to deal with a leprous person.

Since a leper is not supposed to live with those who are not infected, he is to be isolated outside the camp or city or villages. He has to live with other leprous sufferers in a leper's colony living in pains and sorrows. How is he to be fed? Normally family members would leave food for the leper on the ground from a distance. The leper would then collect the food and there will be no physical contact between the leper and his family. No one has handphone during those days where they can send text messages to one another to keep themselves updated on what is happening.

What happened if the family members failed to provide food for him? The leper would be left wondering why? He might be worried for his family members that something bad might have happened to them. Had they abandoned him would be some questions he might have on his mind as he had plenty of free time on hand where lepers are left with nothing to do and hope for healing to come. The thought of many unpleasant things might drive him mad.

What happened if the weather is not conducive to provide relief to him? How is he going to spend his time in winter where food might be difficult to come by? Lepers will have to live on the mercies of others. They may have to look for food on their own like those lepers during the days of Elisha where food from the city had run out. The leper is literally eating his food in sorrows and misery. It is worse than eating bread by the sweat on one's brows. He is pained to the heart where he could only view his family members from afar if they bring food to him at all.

In the dark of night could he sleep well? Does the leper mention here have a family? If he did, and if he was a family man, how many nights had he been thinking of his wife and his children? How much he wished he

could hug and play with his children again. Tears must have been his companions in the quiet of the night. How many nights have gone by where the children ask for their daddy who is outstation at a leper's colony? Why the children cannot meet their daddy, the children might often have asked. His wife would be at pains to explain to them what had happened to their dad where they might not fully understand. The children's constant plea to see daddy might drive her insane.

Family of sufferers might be shunned as well. Can you imagine the leper's children having no friends to play with them? They do not understand why their friends shunned them. When they found out that it was their daddy's fault, they might become bitter. Can you imagine neighbours whispering and suggesting why the man was struck with leprosy! It must be that the man had sinned would be a common accusation. His wife would be too embarrassed to go out to socialize with others. The mental anguish of the leper and his family that had to suffer together with him is not something we could imagine or even dare to think about.

If this leper was a breadwinner of the family, his family must be in a terrible plight. The family would be financially affected and might even have gone into debt. It is not uncommon for people to oppress the woman when the man is no longer around. It is not uncommon for children of the fatherless to be bullied, as the law also required the Jews to take care of the fatherless and widows. The leper's wife would be living like a widow while his children would be like children of the fatherless. How terrible the pain and suffering, no one wish to go through and let alone wish it upon his enemies.

So this leper here must be a very lonely man. He could only fellowship with lepers like him and he spent time complaining like Job to pass time. He must be frustrated many a time and wonder when he would be healed. He might even have given up hope that he would ever be healed at all. He is away from his family members and he misses them very much. He is physically afflicted with pains and sores. He could have lost some limbs because of his conditions and he dared not even reveal this to his family members. He is a terrible sight to behold and people would spit at him if he comes near them. No normal healthy people would come near him at all. If he tries going near someone, either he would be avoided or he would be chased away or even stoned. Leprosy is a terrible and horrifying disease. This is an unmistakable picture of sin.

Sin brought along misery and trouble not only to the sinner but his family members as well. Sin causes physical and mental pains and sorrows. Sin will not leave the sinner alone but keeps reminding him of his conditions. The sinner is a slave to sin and he cannot help himself from the addiction of sin and sinning. Sin brings him to this terrible state with no end in sight. Sin will progressively eat away his body and the sinner will die a slow, painful, lonely and horrifying death. Sin would cause the sinner's mind to be severely affected that he would rather choose death than live a meaningless existence here in pain. Sin is a slow cancerous growth and in the process makes a wretch out of a man.

Who would want to bury a leper? Perhaps only another leper would put another leper out of sight. A leper would die a lonely painful death without his family around him. A mentally deranged leper would possibly consider suicide as a way out of his misery. This is what sin does to a person. Sinning is no fun and not cool at all if only we can see the true nature of the consequences of sin.

But for this leper, his fortune has come. That day, the Lord Jesus Christ passed by. He probably heard about Christ from words of mouth about what Christ did. The miracles Christ did offered him some glimpse of hope. No physician could heal him. The religious leaders could not heal him and offer him no hope. The only rule of law the religious establishment could offer was banishment of the leper.

The law indeed worketh wrath. The law shows how much the sinner has fallen short of the glory of God and God's acceptance to be His people. So the best the religious leaders could do for him was to banish him according to the Law. Why is it so cruel? Here is the reason. **Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. (Romans 7:13)**

Fortunately we can still hear some good news. **Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (Romans 5:20)** So that day, Christ was the leper's only hope. **For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)** The age of grace has finally come.

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. (Mark 1:40) Here the leper positioned himself to meet Christ. He came to Christ on his own. What else could he do? The least he could do to help himself from his trouble was to come to Christ. The sinner can come to Christ and indeed he must come to Christ. Though depravity has plunged the sinner into the abyss of darkness but he still has a free will to come to Christ despite what theologians claim.

This leper came to Christ. Not only he went to Christ, he went on his knee. He went in humble submission and in a posture of worship. He went to Christ in humility and in a state of helplessness. He went with hope even with a very minute grain of hope against all hope that Christ would have compassion on him the sinner, most deserving of his punishment and suffering. Like the sinner in the temple who dared not lift up his eyes to heaven and just prayed in his heart that God would have mercy on him a sinner, this leper likewise prostrate himself before the Great Physician pleading for mercy.

The leper had suffered enough. Enough is enough. The time of repentance has come like the prodigal son returning to his father. How many nights he spent in darkness, in quiet solitude, in reflection and deep contemplation that what sin had brought him to this state of hopelessness and pains. His folly was fully shown to the sinner. His shame and guilt fully felt. His waiting for the time of refreshing has come.

The sinner has finally decided to come home. He wants to go home to be with his wife and children. But he knew he could not go back in this current state and condition. He must go to Christ first. The Law of Moses could not stop him from approaching Christ. Instead of crying out and warning everyone he was unclean all these time, he went to Jesus crying for mercy.

Imagine the commotion he caused when this leper came to the entourage of the Lord. He was a leper and how dared he approached the Lord who is holy and undefiled and came before Christ's sanctified people. His disease is infectious and contagious. How can he be so irresponsible? He had broken the Law of Moses. Kick him away, quick and get rid of this horrible unworthy sinner some might cry in their heart. He is hindering the procession of the Lord. Why waste time with him? He is such an ugly sight

and he deserved his punishment some might tend to think. So when this leper came near to Christ, the disciples and those following probably took a step back and stayed clear of him. They might be standing a few steps behind Christ and watched in horror how the Lord was going to defuse this potentially dangerous situation.

The leper is now kneeling before the Lord. He could not and dared not come any nearer. He probably feared he might be chased away. He knew very well the requirements of the Law. But he had suffered enough as a leper. He did not want to continue to exist miserably as a leper till whatever his meaningless existence might be left for him. He knew he was unclean and he had been crying out to everyone he was unclean which only God knew for how long. He did not want to remain unclean and he desperately needed cleansing. So he came to the Lord pleading.

He came in whatever faith he could muster. He pleaded with the Lord that if the Lord would, He could make him clean. He knew full well that the Lord could make him clean. What was foremost on his mind was whether the Lord would be willing to make him clean. He had no merits whatsoever and he did not come to Christ to rationalize or to argue and complain. He did not come to argue his case and blame fate or someone else for his plight. He accepted his current state as a leper most deserving of this punishment. He came with reserved expectation only if the Lord would heal him.

There was absolutely nothing else he could do. He trusted in God's mercy for the Lord said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The Lord did not demand a sacrifice or to do penance. The Lord expects sinners to come to Him. Those who desire God's mercy will never be turned away in disappointment. Indeed, this leper truly received mercy, grace upon grace when the Lord responded to his plight and humble submission to the Lord.

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. (Mark 1:41) Wonders of wonders, what amazing grace and mercy! A healthy normal man would not even come near a leper let alone touch one. Here the Lord not only had compassion on this leper, He even touched him. The Lord in fact needed not to touch him to heal him. The Lord who spoke the world into existence could have simply spoken the word and this leper would immediately be healed. But the Lord went out of the way to show compassion on this most undeserving sinner leper and touched him.

Would we be so kind to such a fallen ugly human being who is full of petrifying sores and smelt badly? Would we invite him into our homes? Would we allow our children to go near him and play with him? Would we allow him to carry our children? But the Creator of the whole universe gave him a touch, a touch no doubt that is so touching that moves heaven. Angels probably watched in horror and those around Christ were probably speechless. Why would the Lord touch a leper? Would He not be violating the Law of Moses? But the scriptures tell us that Christ is the propitiation for our sins.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21) So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:28)

So the Lord touched the leper that day and healed him. Our compassionate Lord will never turn away anyone and not help someone in need. Our Lord will not allow sin to wreck the sons of man in His holy presence. He came into this world to be the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. He will not stand by and watch and justify himself why He should not help this leper who came to Him in humility. The Lord not only did not heal this leper in an impersonal way, He even spoke to him and told him He would heal him when He reached forth to touch him.

“I will, be thou clean,” these five words must be the most meaningful words to this leper for the rest of his life. No one had spoken so sweetly to him all this while. No one could help him during all those painful years let alone speak of healing him. No one had offered him any hope until the Lord Jesus Christ came along that day. It was a great and glorious day for him.

Here the Lord even touched him and spoke to him so kindly that the Lord would clean him. What a feeling it must be that day for this leper! It must be ecstatic and joy rapturous.

Before coming to Christ, he only had hope. He was not sure whether the Lord would even have compassion on him though he knew full well the Lord could certainly heal him. Now he experienced the reality of his faith. The faith that produces hope in him has now turned into sight. What a blessing it was for him! It was beyond his wildest dream to be healed. He knew how painful it was to be a leper and now he was delivered from such a horrible bondage. He has every reason to be exuberant and he was indeed in a celebratory mood and who would not?

The leper was so happy that he quickly forgot the Lord's admonition for him to continue with the Law of Moses concerning his healing and the sacrifice he had to bring to the priests for a testimony unto them. He ought to show those powerless priests how the Lord on earth could make a sinner leper whole. Instead, he became an instant news item broadcasting what good thing the Lord had done for him. The city was moved and the inhabitants expected something to be done for them as well. In the midst of his celebration, he could not stop publishing, praising and thanking the Lord for deliverance from bondage.

His response is indeed understandable. He has in fact come back to life from leprosy. He needed not live in isolation anymore. He can fellowship and meet freely with people now. He must not have spoken to many healthy normal human beings for a long time. So the first conversation he had was thanking the Lord and publishing what the Lord had done for him. Indeed, he should be a very happy man now. Who would not be happy in such a state?

It is like a resurrection; a man who came back to life. This leper was given a new lease of life. He needed not live the life of a leper anymore. Of course he should be jubilant. His pardon and healing were instantaneous and complete. This is a picture of those who have been delivered from darkness into Christ's marvelous light. It is instantaneous the moment when we believe in Christ and our sin are forgiven and washed away by the precious blood of Christ. How clean we felt that day when we first got saved! Our burdens and guilt of sins forever were gone and how happy and joyful we were back then. How we wish we could enjoy those rapturous joys of our salvation once again?

Today, the leper's plea is just as relevant. If thou wilt, thou can make me clean. The Lord will clean you if you come to Him in humble plea for whatever your problem might be. No sickness is beyond the touch of the Master's hand. No trouble that is so troublesome that the Lord could not relieve. No depravity that is so deep that God's saving hand could not reach. If only we come back to the Lord like this leper in humble submission. If only our posture is right like this leper kneeling before the Lord to ask for mercy having no argument of our own. If only we would come as we are without one plea but that the Lord's blood was shed for us. All our sins and trouble could be placed under the blood of the Lord. God's rich mercy is always available to those who come to Christ for mercy.

Do we want to come to the end of ourselves like this leper and get a blessing from the Lord? God's mercy is new every morning and His compassions fail not. That is why we are not consumed by our sin and trouble as a result of the fall of man. Great is the faithfulness of our God. Would you want to experience the sunshine of God's grace, love and mercy again? Would you want to live like those days of heaven upon the earth when you first got saved when heaven smiled upon you? If there is hope for this leper, there is hope for us. If there is mercy for this leper, mercy is available to us as well. There is no reason why we should not obtain mercy and find grace to help when we come humbly before the throne of grace of our Lord.

Let us come back to Christ. Let us welcome the sinner home. Let us rejoice in our compassionate Saviour who knew no sin but was made sin for us. Let us not miss out on our blessing and remain in our deadness and continue to live in misery. There is no need to continue in our misery. The Lord is passing by us everyday. The Lord is more than willing to help us if only we will come back to Him. The onus is on us the most undeserving to respond to the One who is most gracious and compassionate to touch us. May the touch of the Great Physician offer us hope to come back to enjoy the wonderful salvation He has given us and once again, bask in the sweet fellowship with Him.

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