

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Healing A Leper (Part Three)

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In performing the healing of the leper, "Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed'" (Mark 1:41). In this miracle, we receive a glimpse of how cleansing works to prepare us for salvation. The physical cleansing of the leper resulted from God's grace, power, and faithful word. Similarly, spiritual cleansing of sins and flaws results directly from God's grace, power, and word, preparing us spiritually for His work in us. We see Christ's love and mercy in cleansing the leper in the words "compassion," revealing his tenderness of heart, and "touched," showing His power near at hand.

1. Does Christ show compassion to just anyone? Mark 1:41.

Comment: Christ moved with compassion on behalf of a person who, from the world's viewpoint, was repulsive and undesirable, totally unappealing in any situation. Jesus did not cleanse him because he was nice-looking or wealthy. Similarly, God does not choose to call us into His church due to our good works, beauty, or money; in us is nothing spiritually appealing. Spiritually, we are like the leper was physically—repulsive and undesirable in terms of holiness. We can thank God that His grace "brings salvation" (Titus 2:11) and "by grace we are saved" (Ephesians 2:8). God does not call us to salvation because of what we are but because of what He is. According to His mercy, God decides on whom to have compassion (Psalm 86:15; Romans 9:15-16).

2. Why is Jesus not defiled in touching the leper? How does His touching of him show God's power in the healing? Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:41; Luke 5:13.

Comment: Under the Old Covenant, touching the unclean defiled a person (Leviticus 5:3), but Christ showed that under the New Covenant, this was not so. Instead, evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies are what defile a person (Matthew 15:18-20). Jesus never did any of these evil acts, and contrary to what the Jews thought about touching a leper, He could never be defiled. However, when we view His touching the leper as a defiling act according to the Old Covenant, it reveals a realistic picture of the distinction between man and God. God put the filthy sins of the world on Christ so that we may be cleansed and forgiven. Christ "who knew no sin [took sin on Himself] that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

God's power to intervene is apparent in this healing, as the cleansing of the leprosy occurred immediately, instantaneously, upon touching him. If the healing had taken a prolonged time, the world would have had an opportunity to deny that Christ had healed the leper. They would likely have claimed that the natural healing process of the body made him well. Following Jesus' example, the apostles also laid hands on the sick, by which the power of God's Holy Spirit healed them (see Acts 10:38; I Corinthians 12:9).

3. How is the Word of God important to cleansing? Matthew 8:3; Mark 1:41-42; Luke 5:13.

Comment: God's Word is obvious in this miracle. If something requires cleansing, "the washing of water by the word" must be actively present (Ephesians 5:26). God does not work apart from His Word. From the creation of the world to the present, the place of God's Word in His work has been essential: "In the beginning was the Word [the One who became Jesus Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). In addition, the phrase "God said" is found ten times in the creation account (Genesis 1).

The Bible is God's written Word, as the Father had the Word (Jesus Christ, the Spokesman) inspire and reveal it. Many professing Christian churches have pushed Scripture to the back burner, into irrelevance, taking an *à la carte* spiritual meal from it as if they have the authority to choose which doctrines to swallow and which to refuse. If the true church is to do a work for God, it must be established and built on God's Word rather than on tradition.

4. Why does Christ command the healed leper to say nothing? Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:43-45; Luke 5:14-15.

Comment: Mark says Christ strictly warned the healed leper: "Say nothing to anyone." He was to show himself to the priest and offer the proscribed gift as a witness of what Jesus had done. By showing himself to the priest, the healed leper fulfilled the requirement of the law as to his fitness to return to social life (Leviticus 13:17). As far as we know, this was the first case of an Israelite leper being cleansed since the instructions given nearly 1,500 years before (Leviticus 13:34). The appearance of a cleansed leper at the altar with his gift in his hand testified that God had come to His people and totally satisfied priestly requirements and ordinances.

Yet, this man allowed his zeal to overrule good judgment and obedience to his Healer's command. In fact, his self-absorption in broadcasting his healing seriously impeded Christ's work. Due to the leper's spreading of his news, large numbers of lepers in the region pursued Jesus relentlessly for healing. Thus, "Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction" (Mark 1:45; Luke 5:15-16). However, it was not His purpose to heal all of Israel then but to reveal the Father and His relationship with Him. Being sensational does not mean we make a better testimony for Christ. Rather, this incident illustrates that, generally, the obedient person whom only a few know about makes the better-quality witness.