

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Ten Lepers Healed

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Jesus' miracle of healing the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) begins with Him traveling from Galilee through Samaria and then to Jerusalem, going through Jericho on the way. This roundabout route on His last trip to Jerusalem before being crucified provided Christ with various opportunities for healing and teaching. During His earthly ministry, Christ healed many people of leprosy (Matthew 11:5; Luke 7:22), but only two instances are recorded in detail and not this many at once.

As He enters a village, ten lepers approach Him, staying at a distance to avoid spreading their disease. They are a pitiful sight: ragged clothes and messy hair, slumped shoulders and drooping heads. As suffering outcasts with a shared need, they—nine Jews and one Samaritan—overlook their ethnic differences. In Scripture, the number ten represents completeness, just as the Ten Commandments cover God's complete law. Here, ten represents the sum of human need and hopelessness.

1. What does leprosy picture spiritually? Luke 17:11-13.

Comment: The lepers "stood afar off" because leprosy was a dreaded, loathsome disease for which God gave Moses detailed instructions to deal with it. This was an incurable disease that would eventually disfigure and rot away the body. It was widely known that only God could heal it. So, when Christ healed the leper in Matthew 8:1-4, His divine nature was revealed to many. When the ten lepers saw Jesus, they were likely tempted to rush toward Him to be healed, but they obediently observed the legal distance of 100 paces (Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2; II Kings 5:5).

In the Bible, leprosy illustrates the work of sin. Like leprosy, sin is a vile, contaminating, mortifying, unclean thing. It starts out as a spot that grows and festers until it takes in the whole person, condemning him to death. It is a type of the separation that sin causes, as well as representing how all people are alike in sin: "For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22-23).

2. What condition did the lepers have to meet before healing? Luke 17:14.

Comment: Christ responds favorably to their plea in the form of a command: "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (Leviticus 13-14). Notice what follows: "As they went, they were cleansed." The healing blessing came when the lepers obeyed Jesus' command. Blessings are contingent upon obedience. We miss many blessings because there is too little "as they went" in our lives. If we do what we can in obedience, God will do for us what we cannot.

Two great blessings came to the lepers through obedience. The first is that they were cleansed of the leprosy. The healing of leprosy is usually spoken of as being "cleansed" ("healed" is also used in verse 15). Lepers were unclean, so they had to be cleansed. Disobedience corrupts, but the commands and works of God purify.

The second blessing is that, by seeing the priests as He commanded, the lepers had their social restrictions cancelled. They were free to go wherever they wanted, reunite with family and friends, work normal jobs, and freely associate with whomever they wished. Far from restricting us, following God's instruction grants us freedom. The world taunts believers at times by telling them that the Bible's commandments only restrict them from having a good time, but that is not true. It is sin that restricts, binds, and enslaves.

3. Is there both a cost and a result in praising God for His blessings? Luke 17:15-18.

Comment: "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God" (Luke 17:15). The term "returned" (NKJV) or "turned back" (KJV) indicates that praising God requires effort and sometimes sacrifice. The healed leper was not timid or bashful about praising God. While being loud may show more dishonor than honor, in this case, his loudness showed his zeal in praising God. It also emphasized the completeness of the healing, as leprosy generally affects the voice (Psalm 51:15-17).

His zeal also showed that he was not a secret disciple and not ashamed to honor God in public. He "fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks" (Luke 17:16). In each of the 38 occurrences of this verb (Greek *eucharistēō*) in the New Testament, "giving of thanks" is always directed to God. We must always thank God for what He has provided (Psalm 107:8, 15, 21, 31).

4. How did the leper's faith make him whole? Luke 17:19.

Comment: Jesus informs the healed leper that his faith had made him whole, and because of his return to thank and praise God, more blessing would come as a result: spiritual healing. This added blessing of salvation is especially tied to the man's faith. His faith not only sent him to Christ for healing, but it also sent him back to praise and thank Him.

When we follow the will of God, we find our path taking many different turns. But we can take comfort in knowing that God has a purpose for each turn. The turns are not aimless and meaningless but are for our benefit and learning, as well as for our service to Him. No challenge in a Christian's life is without divine purpose and approval. God's providence is in control in every aspect of our lives.