

A Leper Cleansed

Luke 5:12-16 ESV

¹² While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ¹³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." ¹⁵ But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. ¹⁶ But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

- Second of 3 miracle stories
 - catch of fish
 - leper
 - healing of the paralytic

INTRO

Jesus is willing and able to help those in need.

Therefore, those in need should come to him humbly, confidently, and hopefully.

Portrait of the Needy

3 Aspects of the Leper's Need

1. The leper was physically suffering

- a. The term here translated as leprosy was a general term which could be used for as many as 72 different skin diseases and ailments. It could have been Hansen's disease, which we now call leprosy, but it also could have been psoriasis, lupus, ringworm, favus, or other ailments.
- b. Leprosy in biblical times was generally considered a disease that could not be healed by doctors...only by God or his agent.
- c. Thus, with little recourse for treatment, there would have certainly been physical suffering.

2. The leper was socially isolated

- a. The disease resulted in the sick individual being ostracised from society.
- b. **Leviticus 13:45-46 ESV** "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp."

3. The leper was religiously unclean

- a. **Leviticus 13:1-3 ESV** The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "When a person has on the skin of his body a swelling or an eruption or a spot, and it turns into a case of leprous disease on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests, and the priest shall examine the diseased area on the skin of his body. And if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a case of leprous disease. When the priest has examined him, he shall pronounce him unclean."

~~Godet in *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*: Leprosy was in every point of view a most frightful malady. 1st. In its physical aspects it was a whitish pustule, eating away the flesh, attacking member after member, and at last eating away the very bones ; it was attended with burning fever, sleeplessness, and nightmare, without scarcely the slightest hope of cure. Such were its physical characteristics; it was a living death. 2d. In the social point of view, in consequence of the excessively contagious nature of his malady, the leper was separated from his family, and from intercourse with men, and had no other company than that of others as unhappy as himself. Lepers ordinarily lived in bands, at a certain distance from human habitations (2 Kings vii. 3; Luke xvii. 12). Their food was deposited for them in convenient places. They went with their head uncovered, and their chin wrapped up; and on the approach of any persons whom they met, they had to announce themselves as lepers, 3d. In the religious point of view, the leper was Levitically unclean, and consequently excommunicate. His malady was considered a direct chastisement from God. In the very rare case of a cure, he was only restored to the theocratic community on an official declaration of the priest, and after offering the sacrifice prescribed by the law.~~

● *→ The extremity of his need ⇒ we can relate*

3 Aspects of the Leper's Faith

"While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.""

1. The leper's faith gave rise to humility (because Jesus was an agent of God)
 - a. The leper fell before Jesus, similar to Simon Peter, in recognition of who it was that he was addressing. He recognized Jesus was an agent of God. *PRACTICING THE POWER*
 - b. The leper also shows his humility by not presuming Jesus would even want to heal him: Sam Storms notes that the "leper had no reservations when it came to Christ's ability. But he was reluctant to presume upon Christ's will."

2. The leper's faith gave rise to courage (because Jesus was merciful and gracious)
 - a. The leper was breaking the Law of God in coming close to Jesus (possibly in the city) and risked punishment for that.
 - b. The leper also risked humiliation and rejection should Jesus choose not to heal him.

3. The leper's faith gave rise to hope (because Jesus had the power to heal him)
 - a. The leper was hopeful; despite the risk he ventured this encounter believing that Jesus had the power to heal him as well as the will to heal him.

Sam Storms in *Practicing the Power* (faith relates us to God): "Why was faith so important to Jesus? The simple answer is that faith magnifies the mercy and power of God. By its very nature, faith leads us to look away from ourselves and any notion of self-reliance and confidently trust God for every provision. Faith is a confession of our personal inability and of God's limitless power. When we relate to God with genuine faith the focus is not on the person who believes but on God to whom we look and in whose promises and power we place our confident trust. Faith is an act of self-denial, a renunciation of one's ability to do anything. Faith itself carries no power but it is instrumental, deriving its significance from the role it plays in relating us to the God who answers our prayers."

This is exemplary of how our faith should be. We should have a humble, bold, hopeful faith in Jesus.

↳ to help us in our need

our faith should be humble
courageous
hopeful

Ephesians 3:7-21 ESV

Because of the gospel, we should have a humble, courageous, and hopeful faith

⁷ Of this **gospel** I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. ⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹ and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰ so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known *← Gospel* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹ This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹² **in whom we** *← courage* **have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.** ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

¹⁴ **For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,** ¹⁵ from whom every family in *← humility* heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰ **Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or** *← hopeful* **think, according to the power at work within us,** ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

⇒ Does your need increase your faith or increase your fear?
 IF this, then get your eyes on the gospel!!!
 " " " " Jesus!!!
 → *Worshipping?*

Portrait of the Helper

3 Attributes of the Helper:

→ Able, willing, compassionate ←

1. Jesus was **able** to help the leper

- a. The leper believed Jesus could help him. He had likely heard of the many miracles Jesus already had done
- b. Jesus commands the leprosy away: "be clean"
- c. "And immediately the leprosy left him."

- d. **2 Kings 5:1-7 ESV** Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the Lord had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper.² Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife. ³ She said to her mistress, "Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." ⁴ So Naaman went in and told his lord, "Thus and so spoke the girl from the land of Israel." ⁵ And the king of Syria said, "Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So he went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing. ⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you Naaman my servant, that you may cure him of his leprosy."⁷ **And when the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Only consider, and see how he is seeking a quarrel with me."**
- e. Jesus was able to do what only God could do because he was God

2. Jesus was **willing** to help the leper

- a. To the leper's statement "'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean'" Jesus responds, "I will"
- b. Ryle: "These two little words, "I will," deserve special notice. They are a deep mine, rich in comfort and encouragement to all labouring and heavy laden souls."
- c. Jesus's action, reaching out to touch the leper, indicate a tender willingness to help.
- d. Jesus could have insisted the man keep his distance and remove his presence, but he allowed the leper to get close because he willed to help him.
- e. Jesus's compassion for the needy was behind his willingness to help; Charity and mercy took precedence over strict adherence to the Law.

- f. Is it always God's will that we are healed? **Grudem:** "All Christians would probably agree that in the atonement Christ has purchased for us not only complete freedom from sin but also complete freedom from physical weakness and infirmity in his work of redemption. And all Christians would also no doubt agree that our full and complete possession of all the benefits that Christ earned for us will not come until Christ returns: it is only "at his coming" (1 Cor. 15: 23) that we receive our perfect resurrection bodies. So it is with physical healing and redemption from the physical sickness that came as a result of the curse in Genesis 3: our complete possession of redemption from physical illness will not be ours until Christ returns and we receive resurrection bodies. But the question that confronts us with respect to the gift of healing is whether God may from time to time grant us a foretaste or a down payment of the physical healing which he will grant us fully in the future. The healing miracles of Jesus certainly demonstrate that at times God is willing to grant a partial foretaste of the perfect health that will be ours for eternity. And the ministry of healing seen in the lives of the apostles and others in the early church also indicates that this was part of the ministry of the new covenant age. As such, it fits the larger pattern of blessings in the new covenant, many or all of which give partial foretastes of the blessings that will be ours when Christ returns. We "already" possess some of the blessings of the kingdom, but those blessings are "not yet" fully ours. *Is it always God's will his children are healed? YES!
Is it always God's timing to heal us now? NO!*

3. Jesus was **compassionate**

- Merriam-Webster: sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.
- Jesus was sympathetic to the plight of the leper, and because he was able and compassionately willing, he alleviated his suffering
- Do we ever connect/help/interact with people who are needy to the point of making us uncomfortable?

→ GRAHAM, KIM, LYLE

This is the Jesus we believe in and worship. The God-man who is willing and able to help us in our need, demonstrating his compassion for us. Nowhere was this more evident in his compassionate willingness to help us with our greatest need; our need to be reconciled to God.

This leads us to our 3 point...

Purpose of Jesus

The purpose of Jesus in this miracle pertained to the Kingdom of God:

To indicate that the kingdom of God included the forgiveness of sins

Consider the immediate storyline: *in order to see the purpose of forgiveness of sins*

1. The miracle of the catch of fish
2. The miracle of the leper being cleansed
3. The miracle of the paralytic being healed

1) Catch of fish

- a. Peter recognizes he is a sinner, Jesus responds, "Follow me"
 - i. Either Jesus doesn't care about sin – if this were true he wouldn't be from God – or,
 - ii. Jesus will deal with the sinfulness of Peter

2) Leper being cleansed

- a. The leper was "cleansed" and not healed
- b. Leprosy was associated with sin: "Passages on leprosy in the Old Testament imply that God caused this disease as punishment for sin and that he alone could heal it (see Lev 14:34; Num 12:1–15; Deut 24:8–9; 28:27; 2 Sam 3:29; 2 Kgs 5:20–27; 15:5; 2 Chr 26:20).
 - i. **Deuteronomy 28:15, 27 ESV** "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. ... The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed.

- c. To remove the leprosy was to remove the source and cause of leprosy — *SIN*
- 3) Paralytic being healed — what was implied in the first two miracle stories is stated explicitly in the third: Luke 5:24-25 ESV But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” —he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.

Jesus is willing and able to help those in need. He, and he alone, can help with the greatest need you have; your sin separating you from your God. \Rightarrow His *compassion* *motivates him!*
of forgiveness *courageous*
 Those in need should come to him with a hopeful humility; all those who repent and believe in Christ have their sins forgiven and are reconciled to God.

This applies to all your needs! \Rightarrow *but especially to your greatest need!* GOSPEL!

Practice of Jesus

It was the habitual practice of Jesus to find solitude and pray.

Throughout the gospels this happened regularly, but it happen most frequently before times of significant trial and difficulty.

First major conflict with the Pharisees—who would be his major adversaries and would eventually lead the way in having him crucified.

Ryle: We see, lastly, in this passage — our Lord Jesus Christ's diligence about private prayer. Although "crowds of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses"—He still made time for secret devotion. As holy and undefiled as He was--He would not allow the demands of public ministry to prevent regular private communion with God. We are told that "He withdrew into the wilderness and prayed."

There is an example set before us here, which is much overlooked in these latter days. There are few professing Christians, it may be feared--who strive to imitate Christ in this matter of private devotion. There is abundance of hearing, and

reading, and talking, and profession, and visiting, and almsgiving, and subscribing to societies, and teaching at schools. But is there, together with all this--a due proportion of private prayer? Are believing men and women sufficiently careful to be frequently alone with God? These are humbling and heart-searching questions!