

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 5- Luke 5:12-16** 61- What Can We Learn From a Leper?

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Luke 5:12-16

We need to remember that Luke's Gospel was written to a man named Theophilus who was a Roman dignitary, and it was also written to the greater Gentile world at large to prove to us and him that Jesus Christ was the one true eternal God in human flesh. Luke tells us that Jesus came into the world to be the Messiah, and the Savior, and the Redeemer of all of those who have been chosen by God from before the foundation of the world who have been mercifully given the Grace to see and understand and believe and who have been wondrously given the Power to repent and turn from their sins.

And Dr. Luke- who was, in fact, a medical physician- writes his Account of the Life and Ministry and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ very carefully and very precisely and very accurately and very systematically- presenting an irrefutable case for the Deity and the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And he begins with the testimony of the archangel Gabriel- who came directly from Heaven to speak to Zacharias- the old priest, and to Mary. And then Luke follows up with the testimony of Zacharias and Elizabeth and Joseph and Mary as to the mighty working of God in the preparation of the coming of the Savior. And then Luke adds the testimony of two very old godly people- Simeon and Anna- who saw the infant Jesus in the Temple. And then there is that remarkable description of the virgin conception by which a male child is miraculously and supernaturally planted in the womb of the virgin Mary- who has never known a man which is further proof of Jesus' Divine Nature. And because Jesus' Father was God and not Joseph-

Jesus is the only Man Who has ever been born after the Fall of Adam who was not born with Original Sin.

And Luke describes the birth of Jesus being attended by a corporate angelic testimony and the subsequent confirming witness of the shepherds- who literally saw and heard that Heavenly Host.

And amassing his evidence of the Deity and Messiahship of Jesus- Luke adds an incident from the life of Jesus- the only one in the first 30 years of His Life recorded in Scripture, and at the age of twelve we find Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem- fully aware that He is God the Son.

We then come in Luke's Account to the Baptism of Jesus, and there, at His Baptism, we read about the testimony of the last and the greatest of the Old Testament prophets- John the Baptist- who publicly affirms that Jesus is the Lamb of God. And to this testimony from John- Luke adds the irrefutable testimony of God the Holy Spirit- Who descends from Heaven like a dove and rests on Jesus in His Baptismal waters, and to that powerful testimony is added the greatest testimony of all- as the very Voice of God- thunders from Heaven just like it did on Mt. Sinai three thousand years earlier, and said, "*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*"- which is the affirmation that this Man is God's Son- Who alone is sinless and Who alone of all human beings on earth- is holy.

And then Luke gives us the natural genealogy of Jesus that proves Him to be in the Messianic line through both His father for legal purposes and His mother for physical purposes of both Abraham- the Father of Faith and the beloved King David.

And the final ingredient of the credentials of the Messiah is the account of Jesus being tempted by the devil. And after a massive onslaught by Satan to a humanly weakened Jesus who has been fasting for forty days and forty nights- the proof is now crystal clear- this Man is God- because Jesus vanquishes Satan at every point and He comes out of that temptation in holy triumph!

And that takes us through the first three Chapters, and the foundation of His Divine Credentials are firmly established in the reader's mind. All the OT Prophetic qualifications are fulfilled, and all the Spiritual qualifications have become crystal clear along with all the legal qualifications as well. And having laid that foundation- we then began Chapter 4- to see the Ministry of Jesus- which is predominantly a Ministry of preaching and teaching. And the central Message is,

"Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!"

And this Message is given to the poor and the prisoners and the blind and the oppressed as they were identified by the great prophet Isaiah in **Isaiah 61**- and Jesus says in **Luke 4:18&19** that He had come to fulfill that OT prophecy- and to preach the Gospel of forgiveness and Salvation and eternal life to those who know they are poor and prisoners and blind and oppressed, and who come to God in broken desperation- pleading for Mercy to save their sinful souls.

And to prove continuously that He is, in fact, the Messiah, Who Alone can forgive sin and bring Salvation- Jesus demonstrates supernatural power in three categories:

- ✓ the area of Demons
- ✓ the area of Disease
- ✓ the area of Death

Jesus proves over and over that as God- He has absolute Authority and Power over all fallen angles, over all physical diseases, and even over death itself.

And so as the Ministry of Jesus unfolds through the Chapters in Luke- we're going to see Him not only teaching and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom- the message of Salvation- but we're going to see His Power over the spiritual world of demons, over the natural realm of disease, and over the final foe- death itself.

So as we come to our passage this morning in **Luke 5:12-16**- we see Jesus do a miracle for a leper- so let's read verses 12-14 again together:

Luke 5:12-14

12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, *there was* a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "**I am willing; be cleansed.**" And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 And He ordered him to tell no one, "**But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.**"

Now there are many terrible diseases at work in the earth today. And it is possible that we know more about these diseases in our day, both pathologically and clinically, than at any time in human history.

But of all the diseases that we face in our modern world- none is more dreaded, none is more feared, and none is more stigmatized than AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. This dreadful disease strikes fear in the heart of every single human on earth- precisely because, firstly, there is no cure, and, secondly, because it is spread so easily and so quickly.

And the closest parallel in the ancient world to AIDS was leprosy. During the days when Jesus walked the earth- leprosy was feared and loathed more than any other disease, and it was routinely taught during the first century that leprosy was God's curse on sinful human beings.

In its severest form- leprosy was the most feared disease on earth. It was contagious, incurable, and for the most part, fatal. Leprosy devastated people and families and even entire cities. It had immense social implications and even religious implications during that time.

Now the exact time frame for this encounter with this leper here is unknown to us. It occurred at some point during Jesus' Galilean Ministry as He was moving around the lake. Now as we remember verse 43 in Chapter 4 that Jesus had to preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities in Galilee, and that's exactly what He was doing. And in verse 44- Jesus indicates that He focused His preaching in the synagogues of Judea which would include Galilee. So somewhere in one of those cities around the lake of Galilee- Jesus had come into some synagogue to preach the Gospel and to attend that preaching with His miracle power so that He could attest to the fact that His message was true. And in one of those occasions- Jesus encounters a man, a man with leprosy, and Jesus completely heals the man.

And Luke writes about this and many other miracles, as do the other Gospel writers, because miracles are essential to the credibility of the Scriptural Record to identify Jesus as being God. So Luke and the other writers tell us that Jesus does routinely what normal men cannot do; He does what doctors can't do. In fact, the miracle record of Jesus is essential to the Christian Faith because these are the proofs of His supernatural Divine Nature. If Jesus is not supernatural- then we need

to tear up our New Testament. Without the miracles of Jesus- the Christian Faith becomes inexplicable on any legitimate grounds, and it is reduced to being nothing more than a fantasy or an outright deception. But because these many, many, miracles *did* happen, and because they are absolutely true- then we know that Jesus is God, and, therefore, He is our Redeemer.

We must remember, dear friends, that Moses and Abraham and David and Paul and Peter and John were not Redeemers- they were not saviors and they were not God. As great as they were- as many things that God used them to do- they were all sinners who were all in need of God's Mercy, and they were all saved by Grace through Faith, and they only spoke of the Redeemer- but they themselves were not Redeemers- they were servants of the one true Redeemer- Jesus Christ.

So let's meet this leprous man that Luke tells us about in verse 12. Somewhere in the region of the Sea of Galilee- no precise time or place, and by the way, **Matthew 8** and **Mark 1** also record this very same healing and they also do not tell us when or where. But somewhere in some town, "*Behold, there was a man who was full of leprosy.*"

Now during that time- lepers were confined to the outskirts of the city, but somehow this man comes into town. And Matthew tells us that he came straight to Jesus. So he wasn't just wandering around- he knew exactly to Whom he was going. And this is striking because lepers were forbidden by law to come near anyone who didn't already have the disease because it was so contagious, and because of its disgusting and tragic effects.

Now please remember that Luke is the "beloved physician", and so he understands this disease from a medical point of view, and he tells us that this man had leprosy in its maximum form because he says right here in verse 12 that this man was "**full of leprosy**", so his disease was very advanced and it would have been visible to everyone, and it would have been very frightening and very ugly with entire parts of his body eaten up and great holes in his head and arms, and probably one of his eyes was missing, and his skin would have been very scaly and very dirty, and his clothes would have been just rags, and he probably would not have had any shoes on his feet and everywhere he walked - there would be traces of blood spilling from the open sores on his feet and legs.

And this man would have by this time been totally isolated and completely destitute- because that is what happened to lepers. No one in their right mind would get anywhere near them and so they lost everything they owned- their home, their cart, their livestock, their crops, their farms. And they couldn't conduct business any longer because nobody would have ever done business with a leper, and so if they owned a business- they would have lost it, too, and partly because of the fear of getting the disease and partly because of the social stigma attached to the disease- the leper usually lost his family as well.

And these lepers were forcibly pushed to the outskirts of the city to be condemned by God and to die either by starvation or exposure.

So they had no recourse and they all became beggars. And they had no connection with anybody in society who wasn't a leper. So to get leprosy was a kind of living death. A leper could even be stoned to death for violating the quarantines that surrounded leprosy which were based on the Old Testament Law. But at this particular point, stoning may have actually been a relief to these people because their life was so horrible. Truly Jesus offered to this man the only hope he would ever have.

Now let me talk to you a little about this terrible disease. Leprosy is a term in the Greek: *lepras*, and it really is a word that means: *scale or scaly*, and it can be used in a very general way for a number of physical skin problems that are not what we would know today as leprosy in a clinical sense. Now the Old Testament word for leprosy is the same thing- it's a Hebrew word for "scaly". And there is much discussion as to what the actual pathology of the disease was in ancient times- both Old and New Testament times.

We do know that they didn't have the benefit of modern medical science and so Old Testament and New Testament diseases are generally not described by their pathology. Ancient diseases were not described by some Latin term that described some bacteria or some virus or something like that- but diseases back then were generally described only by their symptoms. They were described by how they were viewed by other people. What people saw with their eyes was how most diseases were described, and leprosy was in the category of something that showed up visibly on the skin. It was something that they would describe as being a skin disorder of a very, very severe nature and there were many such skin disorders in that day- but the

ultimate one was leprosy. So when you read about leprosy in the Bible- it may have been a collection of several skin diseases of which true leprosy would have been among them.

Now back in 1873- a man named Hansen discovered the pathology of a particular skin disorder, and so they called this particular disease "Hansen's Disease, which is leprosy as we know it today.

Now most medical historians believe that leprosy is a very, very old disease. In fact, they say that it probably started way back in ancient Egypt. And interestingly enough- the reason they believe that, we can thank modern medical science for this, is that they have done tests on the cadavers of ancient Egyptian mummies which have been so well preserved that they can extract out of them fragments of ancient bacilli. And they found the bacillus identified today as Hansen's Disease in those ancient mummy's which makes it according to some medical sources the first one to be identified as a cause of human disease.

So leprosy is a very ancient disease. And remember back in Chapter 4:27 that Jesus said, in another conversation in the synagogue, that there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha. So Leprosy was a very common problem in Israel during that time. In fact, in **Leviticus 13**- all throughout the 59 verses- you have a very long and a very careful prescription for diagnosing leprosy. God Almighty put the recognition of this disease into His Law for His people as a way to preserve His people from extinction- which is why many aspects of the Law were given- to preserve the Jew from dying out until human sanitation and human medical procedures could advance.

God was so good to do this because many people, many nations, and even entire ancient civilizations were eradicated due to various diseases and unsanitary conditions- so God gave Israel dietary and sanitary laws to keep them alive- so out of them could come the Messiah. These parts of the OT Law are *not* for us today - they are not to be followed or obeyed in our day, and are not part of the *moral* Law of God- which is eternal- and which we do follow and obey- but these parts were only temporary- and they were only for the OT Jew so that they could live and prosper and survive until sanitary and dietary conditions could be developed.

The moral parts of the OT Law reflect the Personal Character and Nature of God Himself, and these parts of the OT Law are eternal and are absolutely binding on us today- but the ceremonial and the dietary

parts of the Law were strictly for the Jew and strictly for that time, and every effort today by well meaning but wayward people who try to enforce the ceremonial and dietary parts of the Law on believers today are nothing more than ignorant and foolish efforts to try to earn Righteousness, and these efforts are brought about by very sloppy exegesis and they always result in legalism raising its ugly head in the Church. And weak and undiscerning people who do not know or understand the Bible are swept away by these false teachers and carried away from the Truth in nearly every generation.

We see this manifested in our day in these small little so-called "Messianic" groups that pop up all over the place. True Messianic groups are real Jews who come to Jesus for Salvation and renounce the inferior Revelation of Judaism and who climb *up* the mountain and fully embrace the superior Revelation of the New Covenant that is found only in Jesus Christ through the Revelation of the New Covenant. But these groups are nothing more than very unskilled Christians who are being deceived into going back *down* the mountain, and the net effect of what they do is that they abandon Jesus Christ, they leave the superior Revelation of God in the NT, and they renounce Christianity to embrace Judaism.

Leaving the *superior* Revelation of the New Covenant to embrace the *inferior* Revelation of the Old Covenant does not honor God, dear friends; it does not please God, and does not glorify the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ- but is, in fact, blasphemy, and these people do not need to be followed or embraced by genuine believers but they need to be rebuked and called to repentance.

Now outside of **Leviticus 13**- there are a number of other places in the Old Testament in the Law where God says lepers have to be kept apart from other people because this is such a terribly disabling and disfiguring and deadly and contagious disease. And so, if you have the time you might want to read through **Leviticus 13** and you will note the very careful way in which a person was to be diagnosed by the priests.

Now remember that the priests were the officers of the theocracy of Israel. They were the senate and the congress, and they were the governors and the mayors. They were the people who were the officials, and the inspections of people from the medical side to protect the society had to be done in front of the priests, and prescriptions were

given them in **Leviticus 13** as to how to conduct those kind of examinations.

Now the worst situation- genuine leprosy as we know it- or Hansen's Disease as it is called today- caused for the person to be stamped "unclean." **Leviticus 13:46** says:

He shall remain unclean all the days during which he has the infection; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

So the person who contracted leprosy had to have immediate and permanent isolation unless in some rare conditions the disease miraculously abated and disappeared and they could be introduced back into society.

Now genuine leprosy is actually called *Mycobacterium lepraeas*- which is its Latin term, and this term indicates that this disease actually attacks the nerves of the human being. At first it was thought to be a disease that just ate a person's flesh because people with leprosy didn't have noses and they didn't have ears and some didn't have eyes and they had great holes in their heads and their extremities were gone, and the assumption was that it literally ate the person alive.

And there is some sense in which the disease may cause some regression in the skin. And there are some people who believe that leprosy actually attacks the bone marrow and has the tendency to shrivel the bones themselves. According to some medical sources- leprosy attacks the larynx and effects the larynx so that the person doesn't even speak well.

But it does have some power to attack both internal and external parts of the body. And it generally starts on the face with a patch, a white or pink patch of skin usually on the brow, most commonly, or some other part of the face. And it begins to spread in all directions and then spongy tumorous swellings grow on the face. And some people have even called leprosy "lion's disease" because it turns a person's face into such horrible disfiguration that they begin to look like a lion.

This disease then spreads from there and becomes systemic and gets into the internal organs. And it causes a certain clawing effect of the extremities. So it may have that effect- but the hard work of a modern physician by the name of Dr. Paul Brand who has been associated with the leprosy hospital in Carville, Louisiana, has brought

to light the fact that this disease primarily attacks the nerves, and it's an "anesthetic disease". In other words- it destroys a person's ability to feel. It also attacks the teeth and every part of the body- so that there is no feeling in these parts of the body.

And what happens as a result of that is very, very frightening. Dr. Paul Brand, he gives some indication that I think will make clear what happens. He writes,

"In the villages of Africa and Asia a person with leprosy has been known to reach directly into a charcoal fire to retrieve a dropped potato. Nothing in his body told him not to. Patients at Brand Hospital, his hospital in India, work all day gripping a shovel with a protruding nail and never feel the nail tearing their flesh. They extinguish a burning wick with their bare hands. They do it all the time because they can't feel it. They walk on splintered glass or anything and everything else, they feel nothing."

And after watching these people for many years- Dr. Brand began formulating his somewhat radical theory originally that Hansen's Disease was chiefly anesthetic and only indirectly a destroyer. On one occasion Dr. Brand tried to open a door to a store room in his place in India, but it had a rusty padlock and it wouldn't respond to the key. A patient, he says, an undersized malnourished ten-year-old boy approached him smiling, "*Let me, Sahib Doctor.*"

The boy reached for the key, with a quick jerk of his hand he turned the key in the lock and the lock opened and Dr. Brand was dumbfounded. How could this weak youngster out exert him? But his eyes caught a tale-tell clue. Was that blood on the floor? And upon examining the boy's fingers- Dr. Brand discovered that the act of turning the key had gashed the boy's finger down to the bone. Skin, fat, and joint were all exposed yet the boy was completely unaware of it.

To him the sensation of cutting his finger to the bone was no different from picking up a stone or turning a coin in his pocket. The daily routine of life literally ground away at the patients' hands and feet and no warning system ever alerted them. If an ankle is turned tearing tendon and muscle, they would simply adjust and walk crooked. If a rat chewed off a finger in the night, they wouldn't even discover it until it was missing the next morning.

Stanley Stein, author of Alone No Longer, went blind because of another cruel quirk of Hansen's Disease. Each morning he would wash his face with a hot washcloth and neither his hand nor his face were sensitive enough to temperature to know how hot the water was. Stein was actually using scalding water- gradually destroying his eyes until he went blind- but he never knew it- because he couldn't feel the heat. This is what leprosy does.

Now transmission of the disease occurred through the inhaling of the bacillus by bodily contact or in the clothes where it had nested and passed into contact with the skin. And this disease would go throughout a city from anywhere from ten to thirty years- without stopping- eventually killing all the people from low resistance to other diseases, as well as internal injury.

Now since 1982- due to common Grace and the means of medical attention- there has been a successful treatment that can successfully treat leprosy, and in severe cases it takes about 24 months to end its progress. But even at that- they can't recover what has already been destroyed- but they can abate the disease through this medication.

And this is still a common disease. You'd be interested to know that in 1999 there were eight-hundred thousand new cases of leprosy reported throughout the world. One report says that there are four million reported cases of ongoing leprosy in existence in the world today while the actual figures are probably twice that because this disease attacks only about ten percent of the population who don't have immunities to fight it off, and that ten percent of the world population is found in Third World countries- primarily in southeast Asia- the poorest and the most unsanitary of the poor countries.

But in Biblical times- leprosy was so severe as to be life threatening to all of humanity. Now through the centuries- immunities have developed and micro-organisms have changed and so leprosy as we know it today is a little bit different and have a little different impact, but in ancient times- leprosy was so bad and such a threat to all life that even God said to Israel in **Numbers 5:2:**

Command the sons of Israel that they send away from the camp every leper and everyone having a discharge and everyone who is unclean because of a *dead* person.

... and King David- when he wanted to curse the house of evil Joab,- he said the worst thing you could possibly say in **2Samuel 3:29**:

May it fall on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and may there not fail from the house of Joab one who has a discharge, or who is a leper, or who takes hold of a distaff, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks bread.

This was like somebody today saying, "*May your children have AIDS.*" So this was really some kind of terrible curse.

So being a leper was the worse imaginable condition, horribly disfiguring, horribly ugly, pockets worn into your face and your head, clawed limbs worn away, open sores, religiously isolated, socially isolated, economically isolated, no family, no job, no friends, no worship, no hope. So this is horrible, and what is interesting is that this description is very much like what sin looks like to God.

And you know what is really amazing? In **Leviticus 14**- when somebody did have their leprosy abated- when somebody through whatever means was cured of the disease- there was a process by which the person could enter back into society.

They had to go back to the priest and it was an eight-day procedure that involved amazing rites of cleansing and sacrifice. And God through the machinations of all that ceremony that lasted eight days and all those sacrifices and all those purifications and blood was put on the right finger and the right ear of the individual, and all of that, all that was showing that as serious as the disease of leprosy was- God was showing Israel that there was a far more serious disease that existed in the heart of Man and that was sin.

So all that whole ceremonial system, and all those sacrifices for all the various reasons that they were prescribed in **Leviticus** were simply pictures and types and shadows and symbols of sin, and the need for the *real* cure of sin to be given in the heart of man and not on his skin.

So even in the Old Testament- leprosy- in all its horror and shame- was actually only a picture of sin. And we need to know that there were times when God actually gave people leprosy- Naaman the Assyrian, Uzziah, the king in **2Chronicles 26**, and Azariah.

And so, if you had leprosy- not only did you have the most socially stigmatized disease possible- but you could also bear the stigma that maybe you had that disease because God had cursed you.

So here in **Luke 5:12**- this is a poor, sad, and tragic man. He is all alone and the word is going all around the Galilee that there's a great Healer here and that He's healing various diseases. That's what it says back in **Luke 4:40**- anybody with anything is getting healed. And somehow the word was spreading from leper to leper to leper that Jesus was healing everybody, and so this man came. And I pray that we can learn a lot from this leper this morning.

Now the story is pretty simple. Verse 12, "*When he came...or when he saw Jesus,*" actually Matthew tells us he came to Jesus and saw Him. So that tells us that this man was actually looking for Jesus. And this would have been a very serious breach of appropriate behavior for him- but he was desperate.

And that's the first point I want to make this morning about this leper and with us today- that **this man came with desperation**. I mean, what could he lose? So what if he was stoned to death? Death would actually be a relief to a leper. So what could he lose? So from this we can sense this man's desperation. He had no more shame and he did what was completely unthinkable- he did what was totally shameless. And he did what was fearless and he did what was dangerous and bold. He left his isolation and went to Jesus. But after all, he was desperate because he was full of leprosy.

So this man was way past his fear; he was way past his shame. He was way past his embarrassment and he was way past his reservations- it didn't matter anymore what people thought about him or that people might talk- this man was desperate.

The great first century Jewish historian Josephus says that lepers were to be treated as dead men. And the rabbis said that next to touching a dead body, getting near a leper was the rankest form of defilement. In Palestine, in Jesus' time, lepers were barred from the city of Jerusalem and any other walled city. And if a leper was to ever come into a synagogue or into a town or a village- he had to go to a small isolated room called a *maketza*- but he couldn't come anywhere near other people.

In the old rabbinical writings that describe first century Jewish customs- we find that the rabbis said that lepers could come no closer than six feet upwind to another human being and 150 feet downwind.

One rabbi said that he wouldn't eat an egg that was bought on a street where a leper had passed by within three weeks. That is how

fearful people were of this disease. Another rabbi wrote that he would throw stones at lepers to keep them away.

So Luke tells us that this man came to Jesus. So we see that this leper was desperate. But, secondly- Luke also tells us that **this man- in addition to being desperate was also reverent. Luke 5:12** says:

... when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face ...

Now this is the Greek word *proskuneo*, which is where we get our word "worship" from. Now I have no idea if this man believed Jesus was God because it doesn't tell us that- but the body language that Luke describes here is the language of genuine worship. And the word that Matthew uses in his account of this same event is the word of worship used in the New Testament to refer to worshiping God.

Now we also see in verse 12 that this man calls Jesus "Lord," and that could mean nothing more than "Sir," but it seems that when you add the fact that this man fell down on his face before Jesus that he was literally calling Jesus "God", so perhaps he had become convinced that Jesus was either *from* God or that Jesus was actually God Himself, and that this man was actually worshipping Jesus.

So Luke tells us that this man came with reverence. And he fell on his face and he knew that he was unclean, and he knew he was filthy, and he knew he was wretched, and he knew he was miserable, and he knew he was ugly, and he knew he was disfigured and deformed. And so he prostrated himself- acknowledging Jesus as you would a king or God.

So this man was desperate, this man was reverent, and now, thirdly, **he came with urgency**. Falling on his face he implored Jesus. Verse 12 says,

... and implored Him

This man literally begged Jesus. Again this is irresistible to the heart of a compassionate Jesus, as we will see. This man is earnestly pleading for his life. He has endured this great shame that this disease had brought to him and the alienation and the isolation and the suffering and the great disfigurement to its maximum point. Who knows how

many years? He's got nowhere else to turn. And so he is crying out to Jesus- he is pleading with Jesus- he is begging.

Fourthly, Luke tells us that **this man came with humility**. He says,

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

"Lord, if You are willing..." And I like that. Notice that this man didn't have any doubt at all about Jesus' miraculous Ability- he knew that Jesus had the kind of supernatural and miraculous Power to heal him- but this man also knew that in addition to being sick- he was also a vile sinner- and so he was not in any position to demand anything from Jesus. He was fully aware- not only from his own obvious leprosy- but also of his own wretchedness- that he deserved God's Wrath- not God's Mercy.

Contrast this attitude of great humility from this sick and disfigured leper with the great arrogance and self-importance that is being taught today in the modern Church about how much God owes us, and about how much God is obligated to do for us, and how we are so *entitled* to blessings, and how we are so *deserving* of financial prosperity, and how we should be instantly delivered from all sicknesses and all diseases and all financial hardships. We have become so filled with pride and arrogance and the value of our own self-importance that suffering is not taught anymore in the modern Church as being a gift from God to mold our character, and a tool in the Hand of God to expose our own lukewarmness and our own propensity to backslide, and a marvelous instrument that shines a light on our own inherent shallowness - but suffering is universally taught today as being from the devil and something to be avoided at all costs and something that we are to bind and rebuke and reject instead of embrace and submit to. The popular pillow prophets of our day teach that as God's children we are exempt from ever experiencing any suffering at all, and we are encouraged to get instant gratification from God for any number of ailments and even bad hair days. These hirelings teach that God can erase a lifetime of irresponsible rebellion by having hands laid on us at the end of the service instead of teaching God's people that obedience is better than a sacrifice, and to love the Lord is the very same thing as obeying Him.

I tell you- we who take great comfort in all the power and authority and all the abilities that we have in Christ today would do well to sit at this man's disfigured feet this morning and learn humility from this horribly sick man.

This diseased outcast doesn't come to Jesus here with any rights at all. He doesn't come making any claims on Jesus' healing power. He wouldn't have belonged to the "name it and claim it" group of our day. There's no presumption at all in this man. This man has a beatitude attitude- he's hungry and he's thirsty for something he doesn't have and something that he doesn't deserve and something that he cannot earn.

And his disease has made him meek and his agony has made him lowly and his tragedy has made him broken and he is poor in spirit. He understands his own spiritual bankruptcy. He knows that Jesus doesn't have to heal him- that Jesus is not obligated to even look his way. He knows that he doesn't have any rights at all- he has profound needs- but he has no rights- no claim on Jesus' Mercy. And that's genuine humility- and I tell you that this humility is better than gold, it is more valuable than silver, it is more important than prestige, and it is more favored by God than position or connection.

And fifthly, this man came not only with desperation, reverence, urgency and humility- **but he came with faith**, because he said,

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

"Lord, if You're willing- You *can* make me clean." There is no doubt in this man's mind that Jesus can heal him. This man knew- he didn't wonder, he didn't guess, he didn't hope- he *knew* that Jesus had the ability to heal him and change his life forever.

So this man had faith in the Power of the Healer. And that is different from having the faith to be healed. This man believed in Jesus- not in healing. This man put his faith in Jesus- not in being delivered, and that is all the difference in the world. Faith is being taught today in the most perverted way, and it is built up as being a tool that we can use to twist God's Arm so that we can get what we want from God- but please, hear me, dear friends- that is not Biblical faith- that is witchcraft, it is spiritual manipulation- only we are the ones who are trying to manipulate God into doing what we want God to

do for us- regardless of what His will is and regardless of what else happens.

This sick suffering man knew something that we all need to know today- he knew that it very well might not have been Jesus' Will to heal him. This man knew that whether or not it was God's Will to heal him was totally up to Jesus- and that was alright with this man. But whether or not Jesus had the power to heal- the man knew that Jesus could do it because he had faith in Jesus- not in Jesus' Power to heal. This man trusted that Jesus was fundamentally Good and Just and Righteous, and so whatever Jesus decided was fine with him- and that is what true faith is all about. The object of true faith is not miracles or healing or financial prosperity- but the object of true faith is Jesus- the Person- Jesus Christ.

And that means that if Jesus would have told this man that it was *not* His will to heal him- this man's faith in Who Jesus was would not have changed at all.

True faith is not about getting God to do things for you. True faith in God is knowing and believing and trusting in Who God is, Who Jesus is- not simply a way to twist God's Arm to get something that you want out of Jesus. True faith is knowing and trusting that God *can* do because He is absolutely Sovereign, but it is resting in the utmost confidence that when God *doesn't* do what you want Him to- that this was not just God- but it was the *best thing* that God could have done at that point in your life. And you don't trust in that because everything looks so good- because it doesn't- things may actually look worse- but you trust in that for no other reason than that is what Scripture teaches about Who God is and you trust that. That is genuine faith.

True genuine faith is believing that if God never slacks off, that God never coasts, that God is always and in all ways is operating at His absolute peak perfection, and so at any point- if God doesn't always do what is absolutely the best- then God would be sinning.

So whatever God Sovereignly allows to come into your life is not only God acting out His Sovereignty- we have to get to a place where we trust that it is God doing what is the best He could have possibly done for you- even if that means that you lose everything, and even if that means that you die. That is true faith.

So true faith, strong faith, powerful faith, mountain moving faith is resting in the confidence that when it looks so bad and so terrible

that God is moving just as strong as He would be if you got everything you wanted. And that is exactly how this leper understood Jesus to be. And again it seems to me that this leper understood God much better than most Church leaders do today.

So in the mind of this sick man- Jesus could do anything He wanted- precisely because He was God. But even though God was *able* to do anything He wanted- it may not glorify God for Him to do what this leper wanted Him to do- so the leper prefaced his request with the statement,

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

And this shows us that this sick man wanted God's Will to be done even more than he wanted to be healed. And I wonder how many of us think like this? How many of us are willing to suffer if that is the Will of God? How many of us are willing to lose everything we have so that God may be glorified? How many of us today are willing to love and serve God with just as much passion and fervency when God doesn't give us what we want?

I want to remind us of a forgotten man named Nicholas Von Zinzendorf who lead a forgotten group of people called The Moravians. And these people gathered to pray one Saturday afternoon and God came down and walked among them. And based on that one prayer meeting- Von Zinzendorf called a prayer meeting to be held 24 hours a day- 365 days a year for 100 years.

And during those years- the desire to see souls saved grew so great that several of the Moravians sold themselves into slavery so they could preach the Gospel to both the slaves and the slave owners. Their great faith in God propelled them to abandon all the comforts of this life so they might see the success of the Gospel.

So I find this leper to be an irresistible analogy to the lost sinner coming to Jesus for Salvation. And while that's not the main point of this passage- it is an irresistible connection. This man is a graphic illustration of how a sinner comes to Jesus Christ for Salvation.

A lost sinner comes desperate- at the end of his rope. All shame is gone. All fear is gone. There is a desperate boldness. Nowhere else to turn. No hope anywhere. The worst that can happen is maybe welcomed. If you don't heal me, I'll die. But dying would be better than

living like this. And this is the sinner's extremity. This is the sinner's desperation. This is the sinner pounding his breast in **Luke 18**.

All lost sinners who receive Salvation from God come reverently like this. They come reverently- falling on their face- with absolutely no rights and many desperate needs. And I will tell you that if you come to God any other way than this- if you come to Christ looking for any other thing besides unearned Mercy- then you will go away very sorrowful- because unless we come to God broken and desperate and needy and without any demands- only desperation- we will go way without our prayers being answered.

When I talk to people about coming to Christ, I simply tell them, *"You need to ask the Lord to be merciful and save you. But that is totally up to Him."* I won't tell you that you can say a few words or pray a little formula and you're going to be saved. I don't believe that. We didn't learn that method of evangelization from Scripture, dear friends, we learned that from Billy Graham and he learned it from Charles Finney- but you will be hard pressed to find that method taught anywhere in the Bible, and yet the people in the Bible saw thousands of people saved.

All I can tell you is if you have become so blessed to be able to understand the Gospel in your heart, and you have become so blessed to be able to honestly believe it, and you have become so blessed to be empowered to cry out to Him to save You- He will.

He is the sovereign, and you bow humbly as that man who beat his breast wouldn't lift up his eyes, but fell prostrate. That's how you come. This man was also urgent, begging, pleading. That's how the genuine penitent sinner comes- and the rest are simply wanting God to do something temporarily for them- but they are not seeking Salvation for their sinful souls.

Do not come to God so He can get you out of jail, do not come to God so you can get a better job, do not come to God so you can get a better car or a nicer home or the removal of a disease or a better marriage or a better wife or husband- but come to God because you are deeply and profoundly convicted of your sins and you know that you deserve God's Wrath; you are ashamed of your sin and you desire with all your heart to reject your sins and live the rest of your life in humble submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ- regardless of whether that means you will live or die.

True repentance is coming to Jesus humbly, realizing you have no claim to lay on Jesus. You have nothing to commend you.

And the sinner comes with faith. This is a beatitude attitude. This is what it means to be poor in spirit. This is what it means to be meek. This is what it means to hunger and thirst after righteousness. This leper is a classic analogy to the penitent sinner.

So he came. **Luke 5:13** says,

And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." And immediately the leprosy left him.

Mark 1:41 adds that Jesus felt compassion. And when somebody comes in true penitence to the Savior- Jesus feels that compassion as well. That compassion came out of that man's genuineness. Jesus could see his desperation. He could see his reference. He could see his urgency. He could see his humility. He could see his faith. And He healed him. That's like the desperate sinner.

And Luke tells us that Jesus He healed this man. He heals him, stretching out His hand touched him. He did this very often. When Jesus healed, He healed with a touch. Contrary to **Leviticus 5:3** which says never touch a leper- Jesus stepped right past that Law because when He touched him he wasn't a leper anymore. The touch was compassion, yes- but it was also connection because it was very clear when the healing came Whose Hand was on him. It was also clear Who the Healer was.

And Jesus not only healed with a touch- but also with a word. "*I am willing, be cleansed.*" That's all it took. "*Be clean...be cleansed.*" Sovereign Love responded with Sovereign Power, and Jesus spoke that healing into reality.

Now please let me tell you something. The miracles of Jesus were always creative. We talk about them and perhaps we think of them as restorative- and there is certainly a restorative element to them- but essentially the miracles of Jesus were creative. If, for example, the forehead was worn away on this leper and there was a great cavity in the head- then Jesus would have created a new skull and new tissue.

And if his eyes were sunken or rubbed away- Jesus created new sockets. And if the brows were gone- as they do in the initial stages of leprosy- and the eyelashes were gone- brand new ones were created in

that instant. And if the bloody limbs were clawed or worn off- there were new arms and legs, and fresh skin.

Whatever was wrong on the inside disappeared and healthy organs replaced them. And maybe even he had gotten some new teeth which could well have been ground down to almost nothing.

All you modern so-called healers, match that! Or be silent in the presence of the true Healer.

Now, it says at the end of verse 13:

... And immediately the leprosy left him.

Immediately not only is this man restored- but the organic disease of leprosy leaves him and he is made whole instantly! And now it was a brand new day. No more an outcast, no more suffering, no more talk behind his back, no more begging- this man was instantly and completely and totally transformed.

And this is just like the penitent sinner who comes to God for Salvation and is forgiven and cleansed. This man could now re-enter society. There would be new relationships and now he could go back to family, and friends, and he could make new friends, and meet new people, and he could reenter a social world, a world of his people.

But before he did that- Jesus had something important to say to him, in verse 14.

And He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

Now this is tough. I mean, really tough. I mean, your grandkid gets a "B" in school and you put a bumper sticker on your van, and here this man is healed of a dreaded and deadly disease and Jesus tells him not to say anything about it? That is tough.

But we need to know that there's a reason for this. When Jesus said,

... But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.

but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

... that was God's Word. You see, there is in the Old Testament, **Leviticus 14**, a very careful prescribed way for the leper who is cured to get back into society that was clearly laid out by Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God when He gave the ceremonial Law to Israel.

And **Leviticus 14** says this is what you have to do, it was the priests in Chapter 13 who did the diagnosis, and it is the priests in Chapter 14 who have to affirm the cure. So Jesus says, *"Before you just go running off telling everybody, you need to do what's right so that the healing can be affirmed and that you can have the certificate that was given at the end of the eight days."*

It may well be that he had to go to Jerusalem for this, that would take a few days, a few days down, eight days there, a few days back. So not only would he be doing what the Law of Moses prescribed and making a very important testimony to the priests about the power of Jesus- but he would be buying Jesus some time because a miracle of this massive kind would just generate more crowds, more people and become potentially debilitating for Jesus. The crowds were already so big He had to go off the shore in a boat or they would have pushed Him into the water, as you know. So He says don't tell anybody, and that's so hard.

So you go to the priests, you go through the prescription indicated in **Leviticus 14**, and it was a quite interesting one. Two birds were taken and killed over running water and there are some cedar and scarlet and hyssop and the bird, the dead bird is wrapped in that, and it's a very interesting cleansing ceremony. The man washes himself, he washes his clothes. He has to go in and get everything shaven so they have a clear view of all of his head. He has to offer certain sacrifices. There was two male lambs, there was a ewe lamb, there were at least three animal sacrifices, and other offerings that he had to give, flour mingled with oil and then the blood was sprinkled on him and so was the oil.

If you had leprosy you had to go through all of this cleansing- but through all of this- God was saying to the people- *"You've got a much deeper problem than leprosy that requires a much more profound cleansing- and that's your sin problem."*

So, all the ceremonial system and sacrificial system pointed to the ultimate need for the cleansing from sin. But the man had to go through this and it would be a testimony to the priests. "Them" at the end of the verse, I think, refers to the priests. "For a testimony to them." Go down there, let them do this, and when you get all through this and they say, "You don't have leprosy anymore, it's gone," and, of course, he could give them the story of his life and what it had been like and all of that, and then they would say, "How did you get like this?" And he could say, "Jesus did this," and this would be a great testimony, also, of Jesus to the priests. Also, as I said, it would buy Jesus a little time.

Well, I don't know whether the man even made an effort to do what Jesus told him because in **Mark 1:45** it says,

But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

You say, "Well that's not a very good analogy to a believer?" Really? It seems to me that it isn't too long after we've been converted that we're disobedient isn't it? And we need to acknowledge that this man did complicate Jesus' ministry because Mark says,

... he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

Now please let me tell you something. The Galilean grapevine was very efficient and word spread rapidly in those days. And Jesus couldn't go into any town without being literally and totally overcrowded to the point that He couldn't function.

"So He stayed out...it says in **Mark 1:45**...in unpopulated areas, and they were coming out to Him from everywhere." The city was just too much. The buildings, all the people- so Jesus had to stay out in the open areas where they could get around Him.

Now Luke doesn't tell us what Mark tells us about the man's disobedience. But Luke does tell us, in **Luke 5:15**:

But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses.

Mark tell us that from that time on- Jesus had to stop going into the city because inside the wall where the buildings were it was just too crowded. So He had to go to the open spaces- the crowds were so massive. And there Luke tells us that multitudes were gathering to hear Him.

Now remember the priority is always preaching, preaching, preaching, and also to be healed of their sicknesses. And I would venture to say that Jesus pretty well banished leprosy from Galilee. And in order to sustain His power and His ministry, verse 16 says,

But Jesus Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.

And that, too, is wonderfully human, isn't it? The Bible says that Jesus, "was in all points tempted like as we are- yet without sin." So even though Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners- He was in every sense touched with the feelings of our infirmities. And Jesus needed communion with the Father.

Now the word "Pray" here is kind of a habit of Jesus. We find it all the way through the Gospels. Luke features it- Chapter 3, Chapter 4, 6, 9, chapter 11. He kept His ongoing connection with the Father.

And he manifests this astonishing power- which in that day would be tantamount to ending the AIDS epidemic of our day. And if somebody did that today- he would be the hero of the day, right? But Jesus did this and they rejected Him and hung Him on a tree to die.

He banished disease from the land of Israel and they killed Him. But even then- some did believe and they came spiritually, like this man came, not to be healed of a disease- but to be healed of their sinful hearts- which is the greater problem.

So genuine Salvation is so vividly illustrated in this passage. The man had the worst human condition, wretched, disfiguring, incurable, dominating, isolating, deadly. He knew his condition. He knew there was only one person who could change it. He came desperately. He came reverently. He came urgently. He came humbly. He came trustingly. And the sincere heart of this horribly diseased man was met

by the compassionate Lord and Grace and Power literally exploded upon that man's life so that he was instantly recreated. And then he was called to obedience, and to witness. As I said, that's a pretty irresistible analogy of salvation, isn't it? The sinner is far more desperate than that who has a far more deadly disease than that, far more disfiguring. The Savior comes to save sinners.

So if you've come to that point in your life where you're like this man, in the spiritual sense, you've reached the level of desperation where you will fall on your face reverently before the only soul-healer, and urgently and humbly ask Him to cleanse you, believe me, with a word and a touch He'll recreate you. That's it, sinner. Jesus could heal physical diseases, but only really as evidence that He was the soul healer who cleanses from sin. He'll cleanse you if you come like this man came.

Let's come and pray.

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The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 www.covenantofpeace.net

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.