

(Luke 5:12~16)

This severe form of leprosy mentioned here, was the most feared disease of the ancient world, both for the fact it was incurable, and for how it ravished the body. The root word behind *λεπροσ* (**leper**) means “*scaly*,” which describes one of the earliest and most obvious characteristics of leprosy. Over time, spongy, tumor-like swellings would grow on the face and body, and the bacillus would become systemic and affect internal organs, while the bones would begin to deteriorate.

In order to protect His chosen people, God gave strict and specific regulations to Moses regarding leprosy, the details of which are found in Leviticus 13. A person suspected of having the disease was taken to a priest for examination. If he showed signs of having more than a superficial skin problem, he was isolated for seven days. If the symptoms became worse, the person was isolated for seven more days. If, at that time the rash had not spread further; the person was pronounced clean. If, however, the rash had become worse, he was pronounced unclean. When leprosy was immediately evident from a person’s hair turning white and his having raw swollen flesh, he was pronounced unclean on the spot and no isolation period was involved. When a person was found to have the serious form of leprosy, his clothes were to be torn, his head uncovered, his mouth covered (to prevent spread of the disease). The Talmud forbade a Jew from coming closer than six feet to a leper, and if the wind was blowing, the limit was one hundred fifty feet.

Lepers were legally ostracized and forbidden to live in any community with their fellow Israelites (Num. 5:2). Wherever he went, he was to warn others to stay clear of him by crying “Unclean! Unclean!”

In his book *Unclean! Unclean!* L. S. Huizenga describes some of the horrors of leprosy.

The disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly ... As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected similarly. Eyebrows and eyelashes drop out. By this time one can see the person in this pitiable condition is a leper. By a touch of the finger one can also feel it. One can even smell it, for the leper emits a very unpleasant odor. Moreover, in view of the fact that the disease-producing agent frequently also attacks the larynx, the leper’s voice acquires a grating quality. His throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor.

([Show pictures](#)) When the disease advances, the upper part of the nose swells, the nostrils become enlarged, and the nose itself grows soft. Tumors appear on the jaws; the eyebrows swell; the ears become thick; the points of the fingers, as also the feet and the toes, swell; the nails become scaly; the joints of the hands and feet separate and drop off. In the last stage of the disease the patient becomes a hideous spectacle, and literally falls to pieces.

Ironically...by looking at the effects of the disease, it’s hard to imagine this to be true, but Leprosy is generally *not painful*. Leprosy is cruel, but not at all the way other diseases are. It primarily acts as an anesthetic, numbing the pain cells of hands, feet, nose, ears, and eyes. Most diseases are feared *because* of their pain. But it is the disease’s numbing quality that is precisely the reason such fabled destruction and decay of tissue occurs. As it progressed, the bones would deteriorate and break, but the leper would not feel it. If an ankle turned, tearing tendon and muscle, he would adjust and walk crooked. Our natural responses to pain help us to avoid dangers in everyday life. But given the leper was numb, he was subject to all kinds of dangers.

When we think of SIN, we often think of things like murder, stealing, cussing, drinking, adultery, fornication and such. When the reality of it is, those are merely the “*fruit’s of Sin*” in the heart. I’m becoming more and more convinced, that is the *influx of evil*, into our lives. Just as there is with Christ, the Holy Spirit, I’m convinced that SIN is the evil spirit of Satan himself. According to Genesis, man was created in the image of God, but SIN marred that image! The invasion of this “*wicked entity*” has affected every aspect of man. It affects his body, his heart, his mind and soul...every aspect.

Sin affects the body; the body withers and fails us because of sin...(One day we’ll have a glorified body)

Sin affects the heart; in that it corrupts the heart, bad feelings, wrong attitudes, wrong actions...

Sin affects the mind, bad thoughts, wicked thoughts, etc...

Sin effects the soul...sin will destroy a man’s soul...

It’s important to get a good understanding of Leprosy, because leprosy is a graphic illustration of SIN... Like Leprosy, sin infects the whole person; it’s ugly, loathsome, corrupting, contaminating, alienating and incurable by man. Though there are no “*physical signs*” such as that of leprosy in the body, sin is just as devastating, just as grotesque, and just as deadly! Just as leprosy destroys physical health and makes a person an outcast with other men, so sin destroys spiritual health and makes a person an outcast with God.

The Lord’s greatest purpose was to cleanse sin, not sickness...he came to be a Spiritual healer, not a physical healer. His physical cleansings became illustrations of the spiritual cleansing He offered. The healing of leprosy was especially powerful in that regard, because its great physical destructiveness, pervasiveness, ugliness, and incurableness represent the even greater destructiveness, pervasiveness, ugliness, and incurableness of sin. But just as Christ can cure leprosy, He can also cure sin; and just as His cleansing from leprosy restored men to human fellowship, His cleansing from sin restores them to God’s.

(Vs 2) ²And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man **full of leprosy**:

This man had **full-blown** leprosy, and was in the final stages. No doubt, the disease had mangled and deformed his body so that it was likely very hard to recognize whom he was.

It’s not until you understand the hideousness the repulsiveness of this disease that you fully appreciate this passage. The more we understand this man’s condition, the more we understand the heart of our God. In Mark’s account of this same event, he reveals something that Luke doesn’t...

(Mark 1) ⁴⁰And 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. ⁴¹And Jesus, **moved with compassion**, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, ***I will; be thou clean.***

Mark tells us that this miracle was motivated out of “*compassion*” for the man... I don’t know *what ran through your mind* when you saw the pictures of these with leprosy, **but we do know what went through Jesus’ mind**. Rather than being *horror, disgust*, rather than distancing himself from the individual because of his appearance, the Lord *Jesus felt compassion, he felt sorry for the man*. This miracle was not a *show of power* so much as it was a *show of love*. Mark says that Jesus being “***moved with compassion***,” put forth his hand and touched him...

The picture before us in this passage is that of Christ and the sinner... Leprosy is a graphic illustration of SIN... Like Leprosy, sin infects the whole person; it’s ugly, loathsome, corrupting, contaminating, alienating and incurable by man. Though there are no “*physical signs*” such as that of leprosy in the body, sin is just as devastating, just as grotesque, and just as deadly! One may be beautiful on the outside, yet ugly and loathsome on the inside, full of leprosy in the heart! It is both interesting and instructive to note that the scribes and Pharisees who were doubtlessly in the multitude that day were beautifully and richly

attired, yet were inwardly corrupt, proud, and unbelieving. By contrast, the **leper** appeared loathsome and repulsive on the outside, but inwardly he was reverent and believing.

Just as leprosy destroys physical health and makes a person an outcast with other men, so sin destroys spiritual health and makes a person an outcast with God. The problem in our day, through man's manipulation and perversion of the gospel, men are not confronted with their sinful condition. Many are blind to their sinful condition, and see no need for the great physician. Like the rich young man who came to Jesus seeking eternal life, as a result of his good deeds, (*these have I kept from my youth*) many like this man, "*see themselves*" as "*good people*" when the truth is, as Christ told this man, there are none "*good*," no not one! The problem is internal, not external. The problem is beneath the skin...

(Mark 7) ²⁰*And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defiles the man.* ²¹*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,* ²²*Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:* ²³*All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

(Jeremiah 17) ⁹*The heart is deceitful above all things, and **desperately wicked**: who can know it?*

Beloved, sin has ravished our hearts, like leprosy, we are eat up with it! The tragedy is, many are completely oblivious to this fact. It is only by the mirror of God's word, that we are able to see our dreadful condition, to reveal the "*leprosy of the soul!*" Like leprosy, it eats as a canker, it defiles the spirit, and corrupts the heart. Like leprosy, the victims are numb to what it is doing to them. Sin is destroying the soul, but like the leper, the victim is oblivious to it.

True conversion takes place when, like the leper, desperate people come to Christ humbly confessing their need and reverently seeking His restoration. The truly repentant person, like this leper, comes with no pride, no self-will, no rights, and no claim to worthiness. He sees himself as a repulsive sinner who has absolutely no claim to salvation apart from the abundant grace of God.

Upon healing the man, Jesus ¹⁴*charged him to tell no man: but go, and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

Jesus told the man not to tell anyone about how Jesus had healed him... But the man told anyway... and as a result, word quickly spread, resulting in people coming from everywhere to be healed of him. Luke writes that he "*withdrew himself*" into the wilderness and prayed. We lean in Mark, writing about the same account, that it was not so much voluntary as much as he was forced to.

⁴⁵*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.*

According to Mark's account, as a result of this man's telling everyone what Jesus had done for him, Jesus couldn't enter the city anymore... The reason for Jesus telling the man not to tell anyone is that he knew that when word got out, that he would be flooded with people coming to him for healing. Ironically, by spreading the fame of Jesus, this man nearly destroyed his ministry. For even though thousands of people were flocking to Jesus, *it wasn't for the right reason*. He did not want to be noted as a great healer of the sick; he wasn't interested in that kind of fame. Jesus came to deliver men from sin; Jesus wanted people to come to him *for a Savior*... not a healer.

But there may be an alternative reason as well... By pronouncing the man "*clean*," in a sense they would be "*validating*" Jesus. If they had known that Jesus had cleansed the man, they may have been reluctant to verify the cleansing. Whatever the case is, he tells the man to not tell what happened, and to go show himself to the priest and give the offering required by Moses in the law. Notice he says, "*for a testimony to them*..." The command in question here is the process outlined by Moses in Leviticus 14...

This process, described in Leviticus 14, involved taking two birds and killing one of them over running water. The live bird, along with cedar wood, a scarlet string, and some hyssop, was then dipped in the blood of the slain bird. The former leper was then sprinkled seven times and pronounced clean by the priest, and the live bird was set free. It is a picture that lepers were cleansed by a sacrificial offering and with blood... (*A picture of the death of Christ, for the setting free of sinners*).

The Lord's greatest purpose was to cleanse sin, not sickness, and even His physical cleansings became illustrations of the spiritual cleansing He offered. The healing of leprosy was especially powerful in that regard, because its great physical destructiveness, pervasiveness, ugliness, and incurableness represent the even greater destructiveness, pervasiveness, ugliness, and incurableness of sin. But just as Christ can cure leprosy, He can also cure sin; and just as His cleansing from leprosy restored men to human fellowship, His cleansing from sin restores them to God's.