

The Great Inquisitor
Luke 17:17
3/11/18

In the Bible, the word *leprosy* is mentioned around 40 times. Leprosy was more common in antiquity than today. Leprosy is mentioned often in the Bible because it is a graphic illustration of sin's destructive power. The Jews believed leprosy was caused by sin as a punishment of God.

They followed very specific instructions on how to deal with leprosy.

Anyone suspected of having this disease had to go to a priest for examination. If found to be infected Leviticus gives these instructions:

"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"

A leper wasn't allowed to come within six feet of any other human, including his own family. The disease was considered so revolting that the leper wasn't permitted to come within 150 feet of anyone when the wind was blowing.

With these facts in mind consider Jesus walking with His disciples when a group of 10 lepers come walking toward them.

11 While traveling to Jerusalem, he passed between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he entered a village, ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" 14 When he saw them, he told them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests. And while they were going, they were cleansed. 15 But one of them, seeing that he was healed, returned and, with a loud voice, gave glory to God. 16 He fell facedown at his feet, thanking him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus said, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? 18 Didn't any return to give glory to God except this foreigner?" 19 And he told him, "Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.

Luke 17:11-19 CSB

"Where are the nine?"

By the text we may assume that Jesus and His disciples were downwind from these 10 men with leprosy. They had to raise their voices to be heard. Their request was simple, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

They recognized their hopeless situation

Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!

The advantage these men had over us is that they could visibly see the destruction that leprosy was causing to their physical bodies. Their faces would have been marred first. Fortunately for them they did not have to see themselves in a mirror, but everyone else saw the damage caused by the disease.

We are often the last to notice the deterioration in our relationships with man and with God caused by our unrepentant sin. Usually we are ignorant of its devastating effects until it threatens to destroy us.

14 But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. 15 Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death

James 1:14-15 CSB

These 10 men knew they were headed toward a slow and painful death if Jesus did not have mercy on them.

They were willing to take a step of faith

14 When he saw them, he told them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests. And while they were going, they were cleansed."

Jesus commands the 10 to go and show themselves to the priests. There were only two occasions that a person with leprosy would go to a priest. Once, so the priest could determine if the person actually had the disease. Second, if a person was healed from the disease he would have to be approved by a priest as being clean. Obviously it was not the first reason. They were certainly stricken with the disease. So Jesus was commanding them to be inspected as if they were healed. The problem: they were not yet healed. Not until "they were going" to the priests were they healed.

So these men turned in faith to go the priests and while they were going they were healed. The word in Greek is "katharizo" and means to be cleansed literally or ceremonially. I have no doubt that as they turned to show themselves to the priests that they saw their skin return to normal. Physically they were healed. These ten believed Christ for their healing by faith and they were physically healed of leprosy.

6 Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Hebrews 11:6 CSB

Only one returned to Christ and was saved

“Where are the nine?” Jesus asked.

The other nine probably returned to their homes and their families after being released by the priests. Only the Samaritan returned to give thanks to Christ.

The willingness to give thanks and glory to Christ for his physical healing caused Christ to bless him greater than the other nine. Jesus declares to this man,

“Your faith has saved you.”

This word is different than “katharizo.” This is “sozo” in the Greek and is the word used for “deliverance from the penalty of sin.”

While all 10 were physically healed only one was saved. Why? Because only he was willing to recognize, thank and give glory to God for His deliverance.

It rains on the just and the unjust. God blesses so that we may turn to Him by faith and give Him the glory. Physical or material blessings are not evidence of salvation. The blessed farmer in Luke 12 who had so much that he planned to build more barns without thanking God was called a fool. Jesus went on to say, “

“That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” Luke 12:21

For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life?
(Matthew 16:26a CSB)

Application

Have you thanked God for His material blessings?

As a believer, have you given Him the praise He is due for His blessings?

As an unbeliever, did you know that your material blessings were intended to bring you to salvation in Christ? Have you allowed them to turn you away?