

Chuck Smith:

Cleansing

- I. The story of the leper. He came to Jesus kneeling down before Him and beseeching Him, and saying, "If you are willing you can make me clean."
 - A. Leprosy was a loathsome disease for which there was no cure.
 1. It usually started at the extremities of the body such as the toes or finger tips, often on the face or head.
 2. It destroyed the nerve cells and the body tissue swells and gradually rots away. The rotting flesh had a horrible odor that was very repulsive.
 3. As gruesome as it looked, to see a person missing feet or hands it was not painful.
 4. Because the leprosy killed the nerve cells they do not feel pain.
 - a. A person with leprosy in his hands could put his hand on a hot stove and be severely burned without even feeling the pain.
 - b. It used to be thought that the fingers or toes of a leper dropped off as a result of the disease, but latter it was discovered that the fingers or toes were being eaten off by rats in the night, but because of not feeling pain, the leper was unaware of what was happening.
 - B. Leprosy is incurable. With drugs they can not arrest the development of leprosy, so that a person with leprosy may live a fairly normal life.
 1. There was a leper colony on the island of Molikai. Father Damian became famous for his selfless act of giving himself to minister to these poor unfortunate people who would be dumped there. He of course later developed the disease and died of leprosy.
 2. The United States government maintains a leprosarium, known as Carville La. There people can go and be treated for leprosy.
 3. Dr. Hansen was the first one to isolate and identify the leprosy bacillus, and because of the terrible stigma attached to the word leprosy, they now refer to it as Hansen's disease.
 - C. In the Bible times the leper became an outcast from society. They were considered unclean, and had to call out to anyone approaching them, "Unclean, unclean." To touch a leper was to become unclean according to the Mosaic law.
 - D. Because of the nature of leprosy, it became a type of sin.
 1. The mystery of it's origin.
 2. The destroying by a rotting process.
 3. It's progressive nature.
 4. The fact that it was incurable and led to death.
 - E. Here is this man with this loathsome, incurable disease, kneeling at the feet of Jesus declaring, "If You will, You can make me clean."
 1. It is interesting that you rarely read of a leper being healed, but of being cleansed.
 2. The disciples were commanded to heal the sick, and cleanse the leper.
 - F. He was expressing his faith in the power of Jesus. He knew that Jesus had the power to make him clean.

G. To him it was only a matter of willingness on the part of Jesus.

II. The response of Jesus.

A. He was first moved with compassion.

- 1. I love that phrase, "Moved with compassion."**
- 2. His heart was sympathetically touched by the man's great need.**
 - a. The Bible does not indicate how far the leprosy had developed, but a person in the advanced stages of leprosy can be a pitiful sight.**
 - b. Many would be turned off by the sight and smell, but Jesus was moved with compassion.**

B. Next He put forth His hand and touched him.

- 1. This must have shocked those who were standing by, no one would deliberately touch a leper, there was such a great fear of catching the disease yourself.**
- 2. It was a touch of love and compassion.**

C. Then Jesus declared to him, "I will, be clean."

- 1. The moment Jesus spoke those words, the man was cleansed from his leprosy.**
- 2. The power in the words of Jesus.**
 - a. We are told that by Him were all things made that are made. That is, He is the creator of this universe.**
 - b. That means that He is the one who said, "Let there be light." and there was light.**
 - c. He said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters to divide the waters from the waters." and it was so.**
 - d. He said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear." And it was so.**
 - e. He said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind." and it was so.**
 - f. The Roman Centurion recognized the power in the words of Jesus for he declared, "Master, just speak the word and my servant will be healed."**

3. How did they know that he was instantly healed?

- 1. The white rotted flesh probably turned pink.**

D. He then commanded the man to go and show himself to the priest and offer for thy cleansing the things that Moses commanded as a testimony.

- 1. Leviticus 14:1 we read these words, "Now this is the law for the leper in the day of his cleansing."**
 - a. This in itself is a very interesting thing. Leprosy at that time was totally incurable.**
 - b. Why would you have a law that would provide for his return to society in the day of his cleansing?**
 - c. God made provision for Himself to act in the cleansing of the leper.**
- 2. This was the first step that was to be taken under the law to return to society. Show yourself to the priest.**

III. Looking spiritually at the text and considering leprosy as a type of

sin, we see rotten lives being destroyed by the power of sin.

A. There are some that have progressed so far in their sin, that they question if the Lord is even willing to save them.

1. Society has rejected them, they have been incarcerated and are considered a danger to society.
2. They seem to have lost their senses. They show no pain or remorse for their horrible deeds.

B. What happens to that person when they come to Jesus with a request for cleansing?

1. Nothing else can cleanse them from the guilt of the things they have done.
 - a. We sing, "What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus, what can make me whole again, nothing but the blood of Jesus. Nothing can for sin atone, nothing but the blood of Jesus, not of good that I have done, nothing but the blood of Jesus."
 - b. And this is very true. There is absolutely nothing else that can undo what you have done. You cannot go back and undo your misdeeds, you cannot change what has already happened. You may be sorry, you may be filled with remorse, but what is, is.

2. Man may look at you with disgust and disdain, but Jesus looks on you with compassion, and declares, "I will, be thou made clean."

"Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer,
thought it scarcely worth his while,
To spend much time with the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile.

What am I bid for the old violin?

A dollar, a dollar, who'll make it two?

Two dollars, who'll make it three?

Three dollars once, three dollars twice,

Going for three, but no,

From the back of the room came a gray haired man,
And he picked it up with the bow.

He wiped the dust from the old violin,

And tightening the loosened strings,

He played a melody as pure and sweet,

As caroling angels sing.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer

With a voice that was quiet and low,

Said, "What am I bid for the old violin,

And he held it up with the bow.

A thousand dollars, who'll make it two,

Two thousand, who'll make it three,

Three thousand once three thousand twice,

And going and gone said, he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,

We cannot quite understand, what changed its worth,

Swift came the reply, the touch of the Masters hand.

And many a man with life out of tune,

and battered and scarred by sin,

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,

much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,

A game and he travels on,

He's going once, he's going twice,

He's going and almost gone,

But the Master comes, and the thoughtless,

Mark 1:40

**Crowd never can quite understand,
The worth of a soul and the change
That is wrought, by the touch of the Master's hand.**