

Four Types of Leprosy

by Andy Brink

Andy Brink's sermon explores the metaphor of leprosy as a representation of sin and the necessity of recognizing and healing our spiritual wounds through God's love and wisdom.

Duration: 1:02:10

Scripture: Proverbs 1:22-26, Matthew 8:1-2, Ephesians 2:4-5

Topics: "Leprosy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the temporary nature of our physical bodies and the certainty of standing before God to give an account of our lives. He urges listeners to turn to God and seek Him, promising that God will pour out His spirit and make His words known to them. However, the preacher warns that those who refuse God's call and neglect His counsel will face calamity and mockery. He also highlights the need for self-awareness and recognition of our own sinfulness as a starting point for seeking God's help and salvation. The preacher references Proverbs 1 and 1 Timothy 1 to support his message.

Transcript

Good to see y'all this morning. I know y'all just came off of lockdown, so I'm sure it's good to move around a little bit. And it's good to see you today.

Well, I'll tell you what, before we get started, let's just open up in prayer. And I know that God has set apart this morning. He set it apart for good.

He set it apart to open up His Word. He's drawn us into this place. Because there's something He wants to communicate to each of our lives.

And each one of us sitting in this place, He knows exactly where you are. He knows exactly what your thoughts are. He knows what was going on this morning and yesterday.

And it's by His grace that He's brought us in this place, because He has something beyond what we even realize. Let's pray together. Father, I just call on Your name this morning.

And I'm so grateful that You've allowed us to assemble, to come together. And Lord, I know that You have drawn men into this place from the north, the south, the east, and the west. By Your Holy Spirit, they have come in here.

And Lord, I know that there may be many whose mind may have been in other places. But Lord, I ask You this morning to grab ahold of them. Lord, to make Yourself known in such a way that every one of us recognizes the evidence of Your presence.

Lord, right now in faith and because of the precious blood of Jesus, Lord, because of the resurrection and the empty tomb and the promise of Your Word in Colossians 2, where You said You made a public display over the powers of darkness, having triumphed over them in Christ. Lord, I thank You that we don't walk by what we see, but we walk by what we don't see. So right now in the heavenlies in this place, I take authority over every work of darkness, all scoffing, all resistance to the Word, all religious spirits right now, all oppression, confusion.

Lord, that claw that's on the front of some of the men here on their mind, Lord, I ask You to release that. And I pray that this morning You would give clarity to be able to hear and understand the Word of God. Lord, I ask for an anointing and an inspiration, God.

I pray that Your Holy Spirit would flow through me in such a way that the Word of God becomes living and active, powerful, reaching to the very heart, the inward places. And God, only You can do that. Lord, I pray for the singing and the worship.

Lord, that it would be led by Your Holy Spirit. And I pray for those that have been downcast this morning, that they would enter in by faith and choose with their heart to give thanks and to worship You. Lord, demonstrate Your power in this place.

And I pray for the salvation of the lost. I pray for the deliverance of the captives. Lord, I pray that blind eyes would be opened, that we would be able to see, and ears opened, that we'd be able to hear.

Lord, I ask You to do that in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as we get ready to praise and worship, many of you coming in have asked how we're back in the family's doing, and we're all doing well, and baby's healthy, growing, and strong.

And so I thank you for your prayers, and you guys ready to get started? Cause I'll rise again. There's no power on earth can't find. Yes, I'll rise again.

Death can't keep me in the ground. Go ahead, my love for You is still the same. Go ahead, but very soon be free.

Cause I'll rise again. There's no power on earth can't tie me down. Cause I'll rise again.

Death can't keep me in the ground. Go ahead and say I'm dead and gone. But you will see that You will light the sun.

But you will see that You were wrong. Cause I'll come. There's no power on earth can't keep me back.

Yes, I'll come to take my people back, to take my people back, to take my people to see. Amen. I'll tell you, I know that that song is really special, because we need to be reminded that He's coming back for us, and that there's resurrection power in our lives.

And this last week we had a brother go through some things, and he had stuffed and stuffed a lot of things down in his heart, and there were a lot of walls, because there'd been a lot of pain in his life, and God loved him, and so He resurrected all those things in his little heart, and He caused them to come to the

surface so He could be healed, and He's being healed. And I'll tell you, God doesn't want those walls, because like Zachariah 2 says, the reason these things, these walls have to come down is so the glory of the Lord will be in the midst of you, and so that He can be the wall about you with that protection. And so we need to be reminded from time to time, He is resurrection power, He is life, and He's working life in us and through us all the time.

And He's not just risen, I mean, He is risen, and He is here to stay, and here to stay in our hearts. Did someone have a song? Okay. Okay, number seven.

I'm held in your truth, so I fix my eyes on you. Lord, I must see you. I put my faith in you.

I spend my life on you. I want to know you, Lord. Jesus.

Jesus. I want to know the snow, you. Want to be found in you.

Want to be clothed in your truth. So I fix my eyes on you. Lord, I must see you.

I put my faith in you. I spend my life on you. I want to know you, Lord.

Jesus. Jesus. I want to love you.

Want to know you. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. Jesus. Jesus.

Jesus. Well, I don't know about you, but I've already been ministered to and encouraged by this morning. You know, we're all walking through, if you're going to walk with the Lord, many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all.

But I tell you, there's promise for each heart that desires to come after him. There's trials. There's testing.

There's endurance and those things that you go through. And it's funny, in my world over this last week, there's been a lot of different trials that have come up in my life and many different areas. But it's like in the last few days, God keeps saying, praise him.

Praise him. So, trust him in faith. But once again, just for my sake, let me just open up prayer again before we get into the word.

Lord, I just ask for your help this morning. I ask for your help to communicate the word. And Lord, I pray that you would so direct my mind and my spirit, that you say the things that are important to you and that you help me to distinguish and know your voice.

And I just ask you to do this, Lord, in Jesus' name. Amen. Matthew chapter 8. I'm going to start in verse 1 and we're going to skip around to several different places, but I want to start off with this leper in Matthew chapter 8, verse 1. It says, And when he had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.

And behold, a leper came to him and bowed down to him, saying, Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. And he stretched out his hand and he touched him, saying, I'm willing to be cleansed. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

And Jesus said to him, See that you tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded for the testimony to them. I'm going to share on different, some different parts here in Matthew chapter 8. But as I was looking at that, this first part in regard to the leper, I touched on it last time I was here. There were some other thoughts that began to come to me.

And first of all, without going into everything, obviously leprosy in the scriptures is a picture of sin. God always refers to it in relationship to our spiritual life. And leprosy was a disease that began as a small, like a rash or a small circle.

And then it would begin to affect their body. And you would go to the priest and they would do things to see if that's really what it was. And once they distinguished that what it was you had was leprosy, you were isolated.

You were set aside. Maybe you've heard of leprosy, leprosy, leprosy colony, leprosy, leprosy, leprosy, leprosy colonies. You know, we really didn't have that as much in America.

There was a colony used to be in Louisiana, they used to have. But they had these leprosy colonies where they were forced to stay outside the camp. And when they would come amongst the people, they had to holler out, unclean, unclean.

There were usually sores. There was, one of the things that leprosy would do is it would kill your nerve endings. You couldn't feel pain anymore.

Sitting in this place, there are men who can't feel pain. You've become numb to it. And the reason for that is, is every one of us in this room, and I really, I don't care who you are.

I don't care where you're from. I don't care what your background or what economic background or educational background. Everyone in this room, everybody in this world was created for this sole purpose.

And that is to know and experience the love of God. That's why you were made. That's why I was made.

But because of sin and death, when we come into this world, there's a spiritual enemy that we can't see. All right, everybody hold up just a minute. Everybody look up here.

Now, let me just say, we've got for the most part, a fairly new class. A fairly new class, a lot of new people. And you know what, guys? There's a lot of talking coming in.

Time to visit, time to share. Count time, there's a lot of talking going out, a lot of talking coming back in. And I always try to end as much as possible by about 10 after, sometimes 15 after.

This class isn't really finished until about half an hour after. There's a lot of time to visit and talk. And I know there's going to be a little bit of whispering and sharing back and forth.

But I'm going to tell you, when you become an obstacle to everybody else around me and to me, and when there begins to be this light roar all the way across the place, and I'm telling you right now, I don't have any problem asking the chaplain to come get a guard and to have somebody removed. I don't want to do that. I want you to be a part of here.

And I know that not everybody here is born again and not everybody here for the same reasons. But we're not going to have everybody in this place visiting and talking. So you just need to know that for the front

end.

Now, when we get back to this place of leprosy, I begin to consider and think about there's one kind of leprosy, but there's several different kinds of lepers. One of those lepers is a man whose sores can be seen, but he can't see them. Anybody know like that? Anybody like that? It's like you can see in somebody else, whether it's pride or an angry temper or something about their life, but they're completely blind to it.

Their eyes can't see. They can't recognize their own heart and life. Look with me in Proverbs chapter 1. Proverbs chapter 1. Look with me in verse 20.

It says, Wisdom shouts in the street. She lifts up her voice in the square. At the head of the noisy street, she cries out.

At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings. How long, simple ones, will you love simplicity and scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Now think about that. It says a voice cries out and it's saying, we're going to see in a moment, it says, turn to me.

If you'll simply turn from where you're at and begin to seek me, I in turn will pour my spirit out upon you and I will begin to make my words known to you. But here's what happens as we continue on in Proverbs 1. It says, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you and I will make my words known to you. But because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention and you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof.

I will even laugh at your calamity. I will mock when your dread comes. When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes on like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you, then they will call on me, but I will not answer.

They will seek me diligently, but they will not finally find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would not accept my counsel. They spurned all my reproof.

Now think about that for a moment. See, those are passages that are never read. Anybody heard that passage in church lately? But think about that.

God says, I lifted up my voice in the open square. I tried to get your attention. I came and brought counsel.

I sent people into your life. You had a parent, a grandparent, somebody there that kept saying turn, but you neglected it. It wasn't important to you.

You know, think about this. If I was to give you a choice today and I was to say, I'm gonna let you have a choice. I would give you this bucket full of precious diamonds or this bucket full of water.

I'm gonna let you choose. Now that question is really an insult, isn't it? Every one of us in this room would choose the diamonds, but you know what guys? You change the setting and all of a sudden you've been walking through a desert for four days, three days, and there hasn't been any water. You've been walking under a blistering heat with no cover.

Your lips are swollen and cracked. Your throat is dry. There's one thing you have that you need, that you need to live, and that's water.

And I stand before you as you're on the ground and as you're thriving and kneading and gasping and your throat is parched and I ask you, I want to give you a choice. A bucket full of diamonds or a bucket full of water. You know, it's amazing.

That same question is an insult again to our intelligence. The diamonds aren't gonna do you any good. You're dying.

You're parched. And you know what guys? Wisdom cries out and says, I want to make you an offer. I'm gonna make you an offer for living water.

C10 bottom, a visit. C10 bottom. And so that offer begins to be made.

But right here in Proverbs 1, it says, we spurn the counsel of God. We resist the reproof from the correction of the Almighty. And he says, there will come a day when you will so harden your heart against the voice of God that one day you will cry out.

And it says, I will not listen. And I don't know what point that is, guys. But I'm gonna tell you what, every one of us in this room will be held accountable for what you hear today and what you do with it.

If you remember last week or last time we were here, we talked about the wise and the foolish man. The wise man hears and takes heed, takes to heart the Word of God. The foolish man discounts it.

He resists it. He doesn't let it have place in his life. Hey guys, there's a storm coming.

There's a storm coming that's going to reveal what it is we've been building with. He goes on in verse 29, because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would not accept my counsel. They spurned all my reproof.

So they shall eat the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely and shall be at ease from the dread of evil.

You ever thought about the leprosy that a man can't see? He's blind to it until God begins to open his eyes to it. The destructiveness of his life, the brokenness of relationships, and yet we continue to do the same thing, the same thing, the same thing. Isn't it amazing? You know, I've told, again, I shared this last week, but I tell all my children, really the only thing I watch sometimes is football.

And you always have the commercials, you know, with whether it's the beer or the wine or the vodka or whatever it is and the good-looking woman and the partying all around. And Sam, what's amazing, I'm talking my son Sam, we listen to that message, we take it to heart, and we live our life that way. Listen, if some of you knew the end result of the things that you had taken to heart, would you really want to do it again? If you knew the burned relationships and the broken family, the scarred lives, would you really want to do that same thing again? And yet, like a dog, we continue to come to it because our hearts are darkened, we're blind, we're driven by the powers of darkness.

There's another world going on around us, and every thought that comes into your head isn't just yours. Matter of fact, look with me in Ephesians chapter 2. Some of you, or some of us, listen, I remember when I began my journey of coming to the Lord, I don't remember hearing anybody, maybe I just couldn't hear it ever teach on this, and yet it happens in all of our lives. Chapter 2 verse 1, it says, and you were dead in

your trespasses and sins.

Every one of us, dead in trespasses and sins. A leprosy that was eating us away on the inside, that was killing the nerve endings of our life. We could no longer feel pain.

We came numb to life. You know why? And that's what I started off just a second ago. We were all born for this purpose, it's to know the love of God.

That's why you were created, to have relationship with Him. But in the same way, if love is our greatest need, acceptance, validation, then there's nothing more painful than the pain of rejection. And the moment you and I have come into this world, there were thoughts coming into your mind saying you're rejected.

Betrayals of people, rejection of parents. My family loves the older son more than the younger, or vice versa. There's always these things that begin to happen inwardly.

I know even with my oldest daughter already, you know, something begins to happen. All of a sudden we try to bring correction. You always take her side.

Or maybe it's my younger son in relationship to the older son. But these thoughts, these thoughts that come up here and they begin to say you're not loved. And guys, what happens because none of us, I don't care who you are when you come into this world, want to be rejected or betrayed.

We begin the process of building these walls around us to protect us. Anybody ever said these words? Nobody will ever do that to me again. Nobody will ever hurt me like that again.

And the moment you did that, you surrounded yourself with a castle so that you can no longer really feel or express or receive love. Because in order to love, you have to be vulnerable. And most of our relationships, I'll guarantee you, all the way across this room are very shallow.

There's really not a lot of depth to it. Because in order for there to be depth, you have to let the walls come down. And in order to let the walls come down, it gives somebody the ability to reject you or hurt you.

And you know what, guys? Because we're all born in this world, we all have a way of rejecting each other. Even after we come to the Lord, we say things, we do things, we mistreat one another. But I'm going to tell you, there's one.

And this is where love begins. And it says you and I can't even love truly until we first receive the love of God. The more convinced we become of the fact that He loves us.

And guys, the demonstration of the cross is for this reason. When it all narrows down to this, it's because you were created to know love. And the only way God, as holy and perfect and spotless, could have relationship with us was for there to be a sacrifice.

The penalty for the law of the sin and death had to be paid. And He came into this world in order to take the full brunt of the wrath of God. Not so that God could somehow say, well, if you'll just show up at church once a week.

No, the reason for it is for all men, without a respect or persons, God said, if you'll trust me by faith, I want to walk with you. I want to walk day by day as a friend walks with a friend. I want you to distinguish and know my voice.

And guys, I can't explain it to you. Listen, I'm going through some trials right now in my life in a lot of different fronts, in a lot of different areas. And sitting right there in that chair, some of the songs sung this morning, all I can tell you is that God was communicating to me and He was saying, Andy, trust me.

Praise me. It's going to be okay. Well, it doesn't look like it's going to be okay.

Don't live by what you see. Trust me. Trust me.

I'm going to tell you, that's my friend. That's my Lord. That's the God who saved me.

He's not distant or far away. He's right there involved. And I want you to know, He wants to be involved in every life here.

And He says, I'm crying out. I'm doing everything I can to get your attention. I've even sent this nut with gray hair to come in and share.

If you just listen to the word, Ephesians 2, it says, and you were dead in your trespasses and sins, caught in leprosy, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. Romans 6 says, we are all slaves. You can't get away from that.

You're either a slave of sin resulting in death or you're a slave of righteousness resulting in life. And right here, it says, every one of us, front row, back row, choir, loft, pulpit, were formerly in darkness, controlled by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience. Those thoughts.

Listen, nobody had to teach me. I remember, listen, when I grew up, that's when they first came out with HBO. It was the first movie box office thing that came on television.

And you had these boxes on top of your television. And you put your television on a certain channel and you switch the box over and you could watch movies. Listen, nobody trained me in this, but at one o'clock in the morning, on a Friday, on a Saturday morning, something would, I'd wake up and something would start telling me, if you quietly make your way to that television, turn it on, turn the volume down real low so your parents won't hear.

There's a lot of stuff that goes on on there. You know what happened? Almost every Saturday morning, about one o'clock, as a young boy, boom, I'd wake up. These thoughts start going through my head.

Who do you think that was? Who do you think that was leading me into deeper places of bondage? I'm going to tell you who it was. It's the same voice as you hear. What's that voice you hear that caused you to be up half the night with anger, thinking about what somebody said? You can't even sleep at night.

You're filled with rage, thinking about what you're going to do to somebody. When you see him, I'm going to say this, and when he says that, you've got a conversation going on in your head that's not even real. It happens all the time.

That's the reason our broken relationships with wife, we can't, that's why marriage is almost non-existent now, because we can't get along. You know why? Because the moment somebody says something or doesn't say something, you read between the lines and this thought comes, what's she trying to do? What does she really mean by that? Oh, I'll show her, you know. These are the things that you battle night and day, and the whole world is in the power of the evil one.

We're being controlled by our thoughts like a puppet being just generated, and if you don't learn through the Word of God to take up the shield of faith, I resist that right now. Listen, in my life when I came to the Lord and there was a lot of falling down and getting up, but I would get up, that thought would come to me at one o'clock on Saturday morning. God, I don't want that stuff in my life.

It's done nothing but created a perverted heart in me, and I can't even think with purity in my heart, and I hated it. But you know what? It didn't change just because I said, I pray, God, I don't want to do that anymore. All of a sudden, one o'clock Saturday morning, something would wake me up and that thought would start going, and sometimes I'd fall to that thought.

Sometimes I'd get up and say, no, I'm not doing it. I resist it. I'd wrestle in my bed and just try to go back to sleep, but I'm going to tell you what, it's the process of overcoming, and the process of overcoming involves falling down.

But a righteous man falls down and keeps getting up, and I'm going to tell you, I don't live with that anymore. Not from the inside, and I'm not saying there's not temptations that come to my mind, the things that I have to face, but I've been there. I resist it, and God's teaching me still how to take thoughts captive.

I want you to know right here in Ephesians 2, we can mock at it and laugh at it, and we can say, oh, I'm not leprous, but every one of us knows exactly what I'm talking about. Verse 3, among them too we all formerly lived in the lust of the flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and we're by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy because of his great love with what he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.

Can you see your own leprosy? Are you aware of the vileness of your own heart? Can you see the rebellion in your own life? Listen, that's the starting point. If you can't see it, then you don't know you need a helper. In 1 Timothy chapter 1, Paul was talking about himself, and he said, listen, God saved me as a pattern.

What's a pattern? It's something we get an idea of what it looks like. If there's a basic structure to it, and listen, every one of us in this room, we're unique and different, and even the ways in which God speaks to us. Matter of fact, if we gave testimonies around this room for those that know the Lord, you'd be amazed at how different every testimony is, and how God grabbed ahold of them, who God used in their life, what experience made their hearts begin to be tender, where they came from.

But I'm going to tell you guys, there's certain things that remain the same in every testimony, and the first thing that Paul said in 1 Timothy chapter 1, God saved me as a pattern, the chiefest of sinners. Listen, Paul, was he really a chiefest of sinners? Philippians, he says, I was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was a religious man who was studied in the law of God.

Matter of fact, he was welcomed into the temple. Anybody here feel like sometimes you'd be welcomed in a church? I got a friend of mine who loves the Lord. She got saved from being a stripper, prostitute.

She was writing just recently, you know, I go into churches and I immediately feel like I'm on the outside. And listen, this is a girl, she doesn't want to sit in the pews. She's created a ministry, an outreach called Reach Out to Her, Roth, and she's out on the streets ministering to other prostitutes, other strippers, trying to help them.

And she says, I go into a church, and immediately I feel judged. Immediately I feel like I'm put on the defensive, I'm put on the outside. But you know what? Those are the places where God loves to work.

Matter of fact, his greatest rebuke always came inside the church. It always came inside those walls, where we become stiff, and we pretend, and we live as hypocrites, and we find ourselves throwing stones at other people. Let me ask you who you're going to throw a stone at if you're the chiefest of sinners, if you're the worst of the worst.

If you see yourself in the light of... Listen, I came to the Lord going into my high school years, and I'm going to tell you guys there's a lot of things outwardly that I never did, that I did in my heart. Let me tell you this, I saw myself in the light of God's holiness, and I knew the wrath of God was just upon my life. And I knew that if I died, that I would rightly so spend the rest of eternity in hell.

And I'm going to tell you, my heart tormented me. Any of y'all ever hear those electric power boxes that are up on the... You know, when they... You know, you hear them... You know, there was a time... Did I scare somebody? There was a time when that used to torment me, and I'd run through the house looking for my mom, seeing if I'd been left, if the rapture had happened or something, and somehow I got left. Because you know what? My heart condemned me.

My heart condemned me, because for the first time in my life, I was aware of my sinfulness, that I was worthy of the wrath of God. I wasn't shifting the blame and making excuses and saying it's their fault and this person's fault. I knew how I stood and where I stood before God.

But it was in that place that I cried out to mercy and God met me. And because of that, you can't help somebody if you've judged them in your heart. You know that, don't you? You know what? One of the one places that people ought to be able to get help is inside the church.

When I speak of church, I'm talking about right here. But you know what? The moment somebody begins to share some of the struggles of their life, how many of you get offended or threatened? Because it's not where you walked, it's not something you did, so all of a sudden they're doing something worse. Leprosy.

Have you come to the place yet of seeing your own leprosy? The law of God came into this world to shut every man's mouth. There are no good people. There are no holy people.

There are no righteous people. Even the best of the best have been born in sin and desperately needy of a Savior. Well, the next thing that came to mind in regard to a type of leprous person, as if I can just think about it, meditate on it, is the one that knows his leprosy.

He sees his sin. He recognizes that he's slowly being eaten away. He knows that his, you know, leprosy, your body parts just start to fall off because the nerve endings have killed.

It's a disease that affects the very bones. They rot and you don't even realize it. All of a sudden your bone, because the pain is deadened, you don't see it.

You might twist an ankle and you keep walking on that ankle and then it just dies and it falls off. And there may be some in here that recognize, I'm not, listen, you don't have to convince me that I'm undone, that I'm full of sin, that I've done awful things, that I've hurt people. I know it.

But you know what? They can't be convinced or believe that there's a place. They can't come to a place and believe. They can believe God can change somebody else's life.

They can sit and maybe even hear somebody else's testimony. They can know him personally that walked out on those hallways. They said, listen, that man, yeah, that guy really did.

He really did change. God met him. But they don't believe he can do it in their life.

They don't believe he can change them. They believe in God. They believe in the answer.

But they believe he's the answer for somebody else. They don't believe he's the answer for them. There's two men in scripture that betrayed Jesus.

One was named Peter. Jesus said, listen, three times they're going to take me and three times you're going to deny me. And Peter said, not me.

I'd fight for you. I'd give my life for you. Guess what happened when they took Jesus? Three times he was asked, aren't you, don't you belong to him? Aren't you with the disciples? And he said, no.

And he said, no. And finally cursed and swore and, and, and, and, and, and swore, no, it's not me. That says, Jesus looked at him.

The scripture says he wept bitterly. He knew his sin. He knew that he had sinned against Christ and he betrayed him.

He did the very thing he said he would never do. He did under the pressure of life. You know, there was another man that betrayed him.

His name was Judas. Judas walked with Jesus for three years. He heard the same teachings everybody else did.

He heard Jesus talk about the cross. He heard Jesus talk about dying. He heard Jesus talk about all these different things.

And there came a place where Judas himself betrayed Christ for 30 pieces of silver. And once the act was done, it says, now think about this. It says he came back to the priest and he said, I have betrayed innocent blood.

It looks like he's made a confession. He takes the money and he returns it to him. He throws it on the ground.

They said, listen, what's that to us? So it says, it says he goes out and he hangs himself. He couldn't believe the words that Christ said were for him. It was a leprosy of despair.

He couldn't believe that God could heal his past. He couldn't believe that God could forgive his sin. He couldn't believe that God could change his life.

He could believe it for someone else, but not for him. And some of us in this place sit there in that same place. It's not that you don't agree with the fact that, you know, there's a problem in your heart and life that you can't change.

And it's not that you don't agree that you've heard about it over and over and over again. Matter of fact, you're sitting in this service. Something drew you here today.

Some kind of tenderness and heart. There's something in your heart that draw you to this place. And it's not that you haven't seen the lives of other people get changed.

Maybe even people in this very place. Maybe that's why you came here because you do know there's some people here whose lives have been changed. But you can't accept it or believe it for yourself.

But I'm going to tell you, if you trust him, the scripture says you will not be disappointed. Those who trust in the Lord will not be ashamed. And I'm going to tell you, I won't spend much time on this next leper, because it's hard for us to believe.

Matter of fact, I bet you the moment I say it, most people here just will not be able to believe that this kind of leper exists. It's the one who knows he's a leper and boasts in his leprosy. Takes pride in the things that's killing him.

Wears death as a badge. Boasts in the very thing that has destroyed his life. Of course, none of us have been there, have we? The scripture says when we come to that place where our hearts become seared, the enemy begins to convince us that bitter is sweet, that light is darkness, and darkness is light.

When we reject continually the counsel of the Lord, the scripture says your heart becomes hardened every time. And the scripture speaks of a seared conscience, one that can no longer hear. And that conscience begins to now, what used to be a shameful thing in the heart, what used to be hidden, what used to be whispered in the secret places, now becomes thrown out in the open.

We begin to boast of the very thing that's destroying our life and the poison that's killing us. We find ourselves boasting about all the broken relationships of our life, because we can't be a faithful husband. You begin to boast about living for lust when your heart was created to know love.

You begin to boast about the rage of your life, the angry temper, and the enemy has convinced you that bitter is sweet. And you live your life continually being destroyed by the thing you boast about, the leprosy of your life. And the leprosy will end up destroying you.

But you know why God even allows the heart that boasts in its leprosy to hear of the love of God? Because there's coming a day, and in every one of our lives, I look across this room, every one of us in this place, I can tell looking around, the current of life is picking up, isn't it? My hair is turning gray. It didn't used to be that way. My body's aching.

I can't do the things I used to do. Tried to get out there and throw the football with my son, and I can toss it about maybe here to that wall. I can't throw a bomb.

My shoulder starts hurting. I can feel it all the way through. Guys, this body is wasting away, and it's coming to an end, just like yours is.

And there's coming a day, and every one of us knows it in our heart, something tells us. Whether you know God or not, something in your heart tells you you're going to give an account for your life, and you're going to stand before your Creator. I'm going to tell you, when that moment comes, the Scripture says, every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess.

Let me tell you what I personally don't think that means. I don't think that means this big God comes and just makes you bow and makes you say things. I believe in one moment, you're going to see every opportunity God had reached out to you.

You're going to see every act of love, every message He sent in your life, every time you had the opportunity to hear the Word of God, you're going to see every moment that love reached out, and you rejected it, you resisted it, you boasted in the pride of your sin while you lived in that place, you boasted in the bucket full of diamonds, you didn't need the water, you didn't need to hear wisdom, you didn't need God in your life, you rejected Him, and in that moment you will have to say, God, you were merciful to me, and I rejected you. You'll see every moment where God reached out, and every moment in which you turned away, and you'll humble yourself, and you will say, Jesus Christ, you are Lord. Even the most staunchest atheists, even the kings that have ruled the world, they will bow their knee before God, and they'll see in one glimpse the love of God, and how they resisted it.

The Scripture says they will be cast into a lake of fire, with eternal burning, where the moth continues to eat and gnaw. Let me tell you, there's another kind of leprous man, and I don't know how many of you will fit into this place, or have fit into this place, but this is the place that I find myself. I heard the Word of God in my life, and it exposed me.

It exposed my sin, and I knew I was leprous inside and out. I can't tell you guys, I hated the thoughts of my mind. I used to think if anybody knew what was going on in my mind, they wouldn't want to be around me.

Let me ask you, if right now, even your closest friend, let's do something else. What if your parent, or whoever that person you truly love, knew every thought of your mind? Knew every garbage thought that came through there? Would you even be shameful at all? Would you blush at all? Would there be something that causes you to cringe? Is there that one person you said, if they knew the truth of where I had been, and what I had done, well, I knew this. I knew God knew.

I knew every, you ever hear those revival preachers? I don't know where y'all, but they used to talk about, they'd have these revival sermons, and somewhere in the week of revivals, they'd have this one part of the sermon where they talk about God has this movie camera. It's watching you all the time. And it's not just watching what you do, it's watching what you think.

Oh, that sent me over the cliff. I'm telling you, for me personally, I thought that terrified me. I thought, God, it's bad enough what I've done that other people don't know about, but that tormented me that God would one day, and I had this picture in my mind of everybody here, all my, everybody I know, all standing up, and it's my turn, and all of a sudden, they're watching this screen.

They go, no way. Did you really think that? And me, just, that was my leprous life, and I was convinced of it. I knew the leprosy of my heart, and I hated who I was on the inside, and I didn't know how to change, and I didn't have the power to change or to be different, but I heard somebody speak, and you know what happened when they spoke? It was the first time in my life I'd ever heard anybody give an honest testimony.

See, a lot of you here that know the Lord, some of you say to yourself, I'll, you know, I'll never give a real testimony in my life. I'm not going to give glory to the devil. I just don't even want to talk about where I've been.

My goodness, that's where God saved you. I heard somebody say, he said, I used to never share my testimony because I thought it gave too much glory to the devil, and then the Lord showed me I could start in the darkness and end in the light, and when he began to share his story, there were things that he said I'd never heard anybody say before in the honesty of his heart, and I said, that's me. You know what one of those things was? I had never told anybody this in my whole life.

He got up there, and he said, he said, sometimes when I would think about the name of Jesus, and I would want to pray, and just say something to Jesus, curse words would come into my head. Thoughts and just, just, just language would come into my head. I'd never heard anybody say that before, and I said, God, that's me.

When I used to think about Jesus or God, all of a sudden, they'd turn into GD and this and that, and these curse words and some of the foulest words that I'd been around and heard just would come up in my head, and I hated it. But all of a sudden, I had hope because I heard that somebody else had been in that same place, and God, I called upon the name of the Lord. I cried out for mercy, and I can tell you this.

I didn't have anywhere else to go, and I got up and said, I'm gonna walk with Jesus, and I'm gonna tell you what he did in my life. He came up, and he put his hand in the darkness of my life, and he said, I'm willing for you to be clean. He could have said it from a distance.

He could have said it far away, but you know how he got engaged in my life? When I came to this church, there was a lady, Mrs. Stephens, that stood at those church doors, and she hugged me every time I came in that building. Now, guys, I didn't grow up in a hugging family, and I didn't grow up in a I love you, and we all love each other, and that's not where I grew up. Now, I was a latchkey kid.

My mom worked 24 hours a day just to keep things going, and I grew up, believe it or not, on the streets for the most part, and I walked into this building, and this lady gave me a hug, and I just, I felt like a I didn't know how to respond to it. I didn't know what to do with it, but you know what God was saying to me through that lady? He was saying to me, I know the degradation of your heart. I know the leprosy of your life, and I want you to know I still love you.

Put your trust in me, and I'm going to tell you guys, things didn't change overnight. They did inside, but they didn't on the outside, but I knew this. Where I had come from had only been death and destruction, and I knew this.

My only hope was to move forward, put one step in front of the other, and I stand before you here. Listen, my dad and I, my dad is, he's retired, but he was an attorney, and one that I think had a season in his life, one of the best in Houston. He's got a mind that's amazing, and he was trained to argue, to debate, and to destroy you with his words, and I would begin to try and share my faith with him and talk about the Word.

He had already read that Bible several times, and before we got done, he just would leave me confused. I just felt like I was putting out the white flag, but the one thing that I would say to him again and again when we got to that point, Dad, all I can tell you is my life was changed, and there's no argument there. I'm going to tell you this.

If you know the leprosy of your life, God wants to give you hope, and he said he can change it, and here's my one warning as we close. Don't be like Proverbs chapter 1. Don't be that man who heard the counsel of God again and again and again and again. Don't be that man who scorned his reproof, who scoffed at

his wisdom and his counsel.

The one thing he says in Proverbs chapter 1, if you will turn to my reproof, that's all he says. If you will simply turn and listen to me and hear what I'm saying, here's what I will do. Not you, what I will do.

I will pour my Spirit out upon you, and I will begin to make my words known to you. Front row, back row, choir loft, pulpit. If we will repent in our heart and turn to the Lord, he says, I will begin to make this thing more than a book to you.

It'll become alive. Let's pray. Father, I just come to you in Jesus' name.

I thank you for your mercy, and Lord, I thank you for every man here. Lord, I thank you how, Lord, when I asked across the board, everybody really tried to listen here. I thank you that you've drawn them into this place, and I just ask you to encourage every heart here.

Lord, may we search ourselves. Lord, are we aware of the leprous condition of our life? Can we look back and see a place where we knew we were undone and without hope? Lord, are we like that leprous man who sees his undoneness and his sinfulness, but he's unwilling to believe that God can change him? Lord, are we like that leprous man who boasts in his leprosy, that somehow what has become a shame has become some type of badge of honor as it rots us away from the inside and destroys everything precious? Lord, I pray that we will all be like the leprous man who calls upon your name and says, Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean. And Lord, I pray for every man here that there would be that revelation that you are willing and that it's not you who speaks from a distance, but you come right up to us and you put your, you get personally involved, you put your hand right in the midst of the sores and the darkness and the despair and the depravity, and you look with us with eyes full of power and strength and love and hope, and you say, I'm willing, be thou clean.

Lord, may we hear those words today in our heart. I pray for those Christians that have fallen, that have been driven by their own lust back into the vomit of life. Lord, I pray that they would hear you say today, I'm willing, be thou clean.

Lord, I pray for every family represented here, for the loved ones, the people that they care about, and I pray that this day, outside of this prison, that those that they love would be, would have hope today. And I ask you to do these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, I'm sure if you don't get too loud, they won't call you out real quick, and thank you for listening, and we'll see you next week. Pray for David and Cindy, they're on a vacation, they haven't had one in years, and they really need one, and love y'all.

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