

“...If you are willing, You can make me Clean.”

This morning I would like to contrast the lessons provided in the book of Leviticus chapter 14 and Mark 1: 40—45 and analyse the lessons that are presented there in.

Mark 1: 40—45

...A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

In reading this passage what is it that the leper requests? Is it healing? No! He asks for cleansing. A very odd request or so it seems.

So why did the leper ask for cleansing and not healing? To understand this we first need to define “*what is leprosy*”.

The bible when referring to leprosy has a much broader definition than our modern leprosy (or Hansen’s disease). It refers to any skin disease that exposes the raw flesh. It wasn’t limited to just leprosy as we understand it today.

Throughout the OT the concept of clean and unclean is continually being emphasised and there were many forms of being in a state of *uncleanliness*. In the varying state of uncleanness the requirement was such that the person was to be kept away from the temple.

However, in the case of leprosy, the diseased person had to live outside the camp. He or she was totally ostracised and if approached, was to call out, “Unclean! Unclean!” as a warning to keep people away.

It is important to note that leprosy was seen as SIN!

Leprosy is a metaphor for sin – we read in Isaiah 1: 5-6


*Why should you be beaten anymore?
Why do you persist in rebellion?
Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted.
From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no
soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or
bandage or soothed with olive oil.*

Lepers were seen as having SINNED! We see in the above Scripture, Isaiah mirroring the condition of leprosy to that of Israel's rebellion.

Turn with me now to Leviticus 14

It should be noted, before we get too far into our discussion, that cleansing and healing throughout the OT is always connected with atonement – a sacrifice. Once healed (or cleansed), a sacrifice or atonement was to be made – this was a **shadow** or a type pointing to Calvary.

Discuss shadow –
son and his father



So what does that mean – a shadow?

Let me illustrate:

Imagine:

- A young boy anticipates the return of his father who has been away for a very long period of time overseas fighting for his country. His mother has extolled the virtues of his father – explaining he is a hero.
- The father comes round a building with the sun on his back – a shadow is cast.
- The boy sees the shadow and begins to anticipate certain images of his father as he looks upon the shadow – he is excited of *...the good things to come...* but once the father appears to the young boy he will no longer need to imagine because the reality of his father will now stand before him.

So too, the lessons of the OT reveal to us the good things that are coming – Paul in Colossians 2: 17 states...*the reality, however, is found in Christ.*

Hebrews 9:22

The basic theme throughout Scripture is this - ...*without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin...*the shedding of blood symbolizes the shed blood of Jesus on the cross for you and I.

Leviticus

Verse 3:

- Priest to outside the camp to examine the suspect diseased person

Verses 4-7

Live bird



Represents Us

Killed bird



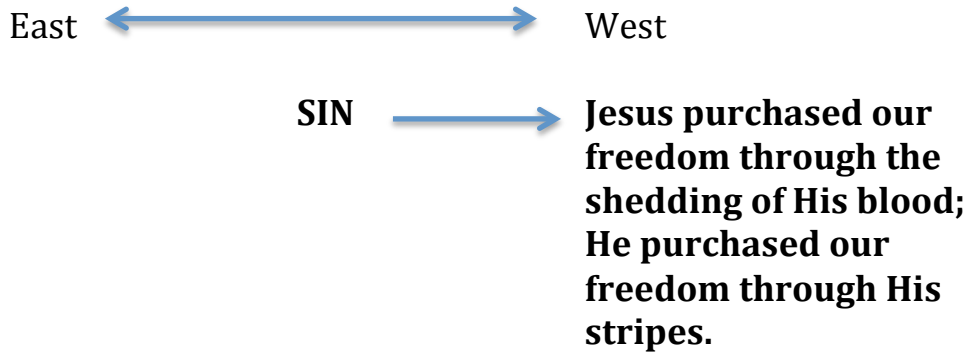
Represents Jesus

- We have been dipped in Jesus' blood;
- Which frees us from sin and all of its consequences.
- In sprinkling the diseased person 7 times (seven the number of completeness) symbolises the forgiveness of sin and Christ death once and for all.

Imagine the ecstasy upon the cleansing –

Discuss the free bird!

- Like the free bird that was loosed into the open field, we too have been loosed into the open field of God's blessings. We too have been cleansed.



We have been bought for a price (1 Cor 6: 19).

Verse 8

- The cleansing process continues – however once he has washed his clothes shaved off all his hair and bathed he then is deemed to be ceremonially clean.
- Seven days – come into the camp but must not go into his tent.

Discuss seven days.

Camp – synonymous with the Church
Tent - synonymous with Believers – “born again”

Whether it be healing physically or spiritually – when God performs such miracles in our lives we need to stop and do some honest self-appraisal and deep internal soul searching. This is a time to rid the self of our old habits – a time of reflection.

The symbolism here is quite clear. The diseased person has been cleansed and is now integrated back into society.

Our acceptance of Jesus, His shed blood allows us to be united to the Father.

...We have been purchased for a price...

Verse 10 - 8th day (number 8 representing a new beginning!)

Sacrifice – God wanted it ingrained in the thinking of the Israelites that when a healing took place a lamb had to be sacrificed by the shedding of its blood.

The lesson: they were healed based on a coming sacrifice – healed on the basis of Calvary yet future. It was a **shadow** *...of the good things to come* (Hebrews 10:1).

Verses 14-18

- The priest was to consecrate the cleansed leper – this was to show the person he is now acceptable to God.

Upon our repentance and acceptance of Jesus, the atoning blood of Jesus is sufficient for the Father to receive and accept us.

...This is why “it was credited to Him as righteousness”...but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness – for us who believe in Him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead (Romans 4: 22,24 NIV).

...God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5: 21 NIV).

- Blood on the right ear – dedicated to the hearing of the Word
- Blood on the right thumb – dedicated to labouring for God; doing the work of God.
- Blood on the big toe of the right foot – Walk in the path of righteousness (Ephesians 6: 15 – *...and with feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace*).

We have been cleansed to serve. DISCUSS!

Verse 15

“The oil can only go where the blood has been”.¹

¹ Bayless Connelly

Oil = Holy Spirit

The work of proclaiming the gospel, the healing is not something we do, rather it comes by the anointing power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can only come where the blood of Jesus came first.

Turn with me again to Mark 1: 40-45

Discuss

The Leper's Quandary

The leper (as a result of his leprosy) is:

- Impure
- Repugnant
- Unfeeling – (condition of leprosy- loss of sensation of feeling)
 - Sin hardens us toward sin; it hardens us toward God (Ephesians 4: 18-19).
- Incurable

God the Father turned His face away from Jesus because of the sins Jesus now bore for all mankind – causing Jesus to cry out...*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

Jesus now suffered the ignominy of that of a leper.

The Leper's Response

- Became persuaded of his desperate plight
- He cast himself at the mercy of Jesus
- He exercised humility
- Demonstrated faith in the healing power of Jesus

Jesus' Act in Cleansing the Leper

- Jesus in touching the leper (**Symbolic act**) demonstrated the future. Jesus was to become sin for us.
- Jesus in touching the leper, branded Himself with our offensiveness and uncleanness.
- **Jesus cleansed him immediately.**
 - **Salvation** happens instantly – we are “born again” We cannot earn it.



Conditional

Conclusion

Parable of the Four Soils

Matthew 13: 1-23

3-9

18-23

Discuss! Which of these four conditions best describes your current Spiritual condition?

We need to ask God to reveal to us the true “me” as God sees us.