

**“Lessons from the Miracles of Christ”:
Cleansing the Leper**

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Sources for Cleansing the Leper, in the order in which they first appear

- (1) Wm. Arnold Stevens and Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Historical Study: An Analytical Synopsis of the Four Gospels in the Version of 1881* (Boston: Silver, Burdett and Company, 1893)
- (2) William M. Taylor, D.D., LL.D., *The Miracles of Our Saviour, Expounded and Illustrated* (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1891)
- (3) Richard Chenevix Trench, D.D., *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord, Revised, with Additions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1883)
- (4) Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “And Why Not Me?” (1890)

Note: Spurgeon delivered this sermon in London on Sept. 7, 1890 and it was published in Vol. 36 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1891). I have been unable to access this volume, so have used *The Treasury of Spurgeon on the Life and Work of Our Lord, Vol. IV, The Miracles of Our Lord, 2*, published by Baker Book House in 1979. This source is coded **Spurgeon1.**

- (5) Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “The Lord and the Leper” (1888)

Note: Spurgeon delivered this sermon in London on Feb. 12, 1888 and it was published in Vol. 34 of *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* (1890). This source is coded **Spurgeon2.**

Key

- (a) **Green** indicates where a source author first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) **Yellow** highlights most parallelisms.
- (c) **Tan** highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row, or parallelisms separated by yellowed parallelisms.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the source and the Sadlers pointedly differ from one another.
- (e) **Red** indicates an obvious mistake.

CLEANSING THE LEPER

INTRODUCTORY

0.1 *Preceding Events*.—Following are the principal events in the Saviour’s life since the preceding miracle, the healing of Peter’s wife’s mother:—

XI: THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST’S
PUBLIC WORK IN GALILEE. (4
Harmony of the Gospels 42)

§39. A DAY OF MIRACLES IN CAPERNAUM. Matt. 8:14-17. Mark 1:21-34. Luke 4:31-41.

§40. THE FIRST PREACHING TOUR OF GALILEE. [Matt. 4:23.] Matt. 8:[1]2-4. Mark 1:35-45. Luke 4:42-44. Luke 5:12-16.

Luke 5:[12] And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, behold, a man full of leprosy: and when he saw Jesus,

Matt. 8:[2] And behold, there came to him

Mark 1:[40] beseeching him, and kneeling down to him,

Luke 5:[12] he fell on his face,

0.2 1. The sunset scene at Capernaum at the close of the Sabbath day on which the demoniac in the synagogue and Peter’s mother-in-law were healed. Mark 1:32-34.

0.3 2. The beginning of his first preaching tour in Galilee. Verses 35-39.

It was during this tour, at some unknown place, that the leper was cleansed.

0.4 *Main Reference*.—Mark 1:40-45.

0.5 *Other References*.—Matt. 8:2-4; Luke 5:12-16.

0.6 *The Bible Story of the Miracle*.—

“And it came to pass, while he was in one of the cities, behold, a man full of leprosy, and when he saw Jesus,

he came to him,

beseeching him; and kneeling down to him,

he fell on his face

SOURCE

“ LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

Matt. 8:[2] and worshiped him,

and worshiped him,

Mark 1:[40] and saying unto him,

saying unto him,

Matt. 8:[2] / Luke 5:[12] Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Mark 1:41 And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will;

And being moved with compassion, he stretched forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will;

be thou made clean.

be thou clean.

42 And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean.

And straightway the leprosy departed from him, and he was made clean.

43 And he strictly charged him, and straightway sent him out,

And Jesus strictly charged him, and straightway sent him out,

44 and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest,

and saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man, but go thy way and show thyself to the priest;

and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

and offer for thy cleansing the things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

[45] But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to spread abroad the matter,

But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to spread abroad the matter,

Luke 5:[15] But so much the more went abroad the report concerning him:

and so much the more went abroad the report concerning him,

Mark 1:[45] that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but was without in desert places:

that Jesus could no more openly enter into a city, but was without in desert places.█

Luke 4:[15] and great multitudes came together to him

and great multitudes came together to him

[Mark 1:[45] from every quarter.]

from every quarter,

to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities.

to hear, and to be healed of their infirmities.

SOURCE

Luke 5:16 But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed.

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

But he withdrew himself in the deserts, and prayed.”

(This quotation is the interwoven story from Matt. 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; and Luke 5:12-16.)

0.7 *Place*.—Unknown, but in Galilee, perhaps not far from Capernaum.

0.8 *Circumstances*.—Christ was making a tour of Galilee. Mark 1:38. At some unknown point on this preaching tour, a leper came to Jesus, and kneeling down, said: “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” This miracle was performed at the request of the one it benefited. The leper’s faith in Christ’s power is shown in the request, “If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” Jesus’ ready response to this request was enough to convince him of his willingness. Christ performed the miracle by putting forth his hand, touching the leper, and saying, “I will; be thou clean.” The miracle was performed in Christ’s presence, in response to his personal touch and his spoken word; and “immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.”

0.9 *Great Lesson*.—Christ’s willingness to forgive. His power and willingness to cleanse from moral leprosy. We need not ask, “If thou wilt;” there is but one question, and the answer to that lies with man: “Canst thou believe?”

STUDY OF THE MIRACLE

1.1 *There Came a Leper.*—

[[L]et us note that he who could cure the leprosy which was the **type of sin**, can cure sin itself (Taylor 115).]

In the Bible, leprosy stands as the **type of sin**.

Leprosy of soul and body are so nearly alike that the process of their cure demands the same great power. Both are incurable. This man was full of leprosy, yet the Saviour could make him whole. This great miracle was wrought to show Christ's willingness to cleanse us from all physical and spiritual pollution. Jesus said: "I will; be thou clean." In answer to the question of every sincere soul that desires cleansing, the answer comes back from the Master's loving lips, "I will; be thou clean."

VII: THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER. (Taylor 110)

Leprosy is a fitting symbol of sin, in view of its

[L]eprosy set before the minds of the Hebrews the **insidious beginning**,

insidious beginning,

gradual increase, and **final** prevalence of sin; it illustrated its **incurable nature**,

its **incurable nature**,

save by the gracious intervention of God,

its loathsome character, and its dire **results** ... (T 113).

and its **final results**;

and God, and he alone, has power to remove it.

X: THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.
(Trench 226)

All the notices in the Old Testament, as well as in other Jewish books, confirm the statement that we have here something very much higher than a mere **sanitary regulation** (Tr 227).

The ordinances concerning leprosy had another and far **deeper significance**, into which it will be needful a little to enter (Tr 228).

[contd from three rows up] Thus, where the law of Moses was not observed, no such exclusion necessarily found place;

Naaman the leper commanded the armies of Syria (2 Kin. v. 1);

Gehazi, with his leprosy that never should be cleansed (2 Kin. v. 27),

talked familiarly with the king of apostate Israel (2 Kin. viii. 5) (Tr 227).

When David exclaims, ‘Purge me *with hyssop*, and I shall be clean’ (Ps. li.7),

he

contemplates himself as a spiritual leper,

as one who had sinned a sin unto death,

who needs therefore through the blood of sprinkling to be restored to God from the very furthest degree of separation from Him (Tr 230).

1.2 The exclusion of lepers from association with their fellow beings was not only a **sanitary regulation**,

but a requirement of **deep spiritual significance**.

Leprosy stood for sin, and sin separates the sinner from God.

Apparently, those not having the law of Moses did not treat leprosy as contagious.

Naaman the leper was a general in the army of Syria. 2 Kings 5:1.

Gehazi, with his incurable leprosy (2 Kings 5:27)

talked with Israel’s king. 2 Kings 8:5.

When David said, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,”

he

looked into his inner self,

and contemplated himself as a spiritual leper,

full of sin and the spirit of disobedience.

“AND WHY NOT ME?” (Spurgeon 49)

I. First, then—and this is the main point of this morning’s discourse—HE CAME OF HIMSELF (S1 50).

This leper **came alone**. He came not through persuading friends (S1 57).

In this man’s case *there was no precedent to encourage him*.

I do not find that our Lord had healed a leper up to that time (S1 53).

I do not find that Jesus ever said, “Come unto me, ye lepers, and I will heal you” (S1 53).

Furthermore, *this man had no promise* (S1 53).

This is very unlike the case of the ten lepers, who came to Jesus in a company ... (S1 55).

VII: THE CLEANSING OF THE LEPER. (Taylor 110)

Matthew says, “He came and worshipped him;” and Mark puts it thus, “There came a leper to him, beseeching him and kneeling down to him” thus manifesting both his earnestness and reverence, and saying,

1.3 This poor leper came *himself* to the Saviour.

He had no interested friends to urge him on.

He **came all alone**,

and without any encouraging precedent,

for up to this time Christ had apparently healed no lepers.

It is nowhere written, “Come unto me, all ye lepers, and be cleansed.”

He had no particular promise

to encourage him in thinking that Jesus would cure him of the loathsome disease from which he was a sufferer.

In this he exhibited more courage than any of the ten lepers who had the mutual encouragement of one another in coming to Jesus.

1.4 *If Thou Wilt, Thou Canst Make Me Clean.*—

The leper showed great faith, saying,

SOURCE

“If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean”
(T 113).

But he must have heard of his miracles of healing elsewhere, and though this is the first recorded instance of the cure of a leper by the Lord,

it is possible that there might be cases of leprosy among the diseases which he had healed (T 113-14).

“THE LORD AND THE LEPER”
(Spurgeon² 61)

I. I will begin my rehearsal of the gospel narrative by remarking, first, that THIS LEPER’S FAITH MADE HIM EAGER TO BE HEALED. He was a leper; ... but he believed that Jesus could cleanse him, and his belief stirred him to an **anxious** desire to be healed at once (S2 62).

Alas! we have to deal with **spiritual lepers** eaten up with the foul disease of sin;

but *some of them do not believe that they ever can be healed* ... Because there is no hope, therefore they **plunge deeper and yet deeper** into the slough of **iniquity** (S2 62).

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

“If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”

While this is the first record of the Saviour’s healing leprosy,

there might have been others among the multitudes that received healing at his hands.

Note how **anxious** this poor leper was to be freed from this disease of physical loathsomeness.

In this he is very unlike

many a **moral leper**, many a social leper,

who, day after day, seems more fondly to embrace the idols of sin,

and **more deeply to plunge** into the dark waters of **iniquity**.

The more they sin, the more they love to sin, and the less they desire to be cleansed from the leprosy that plagues their souls.

1.5 This leper did not come to Christ with the view of having his life prolonged as it was. He came for the purpose of being made *whole*. Disappointment awaits the sinner who comes to Christ with the thought of being made easy and comfortable in his life of sin.

There is but one thing that Jesus can do in saving the sinner, and that is the work which

Our first necessity is to be saved from sinning. The very name of Jesus tells us *that*:

he is called Jesus because “he shall save his people from their sins” (S2 63).

his name implies:

“Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people *from their sins*.”

W. S. SADLER.
(*Concluded next week.*)

CLEANSING THE LEPER (*Concluded*)

2.1 *Put Forth His Hand and Touched Him.*—In answer to the leper’s petition, Jesus put forth his hand, touched him, and said, “I will,” thus indicating his supreme authority and unlimited power.

“AND WHY NOT ME?” (Spurgeon1 49)

Did you ever see a man overcome with emotion? His heart seems to swell, his bosom heaves, and tears burst forth. In our Lord’s case **his whole being** was stirred (S1 58).

His whole being was drawn out in sympathy toward this loathsome but believing leper;

his heart was touched.

He reached forth his hand and touched him. The great need that touched the Master's heart moved the mighty hand to touch the need. The same suffering that moved the Saviour's heart to compassion moved his hand to cleanse the leper.

VII: THE CLEANSING OF THE
LEPER. (Taylor 110)

We must, if I may so express it, put ourselves for the time **on a level with them**, and make ourselves one with them (T 118).

2.2 Christ *touched* the leper. This teaches us that we must reach people where they are.

We must be in touch with them, **upon a level with them**,

showing sympathy, not pity, for the erring.

We must touch God with one hand, and humanity with the other. He cleanses us by giving us new life. He does not put new wine into old bottles. He gives us new wine and a new character in which to hold it. He creates a new man, a new disposition, a new heart.

2.3 *Say Nothing to Any Man; Show Thyself to the Priest.*—

This is another instance where

After this act of healing, our Lord straightly charged the man to say nothing to any one,

the Saviour straightly charged the one upon whom he performed the miracle to say nothing to any one;

only, in this case, he added,

but to go at once to the priest,

“Go thy way, show thyself to the priest.”

SOURCE

“LESSONS FROM THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST”

that he might be examined and pronounced to be clean by the legal authority in the case, and that he might offer for his cleansing those things which Moses had commanded.

See Lev. 14:1-7.

Here is another instance showing that

The Lord came “not to destroy the law,

Christ came not to destroy even the law of Moses, much less the law of God;

but to fulfil” it,

but rather to fulfill,

thus bringing the former to an end at his death, and by the same act forever establishing the latter.

and so he sent the man to obey the particular precept which was appropriate to his circumstances ... (T 115).

Christ instructed the cleansed leper to show himself to the priest.

Moses had enjoined upon the priests the work of looking after lepers, attending to the quarantine, etc. Christ does not set the example at this time of ignoring what he had instructed Moses to enjoin upon the people hundreds of years before. He told the leper to offer the customary sacrifice for his cleansing. Had not Christ cleansed him from his leprosy? Was he not every whit whole?—Yes; but this did not relieve him from attending to those things which divine law had prescribed, any more than being miraculously healed would exempt us from the necessity of taking a bath, or partaking of physical nourishment. Our working and praying must co-operate. Both must have for their object the removal of the cause of disease, and be followed by conscientious compliance with every divine requirement.

2.4 *Could No More Openly Enter the City.*—The leper “began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter.” In this he disobeyed Christ’s instructions, and so seriously interfered with the Master’s work that he could enter no more openly into the cities, but taught the people in desert places, and yet they came to him from every quarter.

But, in the third place, let us learn that **obedience is better than zeal** (T 120).

This miracle teaches us that **obedience is better than zeal.**

The cleansed leper failed to obey.

It is not always wise to encourage young converts to tell the story of their conversion,

It is not always best to encourage young converts to tell, at first, all the story of what the Lord has done for them;

a difference must be made.

This is indicated by

and from the fact in some cases the Saviour

the fact that Christ sometimes told those who had been healed

forbade and in others encouraged those whom he had healed, to tell how he had blessed them,

to tell of the miracles which had been performed in their experience, and at other times he forbade them,

it seems probable that he had respect in each case to the subjective effect on the individuals themselves (T 120-21).

undoubtedly in each case owing to the safety or danger to the spiritual experience of the individual,

as well as the effect of such publicity upon his work.

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