**THE HEALING OF A LEPER**

***The Miracle Heard Round Galilee***

***Mark 1:40-45***

Sunday School Lesson 5

*The Miracles of Jesus*

02/10/2019

**Introduction:** Following the calling of four of His apostles, Jesus continued to preach throughout Galilee. As He came to a certain city, there was a man with leprosy there that sought healing from the Lord. Leprosy was generally regarded by the people as a disease that came as a result of a terrible sin. Miriam, the wife of Aaron, suffered from leprosy for a short time after she had caused her husband to rebel against Moses. King Uzziah also received leprosy when he became defiant against God. The Law had very specific instruction for dealing with lepers. They were to be sent out of the camp or city. Living in isolation and suffering, the life of a leper was miserable. It ought not to surprise us, then, that the leper that came to Jesus was extremely humble. He fell on His face before the Lord, and with total assurance, he confessed his belief that Christ could heal him. The Lord graciously healed the man and sent him on his way with specific instruction. Unfortunately, the man did not follow all of the instruction that he was given. Specifically, he was told to keep quiet, but he instead told everyone about the healing. While we might find it interesting that the Lord would provide such instruction, the man’s responsibility was still to be obedient to the Lord first and foremost. As we look at this lesson, we will make some general observations regarding both what the Lord did and how this man with leprosy responded.

1. THE LEPER HAD CERTAINTY REGARDING THE LORD’S POWER TO HEAL, BUT HE QUESTIONED WHETHER THE LORD WOULD BE WILLING. (MARK 1:40)
2. **Notice that the leper made a statement instead of asking a question (Mark 1:40).** As we study the various miracles of Jesus, we see that most of the people that came for healing asked Jesus for it. Yet, the leper does not directly ask the Lord for healing as others might have. Instead, the leper stated clearly that Jesus could heal him. Specifically, he said: “thou canst make me clean.” To the leper, it was never a question of whether the Lord had the power to make him whole again. This is amazing when you consider that nobody else seemed to have that kind of power. He could not find it from the priests. All they could do was pronounce him clean or unclean. He could not find healing from the religious crowd. How was it that this man knew so confidently that the Lord could heal him? The answer is probably found in his clear understanding of what caused his condition and Who Christ was. If God had given him that disease, then God was the one who could take it away. Clearly, he believed that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.
3. **Notice that the leper’s only concern was whether the Lord would be willing to heal him (Mark 1:40).** As mentioned in the introduction, you can hear the humbling attitude that the leper had. While he knew that Christ could heal him, he was not sure if he would be willing. He said: “if thou wilt.” Why would he be concerned over whether Christ was willing to heal him? After all, Jesus had healed many people already. The man obviously thought that he may not be worthy of that healing. Again, this goes back to the cause of his disease. You can perhaps hear his guilt in his statement. Whatever he had done to bring on leprosy was resonating in the back of his mind as he approached the Saviour. Would the Saviour be willing to cleanse someone so physically and spiritually unclean? This is the question that many in the world still ask today. They wonder how a righteous God could possibly be willing to cleanse them of their sin.
4. THE LORD, MOVED WITH COMPASSION, WAS WILLING TO DO THAT WHICH OTHERS COULD NOT AND WOULD NOT DO. (MARK 1:41)
5. **Notice that the Lord’s compassion caused Him to be willing to heal the leper (Mark 1:41).** The answer back from Jesus to the man was both simple yet powerful. He simply said: “I will; be thou clean.” He wanted the man to know that He absolutely was willing to cleanse him. This is the same message that the Lord wants the whole world to know. He desires to cleanse every man. The Lord was certainly not ignorant to this man’s plight. He, no doubt, knew the sinful pleasures that this man had enjoyed that had led him to this current state. In spite of that, His compassion moved Him to action. This reinforces for us that it is the Love of God that forms the basis of salvation. Without a love for man, God would have not been willing to cleanse man. His love did not stay compressed within Him. The question that believers must ask is what does our love move us to do? If it does not move us to help bring people to the cleansing power of Jesus, then it shows us that our love for them is non-existent. A passive and inactive love is not much of a love at all!
6. **Notice that the Lord touched the leper (Mark 1:41).** As mentioned, the Old Testament Law required separation for lepers. This was meant as a way for God to protect those clean from those who were unclean. The Pharisees probably would have viewed the leper approaching Jesus as a violation of that Law (It wasn’t, since Jesus is the great High Priest, and lepers were allowed to present before a priest). He was not supposed to get close to anybody, and he was even required to state that he was unclean if anyone was walking near him. When Jesus sees this man, He doesn’t just offer healing. He actually reaches out and touches the man. The Lord did not have to touch him to heal him. This was a symbolic act by the Lord. He was willing to touch and cleanse those whom others could not and would not touch. If someone came in contact with a leper, they were to be viewed as unclean as well. This is a picture of what Jesus did on the cross. He took on our uncleanness in order to make us clean! He was the only one Who could do that, and He was the only one Who would do that as well.
7. THE LORD OFFERED HEALING, EVEN THOUGH HE KNEW THAT THE MAN WOULD FAIL TO FOLLOW ALL OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS. (MARK 1:43-44)
8. **Notice that the Lord gave the man three specific instructions following his healing (Mark 1:43-44).** After the healing, the Lord told the man that he should not say anything to any man about his healing. Secondly, he was supposed to go his way and present himself to the priest to verify his cleanliness. This was in accordance with the purity instruction found in the Law. Finally, he was supposed to give an offering of thanksgiving as a testimony to the goodness of God in giving him healing. While we do not know for sure if the man followed the second and third instruction, we do know that he definitely did not follow the first instruction. The Lord gave the command to this man with emphasis (The Bible says he straightly charged him.), yet the man still failed to follow through. God charges believers to abstain from sin and follow His commands, yet how often do we fail Him?
9. **Notice that the Lord knew the man would not follow through (Mark 1:43-44).** In spite of His foreknowledge of what the man would do, Jesus did not withhold cleansing from that man. This is similar to the story at the pool of Bethesda. In both cases, Jesus certainly knew the outcome, yet He still showed compassion. It is incredible to think that God’s love is merciful and gracious enough to save us in spite of the knowledge of how we will continue to let Him down. Jesus’ disciples might have wondered why Jesus would heal the man if He knew that the man was going to go out and disobey His command. As people, we would be very slow to forgive someone if we knew that they were going to wrong us thereafter. While we ought not to take advantage of this liberty from God, it is reassuring to the believer that God’s eternal forgiveness cleanses both the past and the future sins.
10. THE LEPER’S ZEAL CAUSED HIM TO DISOBEY THE LORD’S COMMAND AND RESULTED IN HIM HARMING THE WORK OF CHRIST. (MARK 1:45)
11. **Notice the leper’s intention was clearly not to harm Christ but to help Him (Mark 1:45).** Some might argue that it was impossible for the leper to keep quiet about his healing, and they contend that this is a picture of how a soul winner should be. Yet, the challenge here is that Christ would not give a command if He did not want it to be followed. There is no way to validate that the man’s disobedience was acceptable to God. However, we can at least acknowledge that he had the right intentions in his act. He was legitimately trying to give credit to Christ for what He had done. He probably thought that he was doing something good. This shows us the importance, though, in following God’s wisdom over our own. In our flesh, we might think that we are doing something productive, but God is able to see the big picture and guide us down the right path. The Pharisees had plenty of religious zeal and self-justification, but their actions were unrighteous before a righteous God.
12. **Notice that the result of his disobedience caused the work of Christ to be hindered (Mark 1:45).** Here’s where we can ponder the reason for the Lord’s command. This should not be used as a way to validate that we shouldn’t always be sharing the gospel. The people that were coming to Jesus were more concerned about seeing miracles than hearing the Truth of the Gospel. This is mentioned many times in the four Gospels. The problem with this man spreading the news everywhere was that it further exasperated the people’s desire to see miracles performed. The Lord wanted the emphasis to be more on the eternal work than on the short-term work. This caused Him to enter into the desert just to have enough space to address all those who were coming for healing.

**Conclusion:** While this lesson is a clear reminder of the goodness of salvation, there is also a good lesson here for us regarding our obedience and zeal. These two traits should align together. A Christian who is obedient but does not have any zeal is going to limit the work of Christ, and a Christian who is disobedient with zeal is also going to limit the work of Christ. We ought to be passionate about our service to the Saviour, and we must ensure that our service is based in true obedience to His Word. That must be prioritized about our emotions and our own conventional wisdom. We never want to do anything to hinder the work of Christ!