

THE WILLING SAVIOR

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will: be thou clean.

And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. Mark 1:40-42

Jesus Christ is the Sovereign authority over His grace. No one can dictate to Him the exercise of His gifts.¹ Though He has made Himself a Servant to men, still He retains His rightful sovereignty in all matters, especially in the salvation of us weak humans. This story of Jesus illustrates the will of Christ in the salvation experience, and how those of us who would be saved by Jesus must acknowledge to Him personally our need for His merciful yet sovereign will to be exercised in our behalf. His sovereign will must be actively and individually and personally instrumental if any are to be saved. Jesus illustrates in this incident His exercise of a Sovereign's will. Jesus willed the cleansing of this leprous man. It was simply a matter of Jesus' will which then effected the cure, because everything else had been provided for the leper's healing. The cross would be the eternal payment. He needed only Jesus to will it.

¹*Ephesians 4:7*

Mark's Gospel paints graphic pictures of the character and temperament of Jesus and of encountered persons in living color; that is, through the actions of Jesus His and men's natures are revealed. Mark paints the picture of a humble or unpretentious approach to Jesus.

The acts of Jesus teach and preach eternal truths in living, moving pictures; He preaches by His miracles as well as by His discourses. Jesus reveals His character and also teaches His doctrine in a graphic manner through His actions. The persons involved with His physical miracles are similarly representative of great eternal truths, and are exhibiting spiritual healing and not physical healing alone. The healing of this leper is one such teaching miracle; it portrays the Savior saving the sinner. This story will show us much about the Savior of sinners, as well as the sinners that He saves.

This story shows two men: First, Jesus as the willing Sovereign, using His power for sinners' benefit as He wills healing from sin in Himself as each case may require. Second, an unclean leper who represents us sinners, how we must come to Him. We note:

- I. The Sinner Who Came, *Mark 1:40*.
- II. The Savior Who Cleansed, *Mark 1:41-42*.
- III. The Sovereignty of the Cleansing, *Mark 1:41-42*

As we consider this narrative, we should be thinking of its application to spiritually ill men, not just to physically ill men. The cleansing of our present leprosy (sin) is what Christ's Spirit would emphasize to each one of us.

I. THE SINNER WHO CAME

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

Mark 1:40

This leper came to Jesus as every unclean person must come, (1) with an understanding of a prevalent and common uncleanness, (2) in an uncommon and uniquely humble fashion, and (3) as a believing sinner. His approach to Jesus is representative of every sinner who ever came to the Savior for salvation, or ever hopes to come.

(1) MAN'S COMMON & PREVALENT UNCLEANNES

First, the Leper had Common-to-all-Men Sin

There is a commonality of leprosy in every sinner saved by Jesus, making each just as his peers. Leprosy is a type or metaphor of sin; thus the leper in the Bible pictures the naturally born man who is a sinner from birth, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me, Psalms 51:5.*

Leprosy is a disease which first appears as only a few white spots on the skin. It increases slowly at first, sometimes at a protracted rate over a course of many years. The spots become larger and spread over the entire body. Nothing will remove them. When the disease advances, the nose becomes soft and the nostrils enlarge. Growths appear on the jaws; the areas of the eyebrows enlarge, and the ears

become thickened.

The ends of the fingers, with the feet and toes, swell. The nails become scaly. In its deepening stages, the joints of the hands and feet separate and drop off. The leper becomes a hideous sight to all, and a defilement danger to all. Therefore, the Law declared the leper unclean. The priests' examination pronounced a man as either a leper and unclean, or free from leprosy and clean.² After the declaration of uncleanness, the leper shall dwell alone: *without the camp shall his habitation be.*³ He was required to cry, "Unclean, unclean," in order to keep himself separate from the people of God. The Jewish Rabbis developed an elaborate code for dealing with and separating themselves and the people from lepers and their uncleanness. He was banished by the Law from all relations except with those similarly stricken; He could never enter any walled city or the Temple. He could not approach God or man. He was unclean.

This is indeed a fitting picture of the natural man as he is born into this world a sinner, unclean before God and a contamination to God's people. Leprosy is like sin with its uncleanness and the gradual destruction of man's system. The disgusting appearance of the unholy before the Holy One, the continual outbreaks of its filthy eruptions, and the sure progress of its growth are as sin, which in the end will bring complete and utter ruin. But sin, somewhat

² *Leviticus 13:1-44* ³ *Leviticus 13:46*

distinct from leprosy, is a common disease.

Second, the Leper Pictures an Extremely Prevalent Sinfulness. He was *full of leprosy*. This leper of our story was a far-advanced leper. Luke, the beloved physician, records that he was *full of leprosy*. It was in its advanced stages. This is the picture of the sinner who comes to Jesus. Only sinners in the advance stages of felt sin, or acknowledged sin, will come to Jesus properly. This is the uniqueness of the sinner who obtains cleansing from Jesus. He *is full of leprosy* in his own estimation, as well as in God's. Too many see sin in themselves as "not serious," or "not really presenting a danger." But this man was *full of leprosy*; therefore he did not deny its presence and danger to his welfare.

In this he pictures totally depraved men, wherein all the drives of the body are vile before God. *Full of leprosy* is the plight of all naturally born men who are literally full of sin. Man's consciousness level of God is now lowered to a base plane as are all the activities of his mind, heart, and will. Every part of man's being is corrupted by the influences of sin. Not that all men are as evil as they could be, but that the entire nature of man is sinful, just as with the advanced stages of this case of leprosy in our text: He was *full of leprosy* and knew it. That is the only proper approach to Jesus by the unclean. That is a humble and realistic approach. Unfortunately, it is also very unique in

this world of self-righteousness.

(2) MAN'S REQUIRED BUT UNCOMMON AND UNIQUELY HUMBLE APPROACH

First, His Feelings of Guilt were Uniquely Humble, even Unnatural and Certainly Not Everyday. This leper pictures the uniquely humble sinner in that he felt his uncleanness. Its picturesque uniqueness is its origin by the Holy Spirit. This leper is like sinners who have been prepared by Christ's Spirit's conviction about their condition before God. This man had a hypersensitivity about his condition, so also must the sinner approach Jesus. When sin has saturated the awareness and consciousness, the approach to Jesus will be rewarded with cleansing. One might not be as flagrantly or as outwardly vile a sinner as another who lacks this *full of leprosy* experience, but he must be made to see every sin in his life as too much, too terrible, and too great for any approach to Jesus. Like this leper, the only persons who obtain salvation from Jesus are those about whom it could be said that they are *full of sin*. The Savior will save only these kinds of unique sinners who have had their fill of sin, and are troubled by its magnitude and by its presence in their lives. Theirs is the only realistic

⁴ *Luke 5:32*

and honest approach to Jesus for salvation.⁴

Second, Jesus Considered Him as Uniquely Humble, most uncommon and unusual, even distinct from most. But this leper came as every sinner must approach Jesus, as a humble supplicant and sufferer. Although the Scripture tells us that Jesus healed *all manner of disease and all manner of sickness* during this first tour of Galilee,⁵ this is the first report of His healing leprosy. This leper approached Jesus as no one ever before. His petition, *If thou wilt*, suggests his hesitancy about the extent of Christ's commission from the Father. Did it include lepers? He had heard of other healings but not leprosy. His approach and request was, "Lord, I do not know if you were sent to heal lepers. We lepers are most unclean and beyond hope. We are unclean through and through. We know that our lot is without excuse. You and your Father are pure and we are impure. Lord, if you were sent to heal us most unclean, unworthy, and unlikely recipients of your mercies, thou canst cleanse me of my malady. I do not doubt Your Power only Your will." This man felt in his soul, "My case is leprosy, the most unique case. Will He treat me? I am a most uniquely unclean case. Will He cleanse me?"

Even so, the man who hopes to receive

⁵ *Matthew 4:23*

salvation from Jesus must approach him in a similar attitude of mind and heart. The man with whom the Holy Spirit has dealt, because of his consciousness of sin in himself, seems to himself to present a unique and challenging case to the Savior. He knows that his life is uniquely vile and not worthy of consideration by the King of Glory. He feels his sins to be unprecedented and that his wicked life has been "one of a kind." No one has sinned as he has sinned, and this is true. Every one of us is an especially unique and set-apart sinner. It takes a peculiar and especial grace with application of the blood of Jesus Christ to atone for each believer's sins. This leper says what all honest supplicants of King Jesus say, "Lord, you have the means to cleanse me, but my disease is matchless, unequalled, unparalleled, and unprecedented." So must the truly reverent believing sinner realize his own singular wickedness before God and His Christ. The man who feels he is not so evil as others has no hope of help from Jesus. Only the one who comes feeling, knowing, yea, acknowledging his own brand of patented and copyrighted evil, that only he himself has ever devised, that kind of sinner can count on a graciously inclined Savior.

Third, His Actions were Uniquely Humble .

Mark alone details the actions of the leper as *beseeking him, and kneeling down to him and saying unto him*. The *beseeking* was literally "calling for

aid." The *kneeling down* was the obvious posture of humility. The *saying* was his display of humility and unpretentiousness as shown in the words, *If thou wilt*. However, it is the timing of this series of actions which reveal much about the humility of this leper's approach to Jesus. The construction of the Greek suggests that the *beseeking*, *kneeling*, and *saying*, were contemporaneous actions with the action of the verb *came*. This would mean that this leper was entreating Christ before he got to Jesus, that he was kneeling down before Christ before he reached Him, that he was saying, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, before he got to Jesus. This leper, though it must have been very painful to him in his extremely advanced condition, was so anxious to assent to Jesus' Lordship that he was running on his knees the last few yards of his approach to Jesus. What desire! What forgetfulness of all else in an approach of humility! What humility and submission to Jesus' Lordship! Luke adds that he *then fell on his face* while begging Jesus.⁶ The Greek might be interpreted as meaning that he was repeating over and over, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, while running on his knees. Matthew adds that then he *worshipped him*.⁷ All these actions represented a heart of humility in this unclean leper. This is the only correct approach to the Lord Jesus Christ by unclean sinners. None are

⁶ Luke 5:12 ⁷ Matthew 8:2

worthy to walk uprightly in His presence. We must feel our uncleanness and smite our breasts with heads bowed, and say over and over, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Be merciful to me a sinner.* And then we must worship Him.

Fourth, His Words were Uniquely Humble.

This leper's words also reveal his unpretentiousness and humility. There are two Greek words meaning "to be willing, to desire." The one is of a desire that comes from one's emotions. The other is a desire which comes from one's reason, in other words, emotional desire as over against intellectual desire. The leper used the word of emotional desire or will. He appealed to the tenderheartedness of the Messiah. To approach Christ on an intellectual plane is to fail to appropriate His willingness. That is, "Christ, just think about what you are doing. How it is really the rational thing to help me. Christ, I am a chosen one, the Elect. Surely, your great counsels from eternity past have included me." My, what a vain appeal to the intellectual will of Jesus! It is the appeal to the emotional will of Jesus that obtains from Him, though that mercy does truly rest on and is validated by the rationale of the payment for sin on the cross. His mercy to sufferers provides help from the sufferings of His shed blood. Yet the emotional reality of this Man, Jesus, must be approached. No approach to the rationale alone will move Jesus to compassionate

action as does an appeal to His merciful and gracious nature. The cry of suffering, "Lord, be merciful to me as I am suffering and am hopelessly lost in sin" will find a ready reply from the willing Sovereign. The Merciful One does "will" to provide what is needed to alleviate the hurt... because of the cross.

Fifth, His Specific Request was Uniquely Humble . Again, there is unpretentiousness in a request for cleansing instead of only healing. This leper said, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*. His concern had graduated into the more important matter or result of leprosy, its uncleanness. He had been advanced from just the disease into its separating and defiling powers. He saw the result of his condition and not only the immediate pain. All three Gospels record the same request, *Cleanse me*. In other words, this man represents the truly repentant sinner. He sought not just a relief from the discomfort and pain caused by his condition, but he sought a remedy for the uncleanness, an end of his separation from the Person and the things of God. He looked at the result of his condition as something much more important; he saw clearly his uncleanness before God.

Similarly, the sinner who approaches Jesus, not as a fire escape who is only concerned with hell, but as one drawn to Jesus as the Savior from sin and uncleanness before God, is the one who has the will of the Savior in his favor. The acceptable approach

to Jesus is with a concern over one's sin and its terrible effects. Hell? Yes! Pain? Yes! But more than just dealing with judgment, the sinner's appeal to Jesus must deal with sin itself. The real repentant leper cries out, "Remove me from this sin. Cleanse me from this sin which is so repugnant to You and now to me, Oh Lord. My sin! My sin! My sin is my greatest malady!" While healing and health was a part of his request, it was secondary to the uncleanness that he felt when attempting to look into the face of Jesus. He knew that he had to be cleansed from his defilement if ever he was to be acceptable to God, and be admitted into the fellowship of the righteous. Jesus saves from sin.

(3) MAN'S REQUIRED FAITH

First, the Leper Believed in Jesus' Cleansing Power. This leper was a believing sinner; he had faith in Jesus. But it was not faith in His will; it was faith in His ability. He never questioned Christ's ability and power to cleanse, but questioned His willingness to do it. What the leper did is what every sinner must do in approaching Jesus. The sinner must submit himself to His will, and so with the same breath declare his faith in his power. The leper said, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* The underlined words are from the Greek root dun. This word refers to the innate ability to perform tasks. In Greek it came to be used in common vernacular like our word "can," with the

understood meaning of inherent resourcefulness to perform what one chooses to do. This leper had seen or heard enough of Christ's healing ministry already in Capernaum that he believed in Jesus as the Messiah. But he doubted the will of this Messiah to heal such a loathsome and unclean and diseased person as he. Of His power he is sure; but of his willingness he is not so sure. But he submits himself to Jesus' merciful nature. He begs or implores that he also might be a recipient of the Messiah's healing power and mercy; and so it is with men who approach Jesus. Doubts about His power are unacceptable. Doubts about His willingness are acceptable, perhaps even healthy. It goes like this: Christ's work of redemption is sufficient for all men without exception, but is efficient only for those whom He chooses. When men approach Jesus, some doubt is good in its affect to produce humility and unpretentiousness. The faith is in Who He is and what He has done. Salvation is the actual experience of going to Him to see if Who He is and what He has done is for me. Amen!

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.
John 6:37

Second, He Believed in Jesus' Choices to

Apply or not to Apply His Resources for the Hopeless and Helpless. One should never question the power or ability of Jesus to save and to change sinners. That is what true saving faith is all about. The leper said, *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* He questions not the ability or resource of Christ, but rather questioned the application of His mercy to himself. That is the proper position for the inquirer. He must come to this place where he is absolutely void of hope or help. He is powerless and helpless except as God only will extend mercy to him. He must acknowledge his entire dependence upon the mercy of Christ. He must realize that only the sovereign movement of Jesus' merciful nature can secure his personal salvation. When one realizes that the mercy of God is his only hope, then as he inquires of Christ for it, he finds it always. Jesus never turns away sinners who believe in the work of the cross for sinners, who believe in His Person as God, who seek mercy at the exercise of His Sovereign will. *The same Lord is rich unto all that call upon him.* He is rich in mercy.⁸

Third, He Believed in Jesus' Deity. This leper approached Jesus knowing that here was a Man Who had the resources of Deity. He had such faith in the God-Man concept of the Messiah

⁸ *Romans 10:12; Ephesians 2:4; Psalms 130:7.*

that with unquestioning assurance he acknowledged Christ as Deity. The inquirer after Christ must recognize Christ's unique position as the God-Man. Jesus is a Man Who lived, died, and resurrected to ascend into heaven in order to exercise that same power and will of Deity for the benefit of others. He is seated at the right hand of God, and overcomes the inherent deficiency of each supplicant who comes to Him. Only the God-Man could overcome sin in man. It took Deity to atone man's sin: it took a Man to substitute for man's sin. This combination truth is pictured in this leper's approach to the God-Man, Christ Jesus.

II. THE SAVIOR WHO CLEANSSES

And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will: be thou clean.

And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. *Mark 1:41-42*

The Savior's endorsement of the propriety of the leper's words confirms that God must will the salvation of every person who is saved. The words, *If thou wilt* prove this. Jesus did heal him; therefore Jesus did approve of his faith, and of his personal awareness of Christ's own will in the exercise of His powers to cleanse and to save sinners.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. [Added emph.]

Ephesians 1:4-5

In accord with Christ's sovereign will in saving men, His Elect, we shall take note of:

(1) The Savior's Particular Redemption for Individual Lepers.

(2) The Savior's Particular Grace for Individual Lepers.

(3) The Savior's Particular Change by an Individual Leper.

(4) The Savior's Particular Ability for Individual Lepers.

(1) THE SAVIOR'S PARTICULAR REDEMPTION

⁹ *Matthew 8:17* ¹⁰ *See I Peter 2:24*

FOR THIS ONE INDIVIDUAL LEPER

Jesus would not turn away any supplicant for His favors. Why? Was it only because He was a soft touch and always submissive to the needs of all? The answer is in the wisdom of Solomon:

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.

Say not unto thy neighbor, Go, and come again, and tomorrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. [Added emph.]

Proverbs 3:27-28

First, God made a Particular Application of His Blood. Christ is God; He has the ability and resource to do good to spiritual lepers, and it is *by Him*, near at hand. Jesus was/is ever conscious of the eternal and yet particular redemption of the cross. This was true of His personal ministry when He was confronted with physical maladies as well as spiritual deformity, that is, sin. In regard to these physical healings, Matthew quoted *Isaiah 53:5, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*⁹ The passage in Isaiah refers to all maladies and infirmities that come as a result of sin—both physical and spiritual.¹⁰ It was only because of a particular measure of special grace toward certain individual

¹¹ *Revelation 13:8*

sufferers that made it possible for Christ to cleanse this leper. This leper was one for whom Christ's blood was applied for his particular, physical malady—his leprosy. Only through the redemption of the sacrifice of His own blood did Jesus heal physical sicknesses during His ministry on earth. Solomon's testimony forbade the refusal of help to those in need, *when one has it by thee*, or at hand and available. Every physical malady that confronted Christ had been provided for by the *lamb slain from before the foundation of the world*.¹¹

Second, God had a Predetermined Application for the Blood of Christ. His work on the cross had already been applied to particular men with particular diseases and sicknesses far in advance of Jesus' actual ministry. Without the cross and its payment for sin, no physical healing could be possible. Not all men are healed physically; therefore it is safe to conclude that not every man is included in the blood's payment for sin. This is obvious because of the many sick and diseased Christians, who address Christ on the terms of His blood who are never healed. Christ's blood, therefore, is particularly applied to particular persons and maladies of sin. Since Christ's blood is effectual for all for whom it is applied, quite obviously some physical and spiritual maladies are not

covered under its atonement. This leper's healing pictures this truth. He shows to us in his physical healing our spiritual healing. All who come to Jesus as did this leper receive the healing through the blood's power to remove effectually all the guilt and sin of those for whom it is shed, but for no more.

Then, someone raises the question; "For whom did Christ die?" The answer to that question is: "For as many as are cleansed, and no more." Jesus' blood allocated grace for this leper because he came to Jesus with a humble, unpretentious, and believing approach. Similarly, Jesus' blood allocates grace for every sinner who comes with that same kind of humble, unpretentious, and believing approach. Today, His blood has made its particular purchase of all who come to Him in like manner as did this leper. His blood in heaven assures that all who come to Jesus for healing from sin will indeed find that cleansing. That blood is powerful for healing spiritual diseases today and Jesus will *do thee good* if you come to Him believing. He has the means—His blood payment for your sin—near at hand in heaven when you come to Him as a unique, humble, and believing sinner.

Third, God made an Individual

¹² *II Timothy 4: 1*

Application of the Blood of Christ. It was for certain and individual maladies that Christ died. His redemption was very particular in every case. This is the only viable explanation of why all physical illnesses are not healed when Christ's blood is appealed at the throne of grace. Only certain of all the sicknesses are covered by the blood. That is why Paul had to write: *Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick* ¹² His atonement for maladies—both physical and spiritual, which is what our text pictures—is limited only to those chosen to be healed and saved by God, and to none others. When we pray for healing—either for ourselves or for others—our requests are answered affirmatively only when Christ's blood paid for that particular sin-caused malady. It is only if Christ's blood paid for that particular imputed guilt from Adam's transgression that Divine intervention would be forthcoming

(2) THE SAVIOR'S PARTICULAR GRACE FOR INDIVIDUAL LEPERS

The response of Jesus revealed a peculiar characteristic of God. One looks at this miracle and says, "Why, I see it. He is displaying His power and Almighty energies." I would answer back, "True." He is indeed doing that in healing this leper. He is constantly displaying His omnipotence when He changes a sinner into a believer. But that is not the peculiar

characteristic of Deity to which I refer. I call attention to the peculiar characteristic of His grace.

Notice, there is a Peculiar Characteristic of God's Grace, By itself omnipotence could not heal this leper or save any sinners. Though God unquestioningly has the almighty power to change a leprous man into a cleansed man, yet He is powerless to do anything for sinful men apart from His grace. God must not dismiss evil or its effects without justice being satisfied. The man had leprosy because of the original fall of Adam in the Garden. It was sin that caused the leprosy, not the personal sin of the man himself, though he was guilty of sin, but it was from the sin of our Federal Head, Adam. Through that fall of Adam, sin and all its plagues entered into the human experience. Therefore, we find Christ healing a man of a malady by His omnipotence, yes, but more, much more. By His merciful attitude toward sinners He paid the price for sin's removal. Man's leprosy can be removed only because of God's character of grace in the cross of Jesus Christ. God put the burden of this sickness on His Son on the cross, and then omnipotence could act. So likewise, God put the burden of sin upon Christ on the cross, so omnipotence could act out in removing the maladies of sin—the suffering, pain, sorrow, and

¹³ Literal translation of *moved with compassion*, KJV.

lastly, death. The Divine characteristic of grace is displayed in the cleansing of this leper and in the whole scheme of redemption. Mercy and goodness in God led Him to send His only begotten Son that He by omnipotent grace would save sinners from their sins.

**(3) THE SAVIOR IS PARTICULARLY CHANGED
BY INDIVIDUAL LEPERS**

And Jesus, moved with compassion...

Jesus was changed by the approach of this leper. The writer of Hebrews stated it precisely:

For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

Now realize what is meant. Here is the God-Man Who is "compassioned."¹³ This suggests a movement, a change, or mutability which is not possible with God. God is immutable, unchangeable, *I am the Lord. I change not*. This being true, how can we explain and understand that the Son of God here is *moved*, or better, "changed into compassion?" Jesus here is taken over, so to speak, by the feelings of mercy, by which He had not been possessed before. If Jesus had previously been characterized by mercy toward this leper, He would have already cleansed him. But No! Jesus *is moved with compassion*; He takes on a merciful disposition when approached as this leper had

approached Him. How is this possible?

Jesus Christ is not just God, but is the God-Man. He is possessed of a human nature as well as of a Divine. Consequently, His Manhood became acutely aware of human need and reacted as the Ideal and Perfect Man. He became caught up in the feelings of human need, and then, as omnipotent Deity, exercised sovereign grace to cure this man in need. In the same manner the work of Jesus continues today. He is ever ready to be touched with need. He is always *moved with compassion* when approached as the Man of all other men, as the Mediator, as the Advocate Who can and does mediate God in the behalf of needy sinners. He is the Man, Christ Jesus. If you too approach this Man, He will exercise the same Divine prerogative or a gracious Sovereignty in your behalf. He changes from Judge to Savior to as many as appeal to His emotional will. He will be *moved with compassion* to become your Redeemer. He is the God-Man, possessed of two natures—Human and Divine. Therefore, He can *be touched with the feelings of our infirmities* in a unique way.

(4) THE SAVIOR'S PARTICULAR ABILITY TO CLEANSE INDIVIDUAL LEPERS

And Jesus... put forth his hand and touched him..., and he was cleansed.

If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his

garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Haggai 2:12-13

The Defilement of Impurity

Haggai stresses that holiness by itself could not overcome or overpower unholiness. Whoever touched a leper was defiled, contaminated, unclean, and unholy. But Jesus touched the leper and was not unclean. Instead, the leper became cleansed as Jesus stated it in truth, *Be thou clean*. One commentator stated this was an example of Jesus' "purity overcoming impurity." Not so say I. It was not the purity of Jesus that brought cleanness to this leper, but something quite different. Before Jesus came, all men who touched the purity of God became more impure in their own estimation. Travel through the Bible scenes of men contacting God. Hear Isaiah cry out, *Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips*. He had touched God. Moses, Daniel, Joshua, David, all experienced the same reaction when they came into contact with God. They touched close to God, and became more unholy; they felt uncleanness in their souls. But this is the uniqueness of Jesus. He is purity and the

very holiness of God. He alone of all men can touch uncleanness and not Himself be defiled, nor does touching Him for mercies make the unclean feel more unclean. How can the touch of Jesus bring cleanness to this leper and to every sinner who contacts Him in a similarly humble fashion? And how can Jesus remain holy after touching this unclean leper, or the unclean sinner who comes by prayer into His presence? The answer is again in the cross.

Purity through the Cross

The cross brings to men victory over uncleanness when they communicate with Jesus. The cross of Jesus changes the uncleanness of sinners into cleanness. No amount of defilement could overpower the work of the cross. Quite the contrary! The cross cleanses from *all sin*. There is the work of Christ's blood that washes away sin and defilement so that He is not made unclean by the touch of lepers, but contrariwise, the unclean is made clean. Lepers and sinners are clean as the snow is white. This is the whole story of the cross as far as Jesus' personal ministry is concerned. He was so closely related to the cross and its effects that even before its actual event, Jesus had appropriated the power of its effect in His Person as the Messiah. This explains all the forgiveness in the Old Testament also. Until the cross, the surety and preordained work of the cross made salvation possible. Always, the cross in the

¹⁴ *Hebrews 11:13*

future brought cleansing to sinners by its promise.

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
Hebrews 9:15

This verse in Hebrews refers to the *transgressions* committed *under the first testament* [Old Testament]; and that Jesus' death was the *redemption*, or payment made for those *transgressions*. It was like a giant log jamb, which was made up of sins or transgressions committed in the Old Testament times. They all stacked up against the time of the cross. God granted salvation to Old Testament saints through their faith in the coming Messiah,¹⁴ in view of Christ's, at that time, yet future payment for sin on the cross. But when the cross became a reality, those transgressions were washed away by Jesus' blood. That was the same power that Jesus exercised with this leper. His yet future sin-bearing redemption on the cross so permeated His Person and Presence that He overcame uncleanness by the cross' yet future redemption.

III. THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE CLEANSING

And Jesus... saith unto him, I will.

(1) JESUS' SOVEREIGN VOLITION

The words of Jesus, *I will*, is the exercise of His Sovereign Volition as the Savior and Lord of all. Every man ever saved must have come to this place where he personally acknowledged the sovereignty of Jesus and then awaited His *I will*. What sweet sounding words to this leper! He had doubted the will of Jesus to cleanse him from the very nature of his unclean and defiling disease. When Jesus said *I will*, He used the same language that the leper had used. He did not find in the man's prayer anything insulting or impeachable, but only a proper recognition of the freedom of God's will to heal and to save whomsoever he chooses.

¹⁵ *Romans 9:18-24*

(2) JESUS' SOVEREIGN REPLY:
THE CHOICES OF MERCY

For he saith unto Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. [Added emph.] *Romans 9: 15*

Men are never left hanging after appealing to Jesus. Always, in every case there are the words of sovereignty, *I will*. He appealed to the sovereign mercy of Jesus, and He answered accordingly. The Lord Jesus was so pleased with the man's humble words that He seized them as they came out of his mouth and used them Himself, saying, *I will*. They who submit themselves to Christ's sovereign disposition, as did this leper, will hear an *I will*. He turns away none who appeal to His sovereign mercy.

(3) JESUS' SOVEREIGN YET OBLIGING RESPONSE:
THE CHOICES OF THE SOVEREIGN'S WILL

And Jesus saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. [Added emph.]

Mark 1:41-42

Jesus did not say, "I will cleanse you," but emphasized the passivity of the leper in his experience

¹⁶ *Romans 10:13* ¹⁷ *I Corinthians 2:14; John 6:44*

of seeking cleansing. He is saying in effect, "This cleansing is altogether outside of yourself. You are right. I have the power to cleanse according to My will, and ultimately the decision to cleanse man of uncleanness is at My discretion not yours." That is the lesson for all men to learn, namely: that God above determines man's salvation from sin. The choice is God's. Yet to every man who acknowledges that right of sovereignty, and realizes its necessity because of his own helplessness, He grants cleansing. Man must not question God's right of choosing sinners to cleanse or not to cleanse because it is exclusively His exercise of just, fair, and proper rights as Sovereign.¹⁵ To question God's right of choosing sinners to cleanse, or not to cleanse, is to fail to admit to man's utter decrepit, defiled, and lost condition. Except God did choose some, none would be saved. The acknowledgement of Christ's sovereignty as Savior is all-important in salvation. Man must call on *the name of the Lord*,¹⁶ and realize that God owes no man anything, except judgment and condemnation; and that salvation must come from, be originated by, and find initiation in God's Sovereign will. Since all men without exception are dead to Him and unclean, and since all are alike unable to respond to any overtures from or about God,¹⁷ we lepers must appeal to His sovereign will if any among us are to be saved.

Knowing brethren beloved, your election of

God.

I Thessalonians 1:4

Submission to the Sovereign's Will

Several years ago I worked on a construction project which had a surplus of a certain rather expensive building material. It was much too costly for ordinary folk to have in a home, but since I was at that time building a home, I decided to seek it, even though it was really beyond my own social class. I drove to the supplier's office on Saturday morning, wondering, "Will he or won't he." The supplier was a one-man business in a one-room office with one desk. He was seated behind it when I entered. After I explained who I was and where I worked, I said, "Would you sell me the left over materials from the Sooner High School Project?" They were worth thousands of dollars, far beyond my ability to buy. "For how much?" was his returned inquiry. "One hundred dollars;" I said. He did not hesitate a moment but responded right back, "I will. I'll take it." I was elated. I gave him a one hundred dollar bill; he gave me an order to the construction company's field foreman to give me all excess materials supplied by him. I had obtained the impossible by simply appealing to his will.

Salvation is somewhat like that. Christ has the resources, no doubt about it. He did the work for believing sinners on the cross when He died as their substitute. Like that supplier who had the materials, and had all the rights to them by contract and by rights

of ownership, Jesus has but to move His own sovereign will for one to be saved. When I approached that supplier, I did it humbly and with great anxiety. I knew that it was simply a matter of his will, and not of any question of his resources. Christ responds to men in a similar fashion. He wills to be good to all who go to Him in a humble, unpretentious, and believing manner. That supplier was the absolute sovereign over those materials that I desired. He controlled them. They were his. Even so is Christ just as much in possession of His work in the cross. He owns it, and determines who shall share in its power to save. He has already determined that only guilty and confessing and acknowledging sinners will move His will.

Appealing to Christ's Sovereign Will

The fact of this leper's cleansing and healing was not based upon his faith in Christ's ability alone. He already knew that Christ could exercise such power. *Thou canst* means "Lord, you have ability, power, almighty faculties of Deity. You can cleanse me. I acknowledge that, but, Lord, my knowledge gains me naught, nothing. What I must have is Your sovereign exercise of mercy toward me personally." If the Lord wills it, He can make thee whole as He did this leper. He wills the lost to be found, the lepers to be cleansed, and the sinners to be saved. Go to Jesus and appeal to Him for His exercise of will in your behalf. Cry aloud as a leprous unclean penitent, *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.* Then you will hear immediately

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