

Title: The Testimony

Text: Matthew 8: 1-4

Date: June 21, 2019

Place: Fourth Friday Fellowship, SGBC, NJ

Matthew 8: 1: When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. 2: And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. 3: And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4: And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

We have been learning about how God gives faith through the preaching of the gospel. So this time I want to show you an example of faith. The Lord Jesus had just finished preaching what is commonly called his “sermon on the mount.” Since “*faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” it is fitting that this example of faith comes as soon as he finished preaching the gospel. Since God gives faith by the miracle of regeneration and God gives Christ’s righteousness by the miracle of imputation through faith, it is also fitting that this example is connected with our Lord performing a great physical miracle.

Proposition: This leper came to the Lord because he believed Christ could heal him if the Lord would. The physical miracle the Lord worked is a picture of the spiritual miracle the Lord works in each of his people by his grace when he regenerates us and imputes Christ’s righteousness to us through faith.

NONE TOO SINFUL

Matthew 8: 1: When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. 2: And, behold, there came a leper...

Christ will not reject any sinner because you are too sinful. No sinner is too sinful to come to Christ through faith. Christ will receive you no matter how sin-sick you may be. This man is a picture of that. He had what was the greatest, most dreaded disease of that time, leprosy. Leprosy is a great picture of sin.

At that time, leprosy was incurable—unless God healed them, a person usually died a long, slow, lingering death. Sin is incurable—no man can cure himself of sin. We are born spiritually dead, having no understanding of God and no desire to seek a true understanding. Instead, we hate the true God. Sin is what makes you want to do what you are told not to do. Nobody had to teach you to sin—you were born knowing how to sin. I am trying to bring it home to you just how real our sin is. Sin is why we stink without deodorant. Sin causes physical sickness, disease, aging/wrinkles, and finally death. Unless, we die some immediate death, our physical body suffers a long, slow, lingering death from sins just like the leper.

Leprosy was a spreading disease—it spread over a persons’ body, slowly eating them up. It causes disfigurement of the skin and bones. It causes twisting of the limbs/curling fingers (a claw hand) and thickening of the outer ear. The nose collapses. Tumors develop all over the skin. Sin is a spreading disease. God said through Isaiah, “*the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. 6: From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment*” (Is 1: 5-6).

Leprosy is a hardening disease—it destroys nerve endings so a person loses all ability to sense pain. As we grow older, we become hardened in sin so that what little sense of sin we had when younger, we lose as we grow older. For example, sins that pricked your conscience when you were 5 years old did not phase you at 10. Sins you recognized at 10 seem like nothing to you at 20. Scripture speaks of sinners who grow older “*having their conscience seared with a hot iron*” (1 Tim 4:2). The conscience becomes like a burn on the skin after it hardens into a callous. God speaks of sinners “*who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness*” (Eph 4:19). There are many aged sinners, and younger sinners, who are just that way—past feeling, given over to sin.

Lepers made everyone and everything they touched unclean—so does a sinner! When God told the children of Israel to make an altar, he said, “*And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it*” (Ex 20:25). A work we do may be good. It may help someone. But in the eyes of God our sin pollutes it. Our motive of the heart is sinful. Therefore, God will not accept it. No sinner can work out our own righteousness to save ourselves.

Under the law, a leper must be legally cast out and separated from the general population—sin has legally separated every sinner from God. God said, “*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*” (Is 59:2) God’s holy justice says “*the soul that sinneth, it must die*” (Eze 18: 4). We must die not only physical death. Every sinner must die under the just condemnation of God. We either must die under God’s wrath in a substitute or in ourselves. But all shall die under the just wrath of God for our sins.

You and I are sinners! In fact, we have no idea how sinful we really are. And we have no idea how holy God is and how much holy God hates sinners. That’s right God hates *sin* but he also hates *the sinner*. My freshman year of college English we read the sermon Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God by Jonathan Edwards. He was a preacher and president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton). In his sermon he said, “God hates sinners.” Everyone in the class objected, “No, God hates sin but God loves the sinner.” I said, “The bible says God hates sinners.” So the teacher divided the class between

those who agreed that God hates the sinner and those who did not. I was the only one on the side who said it was in the bible. So the next day I brought my bible to class and showed them the following scriptures.

Psalm 5:5: The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

Psalm 10:3: For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

Psalm 11: 5...the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Proverbs 6: 16 These six doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: 17: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18: An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, 19: A false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

God hates sinners because God is holy and can have nothing to do with a sinner.

Job 15: 15...the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16: How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

But never imagine you are too sinful to come to Christ, meaning, never think Christ will not receive you due to your sins. God chose a people and sent his only begotten Son into this world to heal us of our sins so that God can receive us. The Son of God became a Man like his people so he could bare the sins of his people in his own body on the tree. Doing so Christ brought honor to God's holy justice. His people died in him under the law. He put away our sins and made us the righteousness of God in him. Now holy God can receive his people because we are as righteous and holy as God in Christ.

But be sure to get this. God will only receive us through faith in his Son. We must have Christ's righteousness which God gives to a sinner freely through faith in Christ. But never imagine that Christ will reject you because you are too sinful.

ONLY A SINNER

Matthew 8: 2: And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

We must come to Christ confessing we are nothing but sin. When a sinner possesses true faith he comes to Christ believing Christ is able to heal him of his sin. We will see how a confession of sin is included in faith. But here are five things included in coming to Christ in true faith.

Not ashamed—one, when a sinner believes on Christ, he is not ashamed to confess Christ before the multitudes. Our text says there were “great multitudes” following Christ. Still, the leper stepped out of the crowd to confess his need of Christ. This leper was not ashamed to confess Christ before men. He came to Christ right there in front of them all, “*For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed*” (Rom 10: 11). When you truly behold Christ, when you truly see how righteous and good and merciful Christ is, then you will not be ashamed that your sin-loving, God-hating friends know it. But Christ said, “*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels*” (Mk 8:38).

Broken and contrite—two, to come to Christ is to come humbled and broken in spirit. He came “*and worshipped him.*” It means this leper bowed down at Christ's feet. We are haughty, arrogant, proud sinners by nature. But the word of God is a hammer that breaks the hard heart. The Spirit of God gives a contrite heart willing to bow down at Christ's feet like a submissive child before his father. The apostle Paul said as a sinner hears the gospel of Christ preached and the Spirit of God blesses it to his heart, “*Thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest*” (1 Cor 14: 25). They are made manifest to himself. John Gill said, “the Spirit of God...shows [him] the lusts [of his heart]...filling the conscience with a sense of guilt, and a consciousness of deserved punishment; so that the person looks upon himself as particularly spoken to, and as if the person speaking had knowledge of all that was within him, and adapted his [sermon] on purpose to him, and delivered it for his sake alone; concluding, that there is, and must be, something more than human in it.” Then Paul said, “*and so falling down on his face he will worship God*”. In his heart, he will bow down like this leper did physically. And concerning that preacher and that church which God used to preach the gospel to him, that man will “*report that God is in you of a truth*” (1 Cor 14: 25). It means he will report to others that God is using your church and your preacher to call out his people. But did you see? When God reveals the secrets of his own heart to him, the sinner will own his sin and thus fall down on his face and will worship God. A willingness to bow to God comes from a broken and contrite heart which is given when the sinner beholds how sinful he is. While men are running about trying to make great sacrifices to work their way to heaven, they have no idea, “*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” (Ps 51: 17).

Isaiah 57:15: For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Isaiah 66:2...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

Sovereign—three, to come to Christ is to come owning Christ to be your sovereign Lord who can do with you as he will—“*Lord, if thou wilt.*” When God fills the heart with faith the sinner stops bragging about his own will and starts saying, “*not my will, but thine, be done*” (Lu 22:42). Sinners are not saved by our will. We are saved by God’s will!

Romans 9: 15: For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. 16: So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

Persuaded of Christ’s ability—four, to come to Christ is to come believing Christ is able to save—“*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst...*” In Matthew 9, two blind men came to Christ begging mercy. “*Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you (Mt 9:28-29).* Does any sinner here believe Christ is able to save? Abraham “*staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness*” (Ro 4:20-22). True faith says, “*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*” (2 Ti 1:12).

Confession of sin—five, here is our point. Faith comes to Christ confessing I am a sinner—“*Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*” This leper confessed he was unclean. He confessed he was leprous in need of cleansing. That is a picture of a sinner who confesses himself to be only sin, with no ability to do anything but sin. The problem is never that we are too sinful. Our problem is that we must come confessing that all we are is sin! The great problem is that most think they are too good to come to Christ! (Mt 9: 9-13)

MERCY GIVEN

Matthew 8: 3: And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

If you come to Christ as this leper came then you will find what this leper found. No one would dare touch a leper for fear of being made unclean themselves. But not the great Physician—“*Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him*” The reason we come to Christ this way is because Christ has entered into us and made us one with him. That is what this touch represents. It represents the oneness between Christ and the child of grace that Christ creates anew by a vital union with himself.

Sinner, if you come to Christ not ashamed of him, with a broken and contrite spirit, owning Christ to have the sovereign right to do with you as he will, believing Christ is able to save you and confessing yourself to be a sinner then Christ will make you whole immediately.

1 John 1: 8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. [the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin]

THE TESTIMONY

Matthew 8: 4: And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift [the offering for atonement] that Moses [the law] commanded, for a testimony unto them.

Then you will be a testimony to poor, lost sinners. Christ made this leper a testimony. Of what?

At the time the leper came to him, the law had not yet been fulfilled by Christ on the cross. But that law of the leper was the law of God telling what was to be done *the day the leper was cleansed (Lev 14)*. This was the day this leper was cleansed.

The law commanded that on the day a leper was cleansed *the priest* was to offer *gifts*. The priest typified Christ our High Priest. The gifts were sacrifices to God to make atonement on behalf of the leper. Christ laid down his life as the sacrifice to put away our sins and make atonement to God on behalf of his leprous elect people. Then according to the law, the priest was to apply oil and blood to the leper to ceremonially cleanse him. Christ applied the oil of the Holy Spirit to us, sanctifying us and cleansing us personally within. That law was still in effect until Christ went to the cross and put an end to it. After Christ cried it is finished, he was the end of that law. The veil in the temple rent in two declaring the law had been fulfilled by Christ. It was no more in effect. So since the law was not yet fulfilled by Christ at the time that Christ healed this leper, Christ sent him to do as the law commanded.

Still, Christ had made this leper the testimony to them (and to us) that Christ is the one the law declared. Christ alone made atonement for his sinful people. And Christ alone cleanses his people from our leprosy of sin within by sanctifying us with his own blood. All who believe on Christ are a testimony made by Christ himself, “*Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart*” (2 Cor 3:3). We are a testimony declaring “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*” (Rom 10: 4).

Sinner come to Christ believing on him today and you will be the testimony of Christ! May God be willing to speak to you today!

Amen!