

Complete Restoration for All Unclean, Part 2

Luke 5:14-16

Look at Luke Chapter 5, verse 12, "While he," while Jesus, "was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but 'go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.' But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places to pray."

We ended last time by noting how absolutely amazing it was for Jesus to reach out and touch this man who was covered with leprosy. The man had asked Jesus, "Are you willing to cleanse me?" And before saying, "I am; be cleansed," Jesus acted before he spoke. He showed in his actions the compassions of his heart.

Verbal profession of willingness followed immediately after and that is really a good example for us to follow, isn't it?

If you want to know what someone really believes, don't just listen to what they say, watch what they do. How people live is a very good indicator of what they really believe, what they love, what they value. For Jesus, there was no difference between his words and his actions. We see him as the essence of integrity itself. What he says and what he does are in perfect agreement, perfect harmony. He has absolute integrity. It provides us with the basis of our assurance because he does everything he says he will do. When he says he will forgive us, forgive us he does. When he says he'll take us to be with his father in heaven, that's exactly what he will do.

He is willing to cleanse us and restore us to God. And that's what this story teaches us, that he is willing to reach out and touch those who are full of leprosy, like this man, not unlike us, Leprosy is merely an external visible symbol of the reality of our own sin. Like leprosy our sin, when it is truly exposed, it is truly repulsive. When people around us see our sin in all of its ugliness, they want to stay away. They want to

keep their distance. That's what's pictured in the insolation aspect of leprosy.

In Israel, sin fractures human relationships, sin isolates us, sin divides us, sin drives wedges between people and that's why leprosy is the perfect Old Testament picture of the doctrine of total depravity. When we see our sin as God sees our sin, well, that's when we get a much better grasp of God's amazing grace. Our sins are repulsive and repugnant to a holy God and like leprosy in a physical sense, only God is able to cleanse and cure us of the spiritual malady called sin.

Again, when we know that God is able to see the depth and the breadth of our depravity, that God is able to take our full and accurate measure, knowing us better than anybody else, knowing us better than even we ourselves know ourselves. It's even more remarkable that Jesus is willing to reach out and touch vile sinners like us. God sees us for what we really are. And yet he has shown his great compassion for us by sending forth his son to earth to touch us with that cleansing power. As Romans 5:8 says, "God shows us his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Now we, all of us here, rejoice in that Gospel truth, don't we? That is the essence and the foundation of the Gospel; that's the reason we're here. For every soul that knows its own sinfulness, for every soul that knows the depth and darkness of its own depravity, how far that can go, how deep it can go, how ugly it is, and that mourns over the shame of its own guilt, the willingness of Jesus Christ to reach out and touch what is vile, what is morally repugnant with his own hands.

That's the essence of our hope, our joy. That's the essence of everything in the Gospel. That compassionate and powerful touch, not only the will, but the ability to cleanse us from all our unrighteousness. That's the essence of the Gospel, and that's what fills our hearts with hope and joy.

But we, we need to realize something here, beloved. Not everybody was thrilled about the fact that Jesus touched lepers. Not everybody saw that as a good thing. Not everyone rejoiced in the fact that Jesus reached out to vile sinners. Take a quick look at the very next verse after our section, verse 17, "On one

of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem.”

Huh, well, this is interesting. What are those guys doing there? What is their interest in Jesus’ ministry all of a sudden? What caused religious leaders from, as it says there, “every village of Galilee and Judea,” even, “from Jerusalem” itself. What caused them to come to Jesus? They all of a sudden want to become his disciples? Not on your life. These religious leaders considered themselves to be the very epitome of righteousness, of morality, of adherence to the law. They would never admit that they were more wretched in God’s eyes than a rotting leper.

Like most Americans, they considered themselves to be pretty good people. And that had the tendency to make them critical, to make them judgmental, to make them uncompassionate to the extreme. The Pharisees, the teachers of the law, knew that anyone who touches human uncleanness, Leviticus 5:3, becomes unclean. They had heard the report of Jesus touching the leper and the leper becoming clean, but instead of considering

the implications of that tremendous miracle, instead of having a, a view to the fact of cleansing of someone with a horrendous skin disorder, they were ready to judge, criticize, condemn.

Just think about that. I mean, for the first time in human history, a reverse contamination has just occurred. Instead of Jesus contracting the uncleanness of the leper, the leper contracted the cleanness of Jesus Christ. But, Ah, ah, ah, said the Pharisees. Just a minute there Jesus, you touched a leper and that's not allowed. They didn't have a category for this.

So instead of reconsidering Jesus, instead of reprocessing and rethinking, they took offense at him. They showed up in Capernaum, Luke 5:17, to watch for other law violations, for other ways that Jesus is offending their traditions, ignoring their traditions. The Pharisees, the law professors, they were there to inspect Jesus' ministry. They were there to examine his unorthodox methods to see whether or not they'd give him their stamp of approval, whether or not they'd accept this, Messiah.

Listen, if they're offended by that action, they had better fasten their seatbelts because Jesus is getting ready to do some remarkable things in this chapter. In verses 17 to 26, he's going to not only heal a paralytic, he's going to forgive his sins. That's going to irritate them. If you can believe that? Preposterous, they say. Even worse, Jesus is getting ready to call a tax collector; a vile, wretched, hated tax collector, to be part of his chosen Twelve. That's verses 27 to 32, again, Outrageous, they cry.

These miracles, these actions, they were going to send the religious leaders of Israel over the absolute edge, and they would move them into a position that they were already there in their hearts, but even outwardly they were going to move to this despising of Jesus rather than bowing before him as Lord. He didn't act the way they thought he should act and they were quick to criticize his ministry, to judge him.

But at this point, Luke wants us, the readers, to understand that the way Jesus conducted himself, the way he executed his ministry, the way he fulfilled everything that he was called by the Father to do, he was completely righteous.

Everything he did always conformed to the holiness of God. He never violated God's Word, not once. He never disregarded it. He never set it aside. He followed it to the letter, even to the crossing of the "t's" and the dotting of the "i's;" he did everything exactly as God prescribed. Even if the religious leaders failed to understand that, he was absolutely fastidious about obedience to God. And that's because Jesus is holy, as God is holy because Jesus is God.

Folks, that's what Luke is preparing us to see. By recording the things that we're reading here, that's what he wants us to see. Not only does Jesus possess all authority, all power, all goodness, all compassion, mercy, but his mercy was performed with the utmost personal integrity and with scrupulous attentiveness to the Law of Moses. He kept himself under the law of God. He'd come to do the will of his father in heaven. He came to demonstrate a life fully in submission to the father, which meant that he would adhere closely, at all times, to the Law of Moses.

You would think of all people that the law professors, the Pharisees would appreciate this, that they'd study him carefully



to see how he did actually fulfill the law. But no, their righteousness was merely external. What they were doing they were doing for a show, to gain the approval and the respect of men. What Jesus did had everything to do with his father in heaven. He was always concerned to keep his ministry above board, always righteous; not because of anything the men had to say, but because of what God had to say.

So we're going to see the rest of the story. Last time we talked about how Jesus had granted this man's request, cleansing him instantaneously, cleansing him completely. And Jesus not only healed him of the disease, but he cleansed him from the impurity. But that's not the end of the story.

Cleansing from the disease and the defilement of leprosy, that was only the beginning of an even fuller restoration, which is the second point in our outline. This is a lesson that we need to learn, as well, beloved. We not only come to Jesus to be completely cleansed, second point in your outline, we also obey Jesus to be fully restored. We obey Jesus so that we can be fully restored. The man full of leprosy, he came forward with one goal: to be cleansed of leprosy. We don't blame him for

that. Every sinner who comes to Jesus comes because they want cleansing from their sin. They want escape from judgment, escape from divine wrath. Who can blame anybody for wanting that?

Take a look at verse 14. Jesus intended to take him all the way. "He charged him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.'" Mark, in his parallel account, portrays Jesus as being even more serious about what he said there. It says there, "Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once." Jesus didn't want this man talking to anybody. He wanted him to close his mouth. He didn't want him lingering. He didn't want him wasting any time. He wanted him to keep his mouth shut and go.

The stress is on immediate obedience. It says there in verse 14, as you can see there, Luke starts in the third person. He starts describing it and then he just shifts. He charges him to tell no one, and then he switches to the second person as if he kind of wants us to listen in and hear it for ourselves. "Go, show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your

cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.” The stress there is on immediacy so we get into the moment.

Now the command of Moses that Jesus referred to is in Leviticus 14:1 to 32, and that prescribes a process of restoration for those that God had cleansed of leprosy. Go ahead and turn back there in your Bibles to Leviticus Chapter 14. We’re going to get a closer look at this. It’s going to be very instructive for us. It’s a fascinating portion of Scripture. I’m not going to read the whole thing because it will take quite a bit of time. But [Luke] Leviticus 14, prescribes ritual sacrifices, symbolic cleansing from leprosy. There are also ceremonial washings. There is another period there of quarantine and final examination. And then finally, there are sacrifices prescribed.

But let’s start in Leviticus 14:1 to 7. We’re gonna start reading in verse 1, “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘This shall be the law of the leprous person for the day of his cleansing. He shall be brought to the priest, and the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look. And then, if the case of leprous disease is healed in the leprous person,

the priest shall command them to take for him who is to be cleansed two live clean birds and cedar wood and scarlet yarn and hyssop.

“And the priest shall command them to kill one of the birds in earthenware vessel over fresh water. He shall take the live bird with the cedar wood and the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, and dip them and the live bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprous disease. Then he shall pronounce him clean and shall let,” the live bird, “the living bird go into the open field.’”

Stop there for a moment. There are some who see this, what seems to us, American ears, 21st century, seems strange ritual. It seems odd. And there are some who see this two-bird ritual thing as corresponding to the two goats that are killed on the Day of Atonement. You remember the Day of Atonement prescribed a first goat to be sacrificed, killed for the propitiation of sin? Propitiation is a word that talks about the satisfaction of divine wrath.

"The second goat was then for the expiation of sin, that is sending the guilt away outside the camp. And those two things comprised the atoning sacrifice, which means it provides a covering for sin, a refuge from the just wrath of God. And, and all of that was meant to picture what Jesus Christ did for us, dying outside the camp is expiation. But dying, truly, as a satisfaction of divine wrath for our sin.

That doesn't seem to be what's going on here. As we noted last week, even though leprosy symbolized, it pictured sin, and even though it was commonly assumed to be an outbreak of divine punishment, leprosy wasn't necessarily the result of an individual's sin. Someone could be a law abiding citizen, law-abiding Israelite, fully in tune with the Law of Moses and in communion with God and all the people and still contract leprosy through no fault of their own.

So this bird ritual more aptly pictures the cleansing from leprosy that's taking place. That's what's going on here. Like the other sacrifice, the birds, they act as substitutes for the

person, with the leper's uncleanness symbolically transferred to the innocent birds. The first bird is sacrificed; it's killed. It's gruesome, it's sad, killing a bird. That's what God thinks about our sin. It teaches us the principle that all uncleanness comes from sin, and since sin brings death, the removal of sin requires death.

The second bird dipped in the blood of the first bird, which is mixed in with the water of purification along with the cedar wood and the hyssop all tied together by the scarlet yarn. That second bird is dipped in the blood of cleansing, the water of purification and then sprinkled on the person, and then set free. That freedom represents a release from quarantine, a sending back into society, away from social isolation. No more of that. It's about restoring the person back into the worshipping community. And once again, a symbolic ritual here is teaching spiritual truths to the nation of Israel.

All these ceremonies, all these rituals that are prescribed in the Law of Moses. They prepare Israel to recognize the Messiah when he comes. So no wonder Jesus wanted this man to go immediately to the priest. He wanted him to learn from all the

symbolism of this ritual. He wanted him to think through what all this meant and not be satisfied with just merely an external cleansing. He wanted him to think about the need for internal purification and cleansing as well.

After the bird ritual, the man had to go through a procedure of purification, lasted a full week. He was quarantined. Take a look at Leviticus 14:8 and 9. "he who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes and shave off all his hair and bathe himself in water, and he shall be clean. And after that he may come into the camp, but live outside his tent seven days. And on the seventh day he shall shave off all his hair from his head, his beard, his eyebrows; he shall shave off all his hair, and then he shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and he shall be clean."

Now even though all of that took place in the community where the person lives, so he's restored back from the quarantine, the isolation, but he's only partially restored. He had to live outside of his tent. He had to live outside of his home. So there's this process he has to follow, this procedure, a week-long procedure in the eyes of everybody. That was as much

for the sake of the community as it was for him, so that they themselves could be assured that he was truly clean. It was for the sake of engendering trust that this had actually happened, that they weren't going to become contaminated by his leprosy.

After the bird ritual and this purification procedure, the cleansed person was required to offer sacrifices on the eighth day. There was a guilt or a trespass offering that had to do with sin. There was a sin offering that had to do with unintentional sins, it, a burnt offering, a grain offering and a fellowship offering, all of those having to do with communion before God.

So these are all offerings that he would have missed during his time of uncleanness since he'd been excluded from the communal worship. And each of those offerings, every single one of them symbolized spiritual realities. Every single one of those offerings: The guilt offering, sin offering, burnt offering, grain offering, fellowship offering, all of that symbolized and instructed the believing heart; helped him to see and appreciate and engender praise and glory to God.



One detail that I do want to highlight. If you could look ahead to verses 14 to 18, just scan the text. You can see there, there, that there are animal sacrifices, there's blood, there's rubbing some of the blood and mixed with oil on the right earlobe, on the right thumb, on the big toe of the right foot. What is that about? All of that that seems so strange to us is really symbolic of the total consecration to the Lord. The whole life set apart to God. And here the parts represent the whole. Be thankful the Lord didn't just cover them in blood, right?

They just had to have a little bit. A little dab will do, right? So the ears, a little dab on the right ear, ear lobe, that meant the ears were committed to hearing and obeying God's Word. The thumb, right thumb, it represented the hands that were committed to serving God and serving his people. The, the blood that goes on the toe of the right foot, the big toe of the right foot that meant the feet committed to walking in God's ways. So hearing the Word of God, serving God, serving his people, walking in God's ways, living a life pleasing to him, total complete consecration. All that is wrapped up in what Jesus told this man to go and do. And that's the point. All these

offerings, all these rituals, all this symbolism is intended to restore this man to full communion to God. It's intended to restore full fellowship with the worshipping community of Israel.