

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XXXV. Christ's Gracious Healing Of The Leper
(Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16)

I. Introduction

- A. When Peter found Jesus praying in a solitary place the morning after Christ had experienced a full day of ministry in Capernaum, Jesus had told Peter that He had been sent to preach in the other cities in Israel, that they needed to leave Capernaum to fulfill that divine calling, Mark 1:29-38.
- B. However, a need arose in the life of a man that demanded the Lord's compassionate attention, but Jesus also knew that if he addressed that need, it would result in blocking His capacity to fulfill His Father's will that He minister in other cities in Israel like Jesus had informed Peter.
- C. Jesus' decision on this important matter is informative for us, and we view it for our insight and application:

II. Christ's Gracious Healing Of The Leper, Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16.

- A. In accord with Christ's word to Peter that He needed to minister in other cities besides Capernaum (Mark 1:38), Jesus began to preach in the synagogues throughout Galilee, casting out demons, Mark 1:39.
- B. However, a man who was stricken with leprosy came to Jesus, and falling on his knees, he begged Him, saying that if Christ was willing, He could make him clean of his disease and of the horrible isolation he faced in being viewed as ceremonially unclean, Mark 1:40 NIV.
- C. The leper's plight was great, for the emotional and mental suffering that accompanied his disease was intense: a leper had to warn people who passed him by to stay away from him by crying, "Unclean, unclean;" nor could he speak to anyone, or receive or return a greeting. A leper was considered the recipient of "'a direct 'stroke of God,' as a punishment for special sins.'" (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 149, citing Cunningham Geikie, The Life and Words of Christ, 1893, vol. 2, p. 13)
- D. This situation created an instant crisis in Christ's ministry function (as follows):
 - 1. Since Jesus was God Incarnate (John 1:1-14), He foreknew that were He to heal this leper, he would spread the news of his healing so far and wide that it would be impossible for Jesus to enter any town openly to minister there like the Father had called Him to do, cf. Mark 1:38 with 1:45a.
 - 2. However, Christ as God Incarnate also had an infinite love for this leper, what would demand that He address his terrible plight and heal the stricken sufferer of his horrible disease.
- E. Christ reflected the Father's will in all that He did (John 14:9), and, in this case, He and the Father were "moved with compassion, pity, sympathy" (*splagchnizomai*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 770) for this leper, and reaching out His hand to touch the man, what according to the Law would make any other man ceremonially unclean, Jesus said, "I am willing . . . Be clean!" (Mark 1:41; *Ibid.*, Pentecost, p. 150) Christ was not polluted by touching the leper's body, but the leper's whole body was cleansed by the touch of Christ' holy hand. (*Ibid.*, citing Frederick Farrar, Life of Christ, 1877, vol. 1, p. 275)
- F. The leprosy immediately left the stricken man, and he was made whole and ceremonially clean, Mark 1:42.
- G. Jesus quickly sent the man away, charging him not to tell anyone about his healing, but to go and show himself to the priest and to offer the sacrifices Moses commanded for his cleansing as a testimony to the priest of Christ's ability to heal as the Messiah (Mark 1:43-44 with Leviticus 14:2-32; Isaiah 35:4-6a; Matthew 11:2-6). This command was meant to get the healed man directed away from attracting large crowds around Jesus so that Christ could continue to enter Israel's cities in accord with the Father's calling.
- H. However, the healed man instead went out and talked freely, spreading the news of his healing so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but had to stay outside of the towns in deserted places, Mark 1:45a.
- I. Nevertheless, God still arranged for Jesus to minister in the region to the people of Israel, for the people still came to Him from every direction seeking healing and to hear His teaching, Mark 1:45b.

Lesson: *When having to decide between healing a suffering leper who begged for Christ's healing or preserving His access to entering cities to which the Father had sent Him, Jesus chose to heal the leper in loving compassion. Though it led to Christ's being forced no longer to minister openly in the cities, the Father still equipped Him to be able to minister to the people of Israel out in solitary places where they could come out to Him for His ministry.*

Application: *If given the choice between adhering to the usual Biblical practices or addressing intense human need in God's Biblical love, may we follow Christ's lead in exhibiting the love of God above observing usual Biblical practices, for God is a loving God at the very core of His being. (1 John 4:16)*