

I. Read Luke 17:11-19

- A. This passage in Luke deals with the appropriate response of those who have obtained forgiveness. A secondary theme concerns the need for developing an attitude of gratitude toward God for all good things He has given us. Describe what you imagine the life of a leper was like during the days of Jesus.

Leprosy was greatly feared. It was an incurable condition that was considered to be terminal. Those contracting leprosy were isolated from the general population and were forbidden to have contact with virtually everyone. It was a hopeless and desperate condition for a person to be in.

How might leprosy be compared to sin?

Sin is terminal. It also leads to hopelessness and often alienation, both from God and other people. It presents a very real barrier to intimacy between people, just as leprosy does. In its early stages, leprosy may not be readily apparent, but as it progresses, it causes hideous deformities. Likewise, as sin progresses, the image of God in man is progressively deformed and marred.

What might the healing of the ten lepers be compared to?

Forgiveness, or being the beneficiary of the mercy and grace of God. It must be remembered that even unbelievers benefit from God's *common grace and mercy* in their lives, even if they don't acknowledge it.

- B. Read Luke 7:36-48 and compare the *sinful woman's* response toward Jesus to the Samaritan leper in Luke 17 who glorified God because of his healing.

What is important to understand regarding the *sinful woman* is not so much the fact of her sin, but rather her awareness of her sinfulness. This is especially obvious if we contrast her attitude toward Jesus to that of the Pharisees (see vs. 44-46). Simon was just as much a sinner as the woman, though her sin was the more obvious (as a leper in an advanced stage of the disease). The leper who glorified God was a Samaritan (a mix of Assyrian and Hebrew). He was an outcast in Israel's society, even before he contracted leprosy. Jesus referred to him as a "foreigner" (verse 18) to emphasize this. Just as the *sinful woman* that society disdained recognized the value of Jesus' forgiveness, the Samaritan leper recognized the value of God's mercy in healing him. The *respectable* folks of Israel thought little about either forgiveness or mercy, because they thought they had it all together.

- C. Read Mathew 13:44-46 and contrast the man who found the treasure and the merchant finding the pearl of great price with the nine lepers who failed to glorify God for their healing.

The man finding the treasure gave all that he had to buy the field, demonstrating his understanding of the value of the treasure. The merchant likewise gave all that he had to purchase the pearl of great price. They both knew what was important and valuable and were willing to stake all that they had to obtain it. The nine lepers received a great gift of God. They received His mercy ("Jesus, master, have mercy on us!"). Yet, once healed, they failed to demonstrate gratitude to God, nor did they seem to appreciate how incredible it was that God would choose to show mercy on them. The nine lepers responded to God's mercy in a very different manner than did the man finding the treasure and the merchant finding the pearl of great price.

- D. How might the nine lepers of Luke 17:11-17 be compared to an unbelieving world?

All of God's sentient creatures owe gratitude and worship to God. Even the unbeliever has benefited from *common grace* and a multitude of blessings from God. Each breath they take

is a gift. Each moment God restrains His justice and wrath is an act of mercy. Yet the unbeliever denies this and lives as though God did not exist. The nine lepers provide a picture of this same ingratitude.

- E. How might the nine lepers be compared to believers who fail to acknowledge their debt and gratitude to God and to Christ who saved them? (Read Psalm 107:2; Matthew 5:14-16.)

Those who fail to glorify God, who saved them from their sin, are doing the same thing the lepers did. While it is true that there is more than one way to acknowledge one's redemption (such as through good stewardship and service), it is also true that all the redeemed should be willing to verbally and boldly share their faith with a lost and hurting world. Particularly when it is acknowledged that all men are in desperate need of the forgiveness of God, it makes no sense to remain silent.

- F. Returning to the incident described in Luke 7:36-48, how is the attitude reflected by Simon sometimes evident in church?

It is a common failing for those in church to become so *respectable* and self-satisfied that they find it difficult to identify with those who have been devastated by the destructive effects of sin (much as the promiscuous women had been in Luke 7). Even those who sincerely love the Lord can fall into this kind of trap. Consequently it is necessary for us to be constantly reminded of our own sinful nature and proclivity toward sin. Some see this as a *negative* topic, but the alternative is either a denigration and compromise with sinful behavior as is common in the *anything goes* church or a self-righteous and smug denial of the universal sinfulness of man (the doctrine of depravity). We are all potentially either the *sinful woman before her repentance* or Simon the Pharisee. This should keep us humble. We want to be like *the sinful woman after repentance* or the Samaritan leper who “saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet” (8:15-16)! In other words, we don’t want to live lives given over to sinful behavior, nor do we want to become self-righteous and legalistic. We want to acknowledge and confess our sin, forsake it, and obtain forgiveness—then glorify God!

- G. List and discuss some things we can do to become more like the Samaritan leper in our response to having obtained God’s mercy.

- 1. Begin each day with a time of prayer and reflection in which we review scriptural truths (Bible study or devotion).**
- 2. End each day the same way.**
- 3. Constantly remind yourself of the forgiveness you have in Christ Jesus and purpose to forgive others in the same way you have been forgiven.**
- 4. Refuse to isolate yourself completely from the lost and purpose to form *acquaintances* and *friendships* with those you know do not share your deepest convictions (the lost). *Your intimate friendships should be with Christians!***
- 5. Commit to boldly sharing your faith with others. If you make a half-hearted commitment to witness, you will find you rarely, if ever, do it. It is so easy to find reasons not to witness.**
- 6. Don’t lie to yourself about the reasons you don’t witness by saying things like, “It’s more important to live like a Christian than to verbally witness.” The truth is that it takes both! “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14)**
- 7. Purpose to be honest with yourself—about your own tendency toward sin, your failure to love God and others as you should, your apathy, and your self-centeredness. Then, take this honest confession to the throne of grace, asking for forgiveness and being cleansed.**

(See 1 John 1:9.) This is an ongoing process which pertains to our sanctification rather than our justification.