

Wonderful Salvation in the Gospel of Luke

BEING CLEANSED BY THE LORD

And while He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged Him, saying, Lord, if You are willing, You can cleanse me. And stretching out His hand, He touched him, saying, I am willing; be cleansed! And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one: But go away, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift for your cleansing, even as Moses directed, for a testimony to them. But the word concerning Him spread abroad all the more, and great crowds came together to hear Him and to be healed from their infirmities. But He Himself often withdrew in the wilderness and prayed (Luke 5:12-16).

We should not regard these cases merely as records of what happened to different persons. Actually all these cases portray a single person.

After the Lord Jesus performed a miracle related to fishing, Peter said to Him, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord!” Immediately following, we have the case of the cleansing of a man full of leprosy, the cleansing of a contaminated one. Peter was not only an occupied person but also a contaminated person. Spiritually speaking, the same is true of us all.

The cases 5:1—6:11 portray the spiritual condition of every fallen human being. Before we were saved, we were occupied. We were also lepers, sinful people, in need of cleansing. No matter what a person’s occupation may be, when he is called by the Lord and released, he immediately realizes that he is sinful. When people are busy with their occupation, they may think that they are very good. But when they are released from their occupation to follow the Lord, they realize that they are sinful.

Here we see that the Man-Savior sympathized with the leper. According to the Old Testament, a leper was not to be touched by anyone. In order to keep others away from him, a leper was required to cry out, “Unclean, unclean!” Hence, a leper was altogether isolated. But the Man-Savior stretched forth His hand to touch this leper. The Lord’s touching the leper reveals His human virtue.

His divine attributes were expressed in the cleansing of the leper. It is impossible for any human being to cleanse a leper. Therefore, the One who cleansed this leper must be God.

In the Lord’s sympathy we see His human virtue, and in the cleansing of the leper we see His divine attribute. He was the genuine God-man.

According to the scriptural examples, leprosy comes from rebellion and disobedience. Miriam became leprous because of her rebellion against God’s deputy authority (Num. 12:1-10). Naaman’s leprosy was cleansed because of his obedience (2 Kings 5:1, 9-14). All fallen human beings have become leprous in the sight of God because of their rebellion. But the Man-Savior has come to save men from their rebellion and to cleanse them from their leprosy.

A leper, according to the law, was to be excluded from the people because of his uncleanness. No one could touch him (Lev. 13:45-46). But the Man-Savior touched the one full of leprosy. What mercy and sympathy! By His one touch, “immediately the leprosy left him.”

A leper portrays a typical sinner. Leprosy is the most contaminating and damaging disease, isolating its victim both from God and men. To cleanse the leper signifies to recover the sinner to the fellowship with God and with men. It is significant that the leper was not only healed but cleansed. The one with leprosy not only requires healing as those with other diseases; he also needs cleansing, as from sin (1 John 1:7), because of the filthy and contaminating nature of the disease.

(Readings adapted from the Life-study of Luke.)