

**Spiritual Leprosy**  
**House Church**  
**06-26-05**  
**By: Brother Knight**

**This lesson was given at the home of Brother Russell**

***What does it mean to be a leper?***

To be a leper **in any generation** is to be excluded. To be a leper is to be feared. To be a leper is to live with pain, isolation, and crippling shame, leprosy is not just a disease; leprosy can be a stigma.

The leprosy of the Old and New Testaments actually included a wide variety of skin diseases. In those days PEOPLE were not able to make the distinction between what was dangerous and what was not. So any out break or rash was enough to make you suspect. Lepers were cast out of the community of faith. They were regarded as UNCLEAN. Lepers were even taught that God had rejected them, since their disease was viewed as punishment for sin. They were forced to live away from their families and to have no contact with them. They lost all of their friends, and family... They could not keep a job. To be a leper was to be cast out of **every area** of life. Lepers were not just looked down upon, they were feared.

**How would you feel if you were feared by your friends and family because of a disease that made you an outcast?**

It's a very hard thing to be feared. In our society a "leper" might be? A Someone who is a homosexual, maybe homeless and dying of AIDS. ***He is shunned, feared and very alone.***

**In our Scripture readings this morning we will meet two lepers.** Both are desperately in need of **cleansing and healing**. Neither could help themselves. ***The first is the story of a leper WITH (social standing,) a Gentile named Naaman. The second is the story of an unknown man of no (social standing) but great faith, a Jew.***

**PRAY -READ ~**

**II Kings 5: 1-16 -Naaman** was a highly regarded military commander. He was a powerful man. BUT He had one weakness, what was it? One thing that he had no control over. **Naaman was a leper.**

Perhaps his leprosy was not severe, I don't know, we can assume that.... ***He still had his family, his position in society, (social standing,) and his source of income,*** but it was obvious to all, that Naaman suffered from leprosy. His *appearance* was not the same as other men; **I am sure that many whispered about it behind his back.**

But Naaman was still held in high esteem by his master the king of Aram. It is due to his high standing that Naaman had the freedom to go to Israel when he heard there was a prophet there who could heal him. SO The king- grants him this blessing. The Bible tells us that --Naaman goes equipped with a letter from his king, and gifts for the prophet. He appeared to be a generous man. /may be he thinks that money is the answer to everything.

**V-7-** It is at this point in the story that we encounter the first twist. The letter makes no mention of the prophet Elisha, and the King of Israel panics! He thinks the King of Aram has set him up and is looking for an excuse to pick a fight with him! "**What does he expect me to do?!**" "**Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life?**" Elisha then intervenes, declaring that the healing will take place so that Naaman will know that there is a prophet in Israel.

**V-9-** Naaman then arrives on the scene. Unlike most lepers- Remember - Naaman is a man of wealth and influence. He is used to being paid attention to! He expects the prophet to come and serve him! But he was in for a rude awakening-! **V-10-** Elisha puts Naaman in his place by refusing to grant a personal audience, and instead he sends a messenger. **(In order to RECEIVE your healing, you must have HUMILITY)(God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble)** Here we see that ~ Naaman is given a test-go and do something that appears really stupid. Initially it looks as though he may fail the test. --

**(Sometimes God test our hearts, just to see how we will respond to him)**

**First he makes a** Prideful\_ objection- **V-11-** *the prophet should have come out to me, call on his God and wave his hand over the spot.* **Secondly--** he makes another - **Objection-***our rivers are better than their river any day. The Jordan is NOTHING compared to the Abana and Pharpar Rivers of Damascus!* ☺

**(Look at what repentance can do to in the life of a person)**

**V-13-** But Naaman is persuaded by his servants to get over his temper tantrum, and he goes and does what Elisha tells him to do. He dips himself **seven times in the water of the Jordan and his flesh is restored. He returns to Elisha a changed man.** He is not just **restored** in body he is **restored** in spirit as well,--

**Naaman** - is in awe at the power of God. As Naaman "stands" before Elisha in humility, Naaman wants to pay for his blessing, with money and costly gifts-- Elisha also "stands" before GOD. But - Elisha refuses to take a reward, because **he is God's servant. The Bible teaches us here that Naaman had and encounter with the God of Israel, Do you remember - when you came up from the waters of Baptism?**

Naaman puts himself in a **subservient position** in regard to Elisha. And- Israel's God is now his God.

**Matt 8-1 -4**

(2)

**In Matthew we meet another leper.** This is a story of a desperate person WITHOUT social standing. He doesn't have wealth and position like Naaman. He is a Jew and a leper. He endures a life of exclusion and shame. His approach to Jesus IS very- amazing. He is an outcast-**with faith.** He comes with confidence, having no doubt that if Jesus will, Jesus can make him clean.

This man comes *right up* to Jesus, close enough to be touched, in order to make his plea. No leper would have come *near* a scribe or Rabbi! **According to Jewish law**... Them new that that they would have been stoned. **Six feet was as close as the Law permitted.** But this man comes to Jesus and kneels before him. I want you notice something about this man--**V-2A-** He has perfect confidence in Jesus' willingness to Accept him, even though anyone and everyone else have rejected him. He has perfect confidence in Jesus' ability to heal, even though leprosy is the one disease for which there was no cure.

**What about us, do we express our faith in Christ the way this man did?  
Or do WE continue to wallow in our situation?**

**For me I have to take this passage literally.....**

His behavior is both bold and humble. He kneels at Jesus feet, close enough to be touched.-V-

**How far away have gotten from the cross foot of the cross? In order for God to heals us we have to take a step of faith, AMEN.**

**NOTICE** --Unlike Naaman, this man *comes* in humility.

Privilege and security are things that he has lost long ago. He does not demand healing from Jesus, instead he says, "**If you are willing**, you can make me clean." He makes no claim to *deserve* healing; he comes humbly and with faith

While the social elite had refused to accept Jesus, this MAN was unclean, barred from worship and all normal life but he still, acknowledges Jesus' authority.

With boldness, humility, *and with reverence*. The scripture says he "**worshipped Jesus,**". SOMETIMES TO GET OUR DELIVERANCE, WE HAVE TO PROCLAIM, PRAISE AND WORSHIP TO THE LORD, He may not have understood all he was doing, but he KNEW that in the **presence of Jesus**, was the **presence of God**.

V- Jesus then sent the man, to the priests to make the correct offering and receive a certificate that he was clean. In accordance to LEVITICAL LAW, by going through this process this man would be able to be fully welcome back into society, and his exclusion would be over

### **CLOSING**

**Leprosy is a deadly disease.** It still exists in many places in the world today, but it has largely come to be replaced by other feared diseases, like AIDS. We as the body of Christ have a calling to the modern day lepers of society. It is a calling to touch the untouchable, and to include the excluded. But we also must remember that WE OURSELVES are lepers. We ourselves were once outcast from God, and Jesus Christ saved us. He cleansed us from our spiritual leprosy. We didn't deserve our cleansing; it was freely offered to us. SALVATION means to forgive, heal, cleanse and deliver.

**Jesus Christ came not just to pay for our guilt.** He came to cleanse us from our shame. Naaman came to God in need of cleansing. He carried a terrible burden; a problem which could not be fixed. He came proud, but he left humbled and healed. God received him; God cleansed him. The leper who came to Jesus also had no way out of his shame, but he had faith, He came with confidence. He came with humility and faith. He came with reverence. And God healed him. This is the same Lord whom we worship today. He has not changed. Whatever our burdens are, whatever shame we carry in our souls, God is willing to cleanse it from us. He is willing that we be set free and made whole. He invites us to receive, not just forgiveness, but *cleansing. By the shed blood of Christ...* Amen!

Please feel free to pass on this lesson to your friends & family.

You're Brother, In Christ  
Tyrone