

A HERETIC'S GRATITUDE

Luke 17:11-19

One of the saddest, most tragic conditions in Scripture was the leper.

It was a slow, painful, "living death."

Have you ever stopped to consider what life would have been like?

They lived in isolation, separated from family, friends, home and jobs.

All they could do was beg for enough to survive.

No one around them cared.

They all had enough problems of their own!

Have you ever thought of how sad the life of a leper must have been?

A person suffering this disease was an outcast

—one of those "outcasts" Luke keeps referring to.

—cut off from his community.

—isolated in a camp outside of town.

The leper had to assume the awful "badges" of his disease;

he tore his clothes, bared his head,

and put a white cloth over his upper lip.

From beneath that mask would come the anguished cry,

"Unclean! Unclean!"

No hope this role in life would ever change.

Previous to the coming of Jesus, no leper had ever practiced the cleansing ritual God prescribed for these lepers, because no one had ever been cleansed before!

JESUS TALKS TO HIS DISCIPLES CONCERNING GRATITUDE.

As Jesus travels toward Jerusalem, He has been talking to His disciples, preparing them for the reality of His rejection and departure (17-19).

He talks to them about *forgiveness* (17:1-10)

—Now he deals with *gratitude*.

Healing of ten lepers provides backdrop for this lesson.

THE APPEAL FOR HELP 17:11-13

Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance

13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

They stand at a distance (17:12).

The distance isn't specified,

but one rule states that, when windward of a healthy person,
a leper must stand at least 50 yards away.

They're totally isolated from their own people.

They know who He is

Though no one has ever been cleansed from leprosy,
the ten have hope—because Jesus is there!

They recognize His authority

The word translated "master" means "chief commander."

They recognize that He's in command here.

So they trust Him.

They think He can do something about their condition

So, they cry out for mercy.

THE MIRACLE PERFORMED 17:14 *When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.*

Notice the measure of faith involved: They ask for a miracle

How many demonstrate faith? They all do!

They called They went They are healed

He tells them to go show themselves to the priests. *WHY?*

Why does He send them to the priests?

That's part of the procedure for cleansing,

but they haven't been cleansed.

Is it an indicator of faith or are they to go to the priests for help?

They've been around long enough to know the priests can't help.

This has to be a step of faith for them.

They probably know the story of Naaman the Syrian

who was sent away to be healed, during the days of Elisha.

They go quietly. This must have been an act of faith!

What is the result? Why?

As they're going, they're healed.

They obey by faith, and they're healed.

TWO DIVERSE RESPONSES 17:15-19

Samaritan returns to worship and thank Jesus 17:15-16

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

One has everything going against him

–He's a leper *and*, a SAMARITAN!—a double outcast!

For Pharisees it would be hard to decide which is worse!

Yet God shows mercy toward him.

* He gives glory to God

* He falls to worship at Jesus' feet

* He gives thanks for the blessing he has received.

BUT –let's be realistic about this—his problems still aren't over!

Some of us would have responded,

"Yeah, BUT, the lepers are healed

but their problems are still immense.

They're living outside the city.

They've lost family, home and jobs.

What is there to praise God for?

They probably should hold off for a while,

until their bigger problems are resolved.

With problems still pending,

one comes back to praise God for what He's done for him.

Eph. 5:20: *"Giving thanks for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

1 Thess 5:16-18: *"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."*

If we wait for all the problems to be resolved we'll never get around to praising God for what He has done for us.

How about gratitude for what God has already done?

Sometimes we act like children who always ask for something more and never express their appreciation for what they have received.

William Law, 18th C. English theologian: "If anyone can tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness and perfection, he must tell you to make it a rule to yourself to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you, for it is certain that whatever seeming calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing."

Helen Keller, blind and deaf saint, wrote, "I thank God for my handicaps. Through them I have found myself, my work, and my God."

John Wesley: "Thanksgiving is inseparable from prayer. It is almost essentially connected with it. He that always prays is ever giving praise, whether in ease or pain, both for prosperity and for greatest adversity."

How about us? Do we give God praise for the things He's done in our lives?

The nine go on their way 17:17-18 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?"

You might not know there's anything wrong with the behavior of the nine if you didn't have the example of the one who comes back.

After all, Jesus tells them to go to the priests.

Don't they just do what they're told?

Yet the Samaritan follows his heart.

His heart tells him to go back and express his gratitude to Jesus.

Jesus makes clear that the one has taken the right action. He's THE ONLY ONE!

And he's a SAMARITAN!

As we have seen throughout Luke, it isn't Jewish people who come to praise God for Him.

It's a Samaritan—a heretic—a sinner!

Only the Samaritan receives the full measure of blessing

17:19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

He's healed because of his faith in Jesus.

THEY ALL ARE!

They trust Him and are all healed.

The Samaritan receives something more.

Only he is allowed the privilege of worshiping at Jesus' feet.

Only he hears Jesus' pronouncement of healing.

The word used: "Your faith has made you well" is "saved".

It's appropriate if Jesus is only referring to deliverance from leprosy, but it could mean more.

He not only receives physical cleansing, but spiritual as well.

By faith he's **delivered**, from the physical oppression of leprosy, but also from the spiritual consequences of sin which leprosy represents in Scripture.

He's liberated from all that bound him.

HE'S DELIVERED—COMPLETELY!

The encounter with the lepers teaches the importance of a grateful spirit (gratitude).

Only one of the lepers who receive the blessing of healing returns to acknowledge what God has done and thank Him for it, and he's a Samaritan.

9 recognize Him as teacher/authority

--but never acknowledge what He has done for them;

only one expresses gratitude.

He comes back and receives the full blessing Christ offers him.

Warren Wiersbe suggests . . . *Before we judge the nine too hardly, maybe we need to consider our own "GQ" [before the magazine].*

We know what an "IQ" is--the "Intelligence quotient"--An indicator of intellectual ability.

*More important indicator--the "GQ"--the **"GRATITUDE QUOTIENT"**.*

Do we take our blessings for granted,

or do we continually thank God for them?

The psalmist exhorts: *"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" (107:8, 15, 21, 31)*

LESSON FOR LIVING TODAY:

FAITH + GRATITUDE => TOTAL BLESSING

Are we really grateful for the many privileges and blessings God has given to us?

As we sing, "Now Thank We All Our God", remember the circumstances of the author. This wasn't written in a vacuum.

Rinkhart wrote it during the Thirty Years' War.

He conducted as many as 40 funerals a day, including his own wife.

In spite of war and plague around him,

he was able to give thanks to the Lord from a grateful heart.

In whatever state we are, we can learn to praise God.

The leper was far from out of the woods

as far as his problems were concerned,

and yet he had plenty of reason to praise God

that he was no longer where he used to be!

In present financial crisis--One man said to me: "I thank God. I have the opportunity to tell people that my life doesn't depend on my pay check.

Nobody has it all!

We can choose to focus on the negative or the positive of every situation.

We can choose to be happy and grateful, or to complain.

We can say, whatever circumstances I'm in right now--whatever, I praise You, Lord, because

You're bigger than the mess I'm in."

Are we grateful for all that God has done for us?

When we find it hard to be grateful,

what we need most is to remember where we've come from.