

"UNTHANKFUL, UNHOLY."

– LUKE 17:11-19. – *NOV. 18.* –

"Be ye thankful." – Col. 3:15.

LEPROSY is a very prevalent disease in eastern lands, and amongst the Jews lepers were specially proscribed – separated from others – not allowed to have intercourse with their own families nor to come near anybody, but obliged to keep at a distance, and on the approach of a stranger to cry out, "Unclean! unclean!" From the standpoint of the Law it is evident that leprosy was meant to represent sin and its loathsome, contagious and consuming character.

A traveler in the Orient writes: "As our traveling party passed out the western gate of Nablus, the site of ancient Sechem, a group of repulsive lepers greeted us with calls for help. They showed various forms of that terrible disease: the nose or the lips or a hand or a foot eaten away; the limbs distorted, and one case at least was a leper 'white as snow.' When we were fairly in our tents beyond the city westward, those lepers came, fifteen in all, and seated themselves afar off, in a semi-circle, facing our tents, with one of their number a little in advance of the others, holding out a dish for alms, and, as with one voice, they cried aloud to us to have pity on them and give them aid." Another writer describes leprous conditions thus: "The hair falls from the head and eyebrows; the nails loosen, decay and drop off; joint after joint of the fingers and toes shrink up and slowly fall away; the gums are absorbed and the teeth disappear; the nose, the eyes, the tongue and the palate are slowly consumed."

The horrors and loathsomeness of leprosy and its contaminating qualities, both by heredity and infection, well illustrate the disease of sin, which has taken hold of the entire human family, and which separates and alienates from God and all that are pure and in harmony

with him. The isolation of lepers was distinctly enjoined in the Law, but no cure or remedy was prescribed. The disease was treated from a religious standpoint, and in every case made amenable to the judgment of the priests: they decided whether or not a case of leprosy had developed, they banished the leper, and in the event of anything occurring to cure him, the priests must pass upon his cleansing before he would be readmitted to society. So, in the great malady of sin, God commits to the hands of the antitypical priesthood – Christ and the faithful under-priests now being selected from the world – the work of pronouncing and making manifest what is sin, as distinct and separate from what is righteousness, and thus to separate between the clean and the unclean, between those who are in harmony with God, and those who are out of harmony with him. And in the coming age, when the Royal Priesthood shall be glorified and in official power to bless the world with the knowledge of God and the knowledge of how to become free from sin and, through the merit of the precious blood, to attain to full restitution, – to purity and perfection of mind and heart and body, – it will be this Royal Priesthood that will have the deciding of when the purification has been complete – when sin has ceased to exist in the condemned, and they have been brought back into full harmony with God and righteousness.

Travelers tell us that in the locality mentioned in our lesson – the borders of Samaria and Galilee – leprosy still abounds rather more than elsewhere; and that groups somewhat like the one described in our lesson, are frequently to be seen. This group stood afar off, as they were compelled by law to do; yet recognizing Jesus as the great Teacher, of whose miracles they had heard something, they conceived the hope that he might have compassion upon them and heal them of their loathsome disease. Therefore they lifted up their **[R2722 : page 331]** voices together, crying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." There is no doubt as to the meaning of their cry; altho they usually begged for money, they evidently now were seeking for healing from the great Physician.

Hearing their voices Jesus turned compassionately toward them, and we can better imagine than describe the sympathy which he felt for them in their pitiable condition, and no doubt also his mind at the same time took in the thought of the great malady of sin, from which the whole world was suffering, and whose sufferings he had come to relieve, whose bonds he had come to break, by giving his own life a ransom price for theirs. Our Lord merely said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." This implied that the leprosy had ceased its ravages, and that they might expect to be pronounced free from contagion and permitted to return to their homes and families, even tho the maiming and marring occasioned by the ravages of the disease would still be with them. Thankful for such a release from their sufferings, the entire ten obediently hastened to comply with the injunction, but in the way they discovered that the blessing they had received from the Lord was not merely a staying of the disease, but a restoration to normal conditions. Their faith had brought them far more than they had expected.

One of them turned back and prostrating himself before the Lord rendered homage and thanks to his deliverer. The other nine passed on to comply with our Lord's words, and to show themselves to the priests, not having a sufficiency of love, appreciation and thankfulness to return in their cleansed condition to, first of all, acknowledge the giver of the blessing they had received. Our Lord remarked this, and called attention also to the fact that the one who did return was a Samaritan, and not one of the Jewish household of faith; saying, "Were there none found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger?" And he said unto him, "Arise, and go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Nothing is said in the record respecting any spiritual blessing or favor which came to the Samaritan whose thankfulness of heart led him to Jesus' feet in acknowledgement. We are not told that Jesus invited him to become one of his followers, nor that he received any spiritual blessing; indeed, we know that it was not possible that he

could receive any spiritual blessing, because, being a "stranger," like all Gentiles, he was debarred from any share in divine favor until the full measure of favor was granted to the Israelites – Cornelius, three and a half years after our Lord's crucifixion, being the first Gentile to be received into favor, and that time being the earliest at which the favor might go to the Gentiles – the end of the "seventy weeks" of favor promised to Israel. – See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. II., pp.69-71.

Neither are we told that the nine who received the favor of God without being moved at heart to return and render thanks were, because of their unthankfulness, in any degree deprived of the blessing already received. We can readily imagine, however, that their condition of heart would not be favorable to them in connection with a hearty acceptance of the Lord and the Kingdom privileges he was offering. We may reasonably suppose that if they were unmoved by so great a manifestation of divine love toward them, experienced in their own persons, they would be equally unmoved by any preaching of the Gospel which they might hear at any future time, either from the lips of Jesus or the apostles. We may even surmise that those nine never came into the Church of Christ. On the contrary, we would have good reason to hope for the Samaritan, whose gratitude manifested itself; – that his condition of heart was nearer to the Kingdom requirement, and that when subsequently the gospel of Christ was preached to Gentiles and Samaritans, this one would be a ready hearer and have a ready heart to receive the good message and to be healed from the moral leprosy of sin, and to come into harmony with God by presenting himself before the great High Priest of our profession, who died for our sins and who accepts as clean all who come unto the Father through him. Tho we have no record of it, we believe that the Samaritan was of the kind the Lord is now drawing and calling to sacrifice with Christ, and that receiving that message of the Kingdom he would be ready to lay down his life and become dead with Christ – presenting his body a living sacrifice unto God. – 1 John 3:16; Rom. 5:1,2.

Viewed from this standpoint, thankfulness of heart is a very sure sign of the character God is seeking, – especially in matters pertaining to our great salvation. And we find parallels to this illustration all about us. We find those who have suffered from the leprosy of sin, and who have appealed to Jesus for mercy and help, and who have been justified by faith – cleansed from their iniquities, covered with the righteousness of Christ; and yet amongst all these who have experienced such blessings and favors at our Lord's hands how few, comparatively, there are who return to him and prostrate themselves before him, to offer thanks for release from the bondage of sin and condemnation, and lay themselves at his feet, living sacrifices – making a full consecration of themselves to the Lord, their reasonable service. (Rom. 12:1.) Only the truly thankful are constrained thus to do, – only the truly appreciative. As the Apostle declares of himself and all such, it is true that "The love of Christ constraineth [draweth, impelleth] us; for we thus judge that if one died for all then were all dead [yea, worse than dead in trespasses and sins and condemnation], and that we **[R2723 : page 332]** who live [justified to life through faith in his blood] should not henceforth live unto ourselves but unto him who died for us." – 2 Cor. 5:14.

Unthankfulness is unholiness, lack of that proper appreciation which would lead to a full consecration of life and every interest and affair to the Lord – regardless of what reward he may bestow. The "exceeding great and precious promises" of God's Word are not given to inspire thankfulness and consecration, for they are given only to the thankful and consecrated who already have presented themselves living sacrifices to God. "To *you* it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom," "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," which is granted only to the consecrated. These promises are to strengthen and nerve us and to enable us to "overcome," in fulfilment of our covenant of consecration. – 2 Pet. 1:4; Matt. 13:11; 1 Cor. 2:9,10.

Let us each and all seek and cultivate more and more the spirit of thankfulness, the "*reasonable*" spirit or disposition. Thankfulness

will make every trial and sacrifice on our part seem small, and proportionately easy to be offered, and it will make all of God's mercies and favors toward us proportionately grand and great and inspiring.
