

[R5453 : page 139]

"WHERE ARE THE NINE?"

– *MAY 31. – LUKE 17:11-19. –*

**"Were there none found that returned to give glory to God,
save this alien?" – V.18.**

THE essence of our lesson for today is gratitude. It is a most reasonable trait of character and is frequently found even in the brute creation. It is impossible to imagine a perfect human being or an angel acceptable to God without this quality. We might almost say that the degree of our acceptance with God is measured by our gratitude. It leads to obedience to the Divine laws and regulations, whether understood or not. It leads to self-sacrificing labors in the service of God, and according to a Divine automatic arrangement has its blessings.

Our lesson tells us that the Savior was approaching Jerusalem by way of Samaria and Galilee. It is surmised [R5454 : page 139] that this was His last journey to Jerusalem, which eventuated in His death. His fame had spread abroad; and ten lepers sitting by the roadside heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Immediately they called to Him as loudly as the hoarse whisper of their disease would permit. Ordinarily their appeal was for money; but in this case it was, "Master, have mercy upon us!"

Lepers are a class greatly to be pitied. Their disease has long been considered incurable, and hence in the Bible it is symbolically used to represent sin. It is an affection which seems to corrupt the blood. The joints twist, decay and slough off. Under the regulations prevailing at the time of our lesson, lepers were forbidden to enter the cities, under the penalty of thirty-nine strokes from a rod. They had no means of earning a living, and were always dependent upon the charity of their friends or the public. Nor were they allowed to

approach others nearer than about one hundred and fifty feet, for fear of contamination. Theirs was a living death.

The ten mentioned in this lesson were drawn together by their common trouble which ignored the racial barriers between Jews and Samaritans. In answer to their cry for help, Jesus, although full of compassion, seemed to treat their appeal coldly. He merely said to them, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." According to God's arrangement with the Jews under their Law Covenant, they were to have no sicknesses except as these should represent sins; and the priests were to pass judgment upon cases of leprosy, determining whether or not the disease were indeed leprosy, etc. Our Lord's direction that the lepers go and show themselves to the priests implied a healing, and suggested that by the time that they should reach the priest they would be ready to have him pronounce them clean.

The lepers must have had considerable knowledge of the power of Jesus, and must have exercised great faith; for instead of crying out for instantaneous healing, they followed His direction and started for the priest to have an inspection. Doubtless they hoped that by the time they should reach him they would be well and would receive a bill of health. They had gone but a short distance when they found themselves cured. We can well imagine with what joy they hastened to have the priest approve them in order to return to their families, their business, etc. Surely they almost ran, as they felt the exhilaration of the cleansed blood! But one of them slowed up and then turned back; probably the others in their exuberance did not notice this. Back he came and fell at the feet of Jesus, giving Him thanks. His was a grateful heart, and we cannot doubt that he will receive a blessing eventually, though he did not receive it then, for he was a Samaritan, an alien, a foreigner from the commonwealth of Israel.

ANOTHER CRUMB OF FAVOR

In his case, the healing was a "crumb from the children's table;" for the rich man had not yet died – God's favor had not yet departed from Israel. Jesus had not yet uttered the fateful words, "Your House is left unto you desolate." Nay, the favor to Israel continued three and a half years after their House was left desolate – individual favor. It was three and a half years after the death of Jesus before the individual favor to the Jews terminated to such an extent as to permit the Gospel to go to the Gentiles – Cornelius being the first to be accepted into fellowship with God. – Acts 10.

Had the returning one been a Jew instead of a Samaritan, no doubt he would have been invited by Jesus to become one of His followers – "Come, take up thy cross and follow Me!" But because he was a Samaritan, Jesus merely said to him, "Arise and go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." We cannot doubt, however, that the Lord's providence followed this grateful Samaritan; and that when the time came for the opening of the door to the Gentiles, he was amongst those who gladly received the Message, and made a consecration to become an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ our Lord to the Heavenly inheritance.

We are not to understand that our Lord's words, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," meant that it was the man's faith aside from Divine Power that made him whole, but rather that it was the Master's using the Divine Power in connection with the faith of the individual. The Power of God and the faith of the man co-operated for his healing. They did the same for the nine others who were healed. They also had faith and were healed, and as Jews under the Law Covenant, they had more ground for asking forgiveness and healing than had the Samaritan.

TEN HEALED – WHERE ARE THE NINE?

Jesus called public attention to the fact that ten were healed, but that only one had returned to give glory to God. True, He had not asked them to come back and offer praise and acknowledge the

Divine Power wrought through Him! True, they did what He told them to do – went and showed themselves to the priest – and no more, going then about their business.

Why did He not, before granting the healing, bargain with them, saying, If I heal you, will you consecrate your lives and become My disciples? Undoubtedly they would have agreed to this arrangement. Who would not agree to any terms to be rid of so loathsome and incurable a disease? Why did not Jesus take this method of adding to the number of His disciples? Undoubtedly the answer should be that He was following the spirit of the Father's dealings, which He expressed in the words, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him as worship Him in spirit and in truth." As the Father seeks no others, so the Son seeks no others.

In this respect the preaching of Jesus and the Apostles is in strong contrast with much of the preaching of evangelists, revivalists, etc. Never did Jesus or the Apostles urge worldly people to become disciples of Christ. They merely preached, or declared, certain great facts, and accepted those who came under that kind of preaching, influenced by the great facts set forth. They reasoned of sin, of righteousness and of a coming time of decision, or judgment, and left the matter with the individual conscience. They stated that those who forsake sin and turn to God may have forgiveness and reconciliation through the merit of the blood of Christ. They told of a High, or Heavenly, Call for all such penitents who **[R5454 : page 140]** would consecrate their lives wholly to the service of God, Truth and righteousness, willing to endure hardness as good soldiers.

We remember that on one occasion Jesus apparently reproved even a spirit of enthusiasm that might becloud the cool judgment, saying, "Sit down and count the cost." (Luke 14:28.) It has pleased God through the preaching of the Truth to call out the class which He desires to be joint-heirs with His Son. They are not to be brought into the family of God by prayers or by excitement, but by

the declaration of the Divine terms and conditions. To such as accept the grace of God the urgent message goes out that they receive it not in vain; that, having put their hand to the plow, they do not look back; that, having enlisted as good soldiers of the Cross, they endure hardness, rejoicing in the privilege of service and sacrifice.

The point we make is that according to the Bible, no attempts were ever made by Jesus and His Apostles to obtain recruits for the army of the Lord by a "hip-hip-hurrah" process. In this we are not criticising others, but merely calling attention to facts which have much to do with the guidance of all God's people who seek to know and to do His will.

OTHER TENS, HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS

Let us view the incident of our lesson symbolically. Let the lepers represent sinners who, coming to realize themselves unclean, cry out to the Lord for cleansing, thus impliedly acknowledging His greatness and power as the Son of God, through whom only is forgiveness of sin, and impliedly declaring themselves as desiring to be His followers, His disciples, persuaded that sin is injurious and resolved thereafter to walk in the Lord's footsteps, fighting against sin in themselves and everywhere. How many of the tens, the hundreds, the thousands, whose devotion and faith the Lord has accepted – how many whom He has healed, forgiven and received according to their profession of discipleship – really have become His true followers?

How many who have declared to the Lord their unhappiness, their desire for forgiveness of sins, and promised life-long gratitude and devotion to Him, to have His favor, have forgotten their privileges; and after receiving a blessing have gone, one to his field, another to his merchandise, another to pleasure, another to formalism! How few have remembered their prayers to the Lord

for mercy, their resolutions in respect to what they would do if their prayers were answered!

A REVIVAL IS IN ORDER

Many Christian people are growing in the opinion that we are living today in a time of crucial trial as respects those who have made a covenant with God. They believe that we are nearing the time when the Church, the Body of Christ, will be received by the Lord in the Resurrection change to be His Bride. As the Apostle wrote, "We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." The call of this Gospel Age has been to the finding of these who are to constitute the Bride class, the associates of Jesus in His Kingdom.

Of the Jews Jesus said, in a time of testing in the end of their Age, "They knew not the time of their visitation." Only the comparatively few were in the heart condition of nearness to God which enabled them to understand the character of the times in which they were living and the change which was in progress. The thought is that a similar change is upon us now, which is being discerned by those who have had the eyes of their understanding opened.

The Samaritan in our lesson seems to represent a class of grateful followers of the Lord who seek to give Him glory in their words, thoughts and doings, while the **[R5455 : page 140]** majority of those who have similarly received His favor are disposed to pursue the ambitions and pleasures of the present life. Neglecting to take the path which the Master trod, they will not reach the glory, honor and immortality which He attained and to which He has called this class. A lower place must be for them. In a little while, according to the Bible, the glories of the Kingdom will be revealed to an astonished world, but the glories of the present condition of affairs will fade away.

The true Wisdom that cometh from Above was manifested by our Savior, who counted not His life dear unto Him, who freely made Himself of no reputation that He might do the Father's will, and who is now highly exalted as a reward. St. Paul expressed the same thought, saying that he counted all things as but loss and dross that he might win a place in the Body of Christ – the Church in glory beyond the veil. Great as will be the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom to the world, the blessings which the Church will have will be transcendently better.

