

Matthew 8

Read Matthew 8:1-4: **Dealing with leprosy**

Life's small tragedies and losses change our course. Some people may have a *bad day* while others experience life-changing losses. Leprosy was a scourge that changed the lives of its victims.

Leprosy was a greatly-feared disease. It required complete isolation from society. These hopelessly-infected people were required to cover their bodies and yell "unclean" any time someone was near them. Sin prevents us from experiencing meaningful fellowship with other men. The infected person was required to live outside the city. It was considered to be an awful fate brought on as judgement from God. Leprosy begins in a small way. It is no big deal at first. It is like sin. Our insignificant or innermost spiritual area of corruption is something that is easy to conceal. Then it becomes more obvious to us and others. Symbolically leprosy illustrates the effects of sin in several ways:

1. You lose sensory, and become numb. When you sin, you become indifferent and callous to everything and everyone around you. That is why the vital relationships suffer when we go our own way. We are only seeking our own self-soothing. Everybody else is an inconvenience and something we struggle to tolerate.
2. Leprosy shows up in the little things at first. You might have a few spots on your skin; or discolored hair spots. Sin starts as some little hidden allowance or bad habit or indulgence. People conclude that it really does not affect anyone. Not so.
3. You contract the disease by being in contact with infected persons; or things they have touched. Sin is infectious. Your friend's bad habits will become yours. We all have gates: eye

gates, ear gates, etc... and we need to shut them when something unclean is present. That is why we are called unto holiness.

4. Over time it becomes more apparent and ugly. It eventually turns into complete disfigurement and death. People running hard in the world's ways look run down, prematurely-aged and ugly. Consider the beautiful girl who starts sleeping around. Years later she looks like a rundown street tramp. The collateral damage on their body for their lifestyle will result in an unpleasant health condition and death.
5. The known infected person needs to be quarantined until they have become repeatedly tested over time; and declared clean. Very few get cured.
6. They must yell out that they are unclean; and walk away from people. We are to reach out to sinners; and yet cut off any potential contamination in the body of Christ. We all sin and have failures. Failure to walk away from our continuing sin, and submit ourselves to the healing process can spread sin in the camp. If a fellow in our assembly refuses to let go of their sin we begin by lovingly communicating what they need to do to get healthy. The Biblical model requires accountability and monitoring. If they persist in their ways we must turn them over to Satan. They will either repent and become healed or they will continue in their sin. We cannot allow these infectious bad habits corrupt the body of Christ. i.e. if they are giving drugs to other members of the group...

As believers we encounter potentially-infectious things all day long. There are things that we see and hear. One problem with sin is that people try to heal themselves unsuccessfully for years. To assume

that you can heal yourself in a major sin problem is to deny that it is something that is your master.

There are Laws of Purification to provide a means to restore a person who has touched something dead or unclean. These cleansing rituals are very particular. In other words, there is a prescribed means to deal with sin. We cannot take it upon ourselves to blow off Christian accountability and a specific Biblical process of healing. Our own bad judgement got us into this position...and cannot be relied upon to extricate ourselves from this bondage. It is like observing a bug thrashing about in a spider's web. They seem to have a breakthrough; but then are actually being doubly-bound.

The unclean person cannot cleanse themselves. A clean priest is to use the ashes of a burnt red heifer to ceremonially cleanse him. In the same way; we who struggle with addictions need to submit ourselves to the cleansing process (with accountability and monitoring). Playing around with will power and self-cures is not enough. A leper is a menace to society just like a drunk is a driving hazard to all on the road.

"This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD has commanded, saying: 'Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red A
*FEMALE
RED HAIR
VIRGIN
COW*
heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come. You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him; and Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger, and sprinkle some of its blood seven times directly in front of the tabernacle of meeting. Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight: its hide, its flesh, its blood, and its offal shall be burned. And

the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast *them* into the midst of the fire burning the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, he shall bathe in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; the priest shall be unclean until evening. And the one who burns it shall wash his clothes in water, bathe in water, and shall be unclean until evening. Then a man *who is* clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store *them* outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it *is* for purifying from sin....

‘And for an unclean *person* they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. A clean person shall take hyssop and dip *it* in the water, sprinkle *it* on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. The clean *person* shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean. ‘But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the assembly, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he *is* unclean. It shall be a perpetual statute for them. He who sprinkles the water of purification shall wash his clothes; and he who touches the water of purification shall be unclean until evening. Whatever the

Tolerance & Mercy

IF your into sin IT OWNS YOU

unclean person touches shall be unclean; and the person who touches it shall be unclean until evening.” (Numbers 19)

Christ
Submit
yourself
to the
process

A leper is like a drug addict, person addicted to pornography, or a habitual thief. They must submit themselves to an authorized authority until their unclean behavior is healed. The elders must keep a careful eye on these persons; and young believers need to be kept away from them.

Leprosy can lie dormant for 5-20 years. The scaly patches of skin become hideous and numb to sensation. The tissue becomes spongy and eventually falls off. It eats inwards to the bones and destroys organs. The hands and feet become disfigured and the tissue between the bones is destroyed. It rots out the whole body piecemeal. The entire body becomes disfigured.

After we submit ourselves to the process and accountability and have gone a considerable time without relapse, we can be reinstated fully into the fellowship of believers. If a person is too proud, or believes they have no need to go through the process, you need to step back and let God deal with them. The Corinthians had such a person in their assembly.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles— that a man has his father's wife! (1 Corinthians 5:1)

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. (1 Corinthians 5:7)

FIND SOMEONE THAT IS
REALLY HONORING GOD

But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

After a person stops their harmful lifestyle, and goes through the healing and accountability process they are to be restored to the fellowship. The sinner is not able to decide when they are cured.

KING AT ARMY BAY
→ THE BODY OF BELIEVERS IS JUDGE ON THAT.

This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. (2 Corinthians 2:6-8)

Read Matthew 8:5-13: **The centurion**

Centurions are presented favorably in scripture. It seems counterintuitive that a brutal Roman army commander would be highly-regarded. Here are a few facts about centurions:

- In ancient Rome the "centurion" meant "captain of 100", and the Roman centurion was captain over 100 foot soldiers in a legion. The centurion was loyal and courageous, beginning as a soldier in the army and working their way up the ranks. It is not a position obtained by politics or favor. They were noticed by the general for their skill and courage in battle, and were made officers. The backbone of the Roman army were the centurions. The centurions were legionaries and they were clearly noticed because they wore a special helmet, and a more ornate harness of much better quality. They carried a short vine wood staff as a symbol of rank. They worked their way up the ranks as soldiers, and were promoted for their dedication and courage. They were the veteran soldiers who commanded 100 men each, within a legion of 6,000. There were thus 60 centurions in a

legion, each under the command of a centurion. During the time of Augustus there were 28 legions. The Army of Rome consisted of three types of soldiers: The Praetorian Guard (Caesar's bodyguard), The Legionaries (infantry soldiers and officers made up of citizens), and The Auxiliaries (non-citizen troops). The centurion received pay that amounted to more than 20 times the ordinary soldiers pay, about 5,000 denarii per year. There were actually five senior centurions in a legion who received 10,000 denarii per year, and the chief centurion (the first javelin) received 20,000 denarii in pay annually. The common soldier received around 200-300 denarii per year. During the time of Jesus the headquarters of the Roman army in Judea was located at Caesarea, on the Mediterranean coast.

- The ordinary duties of the centurion were to drill his men, inspect their arms, food and clothing, and to command them in the camp and in the field. This is comparable to discipleship. Centurions were sometimes employed on detached service the conditions of which in the provinces are somewhat obscure. Men like Cornelius and Julius (Acts 10:1; 27:1) may have been separated from the legion to which they properly belonged for the discharge of special duties.

Why are centurions often favorably mentioned in the Bible?

- Good conduct was generally the cause of their promotion to the command of a century (properly 100 men). They were known to not have personal agendas that competed with their fulfillment of their duties. Truthful straightforwardness would make them open to conviction. They would address pressing issues and ask for help when needed. They were in place to keep control over the situation. They did not get caught up into titles or privileges of their office. Christian leadership begins at the bottom. We have to learn to support others with their

*That's
what
we
do!*

needs. That process automatically raises the most-helpful helpers to the position to lead. Many want to lead or speak; but who is really fulfilling the day to day basics?

- They were skillful in tactics and led by example. They led the battles from the front. Their mortality rate was high; as they did not view the battles from the hilltop. We cannot lead men if we are not really subject to the same issues they are. Obviously they would carefully assess any battle they were going to fight on the front lines themselves. They would not subject their troops to any situation they would not shoulder themselves. They took care of the soldiers as valuable assets. Only the most skillful soldiers survived and could pass on direction. This gave them great respect and allegiance from their men. Battle mistakes would thin out the centurions to leave only best at surviving as overcomers. Church hypocrisy is a hard thing to avoid. The best teachers are doers. We don't need theologians. Many things are *caught* as we step out in faith more than they can be *taught*.
- A centurion did not put up with unruly followers. He dealt with problem soldiers on the spot. Mercy and grace is not to be confused with being disorganized and allowing things to run wild. There are boundaries in church membership and leadership.
- Centurions normally had much experience. Some believers prematurely pushed into leadership. This is a problem.

Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure. (1 Timothy 5:22)

Think of how humbling it would be for this centurion to ask for help from a country rabbi to heal his servant. It is commendable that the centurion was on an urgent quest to save his servant. Consider a man having authority to kill and incarcerate; to humble himself to say

THESE ARE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN.

*Li 1/15
GLADIATOR
MOVIE*

*DON'T PREDATOR
PUT PEOPLE
INTO
LEADERSHIP*

he was unworthy to have Jesus to come to his house. He recognized that Jesus dispatched power from afar.

Jesus uses this centurion to illustrate true faith. True faith does not regard boundaries. It seeks to protect human life. God recognized a number of Gentiles (from unbelieving and idolatrous nations) had more faith than the religious Jews.

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matthew 15:21-28)

Read Matthew 8:14-15: **Ministry fringe benefits**

Peter's mother was healed when she became ill. We have a munition storage of power when we are about our father's business. We are connected to prayer warriors and means to assist others. We can access these things when our own household is in need.

→ God will give us all the armaments & shields when we are going about God's business

Honor God like the Gentiles

"You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.
(Deuteronomy 25:4)

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

1. SERVE GOD 2. TAKE CARE OF FAMILY NEEDS

Read Matthew 8:16-17: **Healing ministries**

Healing ministries are nearly impossible to keep from human contamination. There is a lot of glory and attention and notoriety that can come. The battle is the LORD's. When someone receives Christ; there is no room for demonic possession. Demonic possession is more abundant where witchcraft and other occult activities flourish. We are to pray to break down demonic strongholds.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

When conditions are right; God equips his people

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We^[a] exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, [e] so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:11-16)

It is pointless to track, study and address demons. They are lying spirits. We are probably deceived if we are following signs. We are not here to clean up the universe. We are here to honor God by helping people. When we do launch an offensive it is to call upon the name of the LORD in worship. We can pray to remove bondages and strongholds in lives and places. We are given power as we go out to help people in the moment of need. We are not given a magic wand top play with; or use at our pleasure. Many Christians imagine great things about their supernatural gifts. God is very low key. With God; you will miss the miracle entirely as it is obscured in the mundane circumstance. We are more about rescue than seeking out the enemy. We cannot bomb a demonic zone and kill them. We can just bind them by the power of heaven.

Then He said to them, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. (Luke 10:2-3)

He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.” The Seventy Return with Joy Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the

authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:16-20)

Read Matthew 8:18-22: Following Christ will shake out the priority of your relationships. We all have competing interests. We assume that God is o.k. with putting his request on the back burner to accommodate people in our life. We also need to be careful that we do not become a light to the world at the cost of our family.

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. (Matthew 10:34-37)

We need to be what God has called us to be to become better husbands and fathers and mothers. At the same time; we need to be always building up our family. We have to be more mobile and be willing to adjust our commitments to work and other things.

Read Matthew 8:23-27: We all have a chance to minister in the workplace. There is minimal spiritual communication when men work quietly and carry out their tasks. When things fall apart you hear cursing and conflicting interests surface. Men have to become buried and under pressure to cry out for help. This verse is

ministering to my needs today. A storm seems to have come upon my workplace again. Men are frustrated and tired and overwhelmed. Some are losing their jobs. We are faced an impossible schedule. My subcontractors are not able to manage themselves; and are not able to complete their tasks; and require that I re-check them daily. I feel like a ship's captain observing some of the crew members as lost souls. Others have given up trying. Others are so overwhelmed with the rapid-fire survival moves that they can only seem to complete some of what they intend. The irony is that the same storm of confusion and blockades is what I thrive on. God has made me to multi task at a full gallop. The difference is getting a *flat tire* *verses* *cruising at a high speed*.

I have been able to get men to attend a Bible study and read their Bibles. This would not be as likely to happen under normal circumstances. God advances his leaders among the crowd in uncommon circumstances. I am able to share Acts 27 (below) with men who are on the ship as I am today; so that they too will put their hope in God.

From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary. When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it. When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone; and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea. When

considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul *began* to admonish them, and said to them, “Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul. Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter *there*.

When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and *began* sailing along Crete, close *inshore*. But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo; and when the ship was caught *in it* and could not face the wind, we gave way *to it* and let ourselves be driven along. Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the *ship's* boat under control. After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on *the shallows* of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along. The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo; and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing *us*, from then on all hope of our being saved

was gradually abandoned. When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, “Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’ Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told (Acts 27: 4-23)

Matthew 8:28-34: Sometimes spiritual warfare becomes so obvious that you have to laugh. We face *thing after thing* pushing us away from our goal. After fighting a tough storm they get out of the boat; and are faced with demonic and extremely-violent men. We should not focus on the seemingly-endless hurdles. God is showing us that he delivers us from the forces of: nature (naturally-occurring, and demons (supernaturally-occurring, etc.).

Notice that Jesus did not get into apologetics with those opposing him. He stayed focused. When we stay focused; men will get saved; and communities will be impacted as well.