

The Leper Drawing Forth the Saviour's Grace.

by Andrew Bonar

Jesus' compassion and willingness to heal the leper's physical and spiritual diseases illustrate the reality of Christ's sympathy in our sorrows and the manner in which Christ heals our soul's diseases.

Scripture: Leviticus 14:2-32, Psalm 51:1, Matthew 15:32, Matthew 16:20, Matthew 20:34, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 7:13, John 11:22, Hebrews 4:15, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "Compassion Of Christ", "Faith and Healing"

Description

Andrew Bonar emphasizes the profound compassion of Jesus as illustrated by the leper who boldly approached Him, seeking healing despite societal rejection. The leper's faith, expressed in his plea, 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' showcases the struggle between doubt and belief in God's willingness to heal. Bonar highlights that Jesus, moved by compassion, not only has the power to heal but is also willing to cleanse the most unclean, demonstrating His grace and mercy. The sermon encourages believers to bring their sorrows and doubts to Christ, who is always ready to respond with love and healing. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a deeper understanding of Christ's readiness to forgive and heal, urging the congregation to trust in His willingness and power.

Transcript

"And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will, be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away, and saith unto him, see thou say nothing to any man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places. And they came to him from every quarter."

Mark 1:40-45.

Our Lord was at this time sowing the seed of the kingdom in Galilee, visiting its towns and its villages. In the midst of a country village, or at the market-place of a larger town, he often stood among the people; the true Wisdom lifted up her voice (Prov, 8: 1, 3), proclaiming life to the sons of men. On one of these occasions he was met by a leper; or rather, it seems, he was interrupted by the unexpected visit of a man all white with leprosy. The Evangelist Luke (v. 12) speaks of the occurrence as taking place in one of the

towns.

If so, the case was altogether remarkable; for, according to the ancient law that shut out the leper from the camp, no one in that state was allowed to enter the gates of any city. Like the four unhappy men (2 Kings 7:3), the leprous person might come up to the gate, but must not enter. In the case before us, however, the man's misery and earnestness appear to have led to a perilous experiment. Persuaded of the Lord's power to heal, longing to put it to the test, almost sure, also, from rumours that had gone abroad, that his willingness might embrace such a case as his, the man will venture to do this new thing - he will come in all his leprosy into the city!

He will rush along, and ere ever the angry people have had time to recover from their astonishment at the boldness of the leprous man, he hopes to find himself cured and whole at the feet of Jesus. There was both daring and doubting in his action. He is like Esther venturing into the presence of the king, 'If I perish, I perish.' What a lively picture of a soul awakened to true anxiety for salvation! O to see many such in our day! O to see the 'kingdom of heaven thus taken by violence.'

The earnestness of the man is seen yet farther in his manner. He 'knelt' before the Lord, and next 'fell on his face' (Luke 5:12); his attitudes giving emphasis to his words. Even as our Master himself, when clothed with our leprosy, in the garden of Gethsemane, first fell on his knees before his Father, and then prostrate on his face as his agony increased. He 'besought' Jesus - he addressed moving cries to him, and this was the burden of them all, 'IF THOU WILT, THOU CANST MAKE ME CLEAN!'

He has some fear, some doubt, some secret dread lest the Lord should see reasons for withholding the exercise of his power; but still he has great faith. He does not, like Martha, consider Christ's power as needing to be sought from God (John 11:22); he believes the power to be lodged already in Christ's person; he believes, too, it is power so great, that it can reach his case. Yet, let it be remembered, up to this time, there had not occurred any case of leprosy cured. As yet, Jesus had not, so far as is recorded, healed any such.

History, however, told of Namaan healed by miracle; and this man does not doubt but Jesus can work this miracle, if he will. Brethren, if this man reasoned thus in himself, 'though Jesus has never yet done so great a thing as the cleansing of a leper, yet he has done enough to convince me that he can, if he will' - surely much more may every soul here say, 'if Jesus has saved souls as guilty as mine, then surely he can save me.' There was in this leper's case an unhappy dimness of vision as to the Saviour's grace.

'Whether or not he has a heart that will go the length of taking up the case of one so unholy as I am, I know not' - this was the man's lingering suspicion. But the Lord Jesus had so much grace in his heart toward sinners, that, in spite of his doubt, he took up the man's case at once. 'Moved with compassion, he put forth his hand.' The word is, 'his bowels yearning, he put forth his hand.' It is remarkable how often we are told of our Master's compassion. In Matthew 15:32, at the sight of the multitude; in Matthew 20:34, looking at the blind men in vain rolling their eyeballs to find the sun; in Luke 7:13, when he met the weeping widow of Nain at the gate.

All who knew Jesus, knew and felt that he had bowels of mercies, and in this they could not fail to recognise the very character of Jehovah; 'the multitude of whose tender mercies' (Psalm 51:1.) were the theme of David's song, and the hope of David's heart. Jesus 'put out his hand and touched him.' He touched the leper. He was not afraid of being contaminated; he knew that no pollution would come from the man to him, but that, on the contrary, healing would go from him to the man.

Christ is the fountain that cleanses others, and is itself never polluted. Christ can let John lean on his bosom, and in so doing can convey purity to John, while John communicates no stain to his Master. Though Jesus touched the leper, he did not, in so doing, break the Mosaic law; for the law forbade any contact with the defiled, only on the understanding that this contact would spread the defilement. But Christ's touch removed it, instead of receiving its contagion. Even as he ate with publicans and sinners, and yet broke no law of God; for he did so in order to draw them forth from their miry clay.

Jesus saith unto him, 'I will, be thou cleansed.' Our Master is as willing as he is able. He exhibits both qualities here in equal degree, and at one moment. It is with Divine brevity that he expresses himself, in the very style of him who could say, 'Let there be light.' But there is infinite fulness revealed by these simple words; for herein we see the heart and the hand of 'God manifest in flesh,' and find that the depth of his grace and the extent of his power are alike unsearchable.

'And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed.' Here again is the finger of God. How characteristic of Godhead is this immediate effect! 'He speaks, and it is done.' Nothing is a barrier to the Lord's will and power. And hence it is that in pardon of sin the stamp of the Divine character is plainly seen in the sinner being at once and completely forgiven. A gradual pardon, or an incomplete pardon, would want altogether the mark and impress of a Divine original.

Our Lord then 'straitly charged him' i. e. with authority, in the tone, of the Lawgiver - he charged the man as to his future conduct - he bade him tell none of his cure. 'Say nothing to any man.' Some people's own soul is greatly injured by their telling others what they have experienced. Pride is often fed by this habit of speaking about themselves, and the individuals are drawn off from personal application. Neither this, nor any other passage, discountenances a believing man telling what God has done for his soul, if, by so doing, others are to be blessed, and God glorified.

But this, and many other passages, guard us against the abuse of this matter. In the case of Jairus' daughter (5:43), the parents were not to tell the miracle, probably in order to punish Capernaum's unbelief, and the previous scorn of the multitude. In the case of the transfiguration, the three disciples were 'to tell no man till Christ was risen from the dead,' because, until then, the time was not suitable for revealing that special wonder. In another case (Matt.16:20), the disciples were not to tell that 'Jesus was the Christ,' because at that time they were unfit to teach others regarding him, ignorant as they were of the necessity of his death.

In the case before us, the man may have been charged to be silent only till he had visited the priest; and this visit was according to the law of Moses regarding leprosy. By that law, as laid down in Levit. 14:2-32, the priest was publicly to proclaim the leper's cleansing; and in so doing in the present case, a 'testimony' would be borne to the reality of Christ's wondrous works. And then the mode in which the cleansing was made known was well fitted to send back the cleansed man's thoughts - to the Saviour.

For the ceremonial rite observed in pronouncing one clean, was sprinkling him with blood of a bird killed over running water. This blood was dropt on the man from a living bird, that had been dipt therein, and that was let loose to fly at liberty. Our Lord, no doubt, loved that type well, for it so fully spoke of himself as the dying and yet the living one - his death and resurrection. The leper did not obey the command. In this he sinned. No doubt it might seem excusable to man for one so benefited to blaze abroad his benefactor's kindness.

Men might say it was pardonable zeal. But illtimed and too forward zeal may be real sin. The man really, by so doing, misrepresented Christ, saying, in a manner, 'The Lord was not sincere in his charge; it was affected modesty.' O what a reproach to cast upon the uprightness of him whose love 'vaunted not itself, and was not puffed up.' And besides, by his mistaken zeal, he hindered Christ's public work, 'insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city.' Brethren, let the law of Christ direct us, while the love of Christ constrains us. And now let us fix our attention on two important views of our Lord which are both illustrated by this narrative.

I. The reality of Christ's sympathy in our sorrows. There is real and intense pity for human misery in the heart of Jesus. It only waits for an occasion to shew itself. The leper's affliction gave such an opportunity. His beseeching cry touches the spring, and the door flies open. He rolls the stone from the well's mouth, and lets us see how deep and cool are the waters. He breaks the box of spikenard, and diffuses the fragrance on us. Blessed day in which this man probed the heart of our compassionate High Priest!

What, then, is there in Christ's heart? There is love to the needy, and tender pity to the helpless, sympathy for the sorrowful, and bowels of mercies for the miserable. This man came rushing into his presence in haste; his fellow-men shrank back from his touch, and ran aside at his approach. He kneels, falls prostrate, beseeches, spreads out his snow white hands, lifts up his sunk eye, draws attention to the disease that has made his whole person loathsome, and utters an imploring cry, 'Lord, if thou wilt thou canst!'

I am driven off all shores now - is there a haven for me in Thee? The sight and the appeal moved Jesus. See how he feels for misery, He feels for the tears of the distressed who have no comforter. He often bends his ear to the prison-door to hear the groaning of the prisoner. He listens, and yearns over the moans of a sick-bed. He pities deeply the sorrows of awakened souls. And his people's every affliction is felt by him. At this hour, Jesus has all this fellow-feeling; for it is still as true as ever, 'We have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities.' (Heb. 4:15.)

We should never read the gospel history, brethren, without remembering that most precious verse, 'Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' (Heb. 13:8.) 'Yesterday,' he was in Galilee healing the leper; and you see his heart then 'To-day,' he is at the Father's right hand; and you see his heart still. Yet a little while, and he shall come the second time to them that wait for him; and you learn what to expect of him on that day - 'the same for ever.' This compassion was called forth into exercise - brought out in acts - by misery being laid before him.

As when they laid the palsied man, silently, at his feet. As when at Nain he saw the widow's tears. As at Bethany 'when he saw Mary weeping.' Therefore let us lay before him our distress and trouble. Let us open out our wounds in the physician's presence, 'Lord, here is my sore;' and, 'Lord, here is my perpetual pain, and my incurable wound.' Do this by special, particular, minute, confession of sin; or by definite and full declaration of sorrows. It is thus you draw off the bandage and shew the ghastly sore, and move the pity, and draw forth the skill of Jesus.

You may object: 'Of what use in our doing so? He knows our sorrows already?' True; but our High Priest - our brother - uses human rules, so to speak, in this matter. It was his own way on earth; he unbosomed all he felt to his Father, and he desires us to do the same. It is not because he is slow to feel. No; he is easily touched. The leper's case is stated, and 'immediately he puts forth his hand.' Peter begins to sink in the water; and forthwith Jesus stretches out his hand.

Jairus tells the sorrows of a father's heart; and scarcely has he got to the end of his tale, ere Jesus arises and goes with him. All this shews that he has a full heart of tender pity. He is, indeed, far, far more easily moved than we; just because no sin ever blunts his feelings, or introduces selfish regard into his calculations. His holy, loving soul hastens to relieve a suppliant's pain. Some never really shew Christ their disease - their sorrow - their wretchedness. Chagrin, or the sorrow of the world, works their ruin.

O unhappy one, whom the world hath deceived, and who feedest proudly on thy very wretchedness, unbosom all to our High Priest, and find his flowing compassion thy cure. O suffering ones, try these deep compassions. 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so the Lord thy God would comfort thee.' It is thus that his own have always been upheld and refreshed. Such is the character of Him who is our physician.

II. The manner in which Christ heals our soul's diseases. Very many narratives in Scripture appear to have been inserted there because of their peculiar fitness to illustrate spiritual truth and the ways of God. Thus David's cave of Adullam; and David's interview with Mephibosheth, whom he pardoned for Jonathan's sake; and the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon; and Jeremiah's drawn up from the miry clay of his dungeon. But especially may we say this of a narrative like this before us, wherein the disease is leprosy, which all agree is remarkably typical of sin, and wherein the healer is Jesus.

We have no doubt this man's case was meant to teach us the sinner's mode of coming to the Saviour for pardon. Keeping in mind, then, that leprosy shewed the nature of sin, here is represented a sinner of the most loathsome kind, laden with deadly sin, from head to foot polluted. Feeling and thoughts, words and actions, have all been evil, and only evil. Next, there is here represented this great sinner sensible of his case, awakened to deep concern under it. Nature awakens concern in the diseased for a cure, and leads him to a physician; and the Holy Spirit awakens concern in the sinner, and turns his joy into mourning until he has found a remedy, directing him where to go, and opening his heart to embrace the Saviour revealed to him.

Now here are such a man's difficulties in seeking the Saviour; here are exhibited such a man's enquiries when he has come so far as to feel that he must find a Saviour or perish. Here is that man's case set before us in the anxious moments he spends ere the scales have for ever fallen from his eyes, and the fulness of the grace of a forgiving God been discovered. The man comes to none other but the Lord Jesus. And what was the warrant that emboldened him so to come? All the warrant lay in the Lord himself, what he had heard of his works, and what he knew of his character.

And such is our warrant for coming as sinners, as ungodly, as lost, as unjust, as unclean, as desperately wicked, to the Lord our Righteousness. We find nothing in our own hearts or lives to warrant a single hope; but we hear of the Lord, that 'they who know his name, put their trust in him.' We hear that there is boldness found by 'the blood of Jesus,' and by the fact that himself also is 'the High Priest over the house of God' - and so his work and his living person put into our hands an ample warrant for a bold approach.

This warrant, when held even by a trembling hand, avails - Christ's work and person, seen even by a dim eye - the blood and the High Priest, alone trusted in even by a fearful heart, bring us into the Lord's presence, and within touch of the golden sceptre. The leper's heart had still a lingering suspicion, 'If thou wilt;' but then it did at the same time repose confidence on him so far as it knew his mind. He did believe the fountain to be deep and wide, able to give out much; and approaching it thus, he was made by the Lord to know to his blessed astonishment; that not only was it deep and full, but full to the very brim.

Jesus at once hastened to say, 'I will; be clean,' putting the man at the very edge of the fountain, and laving him with its waters. We sometimes think that we believe Jesus able to pardon and save, but we are not sure that he is willing to go so far as to save us. For the lurking suspicion in such cases is, that there is about us an unworthiness that will in all likelihood repel him from us. But this is a misunderstanding, a gross misconception of Christ's reasons for saving any.

His grace is misrepresented by such a thought; and did we see how he pardons solely for reasons in himself, not for any cause in us, we would be delivered from this hinderance. Jesus here removes this very fear; for so great is his grace, that even doubts of himself are swept away by it. Nor is there any price paid for pardon, even as the leper's case was all free. He came to get; he never once thought of offering a gift in any shape. It was well known that Jesus did all his wonders without inducement on the part of the receivers.

The man went feeling, 'He gives, and I need to get.' And so it was, Christ gave, and the leper received - not a word of conditions, not a word even as to duty, until the case was perfected. And thus it is with pardon of sin. The coming sinner's appeal to Christ - his simple confidence in him for pardon - is responded to by an immediate bestowal of forgiveness. The Lord has not to go and fetch the gift; nor has he to bid the applicant go and return again; or go and abide many days in patient hope.

The pardon is in Christ, who at once says, 'I will.' But perhaps you object, 'But there is something like a price, for we must have faith in him?' But is this a price? Was the leper's coming to Christ a price? In fact, faith, so far from being a price, is the soul's believing that it is saved without a price. You may say that you have often tried to get to Christ, and have often prayed. Well, but all the time you may have never searched his heart. You may have thought of 'Thou canst,' but very little of 'I will.'

You are still a stranger to the joy of believing his present readiness, and his present power. You have not been aware, that instead of bringing a price to him - e.g. excited feelings, bitter repentance, humiliation - he has on his part been ready all along to give an immediate pardon, whenever he saw it could be done in a way honourable to himself, - that is, you were content to receive it without a single qualification on your part at all.

Brethren, who of you is this day as the leper? The fear of man has no influence on you now to keep you back; you could face a whole city in your search for a cure. But you have still some unsatisfied doubts. These doubts are no honour to Christ; they are no blessing to yourself. The Holy Spirit, in savingly revealing Christ to any soul, removes them altogether. A Saviour better known would satisfy them. Though no case so bad, or at least so peculiar as yours, had ever occurred before, yet he can reach it with his holy skill. The sinner that believes 'Thou canst,' might surely look a little farther and see that also written on his heart, 'I will.'

Survey his person. See the priest's robe, the priest's girdle, the priest's mitre, the priest's breastplate, with its row of names, each name telling of a man of Israel, to whom the Prince and Saviour gave repentance and remission. See the palms of his hands, on which are engraven the names of Rahab and Manasseh, and thousand, thousand lepers cleansed and glorified.

To such a Saviour you may go: go even with doubts; for you may go to hide them all in his pierced side, as Thomas did. Carry doubts, which form so great a part of your misery, to this compassionate Saviour. 'He can, and he will,' let this henceforth be your song, as you run your race with your eye fixed on his person.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/andrew-bonar/the-leper-drawing-forth-the-saviours-grace/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net