

# DAILY BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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Thirty-Fifth Week -- Tuesday

## THE LEPER

*"When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, 'See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them'" (Matthew 8:1-4).*

When Simon and his friends went the next morning after Jesus had healed Peter's mother and a great many people] to the house where Jesus lodged, they found that He was not there. He had at break of day gone out and retired to a solitary place where He might indulge in communion with his Father in secret prayer. The disciples set forth to follow, having probably some notion of the quarter where He was likely to be found. As they went through the town, they failed not to observe that the popular movement respecting Jesus was reviving with the awakening day, and they met clusters of people who were eagerly inquiring after Him or watching to see or hear Him.

Upon finding Jesus, Peter told him this news. Upon this Jesus announced his intention of commencing a tour through Galilee, that the benefits He had the power to impart might be the more widely diffused. So, attended by them, He proceeded from place to place teaching in the synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner disease among the people. The consequence was that crowds gathered wherever He came, and his fame flew far and wide throughout all Syria. The sick were brought to Him from every quarter, and although the diseases under which they suffered were mostly such as were in that day accounted incurable, it needed but a *word* from Him to heal them. It is therefore not strange that between the desire to hear his new doctrine, given forth in a style so fresh and peculiar, and the wish to witness his miracles or to profit by them, numbers of people resorted to Him from considerable distances. Some of them were from beyond the Jordan, and this explains how He came to be so well known when not long after He made his appearance in that region.

Only one miracle of this journey is particularly recorded, and that perhaps because it was the first of its kind. It was the cure of a leper. There was no disease accounted more absolutely

incurable than this. No one who suffered under it even entertained the hope or expectation of cure. Hence lepers are among the last mentioned as seeking the aid of Jesus, but not because they had not heard of Him or seen Him afar off. They talked of his great works among themselves in their isolated communities, and as they recounted the wonders of mercy He had worked, yet they knew of no leper being cured except in the days of Elisha.

But there was one leper who allowed a ray of hope to enter his heart, and he nourished that hope until it grew into faith. Yes, the prophet of Galilee *could* cure him; but *would* He? Would He even deign to look upon an object so loathsome and so vile? Would He not, as scores of famous teachers and learned doctors had done, warn him from his path as a pollution? The poor leper may be forgiven this doubt, for his affliction had not allowed him to enter the cities in which Jesus taught or to mix in the crowds that saw his miracles. He had not therefore been able to witness the Divine compassion that so often beamed from the Savior's eyes, or to hear the tender gentleness of those tones in which He spoke to the downcast and miserable. It then remained to see if Jesus was willing. The leper could but try.

The leper could not go into any town to seek Him, nor could he mingle with the crowds to approach Him. There was but one course, and this was to wait upon the road leading to Capernaum, when the return of Jesus was expected, and to boldly confront Him as He went by with his disciples. He went, and at length beheld the near approach of One who *might* deliver him from the horrible bondage in which he had lain so long. He advanced toward our Lord as He came nigh, and laying his head low in the dust before Him cried, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." Oh, the agonizing suspense of the moment that followed; but it was not long. A voice came at once to his heart and filled it with rapture, saying, "I am willing." And our Savior, moved with deep compassion, put forth his hand and touched him--him whom no unleperous hand had touched for years--saying, "Be cleansed."

At that word a change passed over him. He felt new blood tingle through his veins, felt the flush of healthy life in all his tainted members, knew that his leprosy had passed from him; and he stood up cleansed, and restored to his family and friends and to all the blessings of social life.

In the fulness of his thankfulness and joy, this man would probably have followed Jesus from that hour, but he saw the necessity of following the direction of his Healer that he should go to Jerusalem and there present himself to the priest to obtain that formal recognition of his freedom from leprosy. Without that, the law would not hold him clean. And besides this, the priest's attestation of his being no longer a leper service to make the priest himself a testifying witness to the reality of the miracle.

But in another matter the restored leper found obedience more difficult. Jesus enjoined him to say nothing to anyone of the way in which he had been healed. But feeling that he had not merely been cured of a disease that all men believed hopeless but had been restored to all that made life a blessing, the poor man could not contain himself. He "went out and began to

publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter." We can hardly find it in our hearts to blame him too much. His gratitude, and his reluctance that his Deliverer should not fail of the honor due Him, considerably excuse his disobedience. The result, however, was very inconvenient to Jesus, for the crowds that pressed upon all his steps became greater than ever. He was for the time unable to enter Capernaum openly, but remained mostly in the secluded places which the neighborhood offered. There He addressed the manageable congregations that came and healed the sick that were brought to him in those retreats.