

Free as a Bird

Leviticus 14:1-7

11/ 02/ 08

Intro

As we continue our study through the book of Leviticus, we come to the section that is called, “The law of the leper.” It describes the actions of the priest on the day that a leper is cleansed. Leprosy was a debilitating disease that was greatly feared in all cultures and civilizations during that time period. Leprosy was incurable at that time, and has been incurable throughout the centuries until quite recently. Today there are less than 100 cases reported in the US each year.

Today leprosy is called *Hansen’s disease* because in 1873 a Norwegian doctor by the name of Hansen discovered that the leprosy was caused by a bacterium. This bacterium is exceptionally resistant to antibiotic treatment and in fact by the 1960s, the world’s only known anti-leprosy drug became virtually useless. Only by utilizing a powerful multi-drug antibiotic therapy can leprosy be effectively treated today. And that treatment may take 2-3 years to complete.

One of the most important things to understand in this section of Leviticus is that God placed a provision here for what the priests should do if a man were to be healed of leprosy, yet leprosy was incurable. And in fact in the entire Old Testament there is only one known case of a leper being healed, and he wasn’t even a Jew, so this scripture would not have applied to him.

That leads us to two spiritual applications. First, that leprosy was a disease that represented sin in the life of every person; and we will see the similarities in our study of Leviticus 13 and 14. Secondly, that the sacrifices and rituals for the leper that was healed is a powerful picture of Jesus Christ and the healing that comes to our lives through him.

I. We Need an Honest Diagnosis

- 1 Can you imagine going to a doctor because of some ailment you’re suffering from, just to have him gloss over the truth because he didn’t want to hurt your feelings?
- 2 Jesus said, “If you abide in my word you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
- 3 In other words, one of the first steps in being set free is knowing the truth and the truth is that sin is a debilitating disease that will destroy your life, so understanding the similarities that God points out to us in scripture is vitally important for our spiritual well being.

A. Leprosy begins insignificantly

- In Leviticus 13:2 it describes how leprosy can begin with something that appears

to be minor and insignificant.

Leviticus 13:2, When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling or a scab or a bright spot, and it becomes an infection of leprosy on the skin of his body, then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.

- Each of these three symptoms is an appropriate diagnosis of the beginning of the appearance of sin in our lives.
- For example, there's the swelling of the flesh, and the scripture describes the danger of the swelling of pride in our lives.

1 John 2:16, For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

- It also describes the symptom of having a bright spot on the skin. What an appropriate description of sin's seemingly simplistic beginning.
- It starts out as something that seems to be pleasurable, something to look forward to, a bright spot in life, but it turns out instead that the person is just medicating himself.
- But sin is not medicine at all; in fact, it only dulls the pain of greater problems that are much deeper.
- Which leads us to the next point....

B. Leprosy spreads rapidly

- In 13:10-11 it describes the condition of chronic leprosy. The disease was capable of rapidly spreading to many parts of the body from the head to the feet.
- What's interesting is that the incubation period of leprosy is actually quite long, anywhere from 2 to 10 years. In other words, the person will have leprosy for quite some time before they start seeing serious manifestations.
- Of course we understand that sin actually incubates in a person from birth. We see signs of this early on when a baby starts bonking other babies with their toys.
- Leprosy was made exceptionally more difficult because it attacks the nervous system and the person with leprosy has no feeling.

Illus – Physicians have observed victims of leprosy who have had their fingers or toes eaten by rats because of their lack of feeling. It can also cause blindness because the leper cannot feel sand or grit in their eyes.

- The bible warns us of the danger of having the same symptoms in our lives as well.

Hebrews 3:13, But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Ephesians 4:17-19 Don’t become callous

- When the conscience becomes dulled it becomes callous to sinful things and it then spreads.
- If we could become sensitive spiritually, we would be able to understand what sin looks like from God’s perspective and it would make all the difference in the world.
- When we speak of spiritual sensitivity, we are of course speaking of the condition of the heart. That is really where the callousness and hardness brings such destruction.

Matthew 15:18-20 Out of the heart come ...

C. Leprosy devastates completely

- One of the great tragedies of leprosy is how insidiously it devastates.
- Leprosy will eventually cause a person to lose their eyes, their nose shrinks into their face, and their hands shrivel and twist up and eventually would bring death.
- We know that sin will not only bring spiritual death, but it also will kill our joy, our happiness, and devastate our relationships.
- The scripture describes that the effects of sin are similar in our lives as well.

Romans 6:23, For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- 1 James gives us a powerful description of the progression of sin in our lives...

James 1:13-15 Carried away by our own desires

- 2 Leprosy also spreads from person to person and there is a powerful application to our lives as well.
- 3 The sin in one person’s life can certainly affect someone else’s life and so we must choose very carefully who we decide to hang out with.

Illus – If you choose to hang out with computer geeks, you will start to become one, if you hang out with golfers, you could easily become one, if you hang out with those who party all the time, you will become that yourself.

1 Corinthians 15:33, Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.”

II. Jesus Heals the Leprous Soul

- 1 In verse 2, Moses wrote that this is the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing... bring him to the priest.
- 2 Jesus is our healer, our king, and our high priest and it's so important that we see all that God put here to speak of the healer that was to come.

A. Jesus desires this with all his heart

- 1 This chapter stood here in Leviticus unused for 1,500 years. They studied it, but they never applied it because there was never a leper who was healed in the Old Testament. Well, there was a Syrian officer named Naaman who was healed, but he was not a Jew so this chapter would not apply to him.
 - 2 But then Jesus came and lepers began to be healed, not just one, but many lepers were healed and each time Jesus would say to them, go and show yourself to the priests.
- 3) **Matthew 8:4, And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”**
- 1 Caiaphas must have been befuddled completely because this was such a clear testimony that the Messiah himself was in Israel – Jesus.
 - 2 But this same leper said something that was absolutely important for us to see as well.

5) **Matthew 8:2-3, And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.**

- 1 Jesus is willing with all his heart to heal the soul. He is willing, so now the question is whether you are willing.

B. Jesus makes us “free as a bird”

- 1 This chapter is filled with so many truths that point to the work of Jesus Christ on

the cross of Calvary in the healing of our soul.

6) Isaiah 53:5, But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

- 1 Verse 4-7 is important to understand because we see Jesus so clearly.
- 2 Two live bird, cedar, scarlet string, and hyssop.
- 3 Slay a bird in an earthenware vessel over running water.
- 4 Dip the live bird, the cedar and the scarlet string in the blood of the bird that was slain.

10) Psalm 51:7, Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

- 1 Sprinkle the man seven times.
- 2 Let the live bird go free in the open field.

C. You are free so you can worship

- 1 When the leper was cleansed the priest then took the blood and applied into his right ear, his right thumb, and his right great toe.
- 2 Each of these has an application for our lives as well.
- 3 **The ear:** faith comes by hearing, him who has an ear, let him hear...Hear, O Israel...
- 4 **The thumb:** serve now with your hands because they have been cleansed by the blood of your redeemer.

16) Illus – In Africa they wash their hands in a basin and running water and serve one another in the process.

- 1 **The great toe:** Walk in your faith, the steps of the righteous are ordered of God.

17) Romans 10:15, How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “ How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!”

- 1 Finally, they **would anoint him with oil** and then pour the remaining oil over the man who was cleansed. What a picture of the anointing of the Holy Spirit on or lives today!

- 2 The only people in scripture to be anointed were priests, prophets, kings, and lepers who were cleansed.
- 3 What a picture of gaining new life in Christ!