

Imagine: One of my daughters, my 2-year-old has made a mess; milk and chocolate syrup all over herself. I run in and say “*I forgive you. I do not hold you accountable for this.*” And then I walk away.

What’s wrong with that scenario? I need to clean her up, not just forgive her!
The reason? She is unable to clean her own mess.

TITLE: **Made Clean** TEXT: **Mark 1:39-45**

The forgotten reality: **We need more than forgiveness from God.**
We need cleansing.

We all face many different kinds of problems in life – *Unemployment, Crippling Debt, Heartache, Health issues, etc*
But none of them come close to the problem of **sin**.

We are not only affected by sin, we are infected with it

And this sin-stain is not something we can clean up on our own.
Every religion and philosophy attempts to clear this stain upon our soul and our conscience

Jeremiah 2:22 Even if you wash with lye and use a great amount of bleach,
the stain of your iniquity is still in front of me. This is the Lord God’s declaration.

Perhaps you know this all too well. Do you often feel unworthy; not enough?
Do you fear your ongoing weakness; do you fear the fall of your stumbling?
Have you walked into this church building hesitant because you carry the weight of shame?
Have years of concealing your guilt left you exhausted?

There’s good news for you:

MAIN POINT-
For those in Christ, we can stand confidently clean,
because Christ has completely cleansed us

Mark 1:39-40 ³⁹He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

⁴⁰Then a man with **leprosy** came to him and, on his knees, begged him, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

CONTEXT

In order to fully understand the weight of this historical narrative, we have to understand the 1st century context.

1- In ancient times, Lepers were outcast for fear of spreading the disease

- Those with leprosy were viewed essentially, as a living corpse. Rabbis affirmed that it was as difficult to heal a leper as it was to raise the dead.
- **Leviticus 13:45-46** “The person who has a case of serious skin disease is to have his clothes torn and his hair hanging loose, and he must cover his mouth and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’” ⁴⁶He will remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp.

2- Lepers were banished for fear of spreading religious impurity

- Viewed as a punishment from God, that only God Himself could heal.
- Only twice in the OT had someone been healed of leprosy (Numbers 12; 2 Kings 5)

2 kings 5:7 When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and asked, "Am I God, killing and giving life, that this man expects me to cure a man of his skin disease?..."

Anyone who touched something unclean would become unclean themselves. (**Clean + Unclean = Unclean**)

You can understand why this man is desperate, on his knees begging. He is utterly unclean.

APPLICATION

Sin has made us utterly unclean

We were defiled, spoiled like bad milk.

Isaiah 64:6 All of us have become like something **unclean**, and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

Warren Wiersbe, *"When you read the 'tests' for leprosy in Leviticus 13, you can see how the disease is a picture of sin. Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (V.3); it spreads (V.5-8); it defiles and isolates (V.44 -46); and it renders things fit only for the fire (V.47-59). **Anyone who has never trusted the Savior is spiritually in worse shape than this man was physically.**"*

Some people acknowledge this, and others won't.

If you don't think sin has stained you, ask those closest to you. If they're honest, they'll confirm it.

This man with leprosy dares approach Jesus! Everyone else has pushed him away, won't even come near- but there's something different about this Jesus... What will his reaction be?

Mark 1:41-42 ⁴¹Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and **touched him**. "I am willing," he told him. **"Be made clean."** ⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.

CONTEXT

Jesus is not horrified by this man's disease or uncleanness; He doesn't pull away- He moves in.

His power to cleanse is stronger than the leprosy's power to contaminate.

In the OT, defilement was contagious. In the NT, Jesus' holiness is contagious.

Jesus stretches out his hand- a phrase in scripture that is often attributed to God (Ex 4:4, 7:19, 8:1, 9:22, 14:16,21,26)

And as with Peter's mother-in-law, which he took by the hand when she was sick (1:31), Jesus touches the leper. Understand that this was personal for Him.

APPLICATION

Jesus sees your sin, your guilt, your shame. He knows what it has done to you- to your mind, to your heart...

Jesus's power to cleanse is stronger than sin's power to contaminate

Jesus should have been overtaken by the leprosy, instead, this man was made clean immediately.

Your sin is not too much for Jesus. Yes it is horrible! But it is not too much for Him!

Romans 5:20 ...But where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more

Dane Ortlund, Gentle and Lowly, Chapter 2-

*“One particularly striking part of [the Old Testament Levitical system] is that when an unclean person comes into contact with a clean person, that clean person then becomes unclean. Moral dirtiness is contagious. Consider Jesus. In Levitical categories, he is the cleanest person to ever walk the face of the earth. He was the Clean One. **Whatever horrors cause us to cringe — we who are naturally unclean and fallen — would cause Jesus to cringe all the more.** We cannot fathom the sheer purity, holiness, cleanness, of his mind and heart. The simplicity, the innocence, the loveliness. And what did he do when he saw the unclean? What was his first impulse when he came across prostitutes and lepers? **He moved toward them.** Pity flooded his heart, the longing of true compassion. He spent time with them. He touched them... there is something deeper in Christ’s touch of compassion. He was reversing the Jewish system. **When Jesus, the Clean One, touched an unclean sinner, Christ did not become unclean, the sinner became clean.**”*

It is imperative that you get this! All who place their faith in Jesus, no matter what they have done previously or will do afterwards, if they have genuinely thrown themselves at the feet of the cross- YOU ARE CLEAN.

One of the devils’ biggest weapons is hiding this from you. So let me give you a few verses to expose what he doesn’t want you to see:

Titus 2:11-14 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴ He gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness **and to cleanse for himself a people** for his own possession, eager to do good works.

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ²⁶ to make her holy, **cleansing her with the washing of water by the word.** ²⁷ He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, **without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless.**

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have boldness to enter the sanctuary through the blood of Jesus— ²⁰ he has inaugurated for us a new and living way through the curtain (that is, through his flesh)— ²¹ and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our **hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water.**

1 John 1:7-9 If we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, **and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** ⁸ If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness.

His power to cleanse is greater than sins power to corrupt!

Mark 1:43-44 ⁴³ Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴ telling him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

CONTEXT According to the book of Leviticus Ch 14, the leper could not stand restored in full functioning Jewish society until a priest examined him and declared him clean through a series of rituals. Until that happens, they are left in a social limbo, since they are still ceremonially unclean.

‘a testimony to them’- The cleansing of a leper was an undeniable sign of the Messiah, that God was working in a new way. If the priest declared the leper clean, but then rejected the One who cleansed them, their unbelief would be incriminating evidence against them.

Why would Jesus ask not only this man, but others who were healed and delivered to keep silent?

To avoid misunderstandings that would end up in wrong perceptions of him and responses to Him.

He did not want his identity declared until he had made the character of his mission clear.

Mark 1:45 Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and they came to him from everywhere.

CONTEXT

In a sense, Jesus and the man traded places- he went out and about, while Jesus was forced out

Something similar has taken place in the Gospel. Jesus takes our place as sinners, and everything it entails-

APPLICATION

Jesus took not only our guilt, but our shame

1870- Father Damien travels to the Island of Molokai to serve the banished lepers, to remind them that God has not forgotten them. He died himself having become a leper.

Paul Washer (don't know if referring to this story or another)- "today I stand as one of you"

You have no need to hide your face from God! Your shame has been dealt with.

As I was studying for the message, I couldn't help but say out loud *"THIS IS REALLY GOOD NEWS!"*

The Danger is some of you will take this as a license to sin... *I'm sorry that's all you make of this wonderful news.* but the another danger is that some will never grasp that God has taken your shame and you *are* clean; and so you will fail to grow deeper into friendship with God and will go on loathing yourself.

Dane Ortlund, DEEPER-

*"Many of us feel irredeemably dirty. We know God loves us, and we believe we really are justified. We know heaven awaits us just around the next bend in the road. But in the meantime we can't get out from under the oppressive sense of dirtiness. Whether from abuse at the hand of others or our own sinful stupidities, we feel dirty. Beneath our sharp theology we feel disgusting. Our smiles and well-presented external appearance are at odds with what we find to be our deepest visceral experience. **The gospel answers that.** If you are in Christ, heaven has bathed you. You have been rinsed clean and are now 'un-dirty-able'. It doesn't matter what you feel. That doesn't define you. Jesus was defiled to free you from your defile status and your defiled feelings."*

MAIN POINT-

For those in Christ, we can stand confidently clean, because Christ has completely cleansed us

He stretched out his hand to heal the man with leprosy;

And He would go on to stretch out his hand to be crucified and heal us from sin.

Jesus touched the untouchable and cured the incurable

INVITATION-

1- *Reach up, and pray for the confidence of purity only God can provide*

Psalm 51:1-2,7,10

¹ Be gracious to me, God, according to your faithful love;
according to your abundant compassion, blot out my rebellion.

² Completely wash away my guilt and cleanse me from my sin.

⁷ Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

¹⁰ God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

2- *Reach out, to the untouchables of society with the love of Christ*

Sadly, too many Christians in our time fear the touch of the leper.

We find safety in our community and never see a need to reach out and touch the untouchables of society in the name of Christ.

**CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM*

Isaiah 1:18 “Come, let’s settle this,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are crimson red, they will be like wool.

PRAY

BULPEN-

Isaiah 43:25 “I am the one, I sweep away your transgressions for my own sake and remember your sins no more.

Unclean Spirit- evil spirits are often referred to as impure

Chad bird points out that “the average Israelites moved between the borders of ritual cleanness and uncleanness their whole lives... that is the background for Mark 5, where Jesus encounters three kinds of uncleanness: unclean spirits (5:2); a woman suffering from bleeding (5:25); and the dead body of the daughter of Jarius (5:40). What makes each of these astonishing and instructive is that Jesus, far from becoming unclean himself, destroys the uncleanness and brings forth life, healing, and restoration.”

Jesus is, as the demon in chapter 1 proclaimed, “the holy one of God”. He is the pure unblemished one, cleansing the impurities of this life

Jesus doesn't only forgive- He cleanses

In the OT, clean + unclean = unclean. In the NT, clean + unclean = clean.

In the OT, defilement is contagious. In the NT, holiness is contagious.

Jesus' ability to cleanse a disease associated with sin sets up the next chapter in which Jesus power is displayed by forgiving sin itself

JC Ryle- “Who can conceive the greatness of the change in the feelings of this leper when he found himself healed? The morning sun rose upon him, a miserable being, more dead than alive, his whole frame a mass of sores and corruption, and his very existence of burden. The evening sun saw him full of hope and joy, free from pain, and fit for the society of his fellow men. Surely the change must have been like life from the dead.”

In Christ, you are clean, at this moment!

“I don't feel clean; I still...” HE DECREES YOU CLEAN

Dane Ortlund, DEEPER- “One aspect of growing in Christ is bringing our subjective feelings of defilement into line with that objective, decisive, invincible, true-for-all-time-and-eternity cleansing in the blood of Christ.”

In what may have started off as a desire for holiness, we have overcorrected towards seclusion.