

## ***Where Are The Nine?***

Luke 17:11-19 tells the story of ten lepers who were healed by Jesus. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem and passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. As He entered into a certain village he met the lepers. In harmony with the instructions in Lev. 13, these men were isolated from society. They stood afar off and called to Christ: "Master, have mercy on us."

Though there are many lepers on the earth, most of us have never met one. Usually this terrible disease afflicts those in third world countries. In Bible times the lepers were required to tear their clothes, have unkempt hair, and cover the lower part of their face (Lev. 13:45.) They were also to cry out "unclean, unclean," when someone approached.

The disease known as leprosy in modern times attacks the nerve trunks and sensory fibres so that the patient loses all sensation of pain. Many wear special shoes for protection as they may cut their feet without knowing it. Others awaken in the morning to discover that rats have eaten away fingers or toes. As the extremities of the body are reduced to bleeding stumps a terrible odour exudes from the rotten flesh. In the final stages the leper goes blind and loses the ability to speak. The blind leper, making grotesque guttural sounds, with his flesh rotting away is almost beyond our comprehension.

The lepers of our text were fortunate enough to be ambulatory and alert. They saw Jesus as He approached and lifted up their voices in a plea for mercy. Once the procession stopped, and their request had been understood, Jesus hallooed back: "GO SHOW YOURSELF UNTO THE PRIESTS." This too, was in harmony with the teaching of Moses. A leper could not return to society until he had been pronounced "clean" by the priests and gone through the appropriate ritual for cleansing.

As they went, they were cleansed!

It is at this point that the Bible narrows our focus to only one of the lepers. When he realized that he had been healed he turned and with a "loud voice glorified God." Then he came and fell down on his face at the feet of Jesus and gave Him thanks. At this point we are informed that this thankful man was a Samaritan.

Jesus said: **"Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."** (Lk. 17:17-19.)

It seems that the nine were doing precisely what the Law of Moses required them to do. They were avoiding contact with anyone who was not a leper until their cleansing had been legally establish. The Samaritan, however, operated outside the realm of law. His faith made him whole.

The Law of Moses does not reflect the ultimate desire of God for man, it is merely a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24.) Jesus told a similar story in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The priest and the Levite avoided a man in need that they might not be defiled by a man they considered unclean. The Samaritan disregarded his own legal purity and ministered to the man. Jesus told us to go and do likewise. We are to be like the Good Samaritan, and not like those enslaved to law.

As difficult as it may be for some to understand, the problem of sin is far more serious than any case of leprosy. It contaminates us from the crown of the head to the soul of our feet. It fills our souls with wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores that cannot be bound up neither mollified with ointment (Is. 1:6.) When we are cleansed of sin we fall on our faces before Him and cry: **"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out"** (Rom. 11:33.)

It matters not what others may say or do, let us fall down before Him with eternal gratitude and praise. Let us not leave a life of thanksgiving to strangers.