

21st Century Lepers

Leviticus 13, 15

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- Luke 7:34 - The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"
- Rom. 5:8 - "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
- Do not mistake my message.
 - I have never been an advocate of fellowship with sin and error.
 - I am an advocate of Jesus' command to be fishers of men

Understanding Uncleanness

- Some people temporarily made unclean by touching the dead, etc.
 - Lev. 13, 15
- Some were declared unclean due to an illness like leprosy
 - Lev. 13:45-46 - “Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!' 46 He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.”

Understanding Uncleaness

- Purpose was not evil or unkind; it was for the health and good of the community
- God is not punishing these people, but protecting the healthy
- Humiliating and difficult; persons not only have to suffer the illness, but are excluded from society and viewed as outcasts; a miserable existence
- That was the Law of Moses. Have we learned nothing about the better way in Christ, the way of love and salvation?!

Unclean Persons In The New Testament

- What did the Pharisees do they encountered a leper or Gentile?
 - Matt. 9:11-13
 - Luke 7:36-50
- What did Jesus do when He encountered lepers and sinners?
 - Matt. 11:4-5
 - Luke 17:12-19
- Did Jesus condemn the woman because He could have become ritually unclean by her contact?
 - Matt. 9:20-22

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- We are under the new covenant
 - Eph. 2:11-18
 - Heb. 7, 8, 9
- There are still many people who are social and religious outcasts, whom many members of churches of Christ would rather forget than fish
 - Homeless, people suffering from AIDS or other STDs, drug users, alcoholics, prostitutes, homosexuals, et al

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- These contemporary Pharisees, screening people for the Lord, select prospects based on who they think would make a good member of the congregation with which they worship.
- These are the same brethren who forty years ago, started congregations for minorities because they didn't want them as members where they worship

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- How do we react to them?
 - It's easier to avoid such persons, right?
 - But is this what Jesus would have us do?
 - TR loves sermons about Jesus, right? Are you ready to practice what He did?

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- Did Jesus imply approval of sin and extortion by eating with sinners and tax collectors?
 - Matt. 9:10-13
 - He taught against sin, but ate with the sinners. Contradiction?
 - Spending time with the lost does not imply fellowship with them, any more than preaching against sin is the same as preaching against spending time with sinners
 - If one doesn't understand this, he is either ignorant or a religious bigot
- Jesus was among them because they were sick and needed a physician

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- Christ expects us to visit the sick and in prison
 - Matt. 25:31-46
 - That might include sinners, people considered "unclean" by members of the church
 - Does this mean we approve of their sins?
Absolutely not!

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- How can they learn to avoid sin and to be cleansed unless we take the Gospel to them?
 - Rom. 10:13-15 - “For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!”

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- They are in misery, suffering physically, emotionally, mentally, and especially spiritually. They are in need of a Physician
- We need to feel compassion for the spiritually ill and minister to them
 - The ones who know they are spiritually ill are most likely not living in nice houses in pretty neighborhoods.
- You may have to associate with publicans and sinners. Will you act more like a Pharisee or a Jesus?