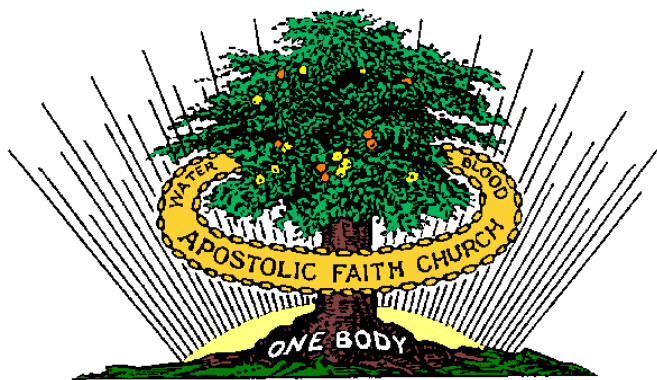


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Showers of Blessing

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The Touch

“We cannot rely on ourselves, for we have learned by bitter experience the folly of self-confidence. We are compelled to look to the Lord alone. Blessed is the wind that drives the ship into the harbour. Blessed is the distress that forces us to rest in our God.”
Charles H. Spurgeon.

Mark 1:40-42 “...A man with leprosy came to Him and begged Him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” He said. “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.” Jesus touched the untouchable, despite 1500 years of religious tradition. The Mosaic Law made it very clear. Lepers could not come near anyone. And if anyone came near them, they were to shout, “Unclean! Unclean!” so people would stay away.

Lepers lived outside the towns and villages all by themselves, all alone. They were untouchable, but Jesus “dared to touch the untouchable.” As that leper approached Him, perhaps in the early morning half-light, Jesus would have known he was a leper just from the smell. Lepers were not allowed to bathe, and therefore, their appearance was unmistakable. Even so, Jesus didn’t turn away. When that leper approached our Lord and begged, “If you are willing, you can make me clean,” Jesus didn’t scold him for not shouting, “Unclean!” No. Jesus reached out and touched him. It was probably the first touch this man had received in years! Full of compassion, Jesus touched the untouchable and cured the incurable.

Then, in accordance with religious tradition, Jesus sent the man back to the priest. Mark 1:43-44 ... Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them” (NIV). This is what the Mosaic Law required. When a leper was cured of his disease, the first thing the law required him to do was go to a priest, who would then certify him clean and welcome him back into the community. That’s what Jesus told the cured leper to do. Bear in mind, Jesus didn’t ignore the traditions of His day. He just didn’t let them keep Him from reaching out to people in need. He touched the untouchable and cured the incurable.

Leprosy was incurable. It is a disease that causes round red sores on a person's skin and can cause blindness and rotting of the nose bone. It makes a person look terrifying. It is not very contagious, but it could spread after close contact over a very long time. God told Moses how to care for lepers. He made them live apart from the city in a separate area. Today, this is called a quarantined area. Notice, God blessed His people with an advanced form of medical care. Thousands of years ago!

The leper had faith that Jesus could heal him and he begged Jesus to do so. Jesus was filled with great care and concern. We are not told specifically, but I'm guessing that Jesus went out of His way to the leper colony to visit the sick. Christians today are going to those with AIDS and other diseases to care for them just as Jesus did here. Then Jesus did something no one

else was willing to do. He touched the leper with His hand. Other people would not even get close, much less actually touch, a leper. They were all afraid of catching the disease. Can we imagine how wonderful it must have been for the poor leper to feel the touch of another person? Jesus said, "I am willing, be clean." Instantly the leprosy left the man. He was completely healed by the spoken words of Jesus!

Jesus didn't have to touch him, but he did anyway because he knew how much it would mean to the leper. This not only strengthened the faith of the leper, but was also a witness to all who came into contact with him. The man was so excited about being healed that he quickly spread the news to everyone in the surrounding area. He was happy to tell others how much Jesus had done for him! The question is, "Are we?" Do we let everyone know when Jesus blesses us? Whenever we get sick or have a disease, let's remember that Jesus can heal anything. Pray for healing. And let's remember to thank Jesus for healing us. Just as the leper was excited about his healing, we should be excited to tell others the great things God has done for us. He wants to touch us, no matter what we've done or where we've come from, Jesus cares enough to extend a healing hand.

(To be continued.)

Article by Rev. Dr. E Kormi, London.

She only touched the hem of His garment,
As to His side she stole,
Amid the crowd that gathered around Him,
And straightway she was whole.

Oh, touch the hem of His garment,
And thou, too, shalt be free;
His saving power this very hour
Shall give new life to thee.

She came in fear and trembling before Him,
She knew her Lord had come;
She felt that from Him virtue had healed her,
The mighty deed was done.

He turned with, "Daughter, be of good comfort
Thy faith hath made thee whole";
And peace that passeth all understanding
With gladness filled her soul.

(AFC Hymnal no. 307.)

