

THE SIN OF INGRATITUDE

Luke 17:11-19

If one were asked what is the most common sin in the world, I suppose the correct answer would be "ingratitude." This story from the earthly ministry of our Lord reveals how ingratitude works in life.

On His way from Galilee to Jerusalem to be present at the last passover of His earthly life, our Lord was passing along the boundary line between Samaria and Galilee. As He journeyed, He met ten men just outside of an unnamed village. The Bible does not say whether they just happened to be present at that time and place, or they purposely intercepted Him; but, in any case, Christ Jesus met them. From the account of this meeting let us observe: ---

I. Their Condition.

1. They were lepers.
2. They were miserable.
Each one had to endure terrible suffering.
3. They were ostracized.
In accordance with the Mosaic Law, they had to keep their distance from all others. They dared not come nearer to clean people than one hundred and fifty feet, if the wind was blowing from that direction.
4. They were humanly incurable.
There was no human remedy for their terrible disease. Man can only attempt to alleviate the suffering of a leper while the dreadful plague runs its death-working course.

II. Their Cry.

1. They had heard of Christ.
2. They recognized Christ when they saw Him.
3. They believed that He could heal them.
4. They appealed to Christ for help.
In sheer desperation they cried unto Him, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Their prayer was marked by humility and faith. Their cry was to the right Person, at the right time, and in the right way. It was unanimous, earnest, respectful, humble, urgent and expectant. The Lord hears the sincere and earnest prayers of those who need Him.

III. Their Cure.

The response of Christ to them was given in the form of a command which implied that they would speedily be healed; and so it was an appeal to their faith. He said to them, "Go, show yourselves unto the priests." Without cleansing them, without so much as telling them that they were to be cleansed, He bade them take the cure on trust, and proceed to show themselves to the constituted authorities, as persons who were lepers no more. It was a strong test, but their perfect confidence in Jesus was equal to it. They instantly set out. They had seen no charm used, had heard no words of cleansing; they felt, as yet, no change wrought upon their diseased bodies, but they went in the firm faith that they would be healed. They did not hesitate, or make excuse, but they obeyed immediately. They acted out their faith. Every step that they took away from the presence of Jesus was a proof that they trusted Him. And their confidence was soon rewarded. As they were going on their way to do as He had bidden them, they discovered for themselves that they had been cured. The Scripture says, "As they went, they were cleansed." The healthy color returned to their flesh

and the dry, scaly appearance disappeared from their skin. Every man saw in his fellows the wonderful transformation which he felt in himself. There were two things which made possible their complete cure:

1. Faith in the Word of Christ.
Could there be a better illustration of faith from one point of view, than the conduct of these ten men? They took Jesus at His Word and they soon realized the blessedness of so doing. His cleansing power worked in their bodies as they walked.
2. Obedience to the Will of Christ.
They immediately submitted to His authority and did as He commanded them to do.

Their healing was conditioned upon their faith in the Word of Christ and their obedience to the Will of Christ.

IV. Their Conduct.

Thus far, their experiences run parallel; but now there is a divergence. Each of the ten had received a healthy body, restoration to society, and readmission to the sanctuary. But here their likeness ends. The conduct of the majority is very disappointing. With feet made nimble by the joy in their hearts, they continue their journey. All ten lepers had been cleansed, but only one of them had a sufficient sense of indebtedness to Christ to offer thanks for the healing he had received. This grateful recipient, and he was a Samaritan, had somehow discovered that "love is the fulfilling of the law," so, he returned and "with a loud voice glorified God, and fell at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks." His gratitude was prompt, humble, reverent, earnest and whole-hearted.

What spirit should more characterize God's children than such gratitude? What should we more certainly look for as the mark of a Christian? This Samaritan teaches us that gratitude does not depend upon the condition of one's health, but upon the status of his heart. The truly grateful are those who look not at what they lack, but at what they have; therefore, they can sing,

"Count your many blessings,
Name them one by one,
And it will surprise you
What the Lord hath done."

Are you one of the unappreciative ninety per cent, or are you a member of that mindful minority, the thankful ten per cent?

Note Christ's appreciation and recompense of the Samaritan's gratitude. He was delighted with his gratitude and said unto him, "Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath saved thee." He was not only cured of his leprosy, but saved from his sin also.