

# If You Will You Can Make Me Clean

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn now to Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 5, and reading at verse 12, Luke chapter 5, reading at verse 12.

While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.

But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him, and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Now this morning, as we were looking at the great catch of fish, and of Peter's response, where he saw himself as this great sinner before a great Lord.

[ 1 : 24 ] And then we saw how Jesus called the disciples, and he told them that they would now become fishers of men. And I was suggesting this morning that every believer is just that, a fisher of men, or a fisher of men and women, boys and girls.

And I hope that as we considered this morning, that you reflected on that, that you thought about it, and that you actually maybe put it to yourself, as I must put it to myself, and ask, are we really fishers of men?

Are we using the opportunities that God places before us? As we view our lives and look at our lives, do we grasp the opportunities that come, just to say a little word here, a little word there, because God is always opening doors for us?

Do we take evangelism seriously? Because the greatest impression and the greatest impact and the greatest way that the gospel is moved and spread forward is by people who interact with other people.

And I'm sure that every believer in here tonight looks back and recognizes the influence and the impression of other Christians, of something that other Christians said, or the impression that some Christian made upon their life, and all these things working together by the Lord for good.

[ 3 : 02 ] It's a very, very important thing, and it is something that we must take seriously. And it's not something that we say, well, I must look at and decide to do tomorrow or the next day or next week, but we must begin now.

And it's the same, I must ask the question, if there is anybody here tonight who has not come to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior, I hope that as you reflect again upon God's Word, and as we pose that question this morning, if Jesus is who he says he is, and you believe this word, then it is the most illogical thing in the whole wide world to ignore the word of Christ.

If you believe this word to be true, and you believe the claims of Jesus to be true, and yet still refuse to do nothing about it, that is the most illogical thing in the whole wide world.

And I would ask that even tonight, that as we go through this, and as we look at Jesus dealing with this leper, that you might take these things seriously to heart, because there is nothing more important in the whole world than that you are right with God in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, we find here that, as we were looking this morning at the great catch of the fish, we leave that behind, and we find that Jesus, as he was moving around the city, said he came into one of these cities, and there he met a man who was full of leprosy.

[ 4 : 51 ] And this man was in a terrible condition. And here was a person who wasn't half-hearted about his need for Jesus. Here was somebody who was totally and altogether consumed with one thing.

He saw an opportunity because Jesus Christ had entered into his city. Here he was, and he had a great need. And he knew there was no doctor, that there was no priest, that there was nobody in the whole wide world who could help his particular situation, because we're told he was full of leprosy.

He was, in other words, consumed by leprosy. And this leprosy was going to destroy him. And he knew there was only one person who could meet that need, and that was Jesus Christ.

There's nothing half-hearted about him. And I would hope tonight that, if you're here without the Lord Jesus Christ, as your own personal Savior, that there is nothing half-hearted in your response, in your prayer, as you must deal with these situations, and as you must deal with your own situation before the Lord.

Now, before we come to look at this man, I think it is important for a moment to stop and to focus upon Jesus, because at the end of the day, it's not the man who is our focus, but Jesus.

[ 6 : 16 ] And one of, if we were to, and we will, Luke, God willing, next week I'll finish this chapter. One of the, I suppose, the key features about it is that when we see Jesus here, that he heals, first of all, this leper, and then he heals a paralytic, and then he calls Levi, and then he goes to this feast that Levi has prepared, Levi and his friends.

And when you look at Jesus, you find that Jesus is living and acting and reacting in a totally different way to the way that the people expected.

Because there was a growing awareness amongst the people. This might be the Messiah. When you read John's Gospel, John is indicating that there was this clamor amongst the people.

This could be the Christ. And there was a desire to take him and to make him king. But what we find here is that as Jesus deals with people, and as Jesus reacts to situations, that he is doing things and dealing with things in a way that the people don't expect and the people don't even want.

There was a shattering of all their expectations because Jesus didn't meet their expectations. You see, he performed the wrong kind of healings. When he healed the leper, he did something that appalled the religious people.

[ 7 : 55 ] He put out his hand and he touched the leper. Nobody did that. Because not only were you risking you yourself getting the disease of leprosy, but no religious person would do that because instantly they would become sermonally unclean.

And he just didn't do that. And so straight away the people were saying, he's performing the wrong kind of healings because he's doing things he shouldn't actually be doing.

And so Jesus was shattering their expectations regarding his healings. And again, when we come to the healing of the paralytic, we find that as far as they are concerned, he is teaching the wrong kind or he's preaching the wrong kind of theology.

Because while he was teaching great and wonderful truths, we find here that he's actually forgiving sins. And they're appalled because they're saying he's entering into territory that he has no right to.

Who can forgive sins but God? So you see that they're reacting against his type of healing. They're reacting against his type of preaching. And then again, we find that when Jesus calls Levi and Levi makes his feast and invites his friends and Jesus, that there is a reaction against Jesus going with the crowd.

[ 9 : 20 ] He's mingling with the wrong kind of people. So you see that as the religious leaders and those of influence and authority as they are looking at the life of Christ, he's getting it all wrong.

His ministry is all wrong. His preaching is wrong. His healing is wrong. His company is wrong. Everything's wrong. And you see, that's part of the problem of having our own expectations about things.

We always have our expectation of how things should be. We have our expectations of how people should be.

We have an expectation of ourselves, but we have expectations of others. These things often don't materialize. Take it in its simplest form.

I remember when I was wee, and I looked forward to the time when I would be grown up, and I would have money. And then I could buy all the sweets, and all the ice cream, and all the comics that I wanted, without any adult saying, you can't buy this, or you can't buy that.

[ 10 : 31 ] I still remember as a youngster thinking like that. But you know, when you grow up, that's not the way it is. I'm not thinking about buying comics.

I thought when I was wee, it'd be great when you grow up, and you could buy all the comics in the shop. I'm not interested in buying them. Things change. What we expect to happen, it's so often, it's different.

And it's the same regarding the Christian. And may I say to anybody in here tonight who is without Jesus Christ as Savior, this is a very important point. I don't know what your expectations of a Christian are.

I don't know what you think yourself it would be to become a Christian. We maybe mentioned that this morning. But the thing is that there might be what's holding you back from really seeking the Lord is that you're so unsure.

You have your own mind made up of how you will feel, and of how you will be. And you've got this picture in your mind, in your head, and you say, I can't cope with that.

[ 11 : 39 ] Well, let me tell you, whatever picture you have in your own mind, if tonight you are unconverted, it's wrong. It is not what you think it'll be.

You see, the bottom line is this, that becoming a Christian is entering into a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what in all the world can be more wonderful than that? A living, real, personal relationship with the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, where you speak to Him and He speaks to you in the Word, where you journey with Him, where He is with you all the time.

As we saw this morning, when He sent, after He had preached in the boat, He said, let's go fishing. And He went out with Him in the boat all the time. Jesus is with us.

And He will give you nothing but that which is for your good, His grace, His love, His mercy, His peace. He will give you a sense of identity, a sense of purpose in this world.

[ 12 : 51 ] He will hold out before you a future as to why you're here and where you're going. And you can look forward to it. Isn't that a wonderful thing?

There are so many people in this world tonight and they're in despair about the future. The future, they're looking out and it's gloomy. It's gloomy economically. It's gloomy regarding the whole security of our nation and the nations of this world.

People are so concerned. They're looking at global warming. They're looking at terrorism. They're looking at the financial markets. And there's despair and there's despondency. But in Christ, there's a future.

There's a hope. There's a purpose. There's a meaning. Without Christ, it's empty. So I want you to dispel whatever notions you have and misconceptions you may have of what it is to be a Christian and to seek the Lord Jesus Christ so that you, yourself, personally will come to know him, to embrace him, and to experience and to enjoy what it is in having Christ as your own Lord and Savior in this world.

And so we find here that Jesus has come into this city and we find that this leper comes to meet him. And so there's this man, as we said, who is full of leprosy.

[ 14 : 19 ] And it was an awful disease where there was a rotting of the flesh, rotting sometimes of the bones. And it was something that in some cases, and obviously this man, it was a severe situation.

And the lepers, unfortunately for them, they became, they had to become, as it were, a recluser. They had to live on their own. It must have been an awful thing. You had to leave your home, leave your family, leave your wife, leave your children, leave your job if you had one, leave whatever and go into, as it were, into isolation.

We still use the term somebody who's an outcast as a leper. It was an awful situation. Well, here is this poor man who is full of leprosy.

And he saw this ray of hope as Jesus came into the city. And it tells us there that he went and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and he begged him.

That's what he did. This man didn't consider and say to himself, I wonder if Jesus will heal me. Or he may be saying to himself, oh, my situation is really bad.

[ 15 : 35 ] I better not go near Jesus. I better not go, because Jesus is, remember, he's got a whole crowd of people around him. And this leper may say, oh, I'm risking my life going in amongst these people.

They might take me and stone me. I'll be hurled away. But no, he is defiant. He knows that there's this one ray of hope and there's great faith in him. This belief that Jesus alone is able to deal with the needs of his life.

Are you convinced of that tonight, my friend? Because, you know, without Jesus Christ, you're not right. You're not right with God. You know, one of the great problems we have is that we're bad for measuring our lives against other people's lives.

And we look at other people and we say, well, I think I'm as good as him or as good as her. And I know it's something that the unconverted do is they measure themselves against the life of the Christian.

And as they look at that life, they will often say, you know, I'm just as good as him and I'm just as good as her. But there's one fatal mistake with that.

[ 16 : 52 ] That is not how God assesses it. We can make these assessments till we're blue in the face, but it doesn't count for anything. Not in God's view.

God assesses it in one way. There is his perfect law. Have we kept it?

No. Have we broken it? Yes. If we have broken his law, what does that mean? It means we're condemned. It means that God cannot accept us.

So what has God done? God has sent his son, Jesus Christ, into this world as a great sacrifice for sin. Jesus died on the cross bearing upon himself the punishment of sin.

God is saying this is the only way. It's accepting my gift, my son, my way of salvation for yourself.

[ 17 : 54 ] there is no other way. You remember how, and as often, I think it's the most vivid description, you remember in Daniel where the Belshazzar had this, the hand was writing on the wall and one of the things, remember it said, you are weighed in the balances and found wanting.

Weighed in the balances and found wanting. That is what the Lord says of everybody out of Jesus Christ. And you see how some people, I think we've said this before, and it's something that I think we all know, people have this idea that in a balance that the way that God looks at things is that he puts all the good things, all the good things that we've done in life, all the good deeds and all the kind words and all the good things that we have done for other people and they're put on the one side of the scales.

And then all the bad things and the wrong actions and the wrong words and the wrong thoughts and another side and balances them out like that. And if the good outweighs the bad, then we'll be all right.

And if the bad outweighs the good, then we've had it. No, that's not how it works. On the one side is his holy law and on the other side, us.

And there's no contest. We, the balance doesn't work. We are all against his law. We are all found wanting.

[ 19 : 30 ] And it is only in Jesus Christ when our sins are forgiven and when Christ's perfect righteousness is put, as it were, in the balance, in our place, that it then equals up the law and Christ who fulfilled the law on our behalf.

It is then that everything is right. So there is no other way. Well, this leper is an example of somebody who realizes his need and the urgency of that need.

And so he comes to Jesus and he comes and he says to him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean. If you will, you can make me clean.

This man believed that Jesus could. My friend, do you believe tonight that Jesus is able to save you? I believe you do believe that.

What are you going to do about it then? Maybe you are saying to yourself, ah, but what if Jesus doesn't want to save me? What if God doesn't want to save me? Can I read two verses of scripture?

[ 20 : 40 ] What the Lord is actually saying? Do you know what, remember what God says? He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Isn't that an extraordinary verse of scripture? I'll read it again. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Isn't that a wonderful word? God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. That's the word of God. Now I want you to take these words and to go to the Lord and say to him, Lord, please save me.

Just as you helped that leper all these years ago, that man went fully persuaded that the Lord was able to help him, to cleanse him, to heal him, to save him.

Lord, help me tonight to come so that I might know this healing, this cleansing, this saving as well. And so Jesus, as he says, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

[ 21 : 54 ] And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying, I will be clean. And Jesus in a wonderful way is showing by this how he is identifying with this man in his need.

Jesus is showing in a wonderful way. He is choosing to identify with what we are naturally. That's what Jesus did. He chose to identify with what we are naturally.

We are sinners. Jesus is holy, harmless, undefined, son of God, residing in glory, the second person of the Godhead. He chooses to come down into this world and take our nature and identify with us in our misery.

He was without sin but he was in all points like us apart from sin. And so Jesus, by touching him, is saying, by choice, I am identifying with you.

And that's how it tells us in Corinthians, for he, God, hath made him, that is Christ, hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we, isn't that how it is, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

[ 23 : 18 ] That's a transfer. That's what took place. It's extraordinary. We must never tire of talking about it, of preaching about it, of hearing about it, of dwelling upon it.

what God did in Christ, what Jesus did. He took our sin upon himself in order to set us free.

And so we find that in a wonderful way we have this picture enacted before us here. And then Jesus says to this man, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left him. And Jesus tells him two things to do. One was he had to go to the priest and he had to make an offering, which was custom, that's what you had to do, had to make an offering for the leprosy and show the priest that he was cleansed because the priest was the one who would make the declaration.

When a leper was healed, the priest would pronounce that healing and cleansing on him. It was a cleansing. And the other thing, he was to tell no one.

[ 24 : 25 ] Now, it's quite a strange thing in a sense because far too often, as I said at the very beginning probably, if there is a charge that can often be leveled against the Christian, it is about not speaking about Jesus.

And yet here, Jesus is actually saying, don't tell anyone. And I wonder why. Well, I think from the fact that we read in Mark, in Mark chapter 1, it tells us there that the man actually did the very opposite to what Jesus did.

Verse 45, it tells us there, but he went out and began to talk freely about it and to spread the news so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town but was out in desolate places.

Jesus, who knew people's hearts and understood people in a way that nobody else was, I think that Jesus was seeing that these people were looking at these miracles as something just almost in a sense of entertainment.

Because there were times that they just wanted, like for instance, Herod. Herod wanted to see a miracle. When Jesus came before Herod, Herod wanted to see Jesus do something miraculous.

[ 25 : 51 ] Jesus wouldn't even answer. wouldn't say a word to Herod. Jesus wasn't about just performing and entertain. It wasn't anything to do with entertain.

His miracles were proof of who he was. He was the son of God. We read, we looked at that before when he preached from Isaiah chapter 61. It was there speaking so clearly of who he was and who he is.

he wasn't about performing and entertaining people by his miracles. And I think I believe that this is what was part of the problem is that these people were wanting to be entertained and to see another miracle.

Oh, look at that blind man over there. Wonder if he'll heal him next. Jesus didn't work like that. But everyone that came to him, he healed.

I love that. Tells us that all who came to him, he healed them. He never, Jesus never ever turns anyone away. None.

[ 26 : 56 ] And he won't turn you away either, my dear friend, if you come to him. This man didn't heed Jesus' warning. And the result was that Jesus couldn't openly work in these places.

You see, we can actually hinder Christ's work. by what we say and what we do. We can get in the way of Christ's work. And so, that is why we need always to be guided by the Lord.

At the beginning and this morning and at the beginning, I was saying the importance of speaking for Christ. But I will add a warning to it. We must only go at the Lord's direction and at the Lord's speed.

need. Because this man didn't. He didn't do remember what Mary said at the time when Jesus turned the water into wine. Mary said to the people, whatever he tells you, do it.

Well, my friend, let that be the rule for our lives as well. Whatever he says to you or whatever he tells you, you do it. And when the Lord tells you to do something, in other words, when you pick up the Bible and supposing you're having your daily reading or whatever, and the word is impressed upon your heart in a certain way, obey it.

[ 28 : 19 ] And I believe when the Lord by his spirit moves you in a particular way to go and see someone or lay somebody upon your heart, pray for that person or go and see that person.

You know, sometimes we can have reactions against and say to ourselves, oh, well, we've got to be careful, we can't go down that road. I think we've got to be very careful not to go down that road.

There's a danger, a real danger, in sort of saying, oh, well, I'm not into all these kind of experiences. Remember, God's spirit moves us. Yes, always by the word, never against the word.

The word is our rule. Whatever the Lord, whatever impressions he places upon your heart, it will never be against his word. Be persuaded of that. all was according to the word.

But the Lord puts impressions upon us about places to go to, people to see these things. We should heed these things.

[ 29 : 24 ] And again, when the Lord puts the word into our heart and we read it, as Mary said, whatever he tells you, do it. let that be our rule and our guide, that the word of God is that which guides us.

But remember that our Christian witness can be a hindrance as well as a help. We can put obstacles in people's way so that Christ cannot work.

That's what happened. God's God's So we need to be sensitive to the leading of God's spirit and the rule of God's word within our lives. It's an awful thing where we're actually hindering.

We can hinder God's word by what we say. Isn't that a thought? God's word. And you know, we have to be careful, on the other hand, not to start ramming people, not ramming people, trying to ram the gospel down people's throats.

We can put people off. We can turn people away. The wonderful thing is grabbing the opportunity as it presents itself to us. Take for example, and with this we close, remember Peter and John going up to the temple, and there was a man who was lame there.

[ 30 : 43 ] Now I believe that that man had been there many a day. But there was one day in particular when this man looked to Peter and to John, and he asked them for money.

And Peter took that opportunity, and he said, remember he said, silver and gold have I none, but what I have I will give to you. And he told, he spoke in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that man was healed. There was a classic experience example of a Christian taking the opportunity that was presented. And the Lord will fill your life with opportunities, where somebody will ask you something.

It's amazing. I can't get over just personally the number of times that people have asked me, how did you become a Christian?

It's incredible the number of times. times where you have an opportunity to sit down with somebody, or you're traveling with somebody, or somebody just in a course of conversation, what happened?

[ 31 : 52 ] What happened? And you think to yourself, wow, I didn't initiate this. They have. You've asked, well here's the opportunity. And you will find it so often that the Lord opens these doors for us.

when he does, we need to be praying that we be given the wisdom to understand, the wisdom to speak, and the discretion to see when to speak and when to remain silent.

But to take every opportunity that the Lord gives us. Well, tonight is an opportunity. Here is Jesus. Do you want to be cleansed of your sin and made right with God?

Well, you call upon Jesus tonight. Let us pray. Oh, Lord, our God, we ask thee to bless us. We give thanks for the fact that we have a great Savior who is able to save to the uttermost all who call upon him.

And tonight we pray that we may all call upon the name of the Lord. Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. What a wonderful promise that is.

[ 33 : 09 ] Grant us grace, Lord, to lay hold upon the truth. May we not turn away from it, but may we embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered to us in the gospel.

Take us all home safely, we pray, and do us good. Cleanse us from all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.