

Chapter one of Mark's Gospel tells of Jesus' orderly and progressive revelation to the public. Having been baptized by John and returned from the 40 days wilderness temptation He called four fishermen to follow Him to become fishers of men. That Sabbath He preached in the synagogue in Capernaum and cast out the foul spirit from a man there who was resisting Him. Going with Peter and Andrew to their house (with James and John) He healed Peter's mother-in-law ill of a fever. Being cured she ministered to their needs probably preparing meals and bedding. News of her restoration to good health traveled fast and by sundown all the city was gathered at the door. He healed many of various diseases and cast out many demons. Again the demons knew Him but He does not allow them to speak. He will have none of that.

He must have finally been allowed to get some rest but He arises a great while before day to seek solitude for prayer with His Father in Heaven. What did He say as He prayed? There are few instances in scripture where His words to the Father are revealed. John 17 is most notable, but John 18 in Gethsemane is more intimate and touching. A few prayers were made publically for the benefit of those nearby (e.g. John 11:41,42 and 12:28). Even that of John 17 was given for the edification of the disciples, and us ultimately. He enjoyed these private visits with His Father. The companionship and fellowship They enjoyed together eternally was carried on even though He was now Man. And He has opened this same access and fellowship with the Father to us, His own. He so valued it He rose far before day so as not to miss it. If we travel on business we call or write (e-mail) home often and those at home eagerly look forward to these opportunities. Today military service personnel overseas have unprecedeted communications available to reach those at home. What a blessing!. Believers have an established private line continuously open to the Father. We can share our innermost feelings with Him. He loves it when we do. We don't even need to dial a cell phone.

Jesus was interrupted by Peter and His other new disciples who told Him "all men seek thee." His public career thus launched, being about thirty years old, He moves though the area surrounding Capernaum in Galilee not far from Nazareth where He grew up as a child.

*38 And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.*

He preached in their synagogues, healed the sick and cast out demons everywhere. One wonders if it was the preaching that drew the crowds or the healing. He doesn't complain or hold any one to a confession of the Christ before He would heal them. We aren't given details of any spiritual awakening, repentance or "conversions" here. How many were thankful? The numerous people healed remained a lasting living witness of His power and authority. The healing was surely intended to awaken them to their spiritual

need and their distance from Jehovah, the God of their fathers. It was not a mere "draw" to get crowds to hear His preaching.. It was not entertainment to attract crowds as is to often seen among "evangelists" and "faith healers" of today. Some who came were merely interested spectators. Some were naturally seeking healing. That's normal and never rebuked by the Lord. Note the thorn in the flesh that was never removed from Paul in order to keep him humble, 2Corintians 12. God allows and uses illnesses and injuries for chastening to draw us closer to Him or to prepare our hearts for some difficulty lying ahead in our path, or for some job He has for us. But sometimes He leaves our discomforts or ailments longer than we would like, for **His** own purposes.

Leprosy was considered both incurable and infectious so those afflicted with it were required to keep apart from others. It was a particularly loathsome disease as it inexorably consumed the flesh from the bones of a living person. It is the subject of three chapters of instruction given Moses by Jehovah. It is an all to vivid picture of sin in the flesh. Sin which afflicts every son and daughter of Adam, Romans 5:12. One of these miserable wretches came to Jesus. He ventures in faith, the question being whether Jesus would heal, not if He could. He would! Moved with compassion, He would! "BE THOU CLEAN." What wonderful words. He not only issued the command, HE TOUCHED HIM. Jesus, the sinless one, could not be infected or defiled by this disease of diseases. And He could heal it. The leper was instantly CLEAN! Just as a sinner who comes to Jesus is justified by faith. Counted as righteous, as if he had never sinned.

There was an exacting procedure in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 13,14) for ensuring one claiming to be cured of leprosy was truly clean and could safely be allowed to mingle with his family and neighbors again. It was rarely used because few, if any, ever were cleansed of leprosy. Jesus orders him to show himself to the priests and go through the prescribed ritual to prove the healing was genuine. Doing so would be a striking witness to the priesthood that here was One among the people who they should take note of. Was He the Christ they claimed to be awaiting? We don't read here that the man did as he was told. But he did tell it abroad so that Jesus was mobbed everywhere He went after that. He could no longer freely enter towns and preach in the synagogues and mingle there. He was in deserted places and people sought Him out there. He apparently had not where to lay His head thereafter. This leper's faith won his healing but his subsequent disobedience resulted in Jesus becoming less accessible to others, hindering His work. He suffered considerable discomfort and inconvenience to boot. Let us obey His word and instructions even if it means we must restrain our natural impulses, and reasoning, or we may cause unintended consequences.

By Ron Canner,

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