

THE LEPER DISEASED

[Le 13:45-46](#)

Preached on August 8th, 1852, at Eden Street Chapel, London.

"And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent. and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled: he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be."- [Le 13:45-46](#)

LEPROSY, that is, the leprosy of which we read so much in the Scriptures, is, I believe, a disease almost, if not wholly, unknown in modern times. There is, indeed, a malady that bears the same name, and is of a very loathsome and fearful nature; but its symptoms and character are, I understand, widely different from the leprosy described in the Old Testament. This circumstance would seem to stamp upon it something peculiar, and to distinguish it from an ordinary disease.

Leprosy, however, was not only a **real** disease, but also a **typical** one; in other words, figurative in the most striking manner of that fearful malady, **sin**, with which we are infected from the sole of the foot even to the head. That the leprosy was a typical disease is evident from several circumstances.

1. That the ceremonial purifications whereby the stain of leprosy was cleansed had all a special reference **as I hope to show, if we are spared to meet this evening** to the Lord Jesus Christ, as making an atonement for sin.
2. That the high priest was the person specially appointed to take cognizance of it; that it was not put into the hands of ordinary physicians, but was placed under the particular supervision of God's anointed servant and Messiah's representative.
3. That there was for it no appointed cure: it being in itself of an incurable nature, and therefore, if cured, cured only by special miracle.
4. We find it miraculously inflicted as a punishment, as upon Miriam, Gehazi, and King Uzziah.

These four circumstances take it out of the catalogue of ordinary diseases, and stamp upon it a peculiar and typical character.

If we read this chapter with a spiritual eye, and enter into its experimental meaning, we shall find in it much instruction, and I think we shall see in it three leading things. At least, I shall, with God's blessing, endeavour to point out this morning these three prominent features.

First. That there was what I may call a spurious leprosy, assuming various forms, but differing from the real disease in several important particulars.

Secondly. That the real disease had certain marked symptoms, which are described with the greatest accuracy and minuteness.

Thirdly. That when it was a decided case of leprosy, the leper was to be separated; as it were, marked off in a peculiar way. In the words of the text: "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without

the camp shall his habitation be." If the Lord then shall enable me this morning to open up what I seem to see in this chapter, I shall attempt to tread the path thus sketched out, and endeavour to describe:

I. The false leprosy.

II. The true leprosy.

III. The condition of the true leper.

You will observe that to the priest was committed the supervision of this disease. If there were any suspicion that such or such a person was tainted with this fearful malady, no time was to be lost: he was to be brought at once to the priest, who had certain minute directions given him by God Himself to guide his judgment in the case. It was not left to his own arbitrary decision to pronounce a suspected person a leper; specific directions were given him to attend to certain determinate symptoms.

Before, however, we enter on the subject, it will perhaps be desirable to answer the question, "What did leprosy typically represent?" It seems to me that it was a typical representation not so much of the disease of sin in the abstract-that is, of sin generally-as of sin as opened up by the Spirit's teaching in the heart and conscience of the family of God. If leprosy represents sin generally, all mankind would be lepers, and the beauty of the figure would be lost; but by restricting it to the malady of sin as a felt disease, the force of the figure is preserved.

I. There were then cases, suspicious cases, which put on the appearance of leprosy, but were not the genuine disease. These, with their spiritual meaning, we will now consider.

a The first was "a rising, a scab, or a bright spot in the skin of the flesh". Looking at this spiritually, we may conceive "the rising" to signify some movement of the mind towards religion; for the flesh was not smooth and unbroken as before, but began to heave and rise. This might be the beginning of a crisis-the first index of something at work beneath. Or it might be "a scab"-the scar of a former wound, or some eruptive sore. Or it might be "a bright spot"-a boil or a pimple, with some degree of swelling or inflammation, producing on the skin a polished, shining surface. As leprosy commenced in almost a similar way, examination was immediately to be made. He was to be brought to the priest. In order to guide the priest's judgment, he was to attend to four distinct marks, which invariably distinguished the true leprosy from the false. These four marks were:

1. That the true disease was deeper than the skin [Le 13:3](#):
2. That the hair where the sore was, was turned white -in other words, had perished from the roots;
3. That the disease when real did not continue at a stay, but gradually spread; and
4. There was in it quick raw flesh. Any of these marks was decisive, and they are all deeply significant. Let us take the first case-that of a man who had "a rising, a scab, or a bright spot". He was to be brought to the priest. What was he to do? To look for the first two decisive marks. Was the hair turned white? Yes. Was the plague deeper than the skin? Yes. The case was clear. He was a leper. But was the case dubious? Was the skin white, but not the hair? and did the sore seem not deeper than the skin? He was to pronounce no hasty decision, but to shut him up for seven days. He was not to determine hastily; nor should we. It is well to be cautious. Do not cut persons off at a stroke because they do not come up to your experience. That is not common justice. Do with them as God directed the priest; shut them up seven days. But when the seven days were gone the priest was to examine the suspected case again. He was now to take for his guide the third mark-whether the disease was at a stay, or whether it was spreading. If it had spread, it

was decisive; he was a leper. If it had not spread, he was to give him another trial, to shut him up for seven days more. At the end of this second period of seven days, the priest was to examine him again, still fixing his eye on the same mark. Had the disease spread? If not, it was not leprosy. "It is but a scab; and he shall wash his clothes and be clean."

But what was spiritually intended by these specific marks? The hair is given us for ornament. "Long hair" is specially mentioned [1Co 11:15](#) as a woman's "glory". It is enumerated among the beauties of Absalom that his hair was so thick and heavy. "His locks are bushy and black as a raven," says the bride of her Beloved; "Thou art come to excellent ornaments;" "Thine hair is grown," says the Lord to the church in Ezekiel [Eze 16:7](#). The root of the hair is deeper than the skin, being centred and growing not in the superficial cuticle, but out of the flesh beneath. In order, therefore, to turn the hair white the disease must have been deeper than the skin. It must have gone down into the substance of the flesh, to the very roots of the hair, so as to dry them up and make their very substance perish, and thus turn the hair white through its whole length. It was, therefore, closely connected with the other mark-deeper than the skin. Leprosy was thus distinguished from a mere skin disease, from a superficial, cutaneous eruption.

The religion of many persons is just this cutaneous eruption; a rising, a scab, a pimple or bright spot, but all superficial, no lower than the skin. There is a movement in religion; but it is a mere rising of the natural mind, not a spiritual work upon the conscience. The hair is not turned white; their beauty and comeliness are not become gray, perished down to the very root. Ah! the mark is wanting. It is not leprosy. The third mark, too, is not here. The disease does not spread. After being shut up, they come out as they went in. Their religion, their convictions, their anxieties are all at a stand. Week after week, month after month, and year after year, they have no deeper sight or sense of sin than before; no fuller, clearer acquaintance with either the malady or the remedy. Their religion is always at one level, like the water in the London Docks, which knows neither rise nor fall, ebb nor flow-always stagnant, and often stinking.

b But we pass on to consider another case. "And if a leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his foot, wheresoever the priest looketh; then the priest shall consider, and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague; it is all turned white; he is clean." This case was not like the last, a single affected spot, but a kind of universal tetter or eruption spread over the whole body.

In my view of this case, I must confess I widely differ from some gracious men who have interpreted it as one of real leprosy. This could not be consistent either naturally or spiritually. Not naturally, for when such precaution was used where there was even a suspicion, a solitary spot, is it likely that a man covered all over with real leprosy should be pronounced clean, and allowed freely to mingle with the people? It would be like shutting up half a madman and letting go a whole madman. Nor is it true spiritually, for it is confounding malady with remedy. A poor leprous sinner knows he is not clean. I view it, then, as a case of bastard leprosy. There was in it a special mark of the true leprosy missing. There was no "quick raw flesh". That decided the case. It was the bastard leprosy and not the true. But you may say, "How do you explain this spiritually?" I will tell you. A man may have a knowledge of sin; he may see himself covered with sin from head to foot, and yet not be a child of God. Many natural men know that they are sinners; persons especially who have sat under sound gospel preaching will tell you that they are covered with sin from top to toe. But just mark this point, they have no "quick raw flesh," no tender conscience. They see sin, but do not feel it; know sin, but do not bleed under it-have no quick raw flesh that cannot bear to be touched. Though the leprosy cover all the skin, it is not deeper than the skin. A sight of sin, without sorrow for sin, or a conscience bleeding under sin, does not make a man a spiritual leper.

c But we have a third case, "a boil which was healed"; but in the place of the boil there was now "a white rising, or bright spot, white and somewhat reddish", which seemed to look like the leprous sore. Here we come to something like feeling. In the first case it was a "rising" or "scab", and we know that in it there is

but little pain. In the second case, too, though the whole body was covered, there was no quick raw flesh; therefore no pain or suffering. But a boil—those who are subject to them well know what a painful thing it is, not indeed of much consequence, but still a very unpleasant companion. But this boil has been healed, and there seemed some disposition for it to form again. O how this represents repeated convictions of sin without conversion to God! workings of the natural conscience, fear of death, and it may be distress of mind; for I have known people distressed in mind about religion, who never manifested that they had the fear of God in their hearts, or were under the teaching of the Spirit. But the priest was to examine this boil, to see whether there was any sign of leprosy in it. And what were the marks to guide him? Two.

1. Was it "lower than the skin"? Was it deep? Did it go below the surface? was it something more than a momentary pang? was it but a carbuncle after all?

2. Was the hair turned white? Had the sense of sin been so deep as to turn all his comeliness into corruption, mar all his beauty, and turn his self-righteousness gray? If not, the priest was not at once to decide, but shut him up seven days and then see whether it had spread; if it had spread abroad in the skin, then he was to pronounce him unclean. He was a leper. His convictions were now spiritual and the work of grace begun. But if it did not spread, it was but "a burning boil". The convictions, though painful, were but natural.

d But there was another case, a "hot burning, a white, bright spot, somewhat reddish or white". Oh, there are cases of this kind, where the wrath of God consumes the sinner, but does not melt the dross! Look at that wretched being, Francis Spira, who slowly consumed away under the wrath of the Almighty. He felt a continual burning in his bosom, as though he had a hot coal in it. Ah! there are many poor wretches who have this hot burning; feel the indignation of God, perhaps upon a death-bed, and yet have no mercy or pardon manifested to them; fearful convictions of the wrath to come, but no manifestation of atoning blood. But even in these cases the marks of the true leprosy are missing. The hair is not turned white; all self-righteousness and self-justification are not faded, nor is it deeper than the skin. Let the sense of God's anger cease, and they are as before.

e But there is another case also in which a man or a woman had a plague in the head or beard; that is, in the hair of the woman, or the hair and beard of the man. This seems to signify how a person may have all his beauty to perish, and yet have no work of grace in the heart. Have you not been astonished sometimes at the austerities and self-denial of Papists, Puseyites, Sisters of Mercy, and other such persons who clearly manifest no work of grace? They have "a dry scall", a leprosy of the hair. They can give up the world, go into convents, macerate their bodies, dress meanly, eat scantily, and make all beauty and ornament to perish. But after all it is not deeper than the skin. It is all outside work. True religion is something deeper than fleshy austerities.

II. But we pass on to consider the **real leprosy**; for there was a real as well as a false disease, and doubtless it required great discrimination and minute examination on the part of the priest to distinguish the one from the other. I am sure it requires it now when the work of grace is not, as in the times of old, deep and powerful, but for the most part shallow and superficial. We need then be very careful, lest on the one hand we make the hearts of the righteous sad whom God hath not made sad; and, on the other, lest we strengthen the hands of the wicked.

I intimated that God had given to the priest four distinguishing marks of genuine leprosy, and to these we may add a fifth, as I hope presently to show.

a The first mark was that the true disease was deeper than the skin. Natural convictions are never **at least, taking the general bulk of those whom one has observed to be, or to have been under them**, very deep; or if deep, rarely, if ever, very lasting. But the work of God upon the soul bears this express feature,

that it is lower than the skin; that is, the convictions are not slight and superficial, but deep and penetrating.

I omitted to mention one thing when speaking of the spurious leprosy. When the priest had decided that it was not a case of true leprosy, he was to "pronounce the person clean"; that is, clean or clear from all leprous taint. It is then added, "And he shall wash his clothes and be clean." As the clothes or outer garments are used in Scripture to signify the outward walk "**Blessed is he that walketh and keepeth his garments**", there seems to be some reference here to the reformation of life and outward profession that natural convictions sometimes produce. "The rising" goes down, "the scab" rubs off, "the bright spot" heals up, the clothes are then washed, a profession of religion put on, and a decent exterior made.

Many, very many members of churches are, it is to be feared, just in this state. They have had this bastard leprosy, and they have washed their clothes, and are now clean. With this experience they have joined churches, and some have become deacons or ministers.

But theirs is not the true leprosy. That goes deeper than the skin; it penetrates, and that with power, into a man's very heart and conscience. If your convictions have not gone deeper than the skin, if they have not sunk into the very bottom of your soul, and penetrated into your very conscience, they have not God's mark upon them. And what will a skin religion do for you? A skin religion! "Holloway's Ointment" will cure that; it does not want the balm of Gilead, the blood of sprinkling.

b Another mark of the true leprosy was, that it turned the hair white in the leprous spot. The reason was that being deeper than the skin it destroyed the hair at the root. Thus it is with spiritual leprosy. As David speaks, "When Thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth." When the disease of sin is opened up, and the soul stands leprous before God, it makes all our fancied righteousness, creature strength, human wisdom, fleshly holiness, acquired knowledge, and religious attainments, wither from the very root, with all their natural sap and moisture perished out of them.

c A third mark accompanied the genuine leprosy. It did not continue "at a stay, but spread much abroad in the skin". The disease went on getting worse and worse till in most cases it destroyed the unhappy individual. There is some allusion perhaps to this in the remarkable expression, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." So with the spiritual leper. He gets worse and worse, till he dies outright as to all creature hope-incurable but by the hand of God.

d A fourth mark remains which I have before touched upon. In the real leprous sore there was "quick **i.e. living** raw flesh". I have interpreted this already as significant of a tender conscience, and of a heart that bleeds under the touch of God. I think I know naturally as well as spiritually what "quick raw flesh is"; for when I was a boy I had a severe attack on my lungs, for which it was thought necessary to employ severe remedies. Among these was keeping on my chest a perpetual blister, which produced a deep ulcerated wound and an abundance of what is called "proud flesh"-the "quick raw flesh" of the text. It was necessary to burn this away with caustic before the wound would heal, and for weeks when my poor mother, now deceased, used to come every morning to touch this quick raw flesh with bluestone, O how I shrank from her hand! Painful indeed was the remedy to burn this quick raw flesh away! So with grace. The quick raw flesh of a tender, bleeding conscience cannot bear the slightest touch; and when God comes with His caustic to burn it away, how the soul shrinks from His touch, and cries and screams, as I used to do, under the painful and smarting application. Mere wordy, dead professors of religion have no such quick raw flesh; no tenderness, no smarting, no writhing under the touch of God's hand. They have no raw ulcers, nor bleeding cancers, which cannot bear the slightest touch.

e But another mark still remains—the disease was incurable. When I say incurable, I mean by the hand of man. No remedy was provided for it, no direction given to the priest to make use of any applications, outward or inward. It was left for God alone to cure. All that the priest was to do was minutely to examine all the symptoms of the complaint, pronounce a decision according to the circumstances, and leave the result to God. Whether the man was cured or not, died or lived, was at the sovereign disposal of the Almighty. So in grace. There is no cure for spiritual leprosy except from the hand of God. It is not all the ministers in the world that can cure a spiritual leper. From God his cure must come, and to His everlasting praise be it ascribed, from God this cure always does come; for there is not a spiritual leper in the family of God who lives and dies without the application of the divine remedy.

III. But let us now consider **the leper's case** when the priest had come to a decision and pronounced him unclean. "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be."

Lepers, canst thou not read thy case here? Afflicted, exercised, tempted, downcast child of God, dost thou not see thy character here described by an inspired pen? If not, let me read the writing for thee, and, as the Lord may enable, interpret what thou canst not interpret for thyself.

a "The leper in whom **the plague** is." Is sin your plague? Does it grieve you? Is it your burden? Take all your worldly anxieties, tie them up in one bundle, and put them into the scale; now place in the other scale the plague of sin. Which scale goes down? Which kicks the beam? If you are a spiritual leper, you will say, "Ah! there is no doubt upon that point; I know well which scale weighs the heavier! Oh, it is sin, sin, that I sometimes fear will be a millstone to drown my soul in hell!" And canst thou find this mark, "the leper in whom the plague is"? Is not this a very striking expression, "In whom"? I think Paul has hit the matter to a nicety; and well he might, for he wrote as a man who knew what he was writing about; he says, "the sin that dwelleth in me". Sin is not like a martin that builds its nest under the eaves, which sticks to the house, but is not in the house. Neither is sin a lodger to whom you can give a week's or a month's notice to quit; nor is it a servant whom you may call up, pay him his month's wages, and send him about his business. No, no. Sin is one of the family who dwells in the house, and will not be turned out of the house; haunts every room, lies in every bed, nestles in every corner, and like the poor ejected Irish of whom we read, will never leave the tenement while stick or stone hangs together. Is not this the case with you? Does not sin dwell in you, work in you, lust in you, go to bed with you, get up with you, and all the day long, more or less, crave, design, or imagine some evil thing? Do you feel sin to be a plague and a pest, as it must be to every living soul? Then are you not something of a leper if the plague dwell in you?

b But the leper's **clothes were to be rent**. This was a sign of mourning. When the news was brought to Eli that the ark had been taken, the messenger came with his clothes rent. When Job's friends saw him sitting among the ashes, they rent every one his mantle. Jacob rent his clothes when he mourned over his lost Joseph; and Tamar when bereft of her honour. It was indeed among the children of Israel the usual sign of mourning. Now the leper here is represented with his clothes rent, and that continually. He was never allowed to mend them, but always wore rent garments. So with the Lord's people in whom the plague of sin is; their clothes are continually rent. Grief, sorrow, trouble, is their continual portion on account of the leprosy that is in them. Rending the clothes was also a sign of abhorrence. Thus "the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy", when the Lord Jesus in answer to his question affirmed that He was the Son of God. The rent clothes, therefore, of the leper shew his self-abhorrence and self-loathing. Seeing the holiness and purity of God it is with him as with Job. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He feels as the church is represented to feel in Ezekiel: "Then shall ye remember your own evil

ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." The rent clothes was also a figure of a rent and contrite heart. "Rend your heart," says the prophet, "and not your garments"; implying that though the rent garment was a figure of a rent heart, yet the outward mark was nothing without the inward feeling. Thus when King Josiah heard the words of the law found in the temple, he rent his clothes and wept before God. His heart was rent by the sentence of the law.

There are not many such lepers with rent garments here; indeed, not many such anywhere. In all the churches and chapels opened this morning for worship, how many such lepers will be found? Many who have washed their clothes and are clean. But O! how few lepers with their garments rent in secret before God!

c But the leper was also to have **his head bare**. No shelter, no covering from God's wrath was allowed him; bare-headed he stood exposed to the winds and storms of heaven, bare before the lightning's flash. And does not this represent the poor sinner without a covering before God, sensible that he is amenable to God's justice and eternal indignation? He must put on no covering. O how glad would he be if he might but put on some covering before God; some hopes of amendment, some repentance for the past, some resolutions for the future! There is in God's armoury a covering for the head: "For a helmet the hope of salvation," as one said of old, "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." But this is not for the leper whilst diseased. His gesture and language speak, "Lord, if Thou strike me to hell, I deserve it."

d But he was also to have **a covering on his upper lip**. What does this imply? We read of the ungodly, that "their throat is an open sepulchre". In fact, what is the carnal mind but a sepulchre in which are dead men's bones and all uncleanness? We are obliged to close the mouth of the grave when we have committed to it the remains of those who were upon earth to us most dear. Of his beloved Sarah, Abraham said to the sons of Heth, "Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." The vault must be built up lest the dead pollute the living. The leper was to cover his upper lip for the same reason that we cover the mouth of the grave-to prevent the infection of his breath. If he covered but the lower lip, the breath might come forth. Have you ever thought and felt that there was sin enough in your heart to infect a world? that if every man and woman in the world were perfectly holy, and you were left freely to give vent to every thought and imagination of your carnal mind, there was sin enough there to taint every individual? It is so, felt or not; for sin is of that infectious nature that there is enough in one man's heart to fill all London with horror. Oh, when a man knows this he is glad to have a covering for his upper lip! He cannot boast then of what great performances he means to accomplish. He has at times a very Vesuvius in him, and wants no one to come within the mouth of the crater.

The cover on the upper lip was to keep infection in; and is it not a mercy to be kept in? You have sometimes at the railway stations seen what steam is when let out. Now if a little steam just let off for a few moments can make such a hideous shriek, and rush forth with such amazing power, what must be the force of the whole bulk of steam in the boiler? So from our hearts there may come now and then just a puff of steam; but what is that to the whole mass? A look, a glance, a word, a thought is a mere puff, a momentary jet; but we carry the whole bulk unseen in the boiler. Now if a man has something of the evil of his nature thus opened up to him, can he be a Pharisee? He cannot. "Where is boasting? It is excluded." If a man has a covering upon the upper lip he will not boast of his goodness.

e But the leper was to have **a cry in his mouth**. That cry was, "Unclean, unclean." It was a warning cry. He was to shout to the passengers, if any were drawing near, "Unclean, unclean; come not near me; I am a leper; I shall pollute you; beware of my breath, it carries infection with it; touch me not; if you touch me you will be tainted with the same malady; beware of me; keep your distance; stand off." Yes, but you say, "Come, I am not so bad as that; I am religious, and holy, and consistent. I am sure I need not cover my

upper lip and cry, unclean, unclean." O, no; certainly not! You are not a leper. You have had years ago a rising, or a boil, and at the priest's direction you have washed your clothes and are clean. But if you do not feel to be a leper, there are those who do: and such do cry, and ever must cry, "Unclean, unclean." And if they do not uncover all their sores to men, they can do so to God. The poor woman with a bleeding cancer may show it to her physician, but she keeps it covered from other eyes. We need not show our ulcers and bleeding wounds except to the Great Physician, who can alone cure them. But if we find one afflicted with the same complaint, as two poor cancered women might condole with each other when they meet at the hospital, so our mouths may be at a little liberty to speak and say, "Oh fellow-patient, fellow-sufferer, you and I are labouring under the same malady; we are brothers; we can sympathise with, we can understand, we can pity one the other!" Nay, though many may not like it, it is a part of a minister's work to uncover these cancers and ulcerous sores. He is an under-physician; and if he do not understand such diseases, if he cannot discriminate them, how are poor bleeding souls to receive benefit or consolation under his ministry?

f But all the days wherein the plague was in the leper he was to be defiled; he was unclean. Such is a spiritual leper; defiled by sin, polluted from head to foot, as long as the leprosy remains.

g But what was the necessary consequence of this? "He shall dwell alone." A solitary religion is generally a good religion. God's tried people have not many companions. The exercised cannot walk with the unexercised; the polluted with the unpolluted; the sick with the well; the leper with the clean; for "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" "He shall dwell alone." So speaks Jeremiah in the Lamentations: "He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." It is good to be alone. I am not very fond of company spiritually, though I used to be so naturally; for I can find but few to walk with. And I believe the best of our religion, I might almost say the whole of our religion, is what we get alone in the communications that God gives to the soul in secret. We need not crave much company: "religious society," as it is termed, is for the most part little else but gossip, scandal and disputation. In such company we cannot tell out the exercises of our soul, still less can we speak of the things God is pleased to communicate of His grace. These are reserved for a private ear, or for the ear of God. The leper especially dwells alone. Oh, may we have this solitary religion! Dwell alone, live alone, talk alone, pray alone, walk alone. I do not mean be cold and shy with the children of God, those especially with whom you are in church connection. But as to the main essential points of religion, you will find, as I have ever found, and all really do find who find anything worth having, what we get alone weighs heaviest, wears best, and lasts longest. I am fond of conversing alone with the people of God, but avoid what is called religious company, tea-drinking, and the like. It sadly dissipates the mind. We speak things that we would not: we hear things we would not: and handles are often made of expressions unguardedly uttered.

h "Without the camp shall his habitation be." This seems to represent the leper as shut out from the tabernacle worship, and other privileges of God's house. Many, I believe, are kept from joining churches through a sense of leprosy. They say, "I am not fit to join a church; I am too vile, too polluted, too tempted, too exercised; I can find few companions; I feel it best to walk alone; I am unfit for the ordinances of God's house." I would not altogether justify this, because Christ and the ordinances of God's house are of God's own institution. But still, until there be some application of God's goodness and love to the soul, it is better to be without the camp: better to walk alone, and lay the disease before God. It is best not to come forward for church membership until there is some testimony from God, and the Lord has done that for the soul which has made it really glad.

The next sermon, No. 19, considers how the Leper is cleansed.