

MARK 1:40-45

HAVE YOU BEEN TOUCHED BY JESUS?

This morning we meet a leper. Leprosy was the scourge of the ancient world. Nothing evoked more fear, more dread, or more revulsion than the sight of these walking dead. That is what a leper was called, a walking dead man. The smell of his decaying flesh would announce his coming long before the tattered scraps of his clothing would be seen, or his raspy "Unclean! Unclean!" announcement he was required to declare, could be heard. The stumbling shuffle of toeless feet, the wandering of sightless eyes and the moan of a cheek less mouth, all pointed to Leprosy, this unseen attacker that slowly destroyed human bodies, and made the individual an untouchable to society.

The great Jewish culture scholar, Edersheim¹ says the disease which we today call leprosy generally begins with pain in certain areas of the body. Numbness follows. Soon the skin in such spots loses its original color. It gets to be thick, glossy, and scaly. ... As the sickness progresses, the thickened spots become dirty sores and ulcers due to poor blood supply. The skin, especially around the eyes and ears, begins to bunch, with deep furrows between the swellings, so that the face of the afflicted individual begins to resemble that of a lion. Fingers drop off or are absorbed; toes are affected similarly. His throat becomes hoarse, and you can now not only see, feel, and smell the leper, but you can hear his rasping voice. And if you stay with him for some time, you can even imagine a peculiar taste in your mouth, probably due to the odor.

LEPROSY is a vivid and graphic physical picture of the spiritual defilement of sin. Sin is ugly, loathsome, incurable, and contaminating; it separates men from God and makes them outcasts. The instructions given to the priests in Leviticus 13 help us understand the nature of sin: Sin is inside us, deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3); sin also spreads (Lev. 13:8); sin always defiles and isolates (Lev. 13:45–46); and just as leprous garments are fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:52, 57), so those who die clothed in sin will burn forever.

But then came Jesus. Mark used his favorite word in our passage we will read this morning. When the untouchable is touched by Jesus, note (v. 42), "*Immediately* the leprosy left him and he was cured."

¹ Quoted by (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1927, p. 149; cited in William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Matthew* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], p. 388)

Imagine² what happened to that leper who was touched by Jesus. His feet—*toeless, ulcerated stubs*—were suddenly whole, bursting his shrunken sandals. The knobs on his hands grew fingers before his very eyes. Back came his hair, eyebrows, eyelashes. Under his hair were ears and before him a nose! His skin was supple and soft. Can you hear a thundering roar from the multitude? Can you hear the man crying *not*, "Unclean! Unclean!," but, "*I'm clean! I'm clean!*"

Shackled by a heavy burden, neath a load of guilt and shame,
Then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I ma no longer the same.
He touched me, Oh He touched me, and Oh the joy that floods my souls,
Something happened and now I know, He touched me and made me whole!

The walking dead were so feared that they were driven to live outside of civilization. No family would be allowed to stay in touch with their loved one once that oozing, green sore was detected. With pitiful wails like a funeral, the dirge of the farewell to the precious husband, father, son, daughter, mother, grandfather, or grand mother would swell from the tear filled faces of the ones never to see their loved one again. Off went the walking dead leper to the dark, pain-filled world of exclusion, hatred, bitterness, and loneliness. Marked for life as a communicable bearer of the most dreaded, incurable blights ever known. Doomed to be treated like an enemy for the rest of your life. Welcome to the Leper's World, the World of the Walking dead.

Read text Mark 1:40-45

The reason we are studying this passage today is to see what Jesus Christ can do for you, for anyone in an instant, in a split second of belief. The healing of Christ in salvation from sin is *instantaneous* and *complete* ("the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from every sin)." Everything we do here at Tulsa Bible Church, every ministry we offer to the Lord, all we are as believers this morning, and all preaching rests in this foundational truth!

If you realize that the leprosy of sin has infected your person, then you have no doubt that you are a sinner.

If you believe that, there is no reason why you should not go immediately to him. He has compassion, he will actually *touch* the leprosy of your sin, and you will be immediately healed!

Have you humbled yourself to say, "I know you are willing, make me clean"? If not yet, then why not this morning, why not do it now?

Mark 1:40. On Jesus' Galilean tour, **a man with leprosy came to Him** (a bold move for a leper). The parallel passage in Matthew adds that the man came to Jesus with reverence. His boldness did not come from presumption but from humble adoration. When he reached Jesus he **bowed down to Him**. (from which comes **bowed down**) literally means to prostrate oneself and is most often translated "to worship (see" Matt. 2:2; 4:9, 10; John 4:20-24; Acts 7:43; Rev. 4:10; 19:10). Matthew also notes the reverential nature of his request as the leper addressed Jesus as **Lord** not simply in the sense of "Sir," but as an acknowledgment of deity. He felt he was

² Drawn from Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Mark—Jesus, Servant and Savior*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

in the presence of God and that therefore Jesus could heal him of his terrible disease. It is both interesting and instructive to note that the scribes and Pharisees who were doubtlessly in the multitude that day were beautifully and richly attired, yet were inwardly corrupt, proud, and unbelieving. By contrast, the **leper** appeared loathsome and repulsive on the outside, but inwardly he was reverent and believing. **Jesus** encountered **a man . . . covered with leprosy** (lit., “full of leprosy”). Perhaps he was in the final stages of leprosy—a fact that would have been easily discernible in the man’s home community. Yet this leper was convinced that Jesus could cleanse him. Without presumption (**If You are willing**) and without doubting Jesus’ ability (**You can make me clean**), he humbly **begged** Jesus to heal him.

1:41-42. Moved by **compassion** (*splanchnistheis*, “having deep pity”), **Jesus . . . touched the** untouchable and **cured** the incurable. His touch showed that Jesus was not bound by rabbinic regulations regarding ritual defilement. Both this symbolic touch and Jesus’ authoritative pronouncement— **I am willing** (pres. tense), **be clean** (aorist pass., decisive act received)—constituted the cure. It was immediate, complete, and visible to all who saw him.

This man knew that Jesus was *able* to heal him, but he was not sure the Master was *willing* to heal him. Lost sinners today have the same unnecessary concern, for God has made it abundantly clear that He is not willing that sinners perish (2 Peter 3:9) and that He is willing that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). Anyone who has never trusted the Savior is spiritually in worse shape than this man was physically.

Jesus said this would be **a testimony to** the priests. And so it was, for in the entire history of the nation there was no record of any Israelite being healed from leprosy other than Miriam (Num. 12:10-15). One can imagine the dramatic impact when this man suddenly appeared at the temple and announced to the priests he had been cured of leprosy! This event should have led to an examination of the circumstances surrounding the healing. Jesus in effect was presenting His “calling card” to the priests, for they would have to investigate His claims. (The healed man, however, disobeyed Jesus’ orders to tell no one, for he “began to talk freely” [Mark 1:45]. Presumably, however, the man eventually made his way to the temple.)

This morning I wonder, have you ever felt the Touch of Jesus? This morning, the leper of Mark 1:40-45 is the second touch of Eight times we see Jesus reaching out to touch those who came seeking Him in the Gospels.

It is very clear from Mark’s Gospel that the Lord delighted in touching needy people. There are no less than eight touches recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

1. When Christ healed Peter’s mother-in-law, he took her by the hand and raised her up (1:31).
2. He laid his hand on the leper (1:41).
3. When he healed Jairus’s little daughter, he took her by the hand and said, “ _____ !” (which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’)” (5:41).
4. Next He “lay his hands on a few sick people and healed them” (6:5).

5. When he encountered the deaf and dumb man, the Apostle Mark says, "After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, 'Be opened!'" (7:33).
6. Later he did almost the same thing for the blind man at Bethsaida (8:23).
7. In the midst of his busy ministry, he repeatedly took little children in his arms (9:36 and 10:16).
8. Finally we see him raising up the formerly demonized boy (9:27).

When Jesus came it was to touch the lost, dying lepers of this world with His love, His salvation, and His Healing. Someone wrote a poem about Christ's coming that goes like this:

"What A Night"

That night when in the Judean skies
 The mystic star dispensed its light,
 A blind man moved in his sleep
 And dreamed that he had sight.

That night when shepherds heard
 The song of hosts angelic choring near,
 A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell
 And dreamed that he could hear.

That night when o'er the new-born babe
 The tender Mary rose to lean,
 A loathsome leper smiled in sleep,
 And dreamed that he was clean.

That night when in the manger lay
 The Sanctified who came to save,
 A man moved in the sleep of death,
 And dreamed there was no grave.

—Selected3

With that touch Jesus answered for all time the doubts of those who wonder if God really cares. Jesus not only met the physical need. He understood the loneliness and psychological pain this man must have experienced, and with His touch dealt directly with that inner pain. If you've ever been lonely, ever felt rejected or unloved, you know what that touch must have meant. If you've ever been convinced that no one could possibly care for you, then you understand how that leper must have felt. Jesus' touch was not needed to heal the leprosy, but it was necessary to meet this man's deep, inner need for love. Jesus touched him. As He yearns to touch all.

When Jesus touched the leper, He contracted the leper's defilement; *but He also conveyed His health!* Is this not what He did for us on the cross when He was made sin for us? (2 Cor. 5:21) The leper did not question His *ability* to heal; he only wondered if He were willing. Certainly God is willing to save! He is "God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved" (1 Tim. 2:3-4). God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9).

Jesus told His disciples that Moses and the prophets spoke of Him. Lepers and their cleansing directs us to Leviticus 13-14. In this chapter is beautiful picture of Christ's work for sinners. The ceremony described in Leviticus 14 presents a beautiful picture in type of the work of redemption. The two birds represent two different aspects of our Lord's ministry: His incarnation and death (the bird put into the jar and then killed), and His resurrection and ascension (the bird stained with the blood and then set free). The blood was applied to the man's right ear (he was to henceforth listen to God's Word), right thumb (He was to henceforth do God's work), and right great toe (he was to henceforth follow God's way). Then the oil was put on the blood, symbolizing the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit cannot come on human flesh until first the blood has been applied.⁴

Note Leviticus 13. Like sin, leprosy is deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3) and cannot be helped by mere "surface" measures (see Jer. 6:14). Like sin, leprosy spreads (Lev. 13:7-8); and as it spreads, it defiles (Lev. 13:44-45). Because of his defilement, a leprous person had to be isolated outside the camp (Lev. 13:46), and lost sinners one day will be isolated in hell. People with leprosy were looked on as "dead" (Num. 12:12), and garments infected with leprosy were fit only for the fire (Lev. 13:52). How important it is for lost sinners to trust Jesus Christ and get rid of their "leprosy"!⁵

The steps in the leper's cleansing and restoration (in Leviticus 13) picture to us what Jesus Christ has done for sinners.

THE PRIEST HAD TO SEEK OUT THE LEPER (vv. 1-3). Of course, the leper was barred from coming into the camp, so the priest had to go "outside the camp" to him. What a picture of Christ who came to us and died "outside the camp" that we might be saved (Heb. 13:10-13). We did not seek Him; He came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Since the unclean leper wasn't permitted to enter the camp, the priest had to go outside the camp to minister to him or her. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). When He ministered here on earth, Jesus was called "a friend of publicans and sinners" (Luke 7:34); He compared Himself to a doctor helping his needy patients (Matt. 9:10-13). As God's Great Physician, Jesus makes "house calls" and comes to sinners right where they are. In the case of the Jewish leper, the priest went out to investigate and determine if indeed the victim was healed; but Jesus comes to us that He might heal us of the sickness of sin.

THE LEPER NEEDED A SUBSTITUTE TO TAKE AWAY HIS UNCLEANNESS (vv. 4-7a). This ceremony is a beautiful picture of the work of Christ. The priest took one of the birds and placed it in an earthen vessel (clay jar), and then he killed it. Of course, the

⁴Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

⁵Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

birds were not created to live in jars, but to fly in the heavens. Christ willingly left heaven and took upon Himself a body, put Himself, as it were, in an earthen vessel, that He might die for us. Note that the bird was killed over running water, a picture of the Holy Spirit. The priest then took the living bird, dipped it in the blood of the dead bird, and set it free. Here is a vivid illustration of Christ's resurrection. Christ died for our sins and was raised again, and He took the blood (spiritually speaking) back to heaven that we might be cleansed from sin. The priest finally sprinkled some of the blood on the leper, for "without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22, NKJV).

THE LEPER HAD TO BELIEVE THE WORD (*vv. 7b*). After years of exclusion and separation because of his uncleanness, the priest told the leper he was clean. Even if he didn't feel clean, he had to respond by faith. How did the victim know he was clean? The priest told him so! How do believers today know that God has saved us? He tells us so in His Word! No matter how the leper felt or what he looked like, God said he was clean, and that settled it.

THE LEPER HAD TO RESPOND WITH OBEDIENCE (*v. 8-9*). This washing is a picture of the believer cleansing himself from filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1). After we have been saved, it is our responsibility to keep our lives blameless and holy for His sake. Note that the leper's wait was until the eighth day, for eight is the number of resurrection, the new beginning. We are righteous by our position in Christ even when we do not feel or act like it. The man was ceremonially clean and had the *right* to live in the camp, but he needed to be made personally and practically clean so he would be *fit* to live in the camp. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean" (Isa. 1:17, NKJV). "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Perhaps Paul had Leviticus 14 in mind when he compared the new life in Christ to a change of clothes (Col. 3:1-14).

THE LEPER IS GIVEN CONSECRATION TO NEWNESS OF LIFE (*vv. 10, 14-32*). It's now the eighth day since the priest first visited the leper, and eight is the number of the new beginning. This is a touching part of the ritual. The priest took the blood and applied it to the right ear, the right thumb, and the right great toe of the man, symbolizing that his whole body had now been purchased and belonged to God. He was to listen to God's Word, work for God's glory, and walk in God's ways. Then the priest put the oil on the blood, symbolizing the power of the Spirit of God for the doing of God's will. The blood could not be put on the oil; the oil had to be put on the blood. For where the blood has been applied, the Spirit of God can work. The rest of the oil was poured on the man's head, and thus, he was anointed for his new life. If you will read Lev. 8:22-24, you will see that a similar ceremony was performed for the consecration of the priests. In other words, God treated the leper as he would a priest.

When that leper said to Christ, "If You are willing, You can make me clean," Jesus replied, "I am willing; be cleansed." As He was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, Christ is willing to save and able to save.⁶

⁶ Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, (Victor Books: The Bible Exposition Commentary) Wheaton, IL.

Did you notice⁷ the man did not obey Christ; he told everybody what the Lord had done! (Christ tells us to tell everybody, *and we keep quiet!*) This poor man was covered with a sad and foul disease, when he said to Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." He had full faith in Christ's ability, but he had some doubts as to Christ's willingness. Our Savior looked at him; and though he might very well have rebuked him that he should doubt his willingness, he merely said, "I will, be thou clean;" and straightway he was made whole of that loathsome plague. If there is in this assembly one grievously defiled or openly disgraced by sin, do you see the leprosy on yourself, and do you say, "I believe he could save me if he would?" Do you have some lingering doubt about the Savior's willingness? Yet I beseech you breathe this prayer, "Lord, I believe, I believe thy power. Help thou mine unbelief which lingers round thy willingness." Then little as your faith is, it will save you. Jesus, full of compassion, will pity even your unbelief and accept what is faith and forgive what is unbelief. The leper came with confidence because he believed Jesus was compassionate, with reverence because he believed Jesus was God, with humility because he believed Jesus was sovereign, and with faith because he believed Jesus had the power to heal him.

Much modern evangelism and personal witness is weakened by failure to confront men with the terribleness and danger of their sin. Coming to Christ is facing and confessing one's sin and bringing it to the Lord for cleansing. True conversion takes place when, like the leper, desperate people come to Christ humbly confessing their need and reverently seeking His restoration. The truly repentant person, like this leper, comes with no pride, no self-will, no rights, and no claim to worthiness. He sees himself as a repulsive sinner who has absolutely no claim to salvation apart from the abundant grace of God. He comes believing that God can and will save him only as he places his trust in Jesus Christ.

After a person is saved from sin, Jesus' first requirement is that he henceforth obey the Word of God. Only a life-style of holy living can give proper testimony to what Jesus Christ has done in saving us.⁸

The sinner is in a plight more miserable than the leper; let him imitate his example and go to Jesus, "beseeching him and kneeling down to him." Let him exercise what little faith he has, even though it should go no further than "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and there need be no doubt as to the result of the application. Jesus heals all who come, and casts out none. In reading the narrative in which our morning's text occurs, it is worthy of devout notice that Jesus touched the leper. This unclean person had broken through the regulations of the ceremonial law and pressed into the house, but Jesus so far from chiding him broke through the law himself in order to meet him. He made an interchange with the leper, for while he cleansed him, he contracted by that touch a Levitical defilement. Even so Jesus Christ was made sin for us, although in himself he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. O that poor sinners would go to Jesus, believing in the power of his blessed substitutionary work, and they would soon learn the power of his gracious touch. That hand which multiplied the loaves, which saved sinking Peter, which upholds afflicted saints, which crowns believers, that same hand will touch every seeking sinner, and in a moment

⁷ Drawn from MacArthur, Spurgeon in situ.

⁸ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

make him clean. The love of Jesus is the source of salvation. He loves, he looks, he touches us, WE LIVE. 9

One last question. Why did Jesus do this? Aside from the reason we have mentioned, that it was most natural for him, he wanted the leper to *feel* his willingness and sympathy. The touch said, "I'm with you, I understand, I love you." Those are the human reasons. But there was also an overshadowing theological reason: the touch of Christ's pure hand on the rotting leper is a parable of the Incarnation. Jesus in the Incarnation took on flesh, became sin for us, and thus gave us his purity. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus laid hold of our flesh. He touched us and healed us. See Jesus bent over the prostrate leper, his holy hand resting on the decaying flesh of the foul-smelling leper, and you see what he did for him. What has he done for us?

There is a relevant application to all this. We will never affect others as Christ did unless there is contact and identification. We have to be willing to take the hand of those whom we would help. Sometimes a touch, caring involvement, will do a thousand times more than our theology. This is what all churches need to do. We are great in theory. We are careful about our doctrine. But we need to lay our hand on some rotting flesh in our neighborhood, in the executive towers where we work, in the city slums. We cannot expect this to be only the job of missionaries because a church which does not regularly place its hand on the rotting humanity around it will not be sending missionaries to do so either.

APPENDIX

The Gospel by Mark is significantly shorter than the others. Yet while much fuller, Matthew and Luke each mention a total of 20 of Jesus' miracles, Mark—just half their size—speaks of 18 specific miracles and refers to 10 other periods of miracles that are not detailed. A list of the miracles in Mark shows:

1. Demon-possessed man healed (1:23–28);
 2. Peter's mother-in-law healed (1:29–31);
 3. Leper healed (1:40–45);
 4. Paralytic healed (2:3–12);
 5. Withered hand healed (3:1–5);
 6. Storm stilled (4:35–41);
 7. Demon-possessed man healed (5:1–20);
 8. Jairus' daughter raised (5:22–43);
 9. Bleeding woman healed (5:25–34);
 10. 5,000 fed (6:35–44);
 11. Jesus walks on sea (6:45–52);
 12. Woman's daughter healed (7:24–30);
 13. Deaf and dumb man healed (7:31–37);
 14. 4,000 fed (8:1–9);
 15. Blind man healed (8:22–26);
 16. Epileptic boy healed (9:14–29);
 17. Blind men healed (10:46–52);
 18. Fig tree cursed (11:12–14).
- Then the 10 general references to other miracles performed by Jesus are: 1:32–34, 39; 3:9–12, 22; 6:2, 5, 7, 13, 14, 53–56. The words used to describe all these miracles are "wonder," "power," "sign," and "miraculous deed."

Up to this passage¹⁰ Mark had spoken of the crowds. But now he draws our attention to an individual. Mark points us to a leper who came to Jesus, begging Him on his knees. As a leper who had very probably not known the touch of another's hand for years. As all around him were repelled by his disease, Mark tells us that Jesus was "filled with

⁹Spurgeon, Charles H., *Morning and Evening*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

¹⁰ Materials drawn and adapted from Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

compassion." The Greek word used here makes it clear that he was deeply moved. Lepers in Jesus' day, as in ours, were untouchable. They had to cry out in the streets, to warn others away from them. They lived outside cities, separated from their loved ones and families. They were alone ... and destined not to know the loving caress or gentle pressure of another's hand. But Jesus reached out and touched the leper! Jesus reached out His hand and actually touched the man! He said, "I am willing," and with a word cured the incurable disease.

Let us look first at the facts. There are three kinds of leprosy.

(i) There is nodular or tubercular leprosy. It begins with an unaccountable lethargy and pains in the joints. Then there appear on the body, especially on the back, symmetrical discolored patches. Slowly the sufferer becomes a mass of ulcerated growths. The average course of the disease is nine years, and it ends in mental decay, coma and ultimately death, the sufferer becomes utterly repulsive both to himself and to others.

(ii) There is anesthetic leprosy. The initial stages are the same; but the nerve trunks also are affected. The infected area loses all sensation. The muscles waste away; the tendons contract until the hands become like claws. There ensues chronic ulceration of the feet and of the hands and then the progressive loss of fingers and of toes, until in the end a whole hand or a whole foot may drop off. The duration of the disease is anything from twenty to thirty years. It is a kind of terrible progressive death of the body.

(iii) The third kind of leprosy is a type - the commonest of all - where nodular and anesthetic leprosy are mixed. That is leprosy proper, and there is no doubt that there were many lepers like that in Palestine in the time of Jesus. He was banished from the fellowship of men; he must dwell alone outside the camp; he must go with rent clothes, bared head, a covering upon his upper lip, and as he went he must give warning of his polluted presence with the cry, "Unclean, unclean!" The leper was a man who was already dead, though still alive. The leper had not only to bear the physical pain of his disease; he had to bear the mental anguish and the heart-break of being completely banished from human society and totally shunned.

Psalm 38.

The third of the seven penitential psalms, recited as evening prayer on the third day of the week by the Ashkenazi Jews, is not exceptional in style; it is repetitive and stereotyped. Yet it looms powerfully before us because of its intense recital of physical pain and emotional isolation and because of its honest acceptance of responsibility (vv. 5, 19). Unlike Job, the psalmist does not argue his innocence but simply pleads for human recognition and compassion.

All indications point to leprosy, which breaks out with oozing sores (vv. 4, 6, 8), blinds the eyes (v. 11), and distorts the limbs (vv. 4, 7). Lepers were quarantined and prohibited from mingling in ancient society (v. 12; Lev. 13). They were "no-persons," no longer a spouse, parent, or child, with no national or religious identity (cf. Luke 17:11-19). Like the dead, they were isolated even from God (Ps. 6:6).

In Ps. 38:4-11 the sickness seems to correspond to leprosy. The severity is intensified by the pounding of the heart (vv. 9, 11) and a consuming fever (v. 8). Yet the psalmist

is able to direct "all my desire" toward the Lord. In v. 6 the sufferer does not argue against personal guilt and foolishness (Ps. 107:17; Prov. 24:9). The word for "sores" is from a root that means to unite, here with hostile forces that strike blows and cast spells. The verb in v. 9, "I roar from anguished heart," is generally used of lions (Ps. 22:14).

Even "those [once] loving me . . . stand at a distance" (38:12) with devices to keep the psalmist far away (v. 13), so that the leper neither hears nor is able to converse (vv. 14-15). Verses 16-21 pursue the reasons why Yahweh should cross the barrier into unclean territory and intervene.

The conclusion (vv. 22-23) calls upon a key word of Psalm 22, "Be not distant" (vv. 2, 12, 20), and begs God not irreverently, only with urgency, to "hurry" (Ps. 22:20).¹¹

Leprosy¹² was "the outward and visible sign of the innermost spiritual corruption; a meet emblem in its small beginnings, its gradual spread, its internal disfigurement, its dissolution little by little of the whole body, of that which corrupts, degrades, and defiles man's inner nature, and renders him unmeet to enter the presence of a pure and holy God" (Maclear's Handbook O.T).

¹¹Mays, James Luther, Ph.D., Editor, *Harper's Bible Commentary*, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.) 1988.

¹² Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton's Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.