

Lesson 2

Mark 1:14-45

II. Initial Ministry in Galilee [1:14-3:6]

1. Summary of Preaching [1:14-15]

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

- a. Mark skips Jesus’ initial ministry in Judea [John 1:35-4:42], which lasted for almost a year. It was during this time that Jesus cleansed the temple, had discussion with Nicodemus, and had his encounter with the woman at the well in Samaria.
- b. John was put in prison as a result of his preaching against Herod for marrying Herodias [his brother Philip’s wife]. Details of this incident will be addressed in Mark 6:14-29.
- c. **Kingdom of God** is also referred as kingdom of heaven [Gospel of Mathew]. It means God’s earthly rule that includes all of the spiritual and material blessings. It was near in the sense that the King was present. If the nation of Israel repented and believed in Christ as the Messiah, the earthly kingdom would have been initiated. Since they did not, the earthly kingdom is presently postponed till the return of Christ.
- d. **Repentance** involves recognition of sin, sorrowing over it and a willingness to turn from it. Repentance is a God-produced effect in our hearts [Acts 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25].

Belief [also translated faith] involves trusting in the good news that Christ through his work on the cross has provided the sacrifice for our sins.

In short, to be saved, one has to turn [from sins] and trust [in Christ]. **Repentance and belief are on-going actions, not a one-time act at the moment of conversion.** The words in the Greek are in the present tense [i.e. keep repenting and believing].

Application

1. **Entrance Into God’s Kingdom Is Only Through Repentance And Belief.** Only those in their earthly lives that accept Christ as Savior and Lord qualify to enter the future kingdom of God.

Repentance is an integral and non-negotiable part of the gospel. It cannot be omitted or redefined to suit the audience. Repentance and Belief both go hand in hand.

- John the Baptist preached repentance “*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near*” [Matt 3:1].
- Jesus preached repentance “*Repent and believe*” [Mark 1:15].
- Disciples preached repentance “*They... preached that people should repent*” [Mk 6:12].
- Peter preached repentance on the Day of Pentecost “*Repent and be baptized every one of you....for the forgiveness of your sins*” [Acts 2:38]
- Paul preached repentance “*turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*” [Acts 20:21]

Rather than trying to win converts by tampering with the gospel, all Christians are to lovingly and obediently proclaim the gospel as given by the Lord in the Great Commission “*repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations*” [Lk 24:47].

For Reflection

Have I truly repented and trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of my sins?
Do I include repentance as a part of my gospel presentation?

2. Call of the First Disciples [1:16-20]

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

- a. Jesus had already met Simon [i.e. Peter] and Andrew before this incident [John 1:40-42]. They came to faith at that time.
- b. Sea of Galilee is about 14 miles long and 7 miles wide and is about 700 feet below sea level. It is also called as Lake of Gennesaret [Lk 5:1] and Sea of Tiberias [Jn 6:1].
- c. James and John could have been cousins of Jesus. Upon comparing Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40 and John 19:25, it is possible that Salome, the mother of James and John [Matt 27:56; Mk 15:40] was the sister of Jesus’ mother Mary [Jn 19:25].
- d. The word “*follow*” means to walk the same path that Jesus walked.

Application

1. **Following Jesus is a Personal Non-Negotiable Call.** “*Come follow me*” [v. 17]. They obeyed “*at once....without delay...followed him*” [vv. 18, 20]. While our individual calling to follow and serve Christ might be different from that of the apostles and even different from other Christians in its outward workings, “*follow Me*” is still a personal call to every one of us.
2. **Following Jesus is a Costly Call.** “*they left their nets ...they left their father in the boat...and followed him*” [vv. 18, 20]. Fishing was a very profitable business in Galilee. The fish from Galilee was exported to many places. It also seems that James and John were wealthy as we read this account. Rich or poor, they left their earthly securities to follow Christ! It was a costly call for all four [and the other apostles];
 - Peter – Crucified in Rome [according to Church history]
 - Andrew – Crucified in Greece [according to Church history]
 - James – Killed by the Sword of Herod [Acts 12:2]
 - John – Exiled in the island of Patmos [Rev 1:9]

Even though these four disciples paid a heavy price, none ever regretted the decision to follow Christ. While you and I may not be called to such an end, we must still be **willing** to follow him, whatever the cost may be! That is why Jesus repeatedly warned the people about the cost of following him. He was not interested in making false converts. His message for those desiring to follow him was very clear:

- **Luke 9:23-25** “²³ *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.* ²⁴ *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it.*”
- **Luke 14:26-27** “²⁶ *If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.* ²⁷ *And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.*”
- **Luke 14:33** “*...any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.*”

- **Matthew 10:37** ³⁷ “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸ and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

In practical areas, this should at a minimum, reflect in simple every-day areas such as the following [the list is not exhaustive, only a sample];

- **Being truthful in the work-place.** Price for being truthful may be a loss of job, promotion or other financial benefits. It may even include ridicule from co-workers.
- **Obedying the Government and its rules.** Being honest in your taxes, not staying or working illegally, and yes, this calls for driving within speed limits also!
- **Saying “No” to a worldly pursuit of riches/career growth.** These can easily become idols in one’s life. Riches can easily become a source of trust than God himself [Matt 6:24 “*You cannot serve both God and money*”]. The rich young ruler held on to his wealth and lost his soul [Mk 10:17-31]. Indeed, a poor exchange!
- **Taking a stand for Christ that may cause strain in family relations.** Many pay a heavy price for converting to the Christian faith, for taking water baptism, etc.
- **Dealing with a troublesome spouse or child.** Day-to-day dealings with an unruly child or a difficult spouse can take its toll on anyone, more leaning on the Lord is needed under such trying circumstances when one is trying to be faithful to the Lord.

Jesus is not interested in those that make a half-hearted commitment to him. In fact, he warned the half-hearted “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God*” [Lk 9:62]. **Rather than worrying about the cost of following Jesus, one should seriously consider the cost of *not* following Jesus** [i.e. A Life of Temporary Pleasures on Earth Vs A Life of Permanent Never-ending Pain in Hell.]. The choice for the sincere thinker is obvious.

3. **Following Jesus is a Promising Call.** “*I will make you fishers of men*” [v. 17]. While the cost of following Jesus is high, it is very comforting to know when Christ calls us to follow him, he provides all the help we need to fulfill that call “***I will make you.***” That is why we have the Holy Spirit [Acts 1:8]. Specifically, in this context, the disciples were called to take people alive “*fishers of men*” for the kingdom of God. In a general sense, all Christians are called to be fishers of men. In a more specific sense, Christ calls individual Christians for unique roles in fulfilling that call of being fishers of men. Below are a few reminders that will help us to follow Christ:

- He used ordinary people like fishermen, tax-collectors, etc., to start his work and plant his church later. Similarly, even today, Christ is not looking for smart people who can bring a lot to his work, he is looking for people who are humble and willing to follow him. Our responsibility is to follow in complete trust just like those fishermen did. Just as Christ took care of them, he promises to take care of us also. Scripture attests to this truth in many areas:
 - Mark 10:29-30 ²⁹ “*I tell you the truth,*” *Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.”*
 - Matthew 28:20 “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of age.*”

In practical areas, this means that God will take care of all our earthly physical needs such as food and clothing. Our “*heavenly Father knows that [we] have need of them*” [Matt 6:32]. **In fact, none that truly trusted in God has ever said that God had failed them.** On the contrary, even if the path sometimes seems rough, those that have trusted him have always experienced a deep sense of peace and joy.

4. Soul-winning Has Similarities With Fishing. Both require:

- **Patience;** Takes time for the fish to be caught. In the same way, it takes time to see results in witnessing.
- **Persistence;** Easy to get discouraged when no fish is caught. Likewise, it is easy to give up witnessing when no conversions occur. We need to persevere and faithfully keep sharing the gospel trusting in the Lord to bring results at his own time.
- **Courage;** Fishing business was not for the weak-hearted individual. The seas can be rough at times. In the same way, we must through the power of the Holy Spirit courageously proclaim and live out the gospel.

For Reflection

- Has following Christ cost me *anything*?
- How do I respond when faced with a decision to obey Christ that might cost me financially, relationally, etc? Do I faithfully obey Christ or quench my conscience and disobey him?
- Do I *really* trust in his promises to take care of me? If yes, does my life show proof of it?

3. Ministry in Capernaum [1:21-34]

A. Casting out a Demon in the Synagogue [1:21-28]



Pictures of Partially reconstructed 3rd Century Synagogue at Capernaum built over the Synagogue during Jesus' Day.

Vv. 21-22

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

- a. Capernaum was the headquarters of Jesus during his Galilee ministry.
- b. **Synagogue** means “assembly.” Synagogue building was of 3-fold use;
 1. Place of worship on the Sabbath
 2. School house during the week
 3. Court room to try minor cases [Matt 13:9; Lk 12:11].
- c. Services on Sabbath Day in Synagogue consisted of;
 1. Prayers
 2. Reading of Scriptures [OT]
 3. Teaching of Scriptures

Reading and Teaching would be open to any qualified individual selected by the ruler of the synagogue.

Vv. 23-26

²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!” ²⁵ “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

- d. The evil spirit [representative of all demons] recognized the true identity of Christ [v.24]:

Human Nature of Christ	–	“Jesus of Nazareth”
Divine Nature of Christ	–	“Holy One of God.”

Their ultimate destruction even though future, would be prefigured at the cross where Christ delivered a death-blow to Satan [Col 2:15]. James' words of demons believing and trembling [Jas 2:19] is clearly seen here.

- e. By casting demons out just simply by a command, Christ showed that he was the promised Messiah [Lk 4:18; 11:20]. Christ did not permit any type of testimony about him coming from demons, this could make people think that he was in co-operation with Satan.

Vv. 27-28

²⁷ *The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”* ²⁸ *News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.*

- f. Teachers of the law appealed to tradition or quoted from other prominent rabbis from the past. Christ did not quote others, but delivered his message directly from God [John 7:16]. This type of teaching and power “*amazed*” [literally struck them like a blow] the people.

Application

- 1. One Has To Accept Christ As Lord.** The sad fact is that many on that day were amazed at Christ, just like many are amazed at Christ even today. Being amazed does not automatically mean accepting him as Lord. Many that were amazed later turned around and crucified him.
 - Jesus said in Matthew 12:30 “*He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters.*” There is no neutral ground. Either one is for Christ or against Christ. Even indifference to Christ will ultimately lead to destruction.
- 2. Miracles Do Not Necessarily Lead People To Salvation.** These people saw a mighty miracle, it only caused amazement to them. It was only an emotional response, no heart conviction of sin and turning to Christ for salvation [John 6:26].
- 3. If Christ Is Your Lord, Be Very Thankful.** Christ alone delivers people from the powers of darkness. Every Christian has been set free from the powers of darkness [even though not every Christian was demon-possessed prior to salvation]. Satan wants to imprison people in spiritual darkness. Christ by his grace sets the prisoners free.
 - Colossians 1:13-14 “¹³ *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* ¹⁴ *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*”
- 4. Proclaiming The Gospel Brings Attacks From The Devil.** Satan will do everything possible to hinder the word being proclaimed. Christians are in a war, not against flesh and blood, but against the invisible forces of Satan and his demons [Eph 6:12]. If he cannot succeed at stopping us from sharing the Word with others, he will hinder the word from being obeyed by the listener [Mk 3:15]. However, we should not give up proclaiming the Word since salvation comes through the Word. We should prayerfully depend upon the Holy Spirit to fulfill our responsibility of spreading the gospel.

For Reflection

- Am I an admirer or adorer of Christ?
- Am I really thankful for being delivered from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of Christ purely by his grace?
- Do I faithfully share the gospel with all people or do I easily give up when facing challenges?

B. Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law [1:29-31]

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew.
³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

- a. According to this account and 1 Corinthians 9:5, **Peter was a married man** [contrary to Roman Catholic teaching]. There is no biblical command that prohibits marriage for those serving the Lord [1 Tim 3:2]. Church tradition says that Peter's wife died as a witness for Christ [by crucifixion] in Rome.
- b. Peter's mother-in-law had a high fever [literally "burning with fever"]. Even though she would have been weak due to such a high fever, her healing was instantaneous and complete.

Application

1. **Humble Service** "*wait on them*" [v. 31]. As soon as she experienced healing, Peter's mother-in-law immediately used her strength to serve the Lord and other people.
 - Every Christian that has experienced healing of the soul as well as other physical/material blessings should always seek ways to serve the Lord. Our homes, cars, physical strength, finances, etc., must be used for meeting the spiritual and physical needs of people as we further God's kingdom. Everything we have is a gift from God and must be put to use for God's kingdom.

Many waste their present lives because they are waiting for some spectacular opportunities to serve Christ. They would rather serve Christ in Africa as missionaries than in their present neighborhood. True service to Christ starts right now where you are – even in the most ordinary tasks. Just as the "*Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve*" [Mk 10:45], we too much have a humble attitude when serving others.

For Reflection

- Do I serve God with every possession of mine?
- Is there anything that is holding me back from fully serving Christ?
- Do I serve with a hidden desire to be seen and applauded by others?
- Do I serve only if a task is done according to *my* way?

C. More Healings and Exorcisms [1:32-34]

³² *That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed.* ³³ *The whole town gathered at the door,* ³⁴ *and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.*

- a. Since Sabbath rules prohibited travel [Ex 20:10], people waited for Sabbath to be officially over [by sunset on Saturday] and then came to Jesus for various healings and exorcisms.
- b. Christ performed more healings and exorcisms to authenticate to people that he is the Messiah [Lk 4:18]. Matthew 8:17 sees in these healings a picture of the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4 “*He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.*” The Isaiah 53 passage is another passage that referred to the coming Messiah.

Application

1. **We Are To Be Compassionate.** Even though it was a long day, Christ still met the needs of those that came to him for help. Even though he would have been tired, yet he touched each of them individually [according to Luke 4:40] and healed them. He was available to all people, truly a Servant-King!

Christ calls every Christian to be compassionate to the needs of others. Sometimes serving others may cause inconvenience to us [physically as well as financially]. But we must walk in the footsteps of the Master himself. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves [Matt 22:39] and look out for their needs [Phil 2:4].

For Reflection

- Do I exhibit a compassionate heart?
- Do I really reach out and help people even when it causes inconvenience to me?

4. Tour of Galilee [1:35-45]

A. Departure from Capernaum [1:35-39]

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” ³⁸ Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

- a. It would have been sometime between 3:00 to 4:00 am when Christ left the house to pray [last watch of the night was between 3:00-6:00am].
- b. **Jesus prayed to show that as Man:**
 - He lived in constant dependence upon God [John 5:19]
 - He set an example for us to follow [1 John 2:6]
- c. The phrase “*Everyone is looking for you*” seems to imply the shallowness of their seeking. Luke 4:42 indicates that even the crowds tried to stop him from leaving. Enthusiasm is not to be confused with true faith. They wanted more miracles than true spiritual healing. Jesus’ leaving the town seems to affirm this fact [if their motives were right, he would have stayed for some more time].
- d. **Jesus’ main focus was on preaching the word.** The miracles were present to authenticate his message. “*Faith comes from hearing the messagethrough the word of Christ*” [Rom 10:17].

Application

1. Personal Prayer Must Be An Integral Part Of Our Daily Life.

Here are some characteristics of Personal Prayer from the example of Jesus [v. 35] that we can consider:

- **Personal Prayer Requires Privacy.** Jesus took pains to pray without being interrupted [“*solitary place*”]. Jesus himself told us to find our solitary places [Matt 6:6]. We need to find our solitary places [e.g. any quiet place in the home or even outside the home] where we can pour our hearts freely before the Lord.
- **Personal Prayer Requires Diligence.** Even though Jesus would have been tired from previous day’s activities [it was a long day], he still “*prayed.*” Sometimes our tendency is to rest and relax after a long day. We need to be aware of this let-down. Prayer is not simply a matter of self-convenience. It is a matter of **self-discipline and sacrifice**. We should guard against developing an attitude that says “I will pray when I feel like praying.” The flesh and the devil will gladly assist us in making sure we rarely get the feeling to pray!

At a minimum, **early morning and night-times** must be an integral part of the Christian’s quiet time. Starting the day by seeking the Lord’s face is way of expressing our dependence on him for the entire day. Closing the day by seeking the Lord’s face is a way of expressing our gratitude to him for carrying us through the entire day.

Guard against the tendency to start praying after you have completed all things [e.g. cleaning dishes, organizing your house, reading or watching the latest news, etc.]. All of that can wait. Prayer and meditation in God’s Word must take priority. Many Christians [and even the Church at large] are better **organizers** than **agonizers**. Jesus clearly said “*apart from me, you can do nothing*” [John 15:5]. If we seek the Lord faithfully, he will bless our labors [Psa 127:1].

2. We Must Plan Our Life According To God's Agenda, Not Human Agenda.

Jesus was not driven by the demands of people *"Everyone is looking for you"* [v. 37] nor was he attracted by the crowds. He put **priorities over popularity**. He was focused on the task that God had given him [v. 38].

We should be cautious in not getting trapped by doing what others want us to do or what we ourselves would like to do and thereby miss what God wants us to do! It is easy to be a self-pleaser or people-pleaser than a God-pleaser. **Consistent personal time** with the Lord through prayer and reading of the Word will not only help the Christian to understand priorities, but will also **give strength to say "No" to the wrong things and "Yes" to the right things.**

3. We Must Proclaim The Gospel To More People.

Jesus realized the need for more people to hear the message *"Let us go...to nearby villages--so I can preach **there also**"* [v. 38]

Many Christians spend a lot of time evangelizing the same people even when there is no response. Sometimes, under the umbrella of evangelism, we boldly talk about Christ to other Christians rather than unbelievers! While every Christian may not be called to go from place to place proclaiming the gospel, we are still commanded us to reach out to more people presently living around us.

Our time is limited, we must make deliberate effort to proclaim this good news to more people. While reaching new people at times may seem a difficult and slow task, we must get out of our comfort zone, diligently keep planting the seeds, and trust in the Lord to bless our efforts.

B. Healing of Leper [1:40-45]

⁴⁰ *A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."* ⁴¹ *Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"* ⁴² *Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.* ⁴³ *Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning:* ⁴⁴ *"See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."* ⁴⁵ *Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.*

- a. While the term **"leprosy"** included various skin diseases, the reference here is probably to "Hansen's Disease" [true leprosy], which was a very loathsome disease. A person with this type of disease cannot feel anything since this disease produces numbness by destroying the body's warning system. Putting a hand in the fire or pouring hot water on the body produces no feeling to the leper. This disease slowly eats away at a person's body.

A leper according to Leviticus was cut off from the society. Lepers were outcasts, excluded from family, society and even worship. They had to warn people they were coming for fear of defiling others.

- **Leviticus 13:45-46** ⁴⁵ *"The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'"* ⁴⁶ *As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. **He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.**"*

Lepers were called as the **"living dead."** This man according to Luke 5:12 was covered with leprosy. Indeed, a terrible state!

- b. The healing was complete and instantaneous [v. 42], thus a true miracle just like the fever [v. 31].
- c. Jesus commanded the cleansed leper to tell this to none because he did not want people to come to him for physical deliverances, but for true spiritual deliverance as the cross would reveal.
- d. There was a two-fold reason for the cleansed leper to go to the priests [v. 44];
 - 1. Only the Priest could pronounce a leper as cleansed by examining him [Lev 14:1-32]. Thus, Jesus kept the law of Moses.
 - 2. The healing would also be a witness to the priests about the healing power of Jesus, another validation that Jesus is the Messiah.

Application

1. Christ Rewards Genuine Faith.

Here are some characteristics of genuine faith from the example of the leper [v. 40] to be considered:

- **Genuine Faith is not Limited by Barriers [“*came to Christ*”].** Even though lepers were not to come into close distance with other people, this leper risked rebuke and came to Christ, a religious Jew, with an expectant faith. He took the effort to come to Christ and was amply rewarded.

Many times, we see the hopelessness of situations around us, get discouraged and never take the effort to seek the help of Christ. Yet, Christ is willing to help all who sincerely cry out to him.

- **Genuine Faith is Humble [“*begged him on his knees*”].** He approached Christ with reverence. Matthew in the parallel account records that this leper called Christ “Lord”[8:2] which in context meant more than a polite “Sir.”

God always draws near to those who humbly approach him “*God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble...Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up*” [Jas 4:6, 10]

- **Genuine Faith does not Demand from God [“*If you are willing*”].** This is a classic illustration of “*not my will, but yours be done*” [Lk 22:42]. The leper did not come demanding to Christ.

Sinful creatures should never demand anything from a holy God, but must be willing to thankfully accept his response, be it “Yes” or “No”. Jesus received “No” as an answer to his prayers at the Garden of Gethsemane, but that did not mean God’s will was not done. In that instance, it was God’s will that Jesus go to the cross. Christ joyfully accepted that as God’s will.

Let us remember: **Genuine Faith is not necessarily getting “Yes” answers, but also willing to joyfully accept the “No” answers that God gives in response to our petitions.**

- **Genuine Faith Believes in the Power of God [“*you can make me clean*”].** Notice, the leper did not ask “Can you heal me?” He had no doubts about the power of Christ to make him clean. His only dilemma was “Will you heal me?” In other words, he was not sure if it was God’s will to be healed.

We must never come to God doubting God’s power. A double-minded person will not “*receive anything from the Lord*” [Jas 1:7].

2. Compassion of Christ Encourages Everyone To Approach Him Without Fear.

- **Christ Fully Feels our Pain** [*“filled with compassion”* v. 41]. This phrase indicates the experience of the entire being of Christ in two areas; he experienced pain at the sight of suffering and he also experienced a longing to relieve the leper of that suffering. While he could have healed the leper by speaking a word, he *“reached out his hand and touched the man.”* Imagine how that must have felt for the leper who probably did not experience a human touch [even from his own family] for a long time. Jesus’ heart exhibited such compassion [Matt 12:20].

Christ’s heart exhibits the same feelings even today. As our sympathetic High-Priest [Heb 4:15] who understands all our pains and sorrows, he truly feels our pain and cares for us.

- **Christ Also Acts to Relieve our Pain** [*“I am willing...Be clean....leprosy left him....he was cured”* vv. 41-42]. Christ did not show sympathy with mere words, but with actions. The physical healing of the leper was the will of God.

Christ’s coming was for a greater purpose than just providing physical healing. It was to provide the healing for the soul. Even though not all are promised physical healing while on this earth [2 Tim 4:20], all can receive the healing of the soul by repenting and trusting in Christ. All that have experienced the healing of the soul can be certain that they **will** experience full physical healing beyond this life [Rev 21:4]. This should encourage anyone going through any trials at present; be it physical, material or emotional. One day, we shall be free from all of these miseries!

- **One must approach Christ Alone for True Deliverance.** Leprosy is a picture of sin. All humans are hit with this disease [Rom 3:23].

First, a person has to see their true spiritual condition. This is how God describes everyone who has not trusted in Christ *“From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil”* [Isaiah 1:6]. The reality is this: **An unsaved person who is a spiritual leper in the eyes of a holy God is in a much worse condition than one who is only physically a leper.**

Second, a person after recognizing their desperate condition, need to seek God for help. This is what God says to all sinners, *“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool*” [Isa 1:18]. Indeed, the blood of Jesus *“purifies us from all sin”* [1 Jn 1:7].

God loves to save all who come to him through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a Savior by nature [1 Tim 2:4].

- **Christ’s Compassion Teaches us to Show Compassion to Others.** The people around Jesus would have been shocked to see him touch a leper. But Jesus did not care about what people thought, his heart was bleeding in love for that leper. Since we are his followers because we graciously received his healing touch through the Holy Spirit, we should walk as he walked. We should reach out to others in compassion, just as Christ commands us [Matt 5:43-48].

There is a world that is hurting around us and we must not be indifferent to it. We must love the unlovable and reach out to those whom the world [and the Church at large] seems to neglect. It may not be glamorous or perhaps may even be shocking to other Christians. In such instances, we must remember that we are not here to seek the approval of others, but the approval of God alone. **When we find it hard to show compassion to others, let us remember the state we were in when Christ rescued us. In addition, let us not forget that we still need Christ’s compassion on a daily basis!**

3. Disobedience to Jesus' commands hinders the Work of Christ [vv. 43-45]

Jesus' commands to the cleansed leper was clear: "*See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go...to the priest...offer sacrifices.*" While we do not know if he went to the priest or not, we know for sure that he disobeyed Jesus' command in keeping silent [v. 45]. Even though his motives may not have been wicked, his disobedience did hinder Christ from moving freely.

Whatever our motives may be, when we disobey God, his work does suffer. Here are some brief examples by which our disobedience hinders the work of Christ;

Example 1: There is a tendency among many Christians to sugar-coat the gospel message because of a desire to see more people saved. There is nothing wrong in desiring more people to be saved, but we cannot and must not fulfill that desire by deviating from the Lord's command to preach the whole gospel [*"Repent and believe"*].

- Galatians 1:8-9 reads ⁸ *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!* ⁹ *As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"*

A half-gospel is not the gospel, it is a lie, no matter what our heart motives may be! A false gospel produces false converts and opens the door for more shame to fall on the name of Christ and his Church and thereby hinder his work.

Example 2: There are times when we fail to take a stand for the fear of hurting people. We think by being "there" for them, we can be more effective in reaching out to them. However, Scripture clearly says that it is more important to please God rather than man.

- Galatians 1:10 says ¹⁰ *Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

By failing to take a clear stand against sin, there is a three-fold problem:

1. We don't **benefit** our fellow-humans who do not see the error of their ways and thereby have an opportunity to repent and turn.
2. In the eyes of other believers, we are also seen as hypocrites [saying one thing and doing another thing] when we fail to take a stand against sin. Especially, new believers in the faith start thinking that this is the way to live the Christian life and thus we end up being a **stumbling block** to their growth. In addition, our hypocrisy also grieves other believers as a whole.
3. This type of action **hurts** our testimony in the eyes of unbelievers as a whole that tend to accuse us [and rightly so] that we **Christians take sin seriously with our lips, but lightly with our lives.**

Thus, all of these actions affect the name of Christ and also hinder his work when we fail to take a strong stand against sin.

Let us take this to heart:

Jesus commanded the cleansed leper to keep quiet, but he told everybody. **That is disobedience.** Jesus commands us to tell everybody, yet we keep quiet. **That is also disobedience!**

Quiz 2

- 1. Repent and Believe is a one-time act that occurs only at the moment of conversion.**
True False
- 2. Following Jesus in active service is a command that applies only to special Christians.**
True False
- 3. Jesus commanded demons to keep silent because:**
 - a. Demons might lie about him
 - b. He did not want anybody to think he was in co-operation with Satan
- 4. Jesus commanded healed people to keep silent because:**
 - a. He was too busy to heal more people
 - b. He did not want to be known simply as a miracle-worker
 - c. He wanted people to understand his real identity as revealed through the cross
- 5. Jesus' miracles showed that he was the Messiah.**
True False
- 6. Jesus' healings were also a picture of how life would be in the coming kingdom.**
True False