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“Where are the Nine?”

[Luke 17:11-19](#)

Pastor Gary Hamrick

In [Luke 17](#) Jesus encountered ten men afflicted with leprosy—a debilitating and ultimately deadly disease that is mentioned sixty-eight times in the Bible. Jesus miraculously healed all ten men but only one returned to give thanks to Jesus. When he did, he received even more than the other nine—salvation. All ten men received physical healing, but only one—the one who returned to thank Jesus—got healing for his soul as well. This life is only temporary, but there is a life to come that is eternal!

1. Ten Lepers Cleansed

- a. [Luke 17:11-19](#) - *“Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices and said, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’ So when He saw them, He said to them, ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on [his] face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?’ And He said to him, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.’”*
- b. Pastor Gary said, “This particular story that I just read, like most of what Luke [wrote] between chapters ten to nineteen, is unique to just the gospel of Luke. ... It says in the text that as he [went] to Jerusalem, he [passed] through Galilee and Samaria ... and it tells us that he came to an unnamed village, an unnamed town ... and there he meets ten men who are afflicted with the disease of leprosy. Now leprosy is a common topic in the Bible. ... We find leprosy mentioned sixty-eight times in the Bible; fifty-five times in the Old

Testament [and] thirteen times in the New Testament.”

- i. Miriam ([Numbers 12:10](#))
 - ii. Naaman the Leper ([2 Kings 5:1](#))
 - iii. Simon the Leper ([Matthew 26:6](#))
- c. Pastor Gary said, “It was one of the most debilitating and ultimately, over a long period of time, deadly diseases. ... Very little was understood about its transmission, and except for a miracle, there was no cure for leprosy. ... Leprosy today is called Hansen’s Disease. ... It was so named after the Norwegian doctor who discovered the causative organism behind leprosy, which is a bacteria that has been called *Mycobacterium leprae*, and so Dr. G.A. Hansen discovered that in 1873, ... but there was not a cure that was discovered for this causative bacteria until ... 1981. In 1981, a cocktail of antibiotics and drugs were discovered as standard treatment so that effectively today, leprosy is curable. ... For nearly 3,500 years, leprosy was incurable. Unless you got a miracle from God, it was an incurable disease that eventually would take your life. Leprosy [was] transmitted generally by direct person-to-person contact. ... Its symptoms [started] on the skin with a rash or a sore that [wouldn’t] heal, and then ... [it would begin] to spread across your body. ... It [caused] neurological issues. ... It [would begin] to affect your hands. It [would affect] your feet, your eyes, your ears ... [caused] disfigurement of the skin and the bones ... and you would a lot of times lose your fingers because you had become desensitized. The nerve endings would erode, so that you wouldn’t know that something was hot, and you would injure yourself often. ... Leprosy would become debilitating, disfiguring, and cause a lifetime of suffering, not just physically, but think about emotionally. ... Those with leprosy in the Bible had to quarantine themselves, and they had to announce themselves from a distance by shouting, ‘Unclean, unclean’ [wherever] they would go. ... Even though there is effective treatment today and the disease can be cured with a cocktail of antibiotics, still today the World Health Organization estimates about 200,000 people around the world are afflicted with leprosy. ... We see in this story one of the aspects ... of leprosy is this isolation.”
- i. [Luke 17:12](#) – “*Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.*”
- d. Pastor Gary said, “[The lepers] were not able to integrate with normal society. You couldn’t work; you could not go to worship; you had to leave your family because you couldn’t infect them. ... In this case, which is very common with leprosy, their common miserable condition drove them together, but can I just use this for a moment to say something: In everyday life, people tend to congregate with similar people based on their shared misery. ... If you find yourself surrounded by a bunch of people who seem to gossip all the time, that says something about you. ... If you find yourself always surrounded by

people who are complaining, or they're critical, or they're negative, look in the mirror. ... It says something about you. ... Misery commiserates. ... It's not good, but ... it's a common human problem. Be aware of it."

- e. Pastor Gary said, "So these lepers are standing afar off; they see Jesus as he enters their village, and all ten of them in unison ... lifted up their voices and they cry out to him, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' Now notice they refer to him as 'Master.' The New Testament was originally written in Greek; the word is **epistatēs**. It means 'one with supreme authority.' They're acknowledging Jesus as having supreme authority, ... but notice what they ask. They don't ask for healing. They ask for mercy. Now no doubt within their request for mercy is their desire for healing, but they don't ask for healing. They appeal to divine compassion. They need the mercy of God. ... God is rich in mercy. Aren't you glad?"
 - i. **Psalm 103:8** - *"The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy."*
 - ii. **Luke 17:14a** - *"So when He saw them ..."*
- f. Pastor Gary said, "Can I encourage you - sometimes read your Bible really slowly and pause and meditate because sometimes each little phrase or a single word means a lot. ... Sometimes when you are feeling really terrible or you're in a bad place in life, one of the most comforting things is just to know that Jesus notices you, that you're not invisible to God ... that God sees us. ... that he sees our affliction, and he knows what we're going through. He's acquainted with our suffering; he's touched by our infirmities."
 - i. **Psalm 33:18** - *"Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy."*

2. A Single Directive

- a. Pastor Gary said, "Notice, Jesus [did] not go over to them. ... He [didn't] lay hands on them to heal them. Now it's not like Jesus had reluctance to touch them; he certainly touched the sick all the time. In fact, in Luke chapter five he touched a leper. He laid hands on a leper and healed him of his leprosy ... but in this particular case ... he [didn't] lay hands; he [didn't] even go over to them. He just [gave] them a single directive."
 - i. **Luke 17:14b** - *"Go, show yourselves to the priests."*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "Now why would he say this? Why would this be the method of his healing by just simply giving them this directive? I submit three reasons to you."
 - i. To affirm God's commands
 - 1. Pastor Gary said, "In Leviticus 13 and 14, there are two chapters devoted to where God [gave] specific instructions to the priests. ... 'This is what you're to do when you diagnose someone with leprosy, and this is what you're to do if they are cured. ...' Jesus ... [was] basically just reaffirming ... God's instructions ... but the

reality is ... except for a few miracles that God performed in the Bible, for 3,500 years leprosy was an incurable disease. ... This is the first time that we ever read in the Bible that Leviticus 13 and 14 actually have to be exercised. ... Except for a few individuals that God directly [and] miraculously healed, there's no record that anyone actually went to the priest to exercise Leviticus 13 and 14. ... What a scene this was when these lepers [showed] up at the Tabernacle of the Lord ... and they [said] 'We've been cured of leprosy,' and the priests [were] like, 'uh, what are we supposed to do here? We've never done this before. ... What did you guys do?' The guys [were] like ... 'We got a hold of Jesus. ...' Which brings us to point number two. Here's another reason why Jesus said, 'Go show yourselves to the priests.'"

ii. To testify to the priests that Jesus is God

1. Pastor Gary said, "Jesus knew not only would these guys be healed, but ... these priests then would be forced to recognize that [the lepers were] cured because of the divine power of God, and that divine power of God is represented in none other than our divine Lord himself. So this was to help the priests see because God [cared] about them as much as the lepers. ... When God does something for you, it's not just for you. It's for those who know you, and those who see you, that they might get a glimpse of God and what he's done for you. You're a living testimony."

iii. To test the faith of the lepers

1. Pastor Gary said, "You were not supposed to go show yourself to the priests until and unless you were cured. These guys still had leprosy when Jesus gave them the directive ... but they were healed as they went. By the way, you know God still does miraculous things, and sometimes it's not instantaneous. Sometimes it's progressive. ... When Jesus gave them this directive, they didn't suddenly become healed in that moment. ... They were cleansed along the way ... and so it was an opportunity to test their faith. Faith is not seeing the results and then praising God. Faith is praising God before we see any results, and the results may not always be exactly what we want either, but it will always be exactly what God knows we need. So we trust him."
 - a. [Hebrews 11:1](#) - *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*
 - b. [2 Corinthians 5:7](#) - *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."*

3. One returns

- a. Pastor Gary said, “The one out of the ten turns back, goes back to Jesus, falls on his face. ... ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you.’ What a tender scene this is, but it’s only one out of the ten, and it adds ...that “one was a Samaritan.” Now Samaritans were considered by the Jews to be half-breeds, a derogatory term, but that’s the way they saw them. ... Around the 8th century B.C. when the Assyrians came into Israel [and] besieged the country, they left some of their own people [and] took other Jews to their country, and the Assyrians intermarried and the result ... [was] the Samaritan people. ... There was longstanding hostility between Jews and Samaritans. ...The Samaritans believed in portions of the Old Testament Scriptures [but] not all of it. ... They worshiped in a separate place [rather than] Jerusalem, so there was this prejudice and hostility between these two groups, [but] of course not with Jesus. ... Jesus loved everybody, died for everybody. He loved the Samaritan as much as he loved everybody else. ... He uses the Samaritan in this wonderful story here to highlight ... the humility of this guy and the love that this guy had for Jesus. This one leper out of ten, who happens to be a Samaritan; now think about this. You’re already a social outcast as a leper, but as a Samaritan who’s a leper, you’re a social outcast among the socially outcast, and he’s the guy who comes back, falls on his face, worships Jesus, [and] gives him thanks for his healing.”

- i. **Luke 17:15-16** – *“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.”*

4. Ten cried out to Jesus but only one came back to thank him

- a. Pastor Gary said, “One of the things that this story highlights is the incredible ingratitude that nine people had for what Jesus did for them. They were very ungrateful because they didn’t even take the time to go back and thank him. Only the one guy did.”

- i. **Luke 17:17**- *“So Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?’”*

- b. Pastor Gary said, “When I read this, it challenges me to ask myself a few questions:

- i. Do we thank God as much as we ask God for something?
 - ii. Do we give to God the glory he deserves whenever we get from God what we don’t deserve?”

- c. Pastor Gary said, “This is challenging to us. Does it ever bug you whenever you do something nice for somebody and they don’t even recognize it or thank you for it? ...Why is it then we do that all the time to God? We do. We beg God, we ask God, we plead with God, we pray to God for something, and then he answers us, and we forget to thank him. We thank God for who he is, not based on the results, not how he answered or what he answered or

whether he answered the way we wanted him to answer. We thank God because he is worthy of our praise, and we give him glory no matter what because that's God's will for us in Christ Jesus, to maintain an attitude of gratitude towards God, to be thankful people.

- i. [1 Thessalonians 5:18b](#) – *“... give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”* (1984 NIV)
- ii. [Psalm 100:4](#) – *“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.”*
- d. Pastor Gary said, “As soon as the nine got what they wanted from Jesus, they forgot all about him. Don't be like the nine. Be like the one and give him thanks.”

5. Ten were healed but only one was saved

- a. Pastor Gary said, “I want to point out three words. In verse 14 it says that as they went, they were **cleansed**. ... In the original Greek language, it's **katharizō**. We get our English word cathartic, something that's cleansing. They were cleansed. Verse 15 uses the word **healed**. It's another Greek word, **iaomai**, but the one who returned to thank Jesus got more than that. He got salvation too. Because verse 19 says, ‘And Jesus said to him, “Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”’ And that Greek word is **sōzō**. ... **Sōzō** means ‘**to save**.’ Literally what Jesus [said] to him is, ‘Arise, go your way. Your faith has saved you.’ **Sōzō** is used more than a hundred times in the New Testament. It can simply mean deliverance from a demon. It can mean the healing of your body ... but ... most times that **sōzō** [is] used in the Bible, it's in the context of forgiveness of sins, the healing of the human soul, when you're made right with God and you're made whole. That's **sōzō**, salvation.”
 - i. [Matthew 1:21](#) – *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*
 - ii. [Ephesians 2:8](#) – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.”*
- b. Pastor Gary said, “This one guy [returned] to Jesus, [humbled] himself, [fell] on his face before Jesus, [gave] him glory and thanks, and we know that he [put] his faith in Jesus as Lord because Jesus [said] to him, ‘Your faith has saved you.’ Saved from what? Saved from sin and death and hell. This guy received something the other nine didn't get ... because he came back to give thanks, and in his humility he [fell] on his face before Jesus, and he [had] by faith his sins forgiven because he [trusted] Jesus as his personal Lord. Don't be like the nine. Be like the one.”

6. Ten got something temporal but only one got something eternal

- a. Pastor Gary said, “All ten were healed physically, but all that did was improve the quality of their [lives]. Now when I say ‘all that did,’ I don't mean that that

wasn't something amazing ... but if you only go to Jesus to improve the quality of this life, you are missing eternity. If you only go to Jesus to heal your body, or to fix a mess, or to bail you out of whatever the situation is ... if you only look to him for a temporal need, then you are denying yourself the eternal gift, which is salvation through faith in him. Life is temporal. ... You can't live just for here, just for now, just for what Jesus can do for you temporarily. He didn't come just to improve the quality of your life. He came to give you eternal life through faith in him."

- i. [1 Corinthians 15:19](#) - *"If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men."* (1984 NIV)
- ii. [Mark 8:36](#) - *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"*
- b. Pastor Gary said, "Jesus came not to just improve the quality of your life, but he came to give you eternal life. ... The eternal life with Jesus is what matters most."

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Luke 17:11-19](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. What was life like for those with leprosy in Biblical times? (See #1d above)
3. What do the ten lepers ask for? (See #1e above)
4. Luke [17:14a](#) says that Jesus "saw" the lepers. What is the significance of Jesus "seeing" us? (See #1f above).
5. What was the single directive Jesus gave the lepers? (See #2a above)
6. What were the three reasons Jesus gave this particular instruction? (See #2b above)
7. Read [Luke 17:15-16](#) again. Why does the Scripture point out that this man "was a Samaritan?" (See #3a above)
8. Read [Luke 17:17](#) again. What should this verse make us consider in our own lives? (See #4b above)
9. What did the one who returned gain that the other nine did not? (See #5a above)
10. What are we missing if we only focus on the temporal? (See #6a above)
11. Read [1 Corinthians 15:19](#) and [Mark 8:36](#). How should these verses shape our thoughts, actions, and attitudes? (See #6a above)

12. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)