

Mark 1: 40-45
“Do you have strong faith?”

“A leper came to Jesus, beseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, ‘If You are willing, You can make me clean.’

“⁴¹Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ ⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. ⁴³And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, ⁴⁴and He said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’

“⁴⁵But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.”

Most of us like to portray strength, toughness, and ability.

What’s the condition of your inner person?

Early in our ministry, an elderly man, who had been away from the Lord for some time, started attending the Hollywood church.

He soon rededicated his life to God.

Jake¹ was born in Oklahoma when it was Indian Territory.

He learned life the hard way, fought with alcohol in his mid-years, married and buried a couple of wives, had no children, and painted houses for a living.

Jake was generous, good-natured, and savvy about life, yet he couldn’t read or write.

One of Jake’s relatives visited from Oklahoma and Jake wanted to take his relative, Norma, our daughter Janice, and me to Knott’s Berry Farm.

Janice was barely school age at the time; Norma and I in our mid-thirties.



We entered a walkway in an older section of Knott’s that had overhead lattice work.

Pomegranate trees grew beside and over the wood framework.



Janice saw a large pomegranate hanging from a tree about 12 feet off the ground, and she wanted that pomegranate.

I thought that I could probably climb up and get the fruit, but first I wanted to get permission from a nearby security guard.

The guard said, “If you can get it, you can have it.”

I looked more seriously at the challenge.

¹ Not his real name

Climbing the lattice and tree was a bit risky.
I also knew that I'd likely get my clothes dirty.

I contemplated too long.

Eighty year old Jake came up to me, pushed me out of the way, and said, "Stand back!"

He quickly took off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves and pants legs, and climbed that tree faster than a Hawaiian after a coconut.

Holding on with one arm, he grasped that pomegranate, tossed it to me, jumped down, and brushed off his clothes while I stood there dumbfounded, feeling like an adolescent who'd just had his girlfriend stolen.

Indeed, Norma said of Jake, "What a guy!"

A few months later, Jake asked me to go with him to a court hearing.

His late wife had set up an estate from which he got a monthly allotment.

Remember, Jake couldn't read or write.

He firmly believed he was entitled to a raise in the estate allotment.

A review of his monthly income and expenses proved his request justified.

While the hearing officer heard and ruled on other cases, we waited in the downtown Los Angeles hearing room along with bank representatives.



The clerk called Jake's name, and I walked forward to state his case.

He remained in his seat about four rows back.

Jake suddenly motioned to me.

Sweating and trembling, Jake asked me to drop the matter.

He had lost his nerve.

It was Jake's turn to have the kid inside take over.

He could scale trees, swing from lattice work like Tarzan, but a court-hearing terrified him.

We can walk the earth for years, attend church, and rear a family, but in a few situations, the little boy or girl inside of us prevails.

Lack of confidence also wrinkles and ages us.

Lots of guys pump iron because they are really trying to strengthen their inner person.

For the same reason, many women endure weight loss.

What an irony that after decades of life experience, toddler timidity still takes over at times.

Hold onto that thought while we see how it applies to our text from Mark's Gospel.

Knowing some info about diseased people in ancient Israel helps us understand this incident.

The Law of Moses, by which Jesus lived, required people with open sores to stay outside city limits.

The Bible refers to persons with infectious conditions as “lepers.”²

They could have no contact with ordinary folks. Healthy people were forbidden to touch lepers.

Quarantine laws required lepers to wear torn clothing, to ruffle their hair, cover their mouths (as with a mask), and to cry out **“unclean,”** so no one would accidentally touch them and become infected (see **Leviticus 13**).

If lepers somehow recovered, they had to present themselves to a Jewish priest, who acted as a health officer to verify their healing.

The healed person then had to offer sacrifices at the Temple (see **Leviticus 14**).

The Law of Moses strictly required the above.

To review our points: mature adults sometimes face circumstances when they feel inadequate.

We’ve also reviewed Law of Moses’ requirements for lepers and infected folks.

Our *Mark* text and parallel passages in *Luke* and *Matthew* give us interesting information.

Luke, the physician the described the man as “covered with leprosy.”

We can picture him in constant misery, infested head to toe with open sores.

The Gospels all share how both the leper and Jesus “broke the rules,” so to speak.

This man’s condition was apparently worsening and he wanted to be healed.

Convinced Jesus could heal him, he broke the law by entering the town.

In his Gospel, Luke used a double preposition that seems to indicate the leper wasn’t just inside the city limits; he’d ventured a long way into town.



He stifled all pride by throwing himself face into the dirt in front of Jesus.

“If You are willing, You can make me clean,” he declared.

The phrasing seems to mean, “Lord, I know you have the power, you have only to want it to happen.”

His earnest longing and his humility moved Jesus to immediately heal him.

Then Jesus sternly warned the ex-leper not to tell anyone.

Jesus didn’t simply whisper in his ear telling him to “keep this between us.”

Jesus used the strongest terms possible.

In order to help this desperate, miserable man, Jesus placed himself in jeopardy.

² This is not to be confused with the disease now known as leprosy.

He consorted with a leper who illegally came into town.

Not only that, Jesus touched this diseased fellow.
Jesus twice violated the Law of Moses, the law all Jews kept sacred.

Jesus was subject to the Law of Moses.

Had you been in Jesus' circumstances, would the little boy or little girl in you been thinking, "Maybe I shouldn't do this. Religious leaders will condemn me."



What gave Jesus such boldness?

How did Jesus avoid weaknesses that beset us?

Some folks speculate about Jesus' early life.

He was baptized and began his ministry when he was 30 years old.

What did he do in the years between 12 and 30?

Some think Jesus went to India, China, Tibet, or some eastern country to consult with so-called wise-men.

Bible evidence points me in a different direction.

A) People knew Jesus as the carpenter in his home town, Nazareth.

1. Jesus didn't leave town, make a life and then come back home.

2. The townspeople knew he'd spent his life in the Nazareth construction business.

B) The Bible makes something else clear.

1. Jesus knew the scriptures as no one else did.
2. To learn, to study, and to digest God's word, I think Jesus went to the synagogue every chance he got.

Jesus' Hebrew name was Yeshua (English-Joshua).

One day last week in my daily Bible reading, I read the first three chapters of Joshua.

Verses from Chapter One got my attention.

The Lord spoke directly to Joshua, who succeeded Moses as Israel's leader:

"Joshua, you must be strong and very brave! Be sure to obey all the teachings which my servant Moses commanded you. If you follow them exactly, you will be successful in everything you do. You must **always** speak what is written in the Book of the Teachings. Think about it day and night. Make sure that you obey **everything** that is written there. If you do this, then you will be prosperous and successful in every way. Be strong and brave!

“Do **not** be afraid or discouraged because I—Yahweh, your God—I am with you wherever you go.”³

I suspect that when Jesus read these instructions to his namesake Joshua, he knew they applied also to him.

Two important lessons:

1. Reading, respecting, and studying God’s word help create courageous, loving, mature people.

But why did Jesus go against established law to help the leper?

On rare occasions, laws seem to conflict with each other.

I once polled my ladies class in Hollywood about the question: Suppose you lived under Nazi rule and were hiding a Jew in your house. The Gestapo bangs on your door and then asks whether a Jew resides in your home.

Would you lie to protect the life of the Jew?

Many ladies said that they would not tell a lie. I think you’d agree that preserving life and one’s relationship with God deserve our greatest attention.⁴

2. How do we deal with weaknesses that beset us?

“We have a great high priest. He has gone up into heaven. He is Jesus the Son of God. So let us hold

firmly to what we say we believe. 15 We have a high priest who can feel it when we are weak and hurting. We have a high priest who has been tempted in every way, just as we are. But he did not sin. 16 So let us boldly approach God’s throne of grace. Then we will receive mercy. We will find grace to help us when we need it.”⁵

As we face those moments when the child in us wants to take over, we first consult God’s word on the matter.

Be wary of church or denominational rules.

If you consult a religious authority in a difficult situation, that person should show you Scriptural evidence for his/her advice.

After you consult Scripture, pray for wisdom.

God gladly grants wisdom when we ask Him.

Jesus has been there.

He helps us when we feel weak and hurt.

“Let us boldly approach God’s throne of grace.”

Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014

www.robertblairbooks.com



³ Joshua 1:7-9 The International English Bible.

⁴ Jesus often addressed this law conflict; see Matthew 12: 1-14 & Luke 13:10-17.

⁵ Hebrews 4: 14-16 NIV