**VOLUME 8; CHAPTER 04 - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**SPIRITUAL LEPROSY by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing.*

*Leviticus 14:1,2*

LEPROSY REMAINS UNTIL THIS HOUR MORE OR LESS A MYSTERY to medical science. (Medical science has made great strides toward the conquest of leprosy since this was written. It is now widely known as Hansen's disease from the name of the discoverer of its bacillus.) In the New Year's Honors List a name included was that of Dr. George Turner, now Sir George Turner, whose story is one of splendid heroism and of pathetic interest. In Pretoria he did arduous work among the lepers, and on reaching the age limit gave himself to bacteriological research in the laboratories of this country, inspired by the ambition to find some remedy for the disease. Suddenly he discovered that he had contracted the disease himself, and now for over two years has been working in seclusion toward the same end.

Dr. Gerhard H. A. Hansen, of Bergen, Norway, who died last year, discovered the bacillus of leprosy, which was previously unknown. The exact value of the discovery cannot yet be known, but it is recognized as an important contribution.

These preliminary references are made in order to emphasize the mystery of the disease. It is, to say the least, an interesting fact, to which attention was drawn in 'The Times' in an article on Sir George Turner, that the problem of the remedy for leprosy is an exceedingly difficult one because of the fact that none of the lower animals has yet been found to be capable of contracting the disease.

The Hebrew word for leprosy is derived from a root which means to strike down. It was looked upon as a stroke of God. There was, however, nothing in the law itself to give any ground for the view that it was always such. In the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus, which contain the law of the leper, leprosy is dealt with on the ground of health, simply as a disease; yet it is quite evident that its mysterious character - its unknown origin and its insidious and resistless progress - made it the fit type or symbol of sin.

Lange graphically describes it as "a speaking picture of sin, and of evil the punishment of sin - the plastic manifestation, the medical phantom, or representation of all the misery of sin."

Jewish expositors of these Scriptures were quite explicit as to their spiritual suggestiveness. In dealing with these particular laws, one of them said, "If a man considers this, he will be humbled and ashamed on account of his sin; since every sin is a leprosy; a spot upon his soul."

The study of the law of the leper has for us a twofold value. Its first teaching has to do with the actual fact of the Divine interest in the physical well-being of men. The general good of humanity was sought by the segregation of the leper. The individual interest was safeguarded in the extreme caution observed in order that no person should thus be cut off from communion with the people unless he were actually leprous, I am not now dealing with that aspect of the teaching of these two chapters. I should, however, like to say so much as this in passing, that in each of these matters we have very much yet to learn. We are a long way behind the Hebrew economy in the recognition of God's interest in the affairs of man's physical well-being, and in the application of the principles to which I have referred - the necessity for the separation of all those in the grip of a disease which constitutes a danger to the community. We are slowly moving toward it, but very slowly. There are some who describe legislation along these lines as grandmotherly. If it be grandmotherly, then may God increase it! We need to learn a good deal also before we arrive at the full realization of the importance of the second of these principles, that there must be strict justice: no person must be cut off from fellowship unless he actually is a peril to society.

However, when we turn from these general principles to the actual disease of leprosy, the only application possible to us is the symbolic, and that is supreme. There can be no reading of these chapters, especially of the fourteenth, without realizing that while in these laws there was provision for the physical well-being of the community, there was also a remarkable recognition of the spiritual.

It is important, therefore, that we consider quite briefly, and yet most carefully, the relation between the two parts of this law of the leper as we find it in Leviticus, chapters thirteen and fourteen. The thirteenth chapter is diagnostic. There is nothing more in it than instructions by which the priest was to discover whether what appeared to be leprosy was actually leprosy. In the thirteenth chapter there is no gleam of hope for the leper. The symbolic value of the chapter, therefore, is that sin demands the separation of the sinner, and is incurable by human agency.

Chapter fourteen opens with the words of my text: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing." The careful reader will immediately be arrested by the assumption that the leper can be cleansed. The thirteenth chapter contains no gleam of hope for the leper; but the fourteenth opens in the full flood of the light of hope. In the thirteenth the priest is to distinguish and differentiate and separate, and make possible the return to the camp of the man who is not suffering from leprosy. The fourteenth says, "This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing." This is an admission of the possibility of what is not in the power of man to provide or produce. The chapter then contains instructions for that ceremonial procedure by which the cleansed man is to be restored to the privileges of the camp and of the tabernacle, the privileges of the economy of the theocracy, and fellowship with God in personal and direct worship. So far as the two chapters constitute a part of the Levitical code, we see that this code distinctly taught that leprosy is entirely incurable by human action; but it also recognized the fact that may be cured by Divine action. As these chapters are viewed as symbolic, their suggestion concerning sin is the same: sin is incurable by any human process, but it is curable within the Divine economy.

We at once recognize a gap between the two chapters, and the gap is great. Between the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of this shadow of the old economy stands our great Christ, our great High Priest. In the thirteenth we have the unveiling of sin under the figure of leprosy, and in the fourteenth we have an unveiling of the way of salvation in the picturesque, and suggestive if vanishing, ritual of the old economy.

Let us, then, consider what these chapters suggest pictorially. Our line of consideration will be twofold: first, leprosy as the symbol of sin; and, second, the way of cleansing from sin as revealed in the symbolic ceremonial.

Leprosy stands as a symbol of sin in four distinct particulars: first, in the mystery of its origin; second, in the method of its manifestation; third, in the nature of its effects; and, finally, in its treatment in this Hebrew economy.

First, in the mystery of its origin. So far as leprosy is concerned, that may be dismissed by the simplest of statements already made, that even until this hour of scientific advancement, man has not been able to discover the origin of leprosy. There is nothing more appalling, shall I say, nothing more perplexing, nothing more certain, than the mystery of sin. I know we have our doctrine of original sin - in passing I should like to say that original sin is not a Scriptural phrase and therefore I hold no brief for it. But, granted the doctrine, believing in the doctrine in certain senses as I most certainly do, let it be remembered that it does not explain the nature of the persistent presence of sin in every human being; it states only the fact that sin is there, that in some form, sin is discovered in every human being. Moreover, it admits the fundamental truth that in human life sin is super-induced. The poetic declaration, "To err is human," is not true, though it is perfectly true if by human we mean humanity as we find it today. But if we think of humanity as in the purpose and economy of God, it is not human to err, not human to sin. Sin is a poison, sin is something within the soul that atrophies its powers and prevents the realization of all the deep and profound meaning of life. It is not part of essential humanity. Whatever terms we may employ in dealing with sin, we must remember that sin is super-induced.

Sin is a spiritual malady, the physical is but the expression of it; behind every physical act of sin is the spiritual attitude. There is no sin of the flesh which is not inspired by sin of the spirit. I cannot sin with my hand until I have sinned with my heart. I cannot sin physically, save as I have sinned spiritually.

Then is it inherited? If so, how? The Bible teaches that every man is offspring of God in his first creation, in his spirit life. Or is the spiritual malady of sin contracted in man? If so, when? I would have you clearly to understand that I am asking questions I do not propose to answer, for the simple reason that I cannot answer them. I ask them in order to affirm that there is no answer. Neither the theologian nor the philosopher has ever answered either of these questions. If sin is inherited, how is sin transmitted in the spirit realm? I am not spiritually the son of the man whose name I bear. "We had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence, shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?" Mark the clear distinction. If sin is of the spirit, and in the spirit, then some evil bocillus has been introduced poisoning the spirit.

The nature of that poison is discovered in Biblical definitions. Paul speaks of "the mystery of lawlessness"; John declares "sin is lawlessness." In the first we have the admission of the mystery. In the second we have a statement as to the true nature of sin. The sins which we denounce are but symptoms; sin lies deeper. Sin is "lawlessness," which does not mean being without law, but being in revolt against law. This evil germ within the spirit of man that affects all his mind and heart and soul is lawlessness; it has a thousand manifestations, but it is always the same in essence. It is indeed the mystery of lawlessness. How is it, why is it, that all men find this principle at work within the soul? I recognize the mystery; but I face the fact. As leprosy is a mystery as to its origin, so is sin; but it is an appalling fact.

Leprosy is a symbol of sin in the method of its manifestation. The first appearance is at times discoverable only by the trained eye. Dr. Turner was a specialist, having a trained eye, yet the disease was on him and manifesting itself before he knew it. One morning, while shaving, he caught sight of marks on his hands that arrested him; he was a leper! The first symptoms are discoverable only to the trained eye. In the little child there may be a thousand things that you count sin that are not proofs of sin at all; a child romancing up to a certain age is not sinning. It is exercising a faculty of mind which belongs to it.

The time comes when the first sign of sin is manifested in the child; it is lawlessness.

This leprosy of lawlessness is invariably progressive, never halting; it steals insidiously forward with varying degrees of speed, until, at last, the whole man is corrupt, mastered - strange paradox - by lawlessness; the whole life is in revolt against authority, against government.

Leprosy is the symbol of sin in the nature of its effects. It excludes from fellowship with our fellow men. It renders the victim loathsome even to his fellow men. Not always in the more vulgar forms of sensuality, but with cold, hard, cynical, devilish self-centeredness, infinitely more loathsome than vulgar forms of sensuality. Sin, like leprosy, ultimately renders its victim insensible to the pain of his own disease. We have in the Scriptures of Truth such arresting phrases as "hardened, a conscience seared," "past feeling"! Leprosy ultimately completely destroys the physical frame; so also sin ultimately completely destroys the spirit life, and all its powers.

Once again, leprosy is the symbol of sin in its treatment in the Hebrew economy. Why was the leper separated not only from man but from God also as to outward worship? Surely because that in itself it was a symbol of sin, and there must be recognition of the fact that sin cuts a man off from fellowship with God, dims the vision, makes him insensible to the fact of God. That necessarily means separation from the camp, exclusion from the fellowship of those who see the City of God and strive for its building; and that without respect of persons.

Sin is an appalling mystery as to its origin in the individual soul and life; in itself it is lawlessness, revolt against the law of God; and it expresses itself in a thousand ways as revolt against the law of man. Our age is particularly characterized by the restless spirit of lawlessness. Everywhere there are signs of mental, moral, social, theological, lawlessness; the refusal to recognize authority, or to be bound even by contracts which men make between themselves. Lawlessness is of the very essence of sin, a poison at the heart of man, a virus at the center of human life, that which prevents the realization of high ideals in individuals and in humanity. It is that which ultimately destroys man and destroys nations. I have never yet heard of a person being asked to sign a pledge against it. This is a very significant fact, revealing, first of all, that men do not as a rule deal with sin, but with sins; not with the malady but with the symptoms; we are always in danger of dealing with the surface of things, instead of getting down to the central trouble. On the other hand, perhaps, no pledge has ever been asked against it because of subconscious conviction of humanity that it is something with which humanity cannot deal.

Is there a way of cleansing for the leper? Is there a way of cleansing for the sinner? Here we turn to the New Testament. I referred to a gap between the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus, and I declared that Christ stands in that gap, in the spiritual realm. In the fourteenth chapter we have the poetic symbols of His work, quite simple figures intended for that kindergarten period in the history of the people of God, yet all eloquent.

Passing into the New Testament, I find lepers, but I also find Christ; and the first general remark I desire to make is never under any circumstances do we read in the New Testament of Christ healing a leper; never under any circumstances do we read of any writer describing a leper as being healed. The one word uniformly used is cleansed. That there is a distinction is evident from the fact when John asked, "Art Thou He that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus said, Tell John the things you have seen, that "the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them." At the foot of the mountain of beatitudes, when the Lord had uttered the ethic that remains to this day startling and awful in its white holiness, He was immediately met by a leper, who said to Him, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." The hand of Christ was immediately stretched out, and the leper who could not be touched, was touched, the word was spoken, "I will; be thou made clean," and the leper was cleansed of his leprosy. Exactly the same scene was repeated later in one of the cities to which Jesus went. Again a band of ten lepers came, and He cleansed them all. These stories of the cleansing of the lepers must be interpreted as all the stories of healing are interpreted. According to New Testament teaching, Jesus never wrought a physical miracle wholly within the realm of the physical; such wonders were always associated with a spiritual activity far more wonderful. "Son, thy sins are forgiven," said He to the man sick of the palsy; and the people complained, "Why doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth; who can forgive sins but One, even God." Jesus replied to them, "Whether is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins … I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house." In the ministry of Jesus there was perpetual relationship between the physical and the spiritual; every physical miracle of healing or of cleansing was an outward sign of the spiritual marvel that He was able to work in the souls of men.

I glance back to Leviticus, to the fourteenth chapter, with which I am not proposing to deal in detail. Therein two great movements are revealed in the law of the leper on the day of his cleansing; they may thus be summarized. First, the priest meets the leper without the camp and leads him back into the camp. Second, the priest within the camp offers on behalf of the leper certain offerings, and anoints him with oil, and sets him at the door of the tent of meeting, the place of fellowship with God. The symbolism is perfect.

In the old economy the priest went without the camp where the leper had been driven on account of his leprosy, to certify the leper's cleansing, not to cleanse him; he could do no more than that. He then observed the ceremony which symbolized the way of his spiritual cleansing, and in doing so employed two birds, one to be sacrificed, the other to be set free, and cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. Do not be afraid of these pictures, they are very suggestive. The birds were for sacrifice, the cedarwood was the symbol of strength, for it was incorruptible wood; the scarlet, forevermore the color of earthly glory, spoke of life and health and beauty; the hyssop was the plant of fragrance and of healing. All these things in the old economy were brought by the leper; but none of them cleansed him, neither did the priest cleanse him; but the man, having been cleansed by some act of God, was now to celebrate the physical cleansing, and that by such ceremony as suggested the method of spiritual cleansing. The disparity between all this and the method of Christ is more eloquent than the comparison. Our High Priest does not come without the camp to certify the leper cleansed; He comes without the camp to cleanse the leper. He comes to the place where the leper is cast out, the place where the leper is alone, excommunicated from the holy place, ostracized by all his familiar friends, shut out in his own loathsomeness for the sake of the health of those left behind. Coming to the leper there, in some infinite and amazing mystery, Christ takes into His own heart and nature the virus and poison of the leprosy, cancels it and by passion, by blood, the outward symbol of the profounder spiritual passion makes it not to be; and lo, the leper is cleansed. His flesh comes again as the flesh of a little child, and the spirit that was lawless utters its first word, and it is a word of submission: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That is the death of lawlessness and the beginning of the law-abiding life. Our High Priest comes not to certify the leper cleansed, but to cleanse the leper, and to bring that leper back into the camp, into the theocratic economy, into right relationship with God, into the Kingdom of God.

The priest not only brings the cleansed man back into the camp, he sets him at the door of the tent of meeting. Again we have the pictorial suggestions. In the old economy the priest offered the guilt offering, speaking of the reparation the man was making to God; he anointed the man with oil on ear and hand and foot, indicating his new consecration, then presented the Sin Offering and the Burnt Offering and the Meal Offering for him. Mark again the disparity: in the old economy the leper himself had to provide the offerings and bring the oil. In the new economy the one and only Priest, provides against every aspect of human sin, all which aspects were suggested in these offerings of the old pictorial method. Sin is fraud; the man who is lawless is robbing God, defrauding God of His rights, rights that are always beneficent in purpose toward man himself, so that man robbing God of His rights is destroying himself in the infinite mystery of his being. For that the Guilt Offering or the Trespass Offering was provided. Sin is not only fraud, it is defilement finding its way into the life with its pollution and vileness. The Sin Offering provided for the removal of defilement. Sin is also failure in life, failure in the realization of the real meaning of life. The Burnt Offering suggests sacrifice that puts away the defilement, and issues in new dedication of the life. Sin is also failure in service. The Meal Offering covers it.

Let the shadows pass and summarize the whole suggestiveness by declaring that our High Priest in His one offering for sin meets every aspect of human sin and deals with it. In this strange and wonderful economy of grace the offerings and the oil are provided by the Priest, forfeited life for life forfeit, spiritual power for spiritual death. A man is not a Christian merely because Christ has stood between him and some ultimate punishment. A man is a Christian when he has received from Christ the gift of life whereby lawlessness is checked, halted, mastered, dealt with, and life is related anew to God.

There is another mystery, the mystery of godliness. The New Testament speaks of both. The mystery of lawlessness has many manifestations. It manifests itself in one man in reckless sensuality, in the plunge into the vulgar and bestial. It manifests itself in another man in cynical selfishness, selfishness which is so absolutely selfish that it dare not sin vulgarly, has not the courage to do it. Lawlessness expresses itself in one man in actual murder, and in another man in a cynical contempt for suffering and indifference to the agonies of men. As God is my witness I do not know which is the more terrible manifestation of lawlessness, but the latter I think. I can understand the rush of blood, the red passion that strikes a blow; that is lawlessness, and it is terrible; but, oh, the terror of the form of lawlessness which has so little recognition of the throne of God, and so little recognition of the claims of humanity, that it is content to live for self and minister to self, shutting its doors that it may never see the objectionable things outside. There may be all the perfumes of Arabia, and all the upholstery of Damascus; but in the sight of heaven whose God is love, and Who is prepared to die for humanity, it is the very ultimate of hell, and the most terrible form of lawlessness. The self-centered cynical man will say things about the sensualist and the murderer. We still measure ourselves among ourselves, and compare ourselves as with ourselves; and we find satisfaction while thus we put the little measurements of dust on our lives; but all the while God sees the leprosy of lawlessness and the rottenness of our godless culture.

But there is another mystery. "Great is the mystery of godliness; He Who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels [messengers], preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory." This mystery of godliness is also spiritual. There has been one manifestation of it in human history. Jesus Christ lived and wrought and served, not independently, but dependently on God. He manifested in the midst of human history the glory and beauty of true life, law-abiding and submissive. But He did infinitely more, He went outside the camp to meet the leper, and in some wonderful mystery of infinite compassion to place His pure life at the disposal of the impure man, so that being communicated to him his leprosy may be cleansed, and the man made to live.

That mystery of godliness has been given to us as the norm of life, the type of what God would have other men to be; but more, blessed be God, or I am left a leper: not the norm alone but the germ also, and that communicated to my soul, so that the lawlessness is subdued, made not to be; and my feet are turned into the way of the Divine commandment, and my life at last conformed to the good and perfect and acceptable will of God. There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved.