

Exegetical Notes, Mark 1:40-45
“Simple Instructions”

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Mark 1:40-45

Verse 40

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

- Leprosy was a much dreaded skin disease. It is caused by bacteria. The bacteria cause sores to develop on the skin that ooze, fester and spread. Eventually, there is a loss of feeling, paralysis, the wasting of muscle, and deformity. In Jesus’ day this disease, leprosy, was untreatable and considered to be highly contagious. Because leprosy was deemed highly contagious and was untreatable, those who suffered from it were forced to live as outcasts. The man who came to Jesus was afflicted with this horrible disease.
- On his knees the man asked for Jesus’ help. That he fell on his knees indicates the sincerity and the passion of his plea.
- The wording, “IF you are willing,” indicates that the man was convinced that Jesus could help him if Jesus was so inclined. He does not doubt Jesus’ ability to help. He is simply not sure if Jesus wants to help.

Verse 41 -42

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said, “Be clean!” Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

- The sight of this poor man on his knees asking for help touched Jesus’ heart. He was filled with compassion because he saw the man’s deep need and heard his earnest plea.
- In those days no one touched a leper for fear of catching his disease. But Jesus’ compassion moved him to touch the man.

- Jesus declared his willingness to help the man and ordered that he become clean. Immediately the sores on the man's body disappeared and he was fully restored to complete health.

Verse 43-44

Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: "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.."

- Jesus gave the man simple and precise instructions. First, he was to tell no one what Jesus had done for him. Second, he was to fulfill the requirements found in Leviticus 13-14 in order to establish officially that he was healed.
- The man may have kept the second part of these simple instructions. It would have been to his advantage to do so for he could not return to his normal life without the priest verifying that he was cured. We have no way of knowing, as there is no mention of this in the text.
- Scholars argue as to why Jesus told the man not to tell others what had happened and how he had been cured. However, the arguments are just speculation as no explanation for Jesus' instruction is given in the text. What is important is to note the clarity and the simplicity of the instruction. The man was to show himself to the priest and tell no one what had happened to him.

Verse 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 people still came to him from everywhere.

- Despite the simplicity of the instructions given him, the man did exactly what he was told not to do. Everywhere he went he told people about how and who had brought about his healing. He did not follow the instructions that he was given.
- Being God in human form, Jesus had to know that the man would fail to keep his instructions. So the resultant outcome did not catch Jesus by surprise. Jesus knew what the man would do and what would happen because of that before he healed the man. Had Jesus wanted to prevent the outcome, he simply should not have healed the man. But Jesus did heal the man and when the man disobeyed Jesus' simple instructions, the man was not stricken with leprosy again. The

point here is that the man, though overwhelming blessed by his contact with Jesus, did not obey Jesus' simple instructions.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *Simple Instructions*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)