

#1. Can the Leopard Change His Spots? (Jer 13:23, Rom 3:12)

- But Who Is God Referring to? (Ecc 7:20, Rom. 3:10-12)
- Man's Heart Is in Bondage to Sin (Jer 17:9-10, Rom 8:7-8)

#2. Can the Leper Change His Spots? (Luke 4:27)

- An Unclean Man Pleads for Mercy (Luke 5:12-16,32)
- Jesus Made Himself Ceremonially Unclean (Mark 1:41, John 6:37, 2Cor 5:21, Rom 8:2)

#3. Can We Change the Leper's Spots?

- Can We, Former Lepers, Also Show Mercy? (Rom 10:14-15)
- Mercy Received Cannot Be Hidden (Rom 4:8)

Please turn in your Bibles to the Prophecy of Jeremiah, Jer 13:23 (2X). I would like to begin this sermon with three questions. 1st: Have you ever been to the zoo? 2nd: Have you seen a leopard?

#1. Can the Leopard Change His Spots? (Jer 13:23, Rom 3:12)

You know what a leopard is? It is a very big cat, almost as big as a lion, with many dark spots on his fur. Why does the leopard have these dark spots on his fur? He has it because his father and mother leopard also had the same dark spots on their fur. And it is a Biblical principle that **like begets like**. The Bible says, "As the father is, so is the son". This principle does not only apply to the animal world, but it also applies to all mankind: Our forefather, **Adam**, fell into sin. He became a sinner and therefore **all his descendants**, down the line, were sinners **from birth**.

Can the Leopard Change His Spots? Of course he cannot! No matter how hard he would scratch! You might say that: **the leopard is in bondage to his skin, he is born that way**. The leopard will always have this kind of skin, because that goes with the nature of the leopard. Now, why would I bring up such a strange question? Can the Leopard Change His Spots? Why? Because God uses this question as a parable in the Bible, to teach us the doctrine of man. In Jer 13 God is speaking to the nation of Judah through the mouth of the Prophet Jeremiah, and God is prophesying all kinds of calamities that shall come to the nation of Judah. And God says in Jer 13:23:

Jer 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then may ye* also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

God says, "Can the black man change his skin? Or can the leopard change his spots?" It is a rhetorical question. The black man is not able to change his skin, and likewise a leopard cannot change his spots. In other words, "**Just like** the Ethiopian or the leopard cannot change their skin, because they are born that way, **so ye** that are accustomed to do evil **are unable to do good**." And to drive home the point a little more forcefully God says in Rom 3:12, "There is NONE that doeth good, NO NOT ONE." Who is God speaking to? Is God speaking to the nation of Judah? Are they the bad guys? If God is only speaking to the nation of Judah, then we can ignore what God says here! Is this not written for a people a long long time ago, in a land far far away? You know, this is the wrong conclusion. The Bible was written for all mankind, throughout all time. The Bible is not just a history book. The Bible was written to all mankind, so that all mankind might hear what God says about the Gospel of salvation, the Good News of salvation.

• **But Who Is God Referring to?** (Ecc 7:20, Rom. 3:10-12)

When God says: "ye that are accustomed to do evil" does God include us? Are we perhaps also accustomed to do evil? God says in Ecc 7:20: "For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." You see, even the just men upon earth are living in sin. That is quite a blow to the holiness movement, which is the religion that we can resist sin, and the devil will flee from us.

Can we agree to this? Please turn to the Epistle to the Romans, Rom 3:10 (2X). Are all sinners? Is there no one who is free from sin? And, you know that is really true. Even after we have become Born Again, which means after we have been declared just in the eyes of God, we are still inclined to do evil. If the Bible says that we are all sinners, it implies that “we are all accustomed to do evil”? Is that really the state of mankind? The Bible says, “Yes it is!” When God speaks of all mankind, God underscores that there is NONE that doeth good. We read in Rom 3:10-12,

Rom 3:10-12, As it is written, There is **none** righteous, **no, not one**: There is **none** that understandeth, there is **none** that seeketh after God. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are **together** become unprofitable; **there is none** that doeth good, **no, not one**.

God says this is the state of all mankind. This is how we were born. How is anyone going to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ? **There is none** that seeketh after God! This means that nobody of his own initiative will seek to come to Christ. Who are we going to run after? We all seek after idols! Gods of our own liking! Moreover, since Romans 3 says, “**there is none** that doeth good”, this also means “we are all accustomed to do evil”. There is the answer. Therefore, when God says in Jer 13:23:

Jer 13:23 “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then may ye* also do good, that are accustomed to do evil,” God was not just talking to the nation of Judah, God was talking to US! If **there is none** that doeth good, then we all are accustomed to do evil. It means that:

- **Man’s Heart Is in Bondage to Sin** (Jer 17:9-10, Rom 8:7-8)

As you know, God gives many examples in the Bible about the fact that man’s heart is in bondage to sin. One of the best known examples is also in Jer 17:9-10: “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins (the inward parts), even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.”

This is serious business. If God “gives to every man according to the fruit of his doings”, it means that all of mankind is in trouble with God. Can we do anything about it? If we start to pay attention to God’s Laws, is that going to bring peace between God and us? If we would stop sinning right now, and obey all God’s law, we still do not have peace with God because there are all those sins of the past. What are we going to do about the guilt of all those sins of the past? God says in Rom 8:7-8,
Rom 8:7-8 **Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: **for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.** So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.**

You see, the carnal mind, or the natural man’s mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be. Rom 8:7 says that the natural man does not have a free will to obey God’s laws. Do we have a free will? NO! Our free will only wants to sin, and sin, and sin more. The Bible says our will is in bondage to sin. Our sinfulness is **not free** to do good. There is none that doeth good, **No Not One!** (Rom 3:10) It means that every one of the human race is on the way to Hell, unless God somehow rescues us. We all were by nature the children of wrath, and are on the way to Hell unless

God does something about it. The problem is that no one realizes how bad sin is. Only God knows how bad sin really is, and God says that our sin is so bad that we deserve to go to Hell and stay there forever. Now that is bad! But God has given us a physical picture how bad sin is: Here and there in the world people were and still are smitten with the disease of **Leprosy**, caused by certain bacteria.

- A person who has leprosy is called a leper. Just like sin, it is a deadly disease! Just like sin, a person who has contracted Leprosy is condemned to die.
- Leprosy is a disease which is first visible in the skin as brownish-red spots, they become thick nodules. Then these nodules become open sores with puss oozing out, with an awful smell.
- It is the smell of rotten meat and it attracts flies and other insects. It is repulsive. Throughout the world, some people who have gotten leprosy, have been so rejected by their society that some of them have been buried alive. They were condemned to die, so they were killed right away.
- In addition, the leper becomes numb in his skin where the nodules have been developing and he begins to lose tissue without feeling it.
- Then he becomes paralyzed in certain muscles of his hands and his feet. As a result the muscles atrophy, the hands and feet become deformed and he loses fingers and toes.
- Then he loses his ears and his nose and other extremities where there is poor circulation.
- The leper is gradually eaten up by these bacteria. It is a process which takes from nine to eleven years. Just imagine suffering through this kind of horrible disease without a nose and without lips.
- Today the media are very concerned about Aids. But Aids is nothing compared with Leprosy. A person who has Aids is dead in two years. But a leper suffers 9, 10 or 11 years with this disease before he dies, without arms or legs, and without eyes and ears.
- When our forefather Adam sinned, and the whole human race was plunged in sin with Adam, God cursed this earth, and one of the consequences of this curse was Leprosy.
- Leprosy was recognized in the Bible as the outward and visible sign of the innermost spiritual corruption of man. It is a picture of sin destroying the human body. It starts as a small spot, then spreads gradually, accompanied by deformation of the body, and continues to eat the man little by little by that which corrupts, degrades and defiles man's inner nature, just like sin, until he dies.
- God made Leprosy to be a vivid picture of what sin is, as a reminder how bad sin is in all of us. This is how God sees us spiritually. Like, walking around with rotten flesh on ourselves.

#2. Can the Leper Change His Spots? (Luke 4:27)

Can the person who has contracted Leprosy do anything to heal himself from his Leprosy? NO! Today, with modern technology, you can stop the disease from spreading. But in all the previous 129 Centuries when a person has contracted Leprosy, it was a death sentence. There was nothing a leper could do, but just wait for his death. The Lord Jesus confirmed this record when He said in Luke 4:27,

“And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus (Elisha) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” Only one person was cleansed of his leprosy, and this person was not even a descendant of Israel. He was Naaman the Syrian. Do we realize that God gave us an entire chapter, about healing from Leprosy, in Leviticus 14. It is a long chapter, dedicated to religious rites to perform when a person is healed from leprosy. But as you know, in all recorded history, until Jesus came, nobody was healed of leprosy! No one except Naaman the Syrian! Lev 14 did not apply to him. He was not an Israelite. Can the Leper Change His Spots? Just like the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, just like the leopard (the big cat) cannot change his spots, so in like manner the leper cannot change his spots. Just the same, a man cannot change his sins. They will always be accumulating, continually accusing the man. Just like the leper is in bondage to death, so the sinner is in bondage to sin. And so it would be until the end of his days, unless God would do something about it. But then the Lord Jesus Christ came on the scene. We read in Luke 5:12,

- **An Unclean Man Pleads for Mercy** (Luke 5:12-16,32)

Please turn to the gospel according to Luke, Luke 5:12 (2X). Here was a leper who believed that the Lord Jesus could heal him of his leprosy. This man already received faith from God that the Lord Jesus could do something for him. Please notice that not all the lepers in the world came to Jesus, only this one leper, because it was the Father who drew this man to the Lord Jesus. Luke 5:12-16,

Lu 5:12-16 **And** it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. **And** he put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. **And** immediately the leprosy departed from him. **And** he charged him to tell no man: but go, and shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. **But** so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. **And** he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Today we see that Jesus is healing a leper. This is the first time that the Lord Jesus is healing a leper. Here in verse 12 we see a definite answer to the question: **Can the leper change his spots?**

Lu 5:12 **And** it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on *his* face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

The leper fell on his face, pleading for the mercy of Jesus, to heal him of his Leprosy. **That is where we find ourselves:** pleading for the mercy of God **to heal us from our sins**. There were many lepers in Israel in the days of Jesus, but only this one leper came to Jesus, knowing full well that he was at the mercy of Jesus. This holy Rabbi could have walked around him. Now this leper was in the city. How dared he to be in the city? He was cast out of society because he was a leper. He was supposed to walk in a big circle around everyone and screaming and holding his mantle in his mouth and shouting “Unclean, Unclean”. When he approached the Lord Jesus, he really took his chances. People could

have thrown stones at him. But this leper was so thoroughly convinced that the Lord Jesus could heal him. He could not help himself. He knew Jesus was the one who could help him. Jesus was the only One Person who could make him whole.

Why was it that only this one leper was drawn to the Lord Jesus to find mercy? What was wrong with the other lepers in the country? Why did they not come? Why, because, at this point in time, **the grace and mercy of God** was extended **only to this one leper**. It was the grace of God that made him believe that only Jesus could save him from this cruel death. It was the mercy of God that the Lord Jesus was willing to make him whole. **That is really how we come to Jesus**. The healing of this leper is a **picture** of anyone who becomes saved. First we have to be convinced that we are spiritually like this leper: We have a deadly disease called Sin. This sin which is not just killing us physically, but it is bringing us down to Hell. If you think that you will come to Jesus on your own initiative, you are kidding yourself. We will not come to Jesus, because we do not want to admit that we have this deadly disease. We are much too proud to admit that we have Leprosy. We are good, moral, law abiding citizens. We are not that bad. But keep in mind that the Lord Jesus said, in Luke 5:32 "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." If we think we are good people, then Christ did not come for us. The majority of mankind thinks that they are good people.

Only when **the grace and mercy of God** has been extended **to us**, only then will we admit that we have this disease. Only then will we seek to be saved from our sins by the Lord Jesus. No, not any Jesus, Only the Lord Jesus of the Bible. No other Jesus would do. We will only come broken before Christ when we have discovered that we are the worst of sinners. We will only come broken before Christ when we have discovered that we have Leprosy. Not the ordinary kind of Leprosy that kills the body, but the Leprosy that is infinitely worse than that. It is the Leprosy of sin that can throw you in Hell. And what did Jesus do when the leper pleaded for mercy?

- **Jesus Made Himself Ceremonially Unclean** (Mark 1:41, John 6:37, 2Cor 5:21, Rom 8:2)

Do you realize that? Let me read this to you. In the Gospel according to Mark, where this same event is recorded, we read in Mark 1:41, "And Jesus, **moved with compassion**, put forth *his* hand, **and touched him**, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean."

The Lord Jesus Christ is moved with compassion for everyone who is drawn by the Father to Him. No one else will come to Jesus except those that are drawn by the Father. The Lord Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37) And Jesus, **moved with compassion**, put forth *his* hand, **and touched him**. That was no incidental matter that Jesus touched this leper. You see, everyone who touched a leper became ceremonially unclean. It means that at that moment Jesus became ceremonially unclean, and at the same time, the leper was cleansed. Jesus did not have to touch the leper. He could simply have said, "Be clean", and the leper would have been cleansed. But Jesus touched him. You can see the reason

why Jesus touched this leper: God is giving us a **picture that is full of compassion**: Uncleanness was taken off from the leper and it was ceremonially put on Jesus. It is as if the guilt of sin was now transferred to the account of the Lord Jesus. Now Jesus Himself had to get rid of this guilt of sin.

Remember that Leprosy is a picture of Sin. Jesus touched this leper, because the Lord Jesus is showing us thereby that **He imputed the guilt of those sins** to His account, so that this leper may be whole again, may be totally righteous in God's sight. And so, that is what Jesus does with us. **He imputed the guilt of our sins** to His account, so that we may be totally righteous in God's sight. No more guilt. God confirmed that in 2Cor 5:21:

2Cor 5:21 For He (i.e. God) hath made Him (i.e. Christ) *to be* sin for us, Who knew no sin (i.e. Christ); that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (Christ).

Christ the righteous Judge would be willing to pay what we owe to God for the guilt of our sins. The guilt of our sins was imputed to Christ's account, so that the righteousness of Christ may be imputed to our account. Look at **the immense compassion** of the Lord Jesus for us lepers, carriers of dead flesh. **Jesus**, who is Almighty God Himself, stooped so low that He was willing to bear the burden of our sins to the cross. He was willing to do that, because we could not help ourselves. Just imagine for a moment how God did look at us; as lepers. You are someone who has hands that are already eaten away, and there are only stumps left at the elbow. And your toes and your feet are eaten away so that you are down on your knees and standing up. And your face is eaten up. The ears are gone, the nose is gone and it is all one wound. The puss is oozing out, and the flies are all over. It is a horrible smell. That is how God looked at us; the walking dead. And, what did Jesus do when Jesus touched this leper? He gave us a picture that He took the guilt of our sins to His account, so that we would be cleansed from our leprosy. It is as if He would touch this leper; this dirty, stinking leper, and the cause of the sin of leprosy would be transferred to the account of the Lord Jesus and the leper would be made whole. He would get rid of his leprosy. Be careful now. Christ is the spotless Lamb of God who cannot be defiled with our leprosy, but He was willing to take away the cause of this leprosy, so that we might be healed. When we say that the Lord Jesus made Himself ceremonially unclean, we should realize that He did not actually become leprous. When the Lord Jesus went to the cross the ceremonial law died. In the New Testament all those statements concerning ceremonial uncleanness ceased to exist. That is the picture. He had to pay for it on the cross. How much did He have to pay, just a little, or a lot? There was no one else to have mercy on Him. There was no Savior for Him. He had to pay for the guilt of those sins the full price that had to be paid, according to the Law of God. And the Law of God demanded that the Lord Jesus must pay the equivalent of an eternity in Hell. That was the full price for carrying the guilt of our sins. What an **immense compassion** of the Lord Jesus for those who could not help themselves.

Now, when we read in the Bible of the love and compassion of the Lord Jesus for us, that He saved us from our sins and that He saved us from going to Hell; **could it be** that we just say “Thank You Jesus”, and then we continue on our own merry way? Is that possible? No, that is not possible. That is making a mockery of the grace of God. The grace of God is far more powerful. The Bible says that at the time of our salvation, at the time of our regeneration, the Lord regenerated our soul, and now we have a soul that wants to do those things that are pleasing to God. What does that mean? It means that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Rom 8:2). What are some of the things that please God? When the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father, He said in John 17:18,

Joh 17:18 “As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”

We cannot die for the sins of someone else. Only the Lord Jesus could do that. But can we do something else for our fellow man that pleases God?

#3. Can We Change the Leper's Spots?

When we apply the Word of God in our daily lives, we realize that we are not dealing with literal lepers. Very few of us come in contact with even one leper in all our life. That is not the application of the word of God. Instead of lepers, we are dealing with unsaved sinners. In God's eyes they are the walking dead. They are enemies of God until at some point in their life they may become saved. They are in bondage to sin and Satan. **Who holds the key to their bondage?** Of course God holds the key. That is why we pray for somebody's salvation, because it is only God who can unlock their bondage. And God saves those whom He wants to save. But God uses people as instruments. Here is the reason why some people are still spiritual lepers. Is it possible that they never heard the true Gospel? Yes, that is possible. In this day and age the true Gospel is very scarce. Let me try to summarize it in ten points; this is the True Gospel:

Almost everybody in the world has heard about Jesus, but they have not heard Jesus; they have not heard the True Gospel from the Bible. **T**hey have heard that everyone in the church is already saved; but that is not true; that is not what the Bible says; in every church there are people who have never been saved. **T**hey have not heard that all of mankind is born in sin and most are still in bondage to sin. **T**hey have not heard that a Righteous God must send most of mankind to Hell for an eternity because He is righteous; which means that He will not pass by even the smallest sin. **T**hey have not heard that anyone can only be saved by the grace of God, and by the mercy of God. **T**hey have not heard that God's Mercy only comes through Jesus Christ dying on the cross in AD 33; and He died to pay for the guilt of those sins. **T**hey have not heard that when Christ died on the cross He paid on behalf of all our sins, not a part of them. **T**hey have not heard that God, the Holy Spirit opens the eyes and ears of those for whom Christ was crucified, so that they begin to cry out for mercy, and God is still in the business of saving people. **T**hey have not heard that a person once saved is always saved; which means that

we can trust God's promises. They have not heard that the true Gospel is circumscribed by the Bible only; and nothing but the Bible. Do not trust your Church. Do not trust your Pastor. Trust the Bible only: Trust only Christ, who is the Word of God made flesh.

The question then that follows is this:

- **Can We, Former Lepers, Also Show Mercy?** (Rom 10:14-15)

We cannot heal another leper. We do not have that power. But, of course, we are talking about spiritual leprosy. And, you know, we have been there. We know where the pitfalls are and we have heard what the true Gospel is. We have been in that spiritual battle. It stands to reason then, that we pray for them and that we **pray to God** that we may be used by God as His instruments to show others what the true Gospel is. This is how we love our fellow man, and this is how we can please God in the most God-glorifying way. God says in Rom 10:14-15:

Rom 10:14-15, "**H**ow then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? **A**nd how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

God describes here how wonderful our task is in God's eyes: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Can God do it without our witnessing efforts? Of course God can; He will use someone else. But it is the character of a child of God to desire this task of witnessing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Why? Because we have been rescued from a great fire! Should we not be boasting of the One who rescued us? He gave His only begotten Son for us, in our place, so that we could be saved. Should we not proclaim, to all the world, what great mercy He has had on us? We desire to be God's instruments for this purpose, because:

- **Mercy Received Cannot Be Hidden** (Rom 4:8)

If God so loved us, while we were still stinking and rotting lepers, with a love that is described with the Greek word "**Agape**", should we not have a reflection of that same kind of love for our fellow man? If we truly have been saved, then absolutely, a reflection of this "Agape" must be found in us. That is why the KJV translators used the word "**Charity**" in various places where they found "Agape". You remember 1 Corinthians 13? That is exactly what it is: "Charity"; a gift to a beggar; a leper. A gift so great, and nothing is expected in return. We cannot give God anything in return for His great gift of salvation. We have nothing to give. It is all tainted with sin. There is no value in anything that we bring **except by the Grace of God**. Our "Charity" for our fellow man can be used for the glory of God. If we have no "Charity", we really have not been saved. God's mercy received at the hand of Jesus Christ **cannot** be hidden. And what exactly is the love that we bring to our fellow man? We must use our own life, our own understanding of our conversion as an example of what we should bring to our fellow man. Look at it in this way: If we really have been saved, we remember what we have been saved from. We

have been saved from a false understanding of what the Gospel is and who our God really is. We can look at ourselves and see that we still commit sins which deserve the wrath of God. But because of the unbelievable love of God we have been forgiven, and even all our future sins have been forgiven because Christ already paid for them at the cross. God says to us in Rom 4:8, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Why does God give us this special treatment? It is not because we were more worthy than others, but because the Lord decided from eternity past to treat us as "special." And so, we should not say, "Because we have confessed all our sins to God, therefore the Lord treats us special"; and we should not say, "Because we have repented of our sins and believed the Gospel, therefore the Lord treats us special"; and we should not say, "Because we have been kind to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, therefore the Lord has looked upon us kindly", and so on, and so on, for all these are Arminian arguments which hold no water. The Epistle of James is full of these things, which are mostly misunderstood. We are obligated to give God all the praise and all the glory, which means that we must be careful to screen out all those Arminian ideas we had in the past; ideas which impose on us a certain amount of responsibility. But we are not response-able. Everything has been ordained by God, even our responses. And when we love our fellow man this is really what we want to tell him. Tell him why God treats us as special. It is because God chose us and loved us from everlasting past, and decided that He would pour His love upon us.

And so, Can the leopard change his spots? I am talking about the animal now. No, he cannot. It is the sovereignty of God that is in view behind this question. God created the leopard the way he is. And we should realize that our God is sovereign. You may worship a god who is not sovereign, but that is another god. If you pray to this other god he cannot help you, because he is a product of your own imagination. The God of the Bible is absolutely sovereign, and no one can be saved by his own free will, for there is NONE that seeketh after God. We cannot be saved if we discard a portion of the Bible. This is what we must tell our fellow man, for this is showing him our love for him.

AMEN. Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.