

Obeying and Disobeying

Leprosy is mentioned close to seventy times in the Bible and it had a wider connotation indicating a variety of serious skin diseases. It caused pain and disfigurement condemning a person to live in the shadows away from normal activity and Jesus treated such people with great compassion, healing them when encountered.

In Mark 1:40-45, Jesus heals such a person telling him not to tell anyone about it, but he **disobeyed** and told of the incident everywhere he went and the result caused an unsuspecting reversal in situations; the leper who had no freedom to travel among the people was now free to move as he wished, but Jesus *could no longer go openly into any town, but stayed outside in deserted places*. It reminds us that there can be a price to be paid for doing good!

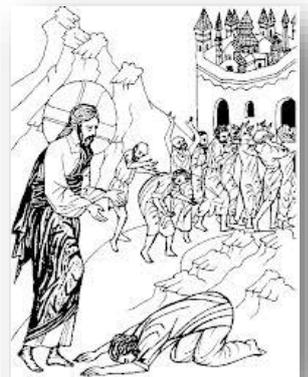
In another situation the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19) raised their voices: *"Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"*. He responded: *"Go and show yourselves to the priests."* One of them, a Samaritan, soon returned, praising God in a loud voice and Jesus asked where are the other nine? In the eyes of Israelites would not a Samaritan be the one least expected to return?

We are not told what the others did, but let us assume that they did as they were instructed....and showed themselves to the priests. These cures surely brought much attention as the priests examined and finally dismissed them with a certificate of cleanliness and they went along their ways feeling satisfied, for was not Jesus' instruction obeyed?

But if they were feeling contented about everything, should they have said to themselves: *"We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty."* (Luke 17:10)? Consider what Jesus says (in Luke 17:7-10)... *"Why be grateful to the servant who is only carrying out his orders?"* In fact, he goes on, *"It is the same with you who hear me when you have done as commanded, say .. "We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty."* Jesus seeks those who are dedicated, not ones who want to simply get by. The word "dedicated" comes from "dedicatus sum", meaning, "I have given myself."

But the returning leper did do more. In fact, his return is an action that can be likened to Peter's words to Jesus, namely, *"You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."* (Matt 16:16-17). Recall that our Lord responded that this revelation could only have been revealed to Peter by the Father.

Did not the leper return because he too was responsive to the Father's promptings? After all, Jesus finally told him: *"go your way"*. He didn't need to say "go My way" if the leper's way was in harmony with the Father's will. The healed leper fell at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. From that moment he no longer looked down at his problems but now looked up to what is above and what greater light could he have encountered than what he saw in the eyes of Jesus. Yes, ten were healed but the one who returned to Jesus giving thanks and praise received salvation!



The leper's *"faith was his salvation"* because he recognized and first came to the highest Priest *"whom we acknowledge in faith."* (Heb 3:1)