

## Make Me Clean!

It is always amusing when you travel or move to another country and begin to notice some of the interesting cultural distinctions that make each place and people unique and enjoyable. Having been born and raised in Germany during my childhood and early teens, there were certain manners and methods specific to a German way of doing things. Everyday tasks like shopping at the grocery store, eating at a restaurant, or using a public restroom are just a few of the experiences that can cause a visitor to think, "Well, that's interesting." Even manners pertaining to eating a meal are a bit different. For example, in Germany, good manners dictate both hands remain on the table throughout the meal. But most importantly, from the moment a child can hold a utensil, they are taught to eat with the fork in the left hand and the knife in the right hand. Regardless of the meal, Germans refuse to eat with their fingers. Even french fries are served with a tiny fork on the side. Apparently, when it comes to eating, Germans don't like to get their hands dirty.

While eating sandwiches and pizza in this "clean" manner seems unconventional for many of us, **it should be entirely expected for Christians to be bothered when they discover "dirty" sin in their lives.** Of course, removing sin requires more than utensils, napkins, or hand soap. This cleansing requires the Purifier, Jesus, since our sin affects more than just our fingers and hands, but the very core of our being - the heart. Luke 5:12-26 records the separate encounters between Jesus and two men - a leper and a paralytic. Their conditions and subsequent miraculous healings become object lessons to those who witness these events and those who read them even now.

The ailments that these men suffered from illustrate the effects of sin on our lives. Leprosy or Hansen's disease "lingered for years, causing the tissues to degenerate and deform the body... It is ... a [disease](#) of the nervous system because the leprosy bacterium attacks the nerves... then spreads to other parts, such as the hands, feet, face, and earlobes." Like leprosy, sin corrupts and, like paralysis, sin has consequences. Sin usually begins in subtle, almost unseen ways. Yet, over time it proceeds to spread like a cancer, separating the sinner from family, friends, even God. The consequences of sin leave a sinner incapable of helping himself and dependent on the intervention of others. This demands honesty, when a sinful brother or sister is ignoring sin's sickening symptoms. It also requires love, care, and patience for people who are unable or unwilling to come to Jesus on their own.

The interactions between Jesus and these two afflicted men is rife with beauty! Jesus welcomed these men, when conventional culture and religion had rejected

them. He came near to them when others overlooked them or feared them. Most importantly, the Seeker and Savior met their greatest need by cleansing their heart and forgiving their sins (Lk 5:13-14, 20-25; Mk 2:17). The need of every man woman, and child is not to be relieved of the hardships and ailments of this life, but to be rescued from the judgment that sin requires. And the desire of every believer should be to become clean and remain clean. This dramatic change turns into our plea for reconciliation to those around us! Paul describes this dynamic in his familiar words written to the church at Corinth:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation**; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” (2 Cor 5:17-20)

What joy to know that when we recognize that we are gravely infected with sin’s terrible virus and in faith request, “Make me clean!” Jesus heals us. So, if you have not surrendered your life to Jesus, who sought you, gave His life for you, and lives so you can live - run, walk, even crawl to Him! Admit your need to Him, ask Him to forgive you, and turn away from your former way of life. If you are a follower of Jesus - restored to new life - you have been given a gift that only God could provide: true forgiveness and a second chance! Like the former leper, live as a new, metamorphosed creation! And, like the former paralytic, walk, dance, and glorify God. Make an onlooking world exclaim, “We have seen extraordinary things today” (Lk 5:26).

***Psalm 103:8-12 (ESV) - “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”***