

The Master's Touch

“Behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

—Matthew 8:2,3

“Thy touch hath still its ancient power,
No word from Thee can fruitless fall.”

THE HAND IS USED IN THE Scriptures as a symbol of power. The touch of the hand is a small exercise of power. Let us notice a few Biblical accounts of the wonderful things that were accomplished by the Master's touch, and consider them to be illustrative of the manner in which we are being dealt with by the same loving and gracious Lord, of whom the poet wrote:

LEPROSY—SYMBOL OF SIN

Our opening Scripture recalls the occasion on which the touch of the Master's hand healed one who was plagued with leprosy. Much more common in ancient times than today, the disease of leprosy is caused by a long-term infection which can lead

to damage of the nerves, skin, eyes and respiratory tract. This damage may result in the lack of ability to feel pain and can lead eventually to the loss of parts of a person's extremities due to repeated injuries or infection.

Leprosy is used in the Scriptures as a symbol of sin. Just as leprosy can result, over time, to damage or loss of parts of the body, so sin eats away at the heart, the mind, the character, and other sensibilities of the human frame. Over the course of a lifetime, without the healing power of the Great Physician, sin's effects will result in a growing separation from the Heavenly Father and his righteous principles and precepts.

Not all the lepers in Israel were cleansed by Jesus during his earthly ministry. (Luke 4:24-27) During the present Gospel Age, although Jesus by the grace of God tasted death for every man, not all have yet benefited from this precious sacrifice, but only one here and one there, a "little flock." (Heb. 2:9; Luke 12:32) However, the coming Messianic kingdom is to bring a still fuller manifestation of divine grace. The "sin of the world" will be taken away, and all mankind will have the opportunity to be fully healed from the "leprosy" of sin and its terrible effects which have plagued humanity since the fall of our first parents in Eden. (John 1:29; I Cor. 15:21,22) The earth, man's home, will likewise be once more a holy place, forever cured from the effects of sin.

FEVER'S DEBILITATING EFFECTS

In another record of the touch of the Master's hand, we read, "When Jesus was come into Peter's

house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."—Matt. 8:14,15

In the human body, fever, or the rising of the body's internal temperature, is a mechanism which is triggered to fight off many kinds of infection. In most instances, fever goes away within a couple of days once its purpose has been accomplished. However, in cases where the underlying infection or disease is more serious, fever may not have its restorative effect. The results in such cases can be very serious, and possibly deadly.

This may well illustrate the fevers of pride, anger, temper, and passion that afflict the human family. The world has never been in a more feverish condition than it is today. The terrible and deadly infections caused by sin are recognized by most people. However, man is unable to rid himself of these because the "feverish" qualities noted above are the exact opposite of the healing balm of humility, kindness, mercy, and love, which are the only remedies for the world's present infection resulting from sin. What mankind needs is the Master's touch.

Fever in the symbolic sense might also denote a condition of unrest. The touch of Jesus will eradicate this and bring us spiritual rest and peace. The Scriptures describe it as "peace with God" as we lay hold of the Lord by faith, and "the peace of God" in our hearts as we surrender ourselves fully to walk in the Master's steps. (Matt. 11:28-30; Rom. 5:1; Phil. 4:7) May our prayers for this blessing be those expressed by the poet:

“Drop Thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of Thy peace.”

OUR EYES OF UNDERSTANDING

“As they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David. ... And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.”—Matt. 20:29-34

This miracle of Jesus well illustrates the opening of the eyes of our understanding by the power of God's Holy Spirit. Here, the Master's touch gives us the ability to view and appreciate with the eye of faith things actually not seen as yet, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (Eph. 1:18; II Cor. 5:7) Some may think that their eyes can be opened by worldly education or through their own efforts. However, repeated endeavors along these lines through the centuries have shown that this is no more possible than for one born blind to open his own eyes and see.

On one occasion the Master cured a man's blindness by making clay and placing it upon his sightless eyes, after which the man washed in the pool of Siloam. (John 9:1-7) This is a beautiful

illustration of the method the Lord frequently uses in opening the eyes of one's understanding by means of human instrumentalities, illustrated here by "clay," as a way of conveying this great blessing. Such healing may be well illustrated by the secretions of our Lord's mouth, "full of grace and truth," mixed with some dust of the earth, denoting the poor earthly talents of the Lord's followers.—Eph. 4:11; John 1:14

This method has been especially used at this end of the Christian age in connection with the message of the Gospel which has gone out world-wide. A "faithful and wise servant," together with many other fellow servants, has been favored to share in these works which the Master foretold would be the privilege of his faithful followers to perform. (Matt. 24:45-47; Luke 12:37) The eyes of many have been opened as a result. Furthermore, a much greater prospect set before the Lord's people is that, if faithful unto death, it will be their blessed privilege in the coming kingdom to open the eyes of the billions who have been both physically as well as mentally blind.—Isa. 35:5

After Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at Jordan, his eyes of spiritual understanding were opened to see in detail the many features of God's will for him. This understanding had two important effects. First, he was sanctified by the understanding and carrying out of his Father's will. (John 17:17-19) In addition, he went throughout all the cities and villages of Israel, proclaiming the coming kingdom of God. (Matt. 4:17; 9:35; Mark 1:15) This shows the two principal reasons why our mental eyes have been anointed with the eye-salve of truth: first,

that we apply its sanctifying effect toward the growth of a Christlike character; and second, that we might witness to the “gospel of the kingdom” to the extent of our ability and circumstances.—Matt. 24:14

SPIRITUAL FOOD MULTIPLIED

On another occasion, seeing the hunger of the multitudes, Jesus said to his disciples, “How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”—Matt. 15:34-38

Here the seven loaves and few fishes were multiplied sufficiently to feed a multitude of over four thousand, again as a result of the Master’s touch. So, on a still higher plane, the same gracious power has caused the spiritual food of truth to be multiplied that it might reach and fill those throughout the earth who seek answers and comfort during these perilous times. Through the printed page, radio, television, the Internet, and countless forms of electronic media, the glorious Gospel message has, and continues, to reach those hungering for the Word of God.

WISE AND HARMLESS

When Jesus was apprehended the night before his death, one of his disciples thought it was necessary to defend his Master. The account states that the disciple, who was Peter, “smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he

touched his ear, and healed him.”—Luke 22:50,51; John 18:10,11

We can be fairly certain that as a result of Peter’s rather reckless use of the sword, the hearing of the injured man would be seriously impaired. Similarly, some have perhaps had their spiritual hearing injured by an unwise use of the sword of the Spirit on the part of over-zealous disciples. All so injured, need the Master’s touch in order for their hearing to be fully restored. As disciples, therefore, let us be sure that in the giving forth of the Gospel we are “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”—Matt. 10:16

OUR LIPS TOUCHED

As Jesus came to the Sea of Galilee on one occasion, the record states: “And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain.”—Mark 7:31-35

The poor man here brought to our attention was deaf as well as having an impediment in his speech, and the power of the Master’s touch was again manifested to heal him. Frequently the Lord’s people have, in a spiritual sense, an impediment in their speech. They are unable to speak the Lord’s message as clearly as they would like to do. We need, therefore, to come into that condition of full

consecration and submission to the Lord's will, that his touch may be experienced.

This symbolic touch does not make orators of many of us, but it does make it possible that we, in one way or another, are able to show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Pet. 2:9) We recall Moses, the servant of God, was slow of speech, but the Lord's providence overcame this difficulty by providing Aaron as a mouthpiece. Today, the many forms of communication available are a wonderful assistance to God's people who may be slow of speech in effectively presenting the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

LITTLE CHILDREN BLESSED

"They brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."—Luke 18:15,16

This beautiful illustration shows that even young children can experience divine blessing as a result of the Master's touch. In view of this, how important it is for Christian parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Many can testify to blessings that have continued throughout their entire life as a result of experiencing the Master's touch in their very early years! Truly the wise man said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—Eccles. 12:1

THE DEAD AWAKENED

In Luke 7:11-15 we read this account concerning Jesus: "And it came to pass the day after, that he

went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”—Luke 7:11-15

Could we imagine a more beautiful spectacle than the giving back of this young man to his widowed mother—her only son, and possibly her only support? As a spiritual counterpart to this during the Gospel Age, one here and one there have experienced an awakening to “walk in newness of life,” developing new hopes, ambitions and goals. If faithful unto death, these will have part in the “first resurrection” of all who wholly live unto the Master.—Rom. 6:4,5; Eph. 1:12-14; Col. 3:1-4; Rev. 20:4,6

In view of the gracious works accomplished during the present Gospel age resulting from the Master’s touch, what marvelous things may be expected when the arm of the Lord is laid bare to all people in God’s coming worldwide kingdom of righteousness and peace! Then all the blind eyes will be opened, and all the deaf ears unstopped. (Isa. 35:5) All that are in their graves will hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth; for he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet, and the last enemy to be destroyed is death.—John 5:28,29; I Cor. 15:25,26

In order to experience the blessed results of the Master's touch, we need to do our part by keeping in close communion with him. Like so many who sought to be healed during his earthly ministry, let us press through the crowd of confusion and doubt, and stay as near to him as possible, by faith, that we might receive the healing "touch" of all the divine promises.

"In the still lute the music lies unheard
In the rough marble beauty lies unseen:
To make the music and the beauty, needs
The Master's touch, the sculptor's chisel keen.
Great Master, touch us with Thy skillful hand;
Let not the music that is in us die!
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us; nor let,
Hidden and lost, Thy form within us lie!
Spare not the stroke! Do with us as Thou wilt!
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;
Complete Thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord!" ■



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