

# Grateful Faith

Luke 17:11-19

SS Lesson for 05/08/2016

**Devotional Scripture:** Ps 107

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# Introduction

## Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson reviews why we should have **Grateful Faith** as a result of what God has done for us. The **study's aim** is to understand that being thankful is the normal response to what God has done for us. The **study's application** is to cultivate a greater awareness of regularly being thankful and to express openly to others thanks to God for His blessings.

*(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)*

### Key Verse: Luke 17:15

*And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God*

### Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

17:11-14. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem... along the border between Samaria and Galilee. When asked for help by 10 lepers, He healed them from a distance. This was the second time in the Book of Luke that lepers were healed (cf. 5:12-16). As in the former case, Jesus instructed the men to show themselves to the priests. On their way they were cleansed from the disease and were made ceremonially clean. 17:15-19. Only one of the men—a foreigner, that is, a Samaritan—came back to thank Jesus. This one understood the significance of what had been done for him. He was praising God and he threw himself at Jesus' feet, a posture of worship. He apparently understood that Jesus is God, for he placed faith in Him. Whether or not he understood that Jesus is the Messiah is not mentioned by Luke. The lack of gratitude by the other nine was typical of the rejection of His ministry by the Jewish nation. He alone had the power to cleanse the nation and make it ceremonially clean. However, the nation did not respond properly to Him. The nation accepted the things that Jesus could do (such as heal them and feed them), but it did not want to accept Him as Messiah. However, those outside the nation (such as this Samaritan leper—a person doubly repulsive to the Jews) were responding.

### Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

We take a lot for granted. Before you start to protest, stop and think a minute. Do you have a place to sleep at night? What about clothing and food? What about your health and that job providing an income for you? It is easy to coast along when things are going well. My grandfather had a saying for that: "You never realize what you have until it is gone." The people in this week's lesson show us the contrast between gratitude and taking things for granted. Take a closer look at the people involved in this passage. These ten men were in dire straits. They had leprosy, a disease that affected every aspect of their lives. There were few things worse in Jewish society than to have leprosy. Having this disease was like a living death. People with it were forced to separate themselves from society. They could not earn a living, attend services at the temple, or even associate with their own families. As the disease progressed, it became even more debilitating. Those with it lost limbs. Their skin slowly decayed until they were walking skeletons. It was a chronic disease without hope for a cure. When Jesus met them on the road and offered healing, you might assume that they all would be grateful. Through this miraculous intervention, these men were reinstated to life. They went from decay and despair to newness and hope. Jesus handed back not just their health but their futures. Notice what happened. Out of ten men, only one returned to thank Christ (Luke 17:16-17). When we look even closer, we realize that this one was a Samaritan, not a Jew. Even Jesus commented on it (vs. 18). The only person to express gratitude was a foreigner with whom proper Jews would not even associate. When the man returned, Jesus commended him for his faith (vs. 19). Gratitude is essential to any believer's walk. It does not matter whether you are a new believer or one of many years. Expressing your thankfulness for God's blessings is imperative for growth. Psalm 22 tells us that God inhabits the praises of His people (vs. 3). He lives in our gratitude. Why should we have grateful hearts? First, He is God. We are His people (Ps. 100:3). He is good, not a tyrant (vs. 5). He hears us when we call (116:1). He has delivered us from death (vs. 8). Most important, by His Son's sacrifice, we are saved from an eternity of torment (Matt. 25:46). There is power in gratitude. When we turn to God with grateful hearts, He extends more mercy and greater blessing. Our walk is strengthened and deepened by demonstrating it (Col. 3:15-17). A believer who fails to express gratitude takes for granted God's blessing. God is not obligated to give us anything. We were created to glorify Him (Isa. 43:21), not He for us. When we choose not to show gratitude, there are serious ramifications (Isa. 27:11). We become discontent and grumble against Him. It is

not simply about offering occasional praise when life is going well for us. It is about cultivating continual thanksgiving in our hearts, which is to be practiced whatever the circumstance.

## **Lesson Introduction and Background**

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Those who live in Western democracies enjoy standards of living that people of centuries past would scarcely comprehend. By one estimate, those in the very bottom 10 percent of income in America are in the top 30 percent of income in the world as a whole. Relatively few in such a culture lack basic necessities, yet many are dissatisfied. Why is that? Shouldn't people who have so much be happy and content? Author Steve Maraboli observes that, "The more I understand the mind and the human experience, the more I begin to suspect there is no such thing as unhappiness; there is only ungratefulness." Is he right? Are the happiest people those who are most grateful? The religious heritage of ancient Israel linked gladness with thanksgiving. Joy, praise, and gratitude are interconnected (see Psalms 35:18; 69:30; 95:2; 100:4). Key elements of worship included both rejoicing and giving thanks. An oft-repeated worship refrain centers on thankfulness: "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever" (Psalm 118:1; compare Jeremiah 33:11). There is a fuzzy distinction at best between praising God and thanking God, both being at the very heart of worship. Even so, the Bible depicts many ungrateful people. The history of the exodus could have been that of a celebration and quick victory march into the promised land. But grumbling, griping, and murmuring made it otherwise (see Deuteronomy 1:27). The dissatisfied heart always wants more, and greediness nullifies gratefulness. Even so, God "is kind to the ungrateful and wicked" (Luke 6:35). This week's lesson looks at a mighty act of kindness bestowed on 10 desperate men, of whom only one exhibited gratefulness. As we consider this account, may we search our own hearts to see if greed or gratefulness is our ensign.

My father was a practicing physician for over 40 years. He once returned from a medical meeting in California where an acquaintance had taken him to a local hospital to see a special case: a patient who had been diagnosed with leprosy, now known as Hansen's disease. The friend claimed that his was the only known case in the state. It was also the only time in my father's long medical career that he had any contact with this ancient disease. Relatively few people today are afflicted with this loathsome, legendary ailment. There are perhaps no more than 300 new cases annually in the U.S. But leprosy was well known in the ancient world, being described in the records of many cultures. Left unchecked, the disease results in visible lesions and deformations. Traditionally, those so afflicted have been forced to live under quarantine conditions, even into modern times. Leprosy was incurable until the advent of antibiotic drug therapies in the twentieth century. Leprosy as described in the Old Testament probably included a wide range of afflictions of the skin, not just Hansen's disease as we know it today. Laws concerning lepers are found especially in Leviticus 13:1-46; 14:1-32. To be a leper was to be "unclean," often permanently. Those so afflicted had to warn others with cries of "Unclean! Unclean!" (13:45) and were required to live apart (13:46). Therefore, lepers suffered not only from the illness itself but also from being ostracized socially. That was the condition of the 10 men of this lesson.

At least one of the lepers in today's lesson was a Samaritan. Samaritans, who lived in central Palestine, were distant relatives of first-century Jews. There was great animosity between the two groups in Jesus' day (see Luke 9:51-53; John 4:9; 8:48), a type of bitter tribalism that had been fueled by centuries of negative incidents. The Old Testament traces the time line of these from 2 Kings 17 through Ezra 4 and Nehemiah 4. The period of time between the Old and New Testaments saw further antagonism develop. Concerning lepers, the Samaritans followed the regulations found in Leviticus. This included exclusion from regular village life of those so afflicted. The 10 diseased outcasts of this week's lesson seem to have consisted of both Jews and Samaritans. We can liken this to a homeless camp made up of folks from divergent backgrounds, having been thrown together by desperate circumstances.

## **Major Theme Analysis**

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

## **Seeking God's Mercy (Luke 17:11-13)**

11 Now it happened as He went to Jerusalem that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.  
12 Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.  
13 And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

### **Faith that God will come when we need Him most (11-12)**

*God will be there because He is our helper (Heb 13:5-6)*

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

*God will be there because He is always with us (1 Chron 28:20)*

20 David also said to Solomon his son, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you until all the work for the service of the temple of the Lord is finished.

*God will be there because He will never forsake us (Ps 37:25)*

25 I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread.

*God will be there because He answers our greatest needs (Isa 41:17)*

17 "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

*God will be there because He upholds us (Isa 41:10)*

10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

### **Faith in God's mercy (13)**

*Because God is rich in mercy (Eph 2:4-5)*

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

*Because God's mercy provides us a living hope (1 Peter 1:3)*

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

*Because God's mercy is part of God's plan (Rom 11:32)*

32 For God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all.

*Because God's mercy is there in our time of need (Heb 4:16)*

16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

*Because God's mercy endures forever (Ps 106:1)*

Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

## **Cleansed Through Faithful Obedience (Luke 17:14)**

14 So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

## **Faith in God's guidance (14)**

### *Guidance into truth (John 16:13-15)*

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

### *Guidance by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:18)*

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

### *Guidance into insight (Ps 119:99-100)*

99 I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. 100 I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

### *Guidance into understanding (Ps 119:130)*

130 The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

### *Guidance into wisdom (Prov 2:6)*

6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

## **Faith requires obedience (14)**

### *Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)*

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

### *Obedience in love (2 John 1:6)*

6 And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.

### *Obedience that is better than sacrifices (1 Sam 15:22)*

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

### *Obedience through putting God's words into practice (Matt 7:24-25)*

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

### *Obedience through living holy (1 Peter 1:14-16)*

14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 15 But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

## **Grateful Thankfulness (Luke 17:15-16)**

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God, 16 and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

### **Faith recognizes that God is the healer (15)**

*God heals physically (Matt 14:14)*

14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

*God heals spiritually (Isa 53:5)*

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

*God brings healing to those who humbly return to Him (2 Chron 7:14)*

14 If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

*God brings healing because man needs healing (Matt 14:14)*

14 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

### **Faith compels us to thank God (16)**

*Thankful for food (1 Cor 10:30)*

30 If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?

*Thankful for all things (Phil 4:6)*

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

*Thanksgiving for others (1 Tim 2:1)*

2 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone

*Thankful for God's kingdom (Heb 12:28)*

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

*Thankful for God's indescribable gift (2 Cor 9:15)*

15 Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

*Thankful for God's promised heavenly inheritance (Col 1:12)*

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

### **Healing Through Faithfully Giving Glory to God (Luke 17:17-19)**

17 So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

18 Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

19 And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

### **Faith always brings us back to God (17)**

*Back to God for pardon of sin (Isa 55:6-7)*

6 Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

*Back to God for salvation (Ezek 18:27)*

27 But if a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will save his life.

*Back to God with all our heart (Joel 2:12)*

12 'Even now,' declares the Lord, 'return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.'

*Back to God as part of examining our ways (Lam 3:40)*

40 Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.

*Back to God to find His grace and mercy (2 Chron 30:9)*

9 If you return to the Lord, then your brothers and your children will be shown compassion by their captors and will come back to this land, for the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate. He will not turn his face from you if you return to him."

### **Faith motivates us to give God the glory (18)**

*Give God the glory as part of our thanksgiving (2 Cor 4:15)*

15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

*Give God the glory because in all things God should be praised (1 Peter 4:11)*

11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

*Give God the glory in all things (1 Cor 10:31)*

31 So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

*Give God the glory because His glory is over all the earth (Ps 57:5)*

5 Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.

*Give God the glory because His glory is in His sanctuary (Ps 96:6)*

6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.

*Give God the glory because He is the King of glory (Ps 24:7-10)*

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is he, this King of glory? The Lord Almighty — he is the King of glory. Selah

### **Faith motivates God to respond (19)**

*God responds to the prayers of the righteous (Ps 34:15-17)*

15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; 16 the face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.

*God responds to the needs of obedient servants (Isa 58:6-11)*

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? 8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. 9 Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If

you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, 10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. 11 The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.

*God responds to those who delight themselves in Him (Ps 37:4)*

4 Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

*God responds to those who obey Him (1 John 3:21-22)*

21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### **Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh**

Just as gratitude is the key to understanding the first half of our text, so it is likewise the key to the last half. Let us now consider the story of the ten lepers, only one of which demonstrated gratitude.

And it came about while He was on the way to Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten leprous men, who stood at a distance; and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” And when He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And it came about that as they were going, they were cleansed. Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they? Were none found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?” And He said to him, “Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.” The time and the place may have changed, but the subject of gratitude has not. Once again, it seems, Luke reveals that his unifying principle is not chronology or geography, but the logical development of his argument(s). At some point in time, Jesus was passing near Samaria. Coming upon a certain village, He encountered ten lepers. They kept their distance, as was prescribed, but they did not keep quiet. They cried out for mercy, and Jesus was more than willing to heal them.

Jesus chose to heal the lepers in a different way, however. Rather than to reach out and touch them (which Jesus had done before, Luke 5:13), He instructed the men to go to their respective priests. They were not yet healed. They were to go in obedience, and if they thought about it, they would probably have reasoned that Jesus must intend to heal them, for they were to go to the priest to be pronounced clean (cf. Leviticus 14). All ten lepers departed in obedience to the Lord’s instructions. On the way, they were all healed. We know from Jesus’ words that all ten lepers were healed (verse 17), and yet only one of the ten returned, and this one man was a Samaritan. It is implied that the other nine were Israelites. The one who returned did so in order to thank Jesus and to praise God for his healing. Since this man “glorified God” (v. 15) and “thanked Jesus” (v. 16), it would seem that he had come to recognize, to some degree, the deity of our Lord. At least he regarded his healing as having come from God through Jesus.

It was true, of course, that Jesus had commanded the ten to go to their priests. In this sense, the nine who did not return were only being obedient to what Jesus had commanded. Jesus had something to say about this, however. He asked several questions. Whether these were addressed to His disciples or to the one man is not clear. What is clear is that Jesus commended the gratitude of this one leper, and criticized the failure of the others to do likewise. Luke, of course, has a special message in this, for the one man was not a Jew at all, but a Samaritan. Jesus made a point of referring to this one grateful leper as a “foreigner” (v. 18). Once again, we are being prepared for the gospel to be proclaimed and accepted by the Gentiles, while spurned by the Jews. These nine ungrateful recipients of God’s grace are typical of the nation Israel, while this one grateful Gentile is a prototype of the many Gentiles who will believe and will praise God. Jesus’ words to this man sound very similar to those which He has spoken before: “Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well” (verse 19). Once we become aware of the fact that the term rendered, “has made you well” literally means “saved,” there is a question which must be asked and answered: “Is Jesus pronouncing a special blessing upon this one man, which is above and beyond that received by the other 9?” All ten men were healed, so in what sense is this one leper “saved”? In the New Testament, the term “saved” is used to refer to eternal salvation and to physical healing. Which way does Luke (and the Holy Spirit) intend for us to understand it here? Luke appears to use

the term “save” in three primary ways. First, the term can describe a physical healing and even an exorcism (cf. 8:36, 48, 50). Second, the term can refer to the saving of one’s physical life, as when Jesus was challenged to come down from the cross and save Himself (23:35, 37, 39; cf. 9:24). Third, the term is used, perhaps most often, of eternal salvation (7:48, 50; 8:12; 18:25-26; 19:10). In some cases, it would appear that there is a blending of the first and third uses, so that physical healing and spiritual salvation are both depicted by the term “saved” (e.g. 8:36, 48). How, then, does Luke use the term “save” here? It is my opinion that Luke uses it with the added sense of spiritual salvation. In the sense of being healed, all ten lepers were “saved.” But in the sense of recognizing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and in giving thanks to Him as such, only this one leper did so. I believe that his “salvation” goes beyond the cleansing of his leprosy to the cleansing of his sin.

## **Conclusion**

The central issue in our passage is forgiveness. The focus of the disciples was on faith. Jesus did not minimize the need for faith, but neither did He affirm that a lack of faith was their problem, and thus that granting more faith was the solution. Jesus’ response in verses 7-10 and the account of the one grateful leper focus on obedience and gratitude. The slave of verses 7-10 is to faithfully obey his master, but not to expect him to show gratitude, for the master has the right to expect obedience of a slave, and has no obligation to be thankful for it. So, too, when the disciple is obedient to Christ, he does not see it as meriting anything from God, nor does he equate his worthiness with it, for all men, even the most obedient of them, are unworthy of divine favor. If this is true, as it must be, then what we need is not a system of rules to keep, for in keeping them there is no merit, no reward. If we are unworthy even at our best—even when we keep all of God’s commandments—then what we need is not Law, but grace. Grace is God’s favor bestowed upon us because we are unworthy, not because we are worthy. Grace and mercy are prompted by our unworthiness, while God’s gratitude cannot even be prompted by our best efforts. How foolish, then, were the efforts of the Pharisees, and all other legalists, then and now, to try to earn God’s favor. We will never favorably impress God. We can never put Him under obligation to us. If we would gain anything from God it will be on the basis of our unworthiness and on the basis of His grace. And the way that these things are obtained is not by our works, but by His grace, through faith. Faith, Jesus is saying, is operative only in the arena of grace and mercy, which is bestowed only on the unworthy. It is the grace of God, poured out freely upon sinners, which produces gratitude, and it is this gratitude which serves to motivate the recipient of grace to also bestow it on others. Thus, just as God has forgiven us of our sins against Him, solely on the basis of our confession of sin and repentance, so we are to forgive others on the same basis. It is not a greater faith that is required for us to do this, but a better understanding of what faith is and how it works.

The second story reminds us that the grace of God should not only be manifested in our freely forgiving others, but also should be seen in our worship and praise of God. Loving God and loving men are the two great commandments of our Lord, and of the Law. If gratitude for God’s grace should prompt us to forgive our fellow man, so it should motivate us to worship and praise God. The 9 lepers obeyed God and were cleansed, but they never recognized Jesus for who He was, nor did they every worship and praise Him. They were the recipients of God’s grace, and didn’t respond to it in faith, worship, and praise. What a perfect picture of the nation Israel. Over the centuries God had poured out His grace upon the nation. His blessings can be found throughout the Old Testament. And yet, for all the blessings of God on Israel, and for all their attention to obeying the law (feeble and failing as it was) the nation never, as a whole, came to worship and adore God, and when God was manifested in the flesh, they did not know it was Him. The nine ungrateful, unbelieving, unsaved lepers, while outwardly cleaned up, were still inwardly unclean. How sad to come so close to God and yet not know or worship Him. The one Samaritan leper differed little from the other nine, but in a very important area. He recognized that his healing was from God, through Jesus. He not only obeyed Jesus’ command, but He returned to worship and adore Him, to give Him thanks, because He had come to recognize Him as God’s salvation. Because of this, he was saved. This man is a picture, a prototype of all of those Gentiles who were to be saved by recognizing Jesus to be God’s salvation. This man did not have all of the benefits which the Jewish lepers did, all of the background, all of the exposure to the Scriptures, but He did come into contact with Jesus, and when He did he not only obeyed Him, He trusted in Him as the Messiah. And because of his faith, he was saved. The Jewish lepers obeyed and were blessed, but they were not saved. This man obeyed Jesus, too, but his salvation came as the result of his faith, not his works. So it is with all who find eternal life in Christ.

While the disciples preferred to think in terms of increasing their faith, Jesus chose to emphasize the arena of faith, and especially the grace of God and the gratitude which should result. It is God’s grace, received with gratitude, which should motivate our forgiving others (and all other ministry to men) and our worship of God. While legalism seeks to motivate men on the basis of fear and guilt, Christ motivates us on the basis of grace and gratitude. It is no accident that Paul introduces the applicational portion of the book of Romans with these words,

I URGE YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING AND HOLY SACRIFICE, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE OF WORSHIP (Romans 12:1).

Here, my friend, is the basis for all that we do in the Christian life—it is the grace and mercy of God, granted to those who are unworthy of it, which produces gratitude. It is on the basis of this grace and the resulting gratitude which we are to live, both in our service to men and in our worship of God. It occurred to me as I have reflected on the Lord's command to forgive and the apostles' petition for greater faith that the key to our obedience is not only in petition, but in praise. How often, when we pray, we ask God for something, rather than to praise Him for what He has given. How often we assume that the reason we have not acted in obedience is because we lack the faith to do so. Many times, I believe that we lack the gratitude to act, rather than the faith to act. Often, it is not that we lack the means to obey God, but that we lack the motivation to obey Him. Peter tells us in his second epistle that God has given us all that is necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), and this through the knowledge of Him. Let us therefore take praise much more seriously. Let us not seek petitioning God for that which we truly lack, but let us also grow in our grasp of all that He has given, and give thanks to Him. I challenge you to search the Scriptures and to study the subject of gratitude, looking up such words as "thanks," "thanksgiving," "thankful," and "praise."

*(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/54-putting-faith-perspective-luke-175-19>)*

### ***Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentator***

This week's story is not a lesson that any Christian can be healed if he or she simply has enough faith. The darker side of such an idea is to believe that any Christian who suffers from illness or ailment is lacking in faith. Certainly, the lesson is about the importance of faith, but it is much more a lesson about the need for gratefulness whenever God blesses us. Several times in the Gospels, Jesus heals people and pronounces that their faith has healed them. Examples include the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48) and blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). There is a double meaning for one of the words in these texts, for a term in Greek that is translated "has healed" is the same word that is translated "saved" in verses like John 3:17: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." Healing and salvation are both signs of being made well or whole. While we might be skeptical of some claims of healing in the church today, there is no need to dismiss them all. Our God is a God of healing, a lesson that Jesus taught repeatedly in his ministry. Miraculous healing is a gift of God; it is not something to be controlled by a human. Certain individuals might be instruments of God's healing power, but God is the one from whom healing comes. Although we may never have witnessed it, a miraculous healing of a physical ailment would be easy for us to understand. If a person had visible symptoms of leprosy that suddenly disappeared, then we would conclude that God had acted. But the Bible accounts of such miracles should push our thoughts beyond that of physical healing. They should push us to understand how our hearts need to be healed. Our hearts have been diseased by sin, hardened by selfishness, and broken by loss. Can they ever be made whole? Here is the lesson: the grateful man who had leprosy was healed in more than body; his heart was made whole as well. That's what the other nine missed—how sad! Healing begins with faith, with trusting God. We begin to heal when we yield our independence and throw ourselves into the arms of our Father. Healing is nurtured when we follow this faith with gratefulness as expressed through praise and thanksgiving. If a physician saves my life through skillful heart surgery, it would be natural to want to thank him or her. How much more should we turn and thank God, who heals our hearts and makes us whole for eternity!

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

1. Those who are most in need of the Lord's help often keep themselves at a distance (Luke 17:11-12)
2. We all need to cry out for the Lord's mercy (vs. 13)
3. It is as we obey the Lord's Word that He does His work in our lives (vs. 14)
4. Thankfulness for what God has done for us should be fervent and public (vss. 15-16)
5. Showing gratitude is often the last thing on our minds when we experience God's goodness to us (vss. 17-18)
6. Jesus gives assurance to all who turn to Him (vs. 19)