

the kind. If so, the miracles this leper may have heard of would almost tend to deter him from asking. He might reflect, Yes, he has rebuked fevers and palsies, he has given eyes to the blind and feet to the lame, he has even cast out devils—but my leprosy!—can he heal that? Ah, no, that's a different thing. And this would not be an unreasonable thought. Leprosy was not only the most dreaded and loathsome of all diseases, not only a hereditary disease, not only one that grew worse and worse to the end, not only beyond the power of the cleverest doctor to cure, but besides all this, it was peculiarly the curse of God (as in the cases of Miriam, Gehazi, Uzziah), and the Divine Law cut the leper off from all the privileges and ordinances of religion. What hope, then, was there that Jesus would heal such an one?

And yet this leper came and asked. Instead of standing afar off (like the ten, Luke 17, 12), uttering his dreadful warning cry, "Unclean! Unclean!" he comes and kneels down before Jesus, in full assurance that, if he will, he can make him clean. He had faith that there was power present to heal him. He was not quite certain about the will, but his asking at all shows he had hope even of that. But belief in the power was that which Jesus so often demanded. "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Matt. 9, 28. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Mark 9, 23. And so he did what must have horrified the bystanders—he put forth his hand and touched him whose touch was legal defilement, with the blessed words, "I will: be thou clean."

2. Why was the paralytic healed? This is a more complex case. For here the poor sufferer got two blessings, and seemingly got them for different reasons.

(a) Why did he get the forgiveness of his sins? We do not find in other cases that a miracle on the body was accompanied by a special revelation of grace to the soul. No doubt it was really so in many cases; but there is something unusually emphatic here. Christ's first word, on seeing the strange apparition coming down from the roof and laid at his feet, is, "Be of good cheer, child! thy sins are forgiven thee." (The literal rendering of Matthew's account, which at this point is the fullest.) Why "Be of good cheer?" and why, "Child!" Evidently the Lord saw the sorrow in the man's heart, and pitied him, and therefore began with a word of compassion. But what was his sorrow about? Surely about his sins. Surely he felt himself cut off from God, and all his bodily infirmities were as nothing to him in comparison with his sense of sin; and so Jesus puts together the word of cheer, the

word of favour ("child"), and the word of pardon.

(b) Why did he get the cure of his palsy? Now we are told by all three evangelists that Jesus marked the faith of the bearers. "Seeing their faith." It is true that this is connected with his word of forgiveness. But we cannot suppose their faith was a faith in his power to forgive, and their object in getting their patient through the roof to obtain pardon for his sins. As I read the narrative, Jesus, seeing their faith, was prepared to work the miracle they desired; but before doing so, he bestowed the higher spiritual blessing which the man himself so especially longed for.

I would, therefore, suggest three thoughts for ourselves and our classes. The power of the Lord is present to heal. How can it be brought down to those who need it?

1. If we need blessing ourselves, spiritual or temporal, pardon, or grace, or deliverance, or guidance, or provision, we must believe in the present power of Jesus, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." And we know, too, he is willing as well as able!

2. Also we must have a sense of our need—a consciousness not only that Jesus can give the blessing, but that we sorely want it. Otherwise there may be belief, but no earnestness. It is the poor and needy in their own estimation who will hear the word, "Be of good cheer, child!"

3. By our own faith and earnestness we may bring others to the feet of Jesus and claim his blessing for them too. It is a grand encouragement to teachers and ministers and missionaries and those who pray for others—"Jesus, seeing their faith, said, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.'"

BEREAN METHODS.

Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Give a short account of the events of the "connecting links" with the last lesson. . . . Explain about leprosy, palsy, "showing to the priest," Pharisees, doctors of the law, Galilee, Judea, "letting down through the tiling" couch, etc. . . . Give account of the two miracles of this lesson. . . . The various kinds of power shown by Christ in this lesson. . . . How leprosy represents sin. . . . What kinds of faith in this lesson. . . . How the salvation of a soul is here represented. . . . What is here taught concerning the way of coming to Christ. . . . Illustrate by the earnest efforts a sick person will take to gain health. . . . The transformation from sin to salvation illustrated by filthy rags in a paper-factory turned to a snowy whiteness. . . . Faith illustrated by the soldier who claimed and received a captain's rank because the emperor called him "Captain!"