



A leper came to him begging him, and kneeling he said to him, "If you choose, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. After sternly warning him he sent him away at once, saying to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." But he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word, so that Jesus could no longer go into a town openly, but stayed out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Introductory Prayer: Lord, thank you for this time together. I need you in my life and the life of my family. It is easy to let activities overwhelm me so that I lose track of you. You fade into the distance, and sometimes sin grows closer. But I know you are always there for me with your unconditional love. Thank you. I love you and long to put you first in my life.

Petition: Lord, wash me from my sins and help me to be detached from them.

1. If You Choose: A leper approaches and falls before Jesus. "If you choose, you can make me clean." This leper couldn't free himself from his disease any more than we can free ourselves from our sin. Leprosy was a fatal disease. It separated a man from his family and drove him outside his village to lonely places. Leprosy is a symbol for sin. Sin separates us from God and from others. We need to approach Jesus with that same humility and trust we see in the leper. This story is for us, to show us Christ's heart. It

reveals his love and his desire to free us from sin. Am I convinced of the ugliness of all sin and how it defaces our souls?

2. I Do Choose: Jesus chose to heal the leper. Not only did he heal him, he touched him. He reached out to the loneliness of that man, and he touched his life to cure him of the disease. This reveals Christ's heart so beautifully. Our sin never drives him away from us. He is always ready and willing to come to our aid if only we would cry out for his help. Am I capable of opening all of the inner wounds of my sins to Our Lord so that he can heal me, wash me clean and make me whole again?

3. Jesus Wants Us Free: Sin keeps us from being who we were meant to be. "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin" (John 8:34). Jesus was free from sin and so was free to love and serve others. He wasn't compelled by greed or anger. He wasn't moved by pride or impeded by laziness. He was free to love, and he loved to the extent of dying on a cross. Sin closes us in on ourselves. We get absorbed in ourselves and others take the back seat – or no seat at all. How often do we say "no" to others and turn a blind eye to their needs? Isn't it sin that blinds us and selfishness that impedes us from loving others as Christ loves us? Christ can free us from sin so that we are empowered to love as he loves.

Conversation with Christ: Jesus, I want to be free, but I need your help. Without you, I can do nothing. Help me to trust you and to turn to you. Don't let me go off on my own as if I could keep fighting without you. Free me to love you. Free me to love others.

Resolution: I will pray Psalm 51 for myself and my loved ones.