

There was something so very special about the times when the Teacher healed someone from leprosy. Most other healings had to do with a particular area of the body, but the serious cases of leprosy dealt with a deterioration over the entire body. Yet Jesus was able to restore them whole, even to the point regenerating appendages that were missing. By healing them He also reestablished relationships for them, as they were no longer required to be in social isolation.

Naturally, I could see a spiritual parallel to the physical decline associated with this disease. In our mission to save souls, I got the sense souls that kept shrinking and shrinking until there was almost nothing left at all¹. I began to expand the vision of my mission as an effort not just to save souls in the standard sense, but to grow them and save them from vanishing.

I saw people who turned away from God as having bits of their souls lose feeling² and fall away. I found a purpose in helping these distressed souls to become re-grown, for I knew that God considered the healing of a soul more important than healing a body. But every person has a responsibility to try to take control of their thoughts and actions.

The Teacher Himself spoke of that need for control in this way:

If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. And if your right hand or foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell³.

If we look at this from the spiritual point of view, it seems that when we go against the will of God, we are essentially cutting off portions of our soul. Jesus didn't actually expect us to butcher ourselves because we have impure thoughts. But if we don't work with God to combat them, then we putting our souls in danger. Of course, I don't think of the soul as having arms or legs; it is shapeless in one sense, but I imagine that it has various spiritual appendages that are defined by the shape of a person's character. Unless we come to the Great Healer, our soul diminishes as its spirit oozes out through the cuts and bruises that it encounters as we go through life.

I am reminded of how the nation of Israel grew but never completed its effort to settle into the complete space that God established and promised to them. In at least two instances⁴ the loss of territory, or "appendages", was signified by the ripping of a garment into pieces. The nation was finally totally dispersed, though a remnant was gathered by God and returned. It gives me great comfort to know that the "prodigal soul" will also be able to return – to the size God intends it to be.

1. Matthew 10:28: Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

2. see 1 Timothy 4:2
3. Matthew 5:29-31; Matthew 18:8-9
4. See 1 Samuel 15:24-29 and 1 Kings 11:28-30

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