**YOU MUST BE MAD !**

Anton van Leeuwenhoek of Netherlands (1632-1723).

Louis Pasteur of France (1822-1895).

Ignaz Semmelweis of Hungary (1818-1865).

Have you ever heard of these men? Probably Dr. Pasteur, but probably not Dr. van Leeuwenhoek or Dr. Semmelweis. Let me tell you their sad, but true, life stories. Then let me tell you the sad, but true, life story from an incident in the life of Dr. Luke.

Anton van Leeuwenhoek never dreamed of being a doctor, but he had a very curious quest for knowledge which led to an amazing medical discovery. Working in a textile factory his job was to count the number of threads in a fabric. To do this he created a small 2 inch magnifying glass that allowed him to enlarge the garment 275 times its normal size. His curiosity expanded to other fields, including microbiology. He began scraping enamel from his teeth and observing it under his “microscope.” He is credited with being the first man to actually observe germs. From this he began publishing his findings over the next decades in the journal of the Royal Society of London. He became known as the “Father of Microbiology.” From this man began the creation of powerful microscopes that have opened a whole new world of medical discoveries. This sets up our studies of Pasteur and Semmelweis.

Louis Pasteur, along with his brilliant assistant and wife Marie Pasteur, used the microscope in his laboratory to search for cures that were ravaging the world in the 19th century. He is the chemist and microbiologist that perfected the process later named after him, pasteurization. This process of heat and cold treatments kills germs which cause diseases in milk and other foods. He also worked on cures for infectious diseases caused by germs on surgical instruments by sterilizing them between uses (think of how many died in the Civil War from the operating table, not the battlefield). Most doctors thought him mad for such a “theory,” but his friend and British surgeon Joseph Lister believed in him and experimented with this and discovered it to be true. He later studied how bacteria caused cholera, and developed tests on anthrax disease. He pioneered the discovery of both rabies and diphtheria. Most doctors of his day thought him crazy for his “Germ Theory” proposals. Who’s laughing now?

Ignaz Semmelweis died in an insane asylum at the young age of 42. He was ridiculed by the scientific community for proposing the theory that hand hygiene (i.e. hand washing) was critical to stopping the spread of disease. After graduating from the prestigious medical school of the University of Vienna in 1844 he worked for Vienna General Hospital. But due to the fact he was Jewish he was not given a position in the main fields of medicine. The only area open to him was obstetrics, a lowly practice among physicians in the mid-19th century. There were two wards in the maternity section of the hospital, one run by doctors, the other run by midwives. The doctors were ordered to do autopsies during the day, then when mothers went into labor they would rush to deliver the baby. Semmelweis began to observe that mothers were dying at a far greater rate in the doctor’s ward then in the midwife ward. Puerperal Fever, an infection caused by streptococcus bacteria was killing the postpartum mothers. The only difference was that the doctors first worked on dead bodies, while midwife’s did not. The doctors were spreading the disease from corpse to patient. There was seven times the mortality rate in the doctor’s ward. He taught his fellow obstetricians to wash their hands between examinations. Presto! Mortality decreased rapidly.

So, on May 15, 1850 he stepped to the podium of the Vienna Medical Society lecture hall and told his fellow doctors three words, “*Wash Your Hands*!” They laughed him to scorn. He was run out of the hospital as a madman. Old prejudices die hard.

1,700 to 1,800 years before these scientists gave the world their discoveries, Dr. Luke, whom Paul labeled “*the beloved physician*” (Colossians 4:14), wrote the detailed account of Paul’s defenses before the Roman officials Felix, Festus and Agrippa (Acts 23-26). During his trial before the Roman Procurator Porcius Festus and King Agrippa II, Paul made a persuasive case for Christ and Christianity. His apologetic arguments were driving home the powerful truth that Jesus was indeed the Savior and that they needed to be saved from their sins! At this point listen to Dr. Luke’s own words in Acts 26:24-29,

*24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “****Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!****” 25 But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe.” 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.” 29 And Paul said, “I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains.”*

It wasn’t Paul that was on trial that day, but Festus and Agrippa! Instead of passing judgment on their prisoner, he was indicting them, then convicting them, of crimes against God. They stood condemned as charged. But if they will only plead “guilty” and become believers in the resurrected Lord, there could yet be mercy from the court.

King Agrippa began wavering, feeling the full weight of Paul’s logic. “*You almost persuade me to become a Christian*!” This sent Festus into a loud “Objection!” He stopped the trial by pronouncing, “***Paul, you are mad***!” But Paul was not crazy. He was never more in control of his senses than at that moment.

Have you ever been called Mad? Crazy? Weird? Irrational? Crackpot? I have too. Welcome to the club. We try to teach a worldly person the gospel and then brace ourselves. The wisdom of the world calls us a fool (I Cor. 1:10). Peter warned that we would be called, “*strange*” – so he told us to “*arm yourselves*” with the mind of Christ to accept the ridicule and keep on preaching (see I Pet. 4:1-5)!

Drs. Leeuwenhoek, Pasteur and Semmelweis were called mad scientists in their day for believing germs are an invisible enemy that spreads disease and kills the body. They have now been vindicated. In our day Christians are called mad for believing sin is an invisible enemy that spreads spiritual disease that kills the soul. Just as they were not vindicated in their day, so we will not be vindicated in our day. But on Judgment Day Jesus will bring to light the truth we have believed and taught. Every knee will bow and tongue confess Christ as Lord (Phil. 2:5-11; Matt. 7:21-23).

Until tomorrow… Call me crazy, but I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Believe, and then sing, “I’m not ashamed to own my Lord, nor to defend His cause…”

I love you.

Rick