

SIMON PETER'S MOTHER-IN LAW

Mt. 8:14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. ... Lk. 4:38 And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her. 39 And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them. ... Mk. 1:29 And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them.

Throughout the Gospels, there are many unnamed characters, both men and women. There was, for example, the Magi, the shepherds from Bethlehem, the sisters of Jesus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the widow who gave her two mites, the criminals crucified with Jesus, the soldier who pierced the Saviour with a spear. ... One of the first unnamed characters is Simon Peter's mother-in-law. Yes, he did have a wife. In Roman Catholic teaching, Peter became the first pope and was said to be unmarried. They assume that since his wife's name is not given in the Gospels, she has died, and Peter was a widower. However, that cannot be because Paul later recorded how Peter's wife often accompanied her husband in the Lord's work, 1 Cor. 9:5 Have we not power to lead about a sister, *a wife*, as well as other apostles, and as *the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*

The background to our study took place on a Sabbath. Earlier in the day, the Lord Jesus and His disciples had attended the synagogue in Capernaum, on the north-western shore of the Sea of Galilee, Mk. 1:21 And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. This local Man from Nazareth, this carpenter-turned-rabbi, ... the people in the synagogue had never heard anyone expound the Word of God as He did. Even the very way He *spoke* the truth, His presence *demonstrated* the truth. ... His demeanour, His delivery ... Here was *the Truth preaching the truth*, as these Jewish men and women had never heard it before!

After He had finished, a demon-possessed man stood up in defiance. In all likelihood this man regularly attended the synagogue each Sabbath. He probably wasn't the most intellectual, but nevertheless, he would have been circumcised on the eighth day. He would have had celebrated his bar-mitzvah when he was thirteen. He had a right to be there, and he was accepted. He would have listened to many a preacher, but he couldn't stand to listen to Jesus! The demon who possessed him shouted, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God (v:24). ... However, in this place where sin abounded, grace did much more

abound (Rom. 5:20) for such was the Saviour's power as He presented the Word of God, the demon was silenced and subsequently exorcised from the man.

When the service ended about noon, Jesus departed from the synagogue and walked the short distance along the street in Capernaum to the family home of Simon Peter, which he shared with his brother Andrew. There, lying on a bed was Peter's mother-in-law, seriously ill with a fever (v.30). This was more than an ordinary 'fever', a 'high temperature' for in Doctor Luke's estimation, he described her as being taken [*afflicted*] with a great [μέγας] fever [πιπρετός] (Lk. 4:38)! ... She was 'burning up', and nobody could do anything for her!

No sooner had Jesus stepped inside the home, they informed Him of her perilous condition. There wasn't a moment to waste, and they brought Him *immediately* to where Simon's mother-in-law was lying, and Luke describes how they besought him for her (Lk. 4:38). They begged and pleaded with Him on her behalf to heal her. He entered the room where she lay desperately ill on her bed, he came and took her by the hand, and [*He*] lifted her up (Mk. 1:31). ... The Saviour placed His arms around her as she lay lifeless and helpless for she could do nothing for herself. He personally reached out and *touch*ed her, - *the touch of the Master's hand*! He took her by the hand. The great Physician entered and met her need immediately and completely.

Does Jesus heal? Yes, He heals. Where it is His will and His purpose He heals, and many of us can testify He heals. Our Saviour physically healed when He was here on earth, and He physically heals today, as He healed this seriously ill woman, Peter's mother-in-law.

Isaiah prophesied in relation to an even greater 'healing', Is. 53:5 the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes *we are healed*. ... He was referring to *spiritual* healing, as the psalmist also declared, Ps. 103:2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: ³ Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; ⁴ Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. ... Sin is the reason we have illness for illness is the consequence of our fallen nature. However, it would be incorrect to say, - as some do, - every illness we have since we trusted Christ is punishment. ... That is not necessarily true for as long as we are in this sinful world, we are susceptible to its sinful effects ... and as a result, *good* people also fall ill.

Before Adam and Eve sinned, there was no sickness, but since sin entered illness and death are an integral part of the human experience. ... Sin results in

death which is the enemy of God's original design and the only means to conquer sin and death is through the Lord Jesus Christ, ^{I Cor. 15:54} when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵ O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... ⁵⁷ thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus died on the cross to deal with our sin and its punishment ... to take away our sin, and to remove its consequences so that in and through Him death, - which came because of sin, - is transformed to become the gateway to Glory. In his epistle Peter uses the analogy, ^{I Peter 2:24} Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: *by whose stripes ye were healed*. Paul wrote similarly, ^{Eph. 2:4} God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us *Imade us alive* together with Christ. ... Just as there was nothing Peter's mother-in-law could have done for her condition, there was nothing any of us could have done to bring the spiritual healing necessary for our eternal salvation. The hymnwriters explain, "He healeth me, He healeth me, By His own word He healeth me ... And I from all the curse am free, Since Christ, my Saviour, healeth me". ... "Jehovah lifted up His rod; O Christ it fell on Thee ... Thy tears, Thy blood, beneath it flowed, Thy bruising healeth me". ... "Jesus loves me, - He Who died, Heaven's gate to open wide; He will wash away my sin, Let His little child come in". ... "Christ is the Answer to my every need; Christ is the Answer, He is my Friend indeed" ...

And when He entered Peter's mother-in-law's home, He knew exactly where the need was and He immediately went to her bedside, - **no hesitation**. ... Do you want to know where Peter's wife was? She was on her knees, holding her mother's hand, mopping her mother's fevered brow ... but when Jesus came, she committed her mother to the Saviour for *He* took her hand and she was in His care, and immediately the fever departed ... "He touched me ... Something happened and now I know, He touched me, and made me whole". ... There was **no hesitation**, and there was **no interruption** for such was the Saviour's authority and glory. There was no demonic presence as in the synagogue. There was no one interfering. There was silence as Jesus knelt by the side of the bed and held this woman's hand, and by His absolute authority the fever immediately departed. It disappeared. She was as if she had never been ill.

That is a picture of the promise of Glory, ^{II Cor. 4:17} our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸ While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the

things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. There is coming a day when this earthly ‘dwelling’ will be torn down for we shall not need it anymore. Presently, as Paul describes, in this *[body]* we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (II Cor. 5:2). ... He used similar language when writing to the Romans, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23) ... To be with the Saviour is our desire and hope.

And when that day arrives, I Cor. 15:52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ... and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed ... The new body will replace the old for ⁵³ this *[old]* corruptible *[body]* must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality ... And at the dawn of the new heaven and the new earth, when He descends from Heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2), He shall wipe away all tears from *[our]* eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

When Jesus walked into this woman’s room, what a wonderful change in her life was wrought when He dealt with her by His grace. ... There was **no hesitation, no interruption, and no restriction** for regardless of how ill she was, Jesus healed her. If she was at that point where her eyelids were about to close in death, He raised her up. That was the reason He went to her home that day! He went to where she was because she couldn’t have come to Him. He took her hand in His ... *that* same hand which in the beginning had created the heavens and the earth ... the same hand which would be nailed to the cross ... He took her hand in His. Lying there, her eyes opened as she felt Him holding her hand ... and then He put His arm around her and lifted her up. His grace was sufficient, and His strength was perfect in her weakness (II Cor. 12:9).

But that is not the end of the story. Mark tells us, - for Peter was there ... and he told it to Mark, - the mother-in-law got up, she went into the kitchen and she prepared a full meal for Jesus, Simon, Andrew, James, John ... and anyone else who was there ... those big, healthy, hungry men, all needing to be fed! She had a new life because of the Lord Jesus. She was transformed and converted because of Him. ... “Jesus alone is the Giver ... Glory to Jesus forever!”

We didn’t hear about her before this incident and neither do we hear about her after this incident, but what a legacy she left! In years to come, if people were to remember anything about us, what would it be? ...

In the evening, after the Sabbath was ended and after the sun had set, multitudes came to Jesus for healing and to be set free from the demonic powers ... and look where they met Him, ³³ And all the city was gathered together *at the door*. ... He met them at the door of the house where Peter's mother-in-law lived, ³⁴ And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him. ... And then, the next morning, ³⁵ rising up a great while before day, he went out, - in other words, Jesus stayed with Peter's mother-in-law all night! ... What a privilege! What a joy! ... She had the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Saviour and Redeemer in her home!

“Little is much when God is in it!” ... In God's plan, He used the circumstances of this woman and what belonged to her for His glory, ^{Jn. 3:30} He must increase, but I must decrease. ... “To God be the glory, great things He hath done” ... Peter's mother-in-law in the background, in her service to the Master. May the Lord encourage us in following her example!