

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

Discipleship Sacrifices

By

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Matthew 8:14-22

Wherever the Lord Jesus went in His public ministry good things happened. Although he spoke some harsh words for unrepentant sinners he never called down judgment upon anyone. As the scripture says, **for God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. John 3:17 (NASB)**

In our scripture today we see how his touch and word brought blessings of wholeness to many. Peter's mother-in-law was instantly healed of a fever that had put her in bed. Others who are unnamed were delivered from demonic possession and made well from various bodily ailments and afflictions.

I. What Is The Significance Of These Cures?

A. Before discussing the significance of these cures I want to draw some conclusions about marriage. The first thing I want to say is that this scripture confirms that Peter was a married man. Only married men have a mother-in-law.

Peter's mother-in-law either lived with him and his wife or she was a welcome guest in their home. Jesus countenanced the married state of Peter by showing kindness to his mother-in-law. The Church of Rome has no support from Christ or from Peter in its insistence on a celibate clergy. Paul states in **1 Cor. 9:5 Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?**

Paul alone of all the apostles was unmarried, and that was by his own choice, not due to any compulsion or rule of ministerial celibacy.

⁴Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Heb. 13:4 (NASB)

Jesus also made reference to marriage when he was asked about divorce. He said, **"Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, ⁵and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH' ? Matt. 19:4-5.** There certainly was no countenancing of homosexual unions. Marriage was to be between a male and a female.

As soon as Peter's mother-in-law was cured of her fever she arose and began to wait on Jesus. She knew her healing was because of Him. The Lord did not command her to wait upon him. She wanted to. This was her talent and this was her way of showing her thanks for his care for her. The love of Jesus draws from us a response of love, a desire to serve him.

B. Matthew sees in the many healings Jesus did a fulfillment of Isaiah 53. In our scripture passage it says, **¹⁶When evening came, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. ¹⁷This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES."**

Matt. 8:16-17

A careful study of Isaiah 53 shows that the suffering of the Righteous One who was cut off out of the land of the living was a vicarious and substitutionary sacrifice for guilty sinners. **He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.**

⁶ **All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.**

Isa. 53:5 -6

What we can see from this is that guilt and sin affects more than the soul, it affects the body also.

Christ came to reconcile man to God through his atoning sacrifice of himself. The salvation he brings restores the sinner to wellness, both spiritually and physically. Salvation is both an event and a process that brings healing to both soul and body. Sin when it is finished brings forth death but salvation when it is finished brings forth perfect wholeness. The reason we do not always see that bodily wholeness in this life is because none of us has yet achieved the state of perfect holiness in these mortal bodies, which would assure us of perfect health. But that day is coming for all who belong to Christ.

The Westminster divines framed a statement which explains this process. Please turn in the Trinity hymnal to page 856 and look at Chapter 13 on Sanctification: *They, who are once effectually called, and regenerated, having a new heart, and, a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his word and spirit dwelling in them: the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the lord.*

This sanctification is throughout, in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part; whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

In which war, although the remaining corruption, for a time, may much prevail; yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome; and so, the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of the lord. (COF XIII: 1-3)

What this states is that none of us can expect to have perfect holiness in these flesh and blood bodies. It explains that the Spirit of God, who regenerates the soul, commences a program of sanctification designed to produce God-like holiness in both body and soul. This is completed before any person passes into the presence of God. In that glorious moment the salvation process will be perfected. There will be no spot or wrinkle in Christ's bride. She will be perfect in holiness and because perfect in holiness perfect in health and strength.

The cures of Jesus during his public ministry are evidences of his Messianic salvation powers and also tokens of the health and wholeness he brings sinners who hear His Word and are touched by him.

II. Discipleship Sacrifices -Verses 18-22

A. As you can well imagine, as Jesus did these miracles of healing people flocked to him. People were impressed and wanted to have this healing for themselves or others. He never charged a fee. His services were free for the asking. And he never had a case he couldn't handle, and he had all kinds. So it isn't surprising that men would come to him and offer to become his disciples and follow him. It was at this

point that he wanted to make sure that men were not ill-informed about the degree of commitment and the sacrifices they must be willing to make to be his disciple.

In this passage of scripture we have the record of two men who came to Jesus offering to be his disciple. I think it is very important that we see what our Lord told them.

The first man was a scribe. He was an educated man, a recognized member of the religious community who had attained a place in the Jewish hierarchy. He was one of the interpreters and teachers of the Law. He no doubt earned his livelihood as a professional scribe. He came to Jesus and said to him **“Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” Vs.19.**

Now Jesus did not question his sincerity, and remember, the scribes and Pharisees were the men who plotted with the chief priests to get rid of Jesus. But he does say something to the man, which was designed to cause the man to think twice before becoming his disciple. He said, **“The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”**

This scribe was probably comfortable in his present position. Jesus implies that should he begin following him he may not have that same comfortable situation. If the Master did not have a home to call his own, who can say that his disciple is guaranteed a steady income and a home to call his own. It will be a life of faith.

None of his disciples ever went hungry or lacked the necessities of life but Jesus doesn't promise to his disciples a life of comfort and ease without any sacrifices. If this scribe thought because Jesus was doing miracles of healing that the money must be flowing in and faith would be without risk or sacrifice, then he better carefully consider Christ's word to him.

He doesn't know from one day to the next where he will spend the night. Do you still want to follow me knowing that you may lack the security you have in your present situation?

Jesus wants us to know that becoming his disciple involves living by faith. To follow Jesus may lead to a pilgrimage over uncharted territory and there may be difficulties and sacrifices to make before we get to our heavenly home. We will need to trust him to meet our needs. And he sets the example for us. In his public ministry he met with opposition and didn't have a permanent place to lay down his head at night. Before becoming a disciple a person needs to count the cost. A person should want to follow Jesus Christ because of the salvation he offers, the blessings of peace with God when one's sin is cleansed and forgiven, and for the gift of a glorious, eternal life in heaven when this life ends, not for the world's idea of success and security. A person must be motivated by Christ's love for him in sacrificing himself for his salvation and he should want to respond to that love by taking up his cross and following him.

B. The second man was desirous of following Jesus too but he had one small request, **“Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.”**

We don't know if the man's father was at the point of death or just quite old and not expected to live much longer. But his father was very special to him and he would like during his dad's remaining days to have quality time with him and then see him laid to rest before commencing a life of discipleship. That would seem to be a very reasonable request, does it not? Doesn't the scripture say, Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the earth? Wasn't this man doing the right thing? Wouldn't you expect that the Lord would honor his request and tell him to go along and spend time with his Dad and then begin his discipleship after his father died? But that isn't what Jesus said to him.

Jesus said to the man, **“Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”**

A lot is contained in those few words. Jesus will not take second place to anyone. He is the Lord, the holy Redeemer. Father and mother are to be honored but they do not take priority over Jesus Christ. When the call comes to serve the Lord there is nothing or anyone who should be put ahead of that call. The

urgency of the gospel is greater than any other consideration. And the Lord gave to this man the authority and the grace to do the right thing. The right thing was to **FOLLOW ME!** He could pray for his father. He could even visit his father and witness to him, but to put off following Jesus could be to not follow him at all, for if a man will be Christ's disciple he must be willing to forsake father and mother, wife and children, sisters and brother and, yes, even hate his own life, or he cannot be Christ's disciple.

To follow Christ is a call to a total, unqualified commitment. Any lesser commitment is no commitment at all. The man who has any excuse at all will be sure to fall away. The call to discipleship is not a call to an easy life without any conflict or struggle. The Devil will make sure you are tested in your resolve and commitment. I like what Matthew Henry says, *an unwilling mind never wants an excuse.*"

Those who join the church and who have not made that commitment will soon join the ranks of the missing at church on Sunday. There will always be some good enough excuse to keep the uncommitted man away, who puts his family first, or his job first, or his hobby first, or his favorite sport first, or sleep first. His resolve will be further and further weakened and the desire to follow Christ can fade out of his mind and heart. He may become subject to Christ's words in Revelation to the Laodicean church, ¹⁵ **I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.** ¹⁶ **So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.** Rev. 3:15-16 Who would want that to be said of him?

And what does Jesus mean, **allow the dead to bury their own dead?** Priests in the Old Testament were prohibited from doing such work. The work of proclaiming the gospel is the greatest, grandest work in the world. There is nothing to compare to it. It ministers the forgiveness of sins and everlasting life to lost and dying men and women. Rightly did our Lord tell him to let the dead bury their own dead. His calling was to minister to those that are dead in trespasses and sins, who need to hear the gospel in order to pass from death to life. **Follow me!** Jesus told the man.

And he says that to everyone here today. **Follow Me! I am the way, the truth and the life.** Come to me and find what I alone can give to you -- everlasting life and a home in heaven. I invite you to come to Him today and become his disciple.

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