

FIRST HEALING AND THEN SERVICE

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever.
So He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.”
Matthew 8:14, 15.*

This event took place at Capernaum, but Peter’s residence was at Bethsaida, for we read, “Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.” How came Peter to have a house at Capernaum? Poor fishermen do not often have two houses. May not the conjecture be highly probable that, finding the Lord Jesus Christ was frequently at Capernaum, Peter thought it best to have a dwelling there, that he might always be present when the Master was preaching and that he might do his best to entertain Him between visits? I like to think that the servant changed his place of abode for his Master’s sake. Would it not be well if many Christian people had some little consideration when they are choosing a house, as to whether it will be convenient for the hearing of the Word of God? Do you not think that a great many professors look chiefly for every other kind of advantage and, when they have virtually made their choice, they *afterwards* enquire into the very important item of their nearness to a place where they may worship God, enjoy Christian fellowship and be useful?

There are some in this congregation who have moved to this part of town to become members of an earnest, prayerful Church. Such Believers feel that the first consideration in life must be the health of their souls, the benefiting of their children and their usefulness in promoting the cause of Christ. When they have made the selection of a house in that way and for that reason, they have found a blessing resting upon them according to the promise, “Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Some who have forgotten this rule and, like Lot, chosen the well-watered plains of Sodom, have lived to regret their choice. Although the house may be commodious and the position convenient, these advantages will not make up for losing the means of Grace and missing opportunities of holy service. When Mephibosheth lived at Lodebar, the place of no pasture, David fetched him up to Jerusalem where he, himself, delighted to dwell. It would be well for many a limping Brother if he made a like change.

Thus, before we actually cross the threshold of Peter’s house, we learn a lesson. Our Lord Jesus Christ had been having a heavy day—He had been to the synagogue and He had preached and had worked miracles. He had moved in the midst of a great throng and now, as the Sabbath was drawing to a close, He needed refreshment—and it was most convenient that Peter had a house into which the Lord could go. I do not suppose it was a stately mansion. Probably it was little better than a hut, for Peter was only a fisherman. But the Lord Jesus made it honorable enough by entering it. Where the king is there, the palace is!

Though our Lord went to Peter’s house to rest, He did not find it free from trouble. It was a hospital before He made it a palace. Peter’s wife’s mother was on her bed prostrate with “a great fever.” Typhus of the worst kind was burning out her life. However good a man may be, he will not escape trial in the flesh. You may have a house full of sanctity and full of sickness at the same time. We find it true, while we are here, that “the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” The regenerated spirit has risen into life, but the body lingers under the power of death and its attendants, pain and weakness. Certain persons attribute all sickness to the devil and impute special sin to those who are grievously afflicted. This teaching is as false as it is cruel! “Whom the Lord loves He chastens.”

I can bear witness that some of the saintliest persons I have ever known have been bedridden for years—and others in whom the very image of Christ was conspicuous, from whose lips all the country round gathered up the choicest sentences of holy experience—have been invalids for 20 or 30 years at a stretch. Our sicknesses are of the Lord’s appointing how-

ever painful they may be and we may, without doubt, say, as David did, “The Lord has chastened me sorely.” “Lord, he whom You love is sick,” is still a Truth of God! Even Peter’s house, though it was the abode of a chosen saint, and a leading Apostle whose very shadow would one day heal the sick, had a terrible fever in it which threatened death. Yet Jesus came where the fever polluted the air. If the disease had come, the Great Physician had come also! We are not alarmed at the Cross if Christ comes with it!

Notice, with regard to our Lord’s entering the house of Peter, that He came there with His three most favored disciples. If you read the statement given by Mark in his first chapter, you may be somewhat surprised to discover Peter, James and John there. We read—“When they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.” Whether Andrew was there or not I cannot tell—he was joint proprietor of the house—but he is not mentioned as being there. Whenever you see Peter, James and John present, together with the Lord, you may look for special wonders. These were the men who beheld the Lord’s exceeding Glory on the Mount. These were nearest to the agony of Gethsemane. These were admitted to behold the raising from the dead of the young maiden when the Lord sent away all the gathered company. To this most select triumvirate did Jesus display Himself as He did not to the rest of the Apostles—and much less to the world! Did not the Savior thus give us notice that the healing of Peter’s wife’s mother was a choice manifestation of His power and Grace—and was intended to convey a lesson to the choicer spirits among His followers? I think so and, therefore, I shall so use the incident. To you who love Jesus much and live in special nearness to Him, there is a voice from the bed of her who rose from the fever to minister to her Lord! You, also, are called from your weakness that you may pay personal service to Him who heals all your diseases!

Yet though Jesus and Peter and James and John were there, nothing is before you but a family group, a scene in a house. True religion displays its greatest marvels around the domestic hearth. A fisherman’s mother-in-law becomes an historic person through the Lord’s touching her. What glory Jesus casts upon common things! With what grandeur He invests a room in a poor man’s house! A fisherman’s hut becomes the headquarters of the Captain of our salvation! He heals a woman within its doors and, before long, “all the city was gathered together at the door.” O that we may see the same—our own dear ones saved—and then the whole city awakened to seek Divine healing!

We will arrange our discourse under the headings of four observations.

I. First, let us observe that IT MAY BE WE HAVE SOME IN OUR HOUSE WHO NEED THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD JESUS. One in Peter’s house could not as yet minister to Christ, for she needed that Christ should minister to her! She was sick of a great fever and quite prostrated by it, so as to be altogether unable to rise. Let us think whether we have not some about us who are *spiritually* sick in a way which may be likened to a great fever.

What would the fever represent? Those who are in a fever represent, *spiritually*, those who are *on fire with sin*. The original word for “fever” bears a close relation to the word, “fire.” The world’s great poet speaks of “the fiery fever.” A burning heat inflames the body, quickens the pulse to an unnatural pace, parches the mouth and tongue and dries up the entire system. Those who have a fever in their souls are hot after sin, dried up with evil desires, inflamed with evil lusts. What unhealthy energy many even show in the indulgence of their passions, or in the pursuit of their ambitions—they are so inflamed with their desires that their life is consumed! Have we not seen some whom we dearly loved, afflicted with this fierce distemper?

Touch upon certain points and we discover that they are diseased in reference to them—they are in such an inflamed state of mind they cannot be made to think coolly or judge calmly and they grow excited and angry. Their touch is that of a fevered hand. Their whole nature is burning with the fire of sin. Such persons are not always inflamed thus—they are frequently gentle and tractable—so much so, that we are filled with hope concerning them! Often fever is intermittent—the patient is hot at one time and cold at another—and in many sinners the fever of sin is intermittent in its symptoms. They are not always drinking—sometimes they are sober for a long period and express themselves as deeply penitent for former falls. What pleasant company, what fine genial spirits they are at such times! The fever returns and nothing can restrain them—they drink, even, to delirium! Alas, the misery which is thus caused! Others are gentle and loving for a season—then they suddenly give way to anger and there is no telling what they will say or do. When once the fever is on them, they become as inflamed as ever!

We know persons from whom the heat of the fever is so long gone that we think, surely, they are healed, but, alas, their cool times are only a pause between the attacks—and the evil returns with increased energy! Their goodness is as

the morning cloud and as the early dew—it comes hopefully, but it disappears utterly. We have mistaken the period between the fever fits for the calm of a cure, but it has not turned out to be so. They have, perhaps, been even worse after their hopeful times than they were before! Like he from whom the evil spirit went out on his own accord, only to return, again, and bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself to enter in and dwell there. Have you not such cases under your own roofs, or among your next of kin—poor souls inflamed with the terrible heat of sin?

These fevered people are *frequently very restless*. It is one effect of the fever that the man cannot lie long either on this side or on the other, but turns to and fro. Even his sleep is broken—neither by day nor by night can he find rest. He is dried up and feels as weak as if he were brought into the dust of death and utterly dissolved. His experience is not so much *pain* as something *worse* than pain—an utter absence of rest. Have you not friends who, in this sense, are feverish? I had almost said I hope they are so, if they are, indeed, under the power of sin—there are signs of *life* where unrest abounds! We know young men with happy homes who cannot be content. They seem resolved to break their mothers' hearts and their fathers know not what to do with them. Nothing pleases them, they are always unsettled. They have been put to half-a-dozen businesses, already, and have left each one of them—they are now longing for a foreign country, or for enlistment in the army, or for *anything* other than their present calling.

We have known them go to the colonies and come back again, finding nothing there. A sea voyage was to cure them, but, alas, a sinner on land is a sinner at sea! The malady is inward and needs change of *self* rather than change of *place*. Under the influence of the fever of sin, men wish and do not know what they wish. They are like a rolling thing before the whirlwind, or as waves of the sea driven with the wind and tossed about—no part of them seems to be at rest—a sort of madness possesses them. Above all, there is a restlessness about them in reference to sin. They sin, but they are not pleased, and after they have sinned, they are eaten up by remorse, a remorse, however, which is not practically operative—for they go back to sin, again, flying like the moth to the candle where they have already burned their wings. Such persons often become irritable towards their friends when checked in their wrong doing and even become, at last, like Pashur in the book of Jeremiah—a terror to themselves and to their friends!

I may be treading upon tender ground in all this. I believe my words are true to the letter. I shall ask Christian people who have not this heavy trouble to be very thankful and to pray to God for those who have. With those dear friends who have to endure the sore affliction of having such in their family, I desire to sympathize and to encourage them to bring these feverish spirits to the Lord Jesus by prayer and faith—that in them the parable of the prodigal may be literally fulfilled.

One symptom of a fever is that a man *loses appetite for that which would be good for him*. Some of our unconverted friends have no taste for the Gospel. We cannot easily induce them to come to hear it. If you could get them under the sound of the Word of God, you would sit and pray and even agonize for them while the Truth was being preached! But, alas, they will not come near! They have no taste, no liking, no care for heavenly things. The thing they most require is that for which they have the least desire! Yet, fear not, *Jesus* can give them appetite and everything else which is necessary to a perfect cure!

On the other hand, a fevered patient often *feels a great thirst* which he cannot, by any means, satisfy. He longs to drink and drink again, and with all his drinking the heat is not abated. Sometimes the sick man *has an appetite for what he must not taste*. He craves after the most injurious and even unnatural things! He prefers foods which would be most pernicious. So is it with unconverted ones when under the full power of sin—they are eager enough to hear a godless lecture, or to listen to opinions which are the opposite of the Truth of God! They would go through any hardship to indulge their passions and sacrifice any amount to be allowed their desires. As the horseleech cries, “Give, give,” so is sin insatiable! Sin can never yield satisfaction to the soul of man—as well might the thirsty hope to relieve their anguish by draughts of brine.

As it is with cups of wine, so is it with sin—one makes room for another. He that has sinned will sin. It is an awful part of the punishment of sin that it grows into a habit and increases in intensity as it is indulged. I may rightly say of the black well of sin, “He that drinks of this water shall thirst again and thirst more.” Sin is a thing of rapid propagation and never abides alone. You cannot retain one sin in the house by itself, for it will, before long, produce a numerous progeny, a generation of vipers—many as the hairs of your head! What a dreadful thing it is for a man to have a fever upon him which makes him thirst for that which increases his thirst!

But the worst point in the case of the sinner is this, that this fever of his *will prove fatal*. This son, daughter, husband, or wife of yours will perish through the fever of sin if it is not cured! A great fever is a great danger—and so is sin. In our Lord's days, men did not know how to deal with fever as well as now and, therefore, those who were taken with it were doomed. This poor woman would have died if Jesus had not interposed—thus is it with the sinful ones whose cases we deplore.

I have thus described the disease. What shall we do with it? Let us see what the disciples did.

Mark says, "And *they told Him about her at once*." I would earnestly persuade you to do the same. Take the case of the person who is laid upon your heart and spread it before the Lord. Go over the matter in detail. Not for *His* information, but to excite your own prayerfulness. Look the matter in the face, making no excuses for the sinner and, in all truthfulness, tell the Lord what ails the sinful one. Pour out your heart before the Lord and sorrow over the lost one, even as Samuel mourned over Saul, only with better hope. Tell the case to Jesus just as you would mention a physical case to a doctor. He is ready to hear it all and to consider it. Make a *confidant* of Jesus! Do not go and complain all over the neighborhood, "My boy does this," or, "My husband does that," for you may increase the evil in that way by incensing the person against yourself and your religion. You may tell Jesus all about it, without restraint. No harm can come of such a relation. It will be a relief to your own mind and it will be the most proper way of engaging your Lord to help you.

Luke tells us, "*they besought Him for her*." After you have stated the case to your Lord, then plead with Him! Plead His promises and plead His Nature. Plead the need of the case and the glory which a cure will bring. Let it be no cold prayer, but a warm, hearty, intense entreaty. Do not wrangle with sinners about religion, but wrestle with Christ about *them*. Beseech the sinners for Christ, but never fail to beseech Christ for the sinners! When little can be done with men, you can still do much with Jesus. It will be of very little use to be always worrying them with, "you should not do this," and, "you should not do that." But it will be of infinite service to go and say, "Lord, have mercy upon these poor souls who know You not." Never give over praying for your prodigals as long as there is breath in their bodies—no, not even if they curse you for doing so!

We find, also, that when they had thus told Jesus of her, and had besought Him, then they *brought Him into the chamber*, so that we read in our text, "When Jesus was come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever." They seemed to say, "Lord, this is all we can do. We would have You look upon the dying woman and consider her. There she is." Can you not, by faith, so realize the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ that you see Him viewing the lost estate of those for whom you are concerned? Your friend is fevered with sin, but Jesus sees it. Your boy is restless, but Jesus watches Him. Your daughter is likely to perish, but Christ looks upon her! Every day let your importunate prayers keep them under Christ's eyes! Bring unto Jesus all your sinful ones! Lay them at His feet. Leave them in His Presence. When you have done all this—when you have told Him of her and besought Him about her and brought Him to the house to look upon her—then you may expect His healing touch and saving Word! That is our first remark.

II. Secondly—THE MINISTRY OF JESUS MUST PRECEDE THE MINISTRY OF THE SAVED ONES. We anxiously desire that these friends of ours who are now sick of the fever of sin should yet become the servants of Christ and should minister to Him. I can imagine the joy of that anxious mother over yonder if she should ever be privileged to hear her boy preach the Gospel—that boy who has even been known to swear! What delight would fill the wife's bosom if she could hear her infidel husband engage publicly in prayer! Some of you are now thinking of certain gifted persons who are using all their abilities *against* the cause of Christ and, "Oh," you say, "if they might be converted, my heart would dance with delight!" This is a right desire, but do not indulge it unwisely. Do not ask them to do anything for Jesus while they are unregenerate. Healing *must* come before serving!

When a person is "lying sick of a fever," do not ask her to rise and wait upon the Lord Jesus Christ. No—*His* ministry to Peter's wife's mother preceded *her* ministry to Him! She was "lying," that is, prostrated by the terrible malady. As a body greatly weakened seems to cling to the bed and almost sink into it, so was she. She was like a crushed thing, or a sheep cast upon its back in a trench—and so she was powerless to do anything. Thus is it with the sinner. What can he do for Christ? "When we were yet *without strength*, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly." There is no strength in an ungodly man with which to serve God! He has no faith and, "without faith it is impossible to please God." He has no love and even if a deed were done rightly, yet if there were not *love* as the *motive*, it would not be acceptable with God.

The sinner, in fact, has no spiritual life and if he should *try* to do good works they would be dead works and could not please the living God. Out of a foul spring no clean waters can come and out of a corrupt heart no acceptable works can proceed! Christ must give us strength and cause us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure, for without Him, we can do nothing.

Moreover, this sick woman was *utterly unfit* to do anything for Jesus and His disciples with a great fever upon her. Everywhere she went, she would spread the contagion of her malady. Everything she touched would be infected—any food she prepared would be nauseous even to think upon! Let her stay in her bed, by all means, and let none go near her unless they are compelled to do so, for fever soon seizes upon fresh victims! So you that are ungodly cannot serve Christ, for everything you do is defiled—you cannot lay your hands, even, upon holy things without polluting them! Your thoughts are feverish, your words are feverish, your acts are feverish and, therefore, we cannot invite your cooperation in the work of the Lord. You would do more hurt than good, if, as sinful men, you pretended to render service to a holy God! Such is your natural depravity that you would spread infection all around, even if you attempted to minister to the Lord Jesus.

What is more, a person sick of a fever, if in her feverishness she were to arise and wait upon guests, would get no good, but run terrible risks. Persons in fever must not be exposed to drafts, or be driven to exert themselves. Every doctor would judge it to be most injurious to a person in a high state of fever to attempt to work. I solemnly believe that unconverted people get hurt when they attempt religious duties. To preach with an unrenewed heart must be to pronounce one's own death warrant! If unrenewed men come to the sacramental table, they eat and drink condemnation to themselves! And if they, in any way, make a profession of faith, they are enacting a falsehood in the sight of high Heaven, seeing they have no such faith. "Unto the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?" No, you must stand back, you that have never been washed in the blood of the Lamb! You cannot minister to Christ while the red fever is on your brow. He who has seraphim for His servitors wants not feverish services from souls diseased with iniquity. King Jesus wants no slaves to swell His train! You must be, first, freed from the yoke of sin and *then* you shall become the servants of the Lord!

Listen to me, any fevered ones who are here, while I briefly describe how the Lord Jesus Christ ministered to this woman!

He ministered to her by *His Presence*. His being in the room with her meant that salvation was come to her house. Beloved, believe that Jesus Christ is here! To His ministers He has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." I want you to know that He is not shut up within the heavenly gates, but He is *here* and His power to save is present in the midst of this assembly—and will be present in your room when you go home and fall upon your knees!

The next thing that blessed this woman was *His look*. "Jesus saw her." There is more, here, than appears upon the surface. You know what a physician means when he says, "I will come and see your sick child." He does not mean that he will barely look at it—he intends to search into the matter, study it, and see what can be done. Will you try to think that the Lord Jesus Christ sees you—that He reads your heart, knows your secret thoughts, hears your secret groans and notes your inward desires? He perceives the power which sin has over you, the difficulty you find in coming to Him—He sees it all and knows how to deal with it. Not only is Jesus near at hand, but He is present with His eyes open, observing all that ails you. And He sees it with a mind which is deeply sympathetic and a heart quick to relieve!

The next thing the Lord Jesus Christ used was *His touch*. This is the healing point. He "took her by the hand and lifted her up." There was a contact established. Oh, that glorious Doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ! There is healing in it! I do not mean in the *doctrine*, but in the *fact*, itself, that the Lord Jesus Christ took our flesh and became Man, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." Thus He touches us and heals us! Had He not been Man, He could not have died. And had He not died, we must have died forever. God in Christ Jesus is very near to you, poor Soul! He is so near to you that if you, by faith, touch the hem of His garment, you are saved! If you believe in the Lord Jesus, He is in contact with you—His cool hand is grasping your fevered hand and as your fever dissolves into Him—for "He Himself bore our sicknesses"—His health flows into you so that you may arise and minister unto Him! Contact by faith with Jesus Christ our Lord is the ordained means of salvation!

And there was, beside this contact, another form of power—our Lord spoke to the fever. *His word* is a word of might. If the touch of our Lord represents incarnation, His word represents resurrection, for by hearing the voice of the

Son of God shall all the dead arise from their graves! His word is quickening and where it falls, it proves itself to be a living and incorruptible seed! By the word of the Lord, even by the Gospel of Jesus, the fever of sin is driven out of men and women. Oh, that the Lord Jesus may now speak to you by these lips of mine—speak with almighty power to your hearts! Oh, that you, poor sin-sick Sinner, may hear the word of the Lord with your inner ears, for such hearing is eternal life! God help you so to hear.

There is healing for you and I warn you, again, that you must have this healing before you can work for Jesus. Your Lord must begin with you before you can begin with Him. Do not go blundering out of the Tabernacle and say, “I will take a class in the Sunday school” “I will try to preach.” “I will give my money to the Lord’s cause.” No—stand back till you are healed—weep and pray and agonize till you are healed! You must *receive* from Jesus all He has to give before you can give anything to Him!

This may sound harsh to you who mean well, but God forbid that I should bolster you up in a zeal for God which is not according to knowledge. Aliens cannot stand in the Lord’s courts—you must be made Israelites before you can be priests unto God! First, salvation, then service.

III. Thirdly, it is plainly taught in the text that **STRENGTH TO MINISTER COMES WITH HEALING**. “Immediately she arose and ministered to them.” Fever causes extreme weakness and when it leaves the patient, he is, for a considerable length of time, greatly debilitated. The cures of Nature are slow. But when Jesus cures, He does it at once. Though He uses only a touch and a word, yet He cures so perfectly that no weakness remains! The woman did not lie in bed a week or two and feed upon nourishing diet and so recover her strength. No, *then and there* she arose from her bed, girt her garments about her, and went about the duties of the household! Is it not wonderful to see her hasten to the kitchen to prepare the evening meal for the Lord Jesus Christ and His friends? With gratitude beaming from her face, she placed each dish upon the table and brought forth water with which her guests might wash their feet. The moment the Lord Jesus Christ saves a soul, He gives that soul strength for its appointed service!

I want to call your attention to this, that her service was *immediate* service, rendered on the spot, without delay. Some of you have been converted during our late special services—let me bid you serve the Lord at once, even as the Lord has served you. “What, get to work directly?” Yes, *immediately*, for there is something very beautiful about that which is done by new converts. Oh, the beauty of that first look of love! Oh, the sweetness of those first notes of praise! Oh, the power of those first sentences of testimony! I do not find any fault with our dear old saints—there is a richness and maturity about them—but still, my soul desires the first ripe fruits! There is a pungency of flavor about the first berries of Grace and even a kind of tartness about them which makes their taste all the more perceptible to those who are dull and careless! Give me fruit with the dew of the morning upon it! New blood in the veins of the Church is a great promoter of its health and vigor! The first fruits are, in some respects, the best fruits! I would not have a converted person wait a week before trying to do something for Jesus. Run as soon as you find your feet!

But notice that what this good woman did was very *appropriate*. Peter’s wife’s mother did not get out of bed and go down the street and deliver an address to an assembled multitude. Women are best when they are quiet. I share the Apostle Paul’s feelings when he bade women be silent in the assembly. Yet there is work for holy women and we read of Peter’s wife’s mother that she arose and ministered to Christ. She did what she could and what she should. She arose and ministered to Him. Some people can do nothing that they are allowed to do, but waste their energies in lamenting that they are not called on to do other people’s work! Blessed are they who do what they should do. It is better to be a good housewife, or nurse, or domestic servant, than to be a powerless preacher or a graceless talker. She did not arise and prepare a lecture, nor preach a sermon—she arose and prepared a supper—and that was what she was fitted to do.

Was she not a housewife? Let her serve the Lord as a housewife. I do not say that if you were converted a week ago you are at once to preach. No, but you are to minister to the Lord in the way for which you are best qualified—and that may happen to be by a living testimony to His Grace in your daily calling. We greatly err when we dream that only a preacher can minister to the Lord—for Jesus has work of all sorts for all sorts of followers. Paul speaks of women who helped him much and, assuredly, as there is no idle angel, there ought to be no idle Christian! We are not saved for our own sakes, but that we may be of service to the Lord and to His people—let us not miss our calling.

When healed of her fever, Peter’s wife’s mother had strength to perform a *suitable* ministry, such as the peculiar occasion required. She did, for Jesus and the three companions, that which was necessary then and there. Jesus had had a

hard day's preaching and that is hungry work—He had spent a heavy day in healing and that is exhausting work—and now He needed to eat and, therefore, He came into Peter's house. The principal worker there was laid aside, and so our Lord did not ask for refreshment. He always thought of others before Himself and though He was faint and hungry, He put back His own needs till He restored health to the fevered woman. This being done, the next necessary thing was that the wearied Preacher and Physician should be refreshed—and this, the grateful woman attended to. When our Lord sat on the well and talked with the woman of Samaria, He was faint and weary and asked for a drink. But the claims of Nature, He put aside till He had preached the Gospel to her. *Then* came the disciples with the meat which they had bought. On this occasion at Peter's house, the refreshment was ministered by her who had just left her bed. "She arose and ministered to them."

Now, dear Friends, you that are converted may minister to Christ in a way which is as necessary as the service of His ablest preachers and pastors. There is something for you to do which will be a refreshment to Him and to His servants. He condescendingly permits it and will graciously accept it. You can personally minister to a personal Christ. You cannot do everything, but you can do *something* that will be acceptable to Him. You may, you can and you ought! Ministry to Jesus is practicable, permissible, acceptable and *obligatory*. You owe your very life to Him. Come, spend that life in His service! Immediately, this very day, minister to Jesus! If you have only been saved this day, yet there is something incumbent for the day and, in its place, it is as necessary to the glory of God as the ministry of cherubim and seraphim! Now then, do it! I will not urge you because I can see in my last head something that will move you to it.

IV. THE DESIRE TO MINISTER ALWAYS ARISES OUT OF HEALING. Here was a woman, a poor woman, an old woman, a widow woman—one who had just been sick—and she desires to minister to Christ at once. She can do it and she does it! How do you think she was moved to this? Was not it that *strength naturally suggests* activity as soon as you get it? When you are very prostrate, you do not want to do anything. You feel as if you must lie still—there is no power in you and there is no industry in you. But persons who have recovered, need something to do. Sometimes they try to do more than they can, such is the suggestion of revived strength.

Now, if the Lord has given you spiritual life, that life will need to work! If He has given you light, that light will shine. "Now candle, do not shine." Will the candle take any notice of you? No, it cannot help shining if it has been lighted! If Christ has given you His Grace and it is in you as a well of living water, it must flow out that others may drink! It is no use saying, "Water, do not flow—fountain, cease." The fountain cannot help it! It must send forth its streams—as it must be so with you. The strength God has given you in Christ suggests *activity*.

And then the *gratitude for the strength impels you to activity*. How can a man be still when Christ has spoken for him and delivered him? We read in the paper, some time ago, that the King of Italy, to his great honor, appeared in a court of law on behalf of a man brought up under charge of causing a death. The King had seen the accident and he came forward as a common witness in the court to say that the horse had mastered the driver and the man was not to be blamed. I do not know the name of the man, but I feel pretty sure that Jacobi or Antonio, whoever he may be, if ever King Humbert wants somebody to speak up for him, will find a friend in him! He will say, "My King came into court and spoke for me, and I will, as long as I live, speak up for him." Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is an Advocate for you—therefore, be an advocate for Him! Can you ever be silent for Christ, now that the Lord Christ has redeemed you from the curse of the Law and the penalty of sin? I tell you, if you can be quiet and do nothing for Christ, I am afraid you have never tasted of His love and Grace.

Once more, I think I may say that those who are healed by Christ are sure to do something for Him of the right sort because *their former habits will assist them*. I do not mean by this, that *sinful* activity can ever help us into *holy* activity, but I do mean that we can turn our old habits to account for Jesus. I believe that Peter's wife's mother was a particularly nice old lady. There is rather a prejudice against a wife's mother, but if Peter found it the proper thing to have her living in the house, I am sure she was a specially good woman. I have a picture of her in my mind's eye—a dear old soul, always busy and happy. When there was nothing else to do, she would mend the stockings, or do any commonplace work. She was always busy. You never had to ask her to work—she did it of her own accord. At cooking the meals and preparing everything for the house, she was perfectly at home, never grumbling, never complaining, never setting the husband against the wife, but always looking out to do everything that possibly could be done to make the household go along in all its concerns with oiled wheels.

When she had the fever, she did not like to be laid aside and so, the moment she is restored, there she is, at it again! The ruling passion is strong, now that death has been removed. She begins to serve Jesus, for she had *always* been serving *somebody*. When Jesus came into the house with Peter, James and John, she could not bear to think that there was nothing for supper. But the moment she felt well, away she went to the kitchen and, with all the utensils of her cooking craft, she began to prepare the best meal in her power! You people who, when you were not converted, were always active, ought to be doubly active now! In the family, do all for the Lord Jesus Christ. Those commonplace things—sweeten and flavor them with love for Him! Reverence Him and glorify Him in all that you do. Is there not something you can do for your neighbor, something you can do for your children, some part of the Lord's work you can undertake?

As for you young men who have been so restless, so vigorous, so dashing in sin—it seems to me that this habitual energy ought to be placed under consecration to Christ. A horse that has no mettle in it is easily managed. Still, a horse with a little mettle, though he may kick and plunge—and do a great deal of mischief—is all the better horse when he is broken. If he is under proper management. If he answers to the bit, you like the mettle! So it is with a man when he is converted. If he had mettle in him that led him to kick and plunge when he served the devil. If he did so much mischief and damage against the Kingdom of Christ, he is the very man to pull well in Jesus Christ's chariot! I pray the Master, therefore, that He will come and heal that young man of his fever and make his blood cool within him this day, and restore him, by His Grace! Oh that the Lord would touch all sick folk and make them healthy! Then when all are healed, let us rise to serve Him who has served us—and unto Him be glory forever and ever! Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew 8:1-17.

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