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THE GOOD PHYSICIAN.

– MARK 1:21-34. – FEBRUARY 7. –

Golden Text: – "He laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them." – LUKE 4:40.

ALTHOUGH Simon Peter and Andrew were natives of Bethsaida, a few miles north of Capernaum (Jno. 1:44), they had evidently settled down in the latter city, perhaps because larger and more favorable to their business. When Peter, Andrew, James and John accepted the Lord's invitation to become fishers of men they did not immediately depart from home. Some hours if not some days elapsed between the fishing experience and the narrative of this lesson. The Sabbath was come, and Jesus with the four disciples went into the synagogue where he was recognized and given an opportunity for teaching. In the synagogues of olden times there was great liberty to anyone who had the necessary education and faith in the holy Scriptures, to discuss their messages. In some respects that greater liberty was more favorable to the Truth than the present circumscribed methods of Christendom, in which each party or sect holds absolute control and refuses liberty of discussion of its own tenets as well as of the Scriptures. The Lord's people should jealously guard Lord's day opportunities, so that they be not occasions for the overthrow of faith by those who reject the Word of God. At the same time the blessing of the Lord's day, the purity of Truth and the clearness of the faith would certainly be greatly [R3309 : page 28] stimulated by a full liberty of discussion of the meaning of the Scriptures in a reverent manner.

In very few Church gatherings of today would our Lord Jesus be granted opportunity to set forth his doctrines. He could not and would not accept authority from any of the denominations of Christendom, because he could not and would not indorse any of their creeds as a whole; hence he would be deprived of any opportunity for

promulgating the Truth in this manner in this our enlightened twentieth century. Likewise those who follow his word closely, and who for similar reasons cannot indorse fully any of the creeds of Christendom, are deprived of opportunities for presenting the Truth in the synagogues of today; and are obliged to adopt other methods of reaching the Lord's sheep with the message of the great King, now due to be understood. However, the Lord has greatly blessed and used these efforts outside the synagogues – especially the printed page, DAWNS, Tracts, WATCH TOWERS, etc.

Our Lord's teaching impressed his hearers as being reasonable and positive; and this is one of the characteristics of the Truth today. The Lord's message is so clear and so forceful that it cannot be gainsaid. It appeals to the minds as well as to the hearts of reasonable people now as it did then. On the contrary, the general mixture of error as then held by the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, and as now held by the various denominations of Catholics and Protestants and their Doctors of Divinity, is confusing, indefinite, self-contradictory and generally unsatisfactory.

THE DEVIL A CHURCH GOER.

The devil went to Church then as he not infrequently does now, and he was as opposed to having the Truth preached then as he is now. The attendants of the Capernaum synagogue, however, were seemingly of a nobler type than that of Nazareth, which gnashed upon our Lord and sought to take his life. In this case the majority of the people were less under the influence of Satan, although one of their number was more particularly possessed by a demon, here called "an unclean spirit." We know nothing of our Lord's discourse, but from the fact that this demon became so excited under the preaching, we may draw the inference that our Lord was explaining to the people the origin of sin and the power of Satan and of the fallen angels in respect to humanity, how all these downward tendencies were more and more injurious to men and should be resisted, how divine fellowship and

communion should be sought, and how repentance and reformation and resistance of the evil one were necessary to physical health as well as to a closer approach to our God.

The demon – one of the fallen angels from the time of the flood, mentioned by Jude and by Peter (Jude 6,7; 2 Pet. 2:4) – believed that the Lord's teachings were condemnatory of himself and his associates in evil, and cried out, using the mouth of the possessed man. Unquestionably the fallen angels, although restrained by chains of darkness from manifesting themselves to humanity until a certain time, have contact with each other and are well aware of procedures in general. As Satan recognized Jesus in the temptation, so all of the fallen angels knew that the Holy One of God had become a man for the purpose of redeeming and reclaiming and restoring humanity from the fallen condition superinduced by Satan's lying ambition. Apparently, too, these demons had some knowledge of the divine times and seasons, though we need not suppose that they had a particular or definite knowledge, for our Lord declared that at that time neither himself nor the holy angels knew of the day and the hour of his coming in glory and the establishment of his Kingdom. It is not supposable, therefore, that the fallen angels knew more on this subject. However, there is a great difference between not knowing the exact day or hour of a matter and not having any idea whatever respecting it. Apparently this demon recognized that the time was still distant when the power of Satan and all the fallen angels is doomed to be overthrown.

"BE YE CLEAN THAT BEAR THE VESSELS OF THE LORD'S HOUSE."

The testimony of the demon seemed to be reverential, and might by some have been construed to be a testimony in the Lord's favor. Jesus, however, was not willing to accept such a testimony from such a source, even as the Apostle Paul was similarly unwilling to receive testimony of the possessed woman, who declared of Paul and Silas,

"These be the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of life." (Acts 16:17.) The divine method seems to be to make a clear separation between the servants of God and the servants of evil. The privilege of testifying for God or being ambassadors for the Truth is a favor reserved for the Lord's own people. He seeketh not the evil one nor the fallen demons nor evil men or women to be heralds of the good tidings. The Lord's people should note this matter carefully, and resent the services of any who do not give evidences of being in heart-union with the Lord. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to take my covenant into thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and casteth my words behind thee." (Psa. 50:16.) Spiritualists, Trance Mediums, Hypnotists, Christian Scientists, etc., would fain associate themselves more or less with the name of Jesus and seem to be servants of the light; but all children of the light should be on their guard against these, who, however sincere they may sometimes appear, are undoubtedly the tools of the prince of darkness, who would array himself as an angel of light that he might deceive and mislead the children of the light – the children of God.

But some one will say, Did not Jesus surely say, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go unto my Father," and are not those words genuine? Yes, we answer, they are genuine, and most precious words; but how have they been fulfilled? Have any of the Lord's disciples done any greater miracles than Jesus did so far as healing physical ailments are concerned? Assuredly not. We have no record of greater works of this kind than are recorded in the Gospels. Have any of the Lord's disciples at any time done as great works according to the flesh as Jesus did? Have any of them ever awakened the dead? Surely none except the apostles have done this wonderful work. What then could our Lord have meant by this expression?

"GREATER WORKS THAN THESE SHALL YE DO."

We answer that in our last lesson we saw that Jesus in his ministry dealt only with the natural man, and could not communicate to natural

man respecting spiritual or [R3309 : page 29] heavenly things except in parables and dark sayings, which could be but imperfectly comprehended until after Pentecost gave the enlightenment of the holy Spirit. To our understanding, therefore, the greater works that have been done by the Lord's followers since the ascension have been such works as related to the hearts of men rather than to their bodies. The whole creation is groaning and travailing in physical discomfort, but the worst of all groans and pains comes from the anguish of the soul – broken hearts.

The Lord's followers, even the humblest of them, in proportion as they receive of his Spirit, may communicate it through his word and bring to wounded and broken hearts peace and joy and blessing, regardless of physical conditions of discomfort, so that as the Apostle explains they may rejoice even in tribulation, knowing what the tribulations are working out for them in the way of greater glory and blessing and association with the Lord in his Kingdom. (Rom. 5:3.) Would not he who has had the eyes of his understanding opened, that he might see with clearness the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the love of God, esteem this blessing as of much greater value and importance than simply the restoring of natural sight? Who that has tasted that the Lord is gracious has not participated in a greater miracle than did those who tasted of the loaves and fishes which our Lord so miraculously increased that they fed the five thousand? It is true indeed, then, that the Lord has made it possible for his humbler servants in the humbler walks of life and with few natural abilities, but possessing his Spirit and his Word, to do mighty works [R3310 : page 29] even today – "Mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" of error and of sin.

THE NECESSITY FOR MIRACLES IS PAST.

There was a reason why miracles were necessary at the beginning of this Gospel dispensation. Had our Lord Jesus performed none of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures how could we today feel the

confidence, the assurance, that we do feel respecting him? Had he gone about as a preacher of righteousness and expounder of the divine Word merely, and had he then died just as he did die, would the proof have been as sufficient as it now is that he was indeed the Son of God and that his death was indeed the sacrifice of a perfect one for the imperfect one and his progeny? Would our Lord in preaching to the Jews have accomplished any work without the use of miracles? Were they not necessary to him as a demonstration of his right to take the place of Moses as the antitypical leader of the Israelites indeed? Assuredly this is true. But we have no necessity for such manifestations of miraculous power today. On the contrary, we behold Christianity already too popular with the world. As it is, too many tares are pretending to be wheat. The conditions, therefore, seem to be the very reverse of those which at the first advent demanded miracles for the establishing of the Church on a proper faith basis.

"WHO HEALETH ALL THY DISEASES."

But some one will urge, Does it not seem more reasonable that the Lord's people should go to him in prayer or go to the elders for healing by miraculous power, than that they should use drugs or medicines or surgery? Yes, we reply; it is very *natural*. That is just what the natural mind would expect and crave, but the Lord is not dealing with his people of today as with natural men. We are not natural Israelites, but spiritual Israelites. It is to the New Creature that the Lord now appeals; it is the New Creature that now has the privilege of experiencing healing at the Lord's hands, forgiveness of sins, covering with the robe of Christ's righteousness, so that we have the standing before the Father of absolute righteousness, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing; we know no man after the flesh, we know no perfection after the flesh, but we do know the perfection and miracles after the spirit; and many a time have the Lord's people marveled at the wonderful healing of mind and faith and hope, and the wonderful refreshments, with joy unspeakable, – the holy anointing oil received from our spiritual and glorified Head.

"WE ARE TO WALK BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT."

Not only is this the clear statement of the Word, but the logic of the proposition must be evident to any one. As for the Lord's saints, have they not taken their physical, human, earthly rights and privileges, secured through the death of Christ, and exchanged these with the Lord for heavenly things, the heavenly body that is to be received at the First Resurrection, the heavenly hopes and heavenly joys which are already the first-fruits of the Spirit in us? Yea, verily, they have. Have they not sacrificed thus the earthly interests, hopes, rights, privileges, for the heavenly ones? How then can we who have thus devoted or consecrated our earthly advantages for the heavenly ones ask to have again the earthly advantages? Would not such a prayer, such a request intelligently made, signify a withdrawal of our consecration – signify our preference for the earthly rather than the heavenly gifts, privileges and advantages? And would we as spiritual Israelites be willing to make such an exchange again if the Lord were willing to let us do so? Surely not. Would one who appreciates the privilege of sacrificing earthly interests with Christ, of laying down the earthly life and its privileges in participation with the Lord and in hope of joint-heirship with him in the divine nature and Kingdom, wish for a moment to have the Lord cancel this arrangement and give him back earthly rights, restitution privileges?

As for the world we grant that the Lord has secured for them restitution privileges and blessings, and that in due time they will have them – that in due time Satan will be bound and all of his coadjutors be restrained, and that then the good Physician, with his whole staff of co-laborers, the members of his body, his Bride, will participate in the great uplifting of the millennial age, in administering the blessings of restitutions, mental, moral and physical, to all the willing and obedient of that glorious time. (Acts 3:19-23.) But the time of restitution has not yet come. It will not come until the close of this Gospel age – until the Church shall have finished her course, walking by faith and not by sight, enjoying the spiritual miracles and not the natural ones.

The demon came out of the man, tearing him – that is to say, causing a convulsion, a fit. Luke, describing the event, says that he threw the man in the midst – that is, he fell on the floor of the synagogue in the midst of the people in a fit, but was otherwise unhurt, the demon not having power to do him injury, under the Lord's command. The assembled company was astonished, and [R3310 : page 30] inquired, What new teaching is this which has authority to cast out the evil demons? Our Lord's enemies, it will be remembered, subsequently charged him with casting out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, Satan; hence we see the wisdom of his having refused to receive testimony from this demon. To have received their testimony would have been more or less acknowledging them and giving them credit for truthfulness; whereas the Scriptures everywhere represent Satan and his fallen spirits as lying spirits, deceiving the people.

Undoubtedly there are cases of demon possession today – obsession. The custom of our day removes these to asylums, where they are called insane. It is not our thought that all the inmates of insane asylums are possessed of demons; but that many of them are. So far as we are able to form a conclusion on the subject, it would be that probably more than half are demon possessed, and less than one half are insane through disease of the brain. In all parts of the world this demon possession seems to prevail, and the tendency seems always to be downward – they are unclean spirits, delighting not in holy, pure and good things, but in impurity and unholiness. Their influence is exerted not only upon the possessed ones but upon others, in an evil direction.

WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF SATAN'S DEVICES.

Even spirit mediums are well aware of the danger they encounter in acting as mediums at all. They caution one another not to yield the will too far, to maintain a self control to a certain extent, to yield themselves to the control of these spirits only in a definitely limited

degree lest they become obsessed, because the evil spirit obtaining full control, the human will is therefore powerless to expel the intruder and they are at the mercy of the demon, and from man's standpoint are denominated crazy – more particularly so if several demons gain possession of the same person and thus several wills seek to control the one organization. In proportion as a knowledge of God and the principles of righteousness advance and open the eyes of human understanding, in this same proportion the evil spirits find it necessary to be coy in their deceptions, and proportionately the Lord's people need the protection which the Lord has provided for them, namely, the holy Spirit, the spirit of a sound mind, the spirit of love, joy and peace in the holy Spirit of the Lord.

Apparently, however, the masses of the people were less deceived on this subject at that time than they are today. Today Satan, acting more skilfully than in the past, is leading on as a scientist and is pooh-poohing suggestions that there are evil spirits or a Beelzebub or prince of demons. To such an extent has he prevailed that many of the leading theologians of the world, in all denominations of Christendom, agree that there is no devil, that there are no demons and that our Lord performed no such miracles as are here recited. They claim that the poor ignorant people of our Lord's day did not understand what they were talking about, and said that a man had a devil when he merely had a nervous disease, a fit, etc. Christian Science is one of Satan's latest fads, which, under the guise of morality, is seeking to destroy both common sense and Christianity amongst the Lord's people. It is one of Satan's latest devices, disproving himself and thus turning attention away from the powerful influence which he exercises in the world. "We are not ignorant of his devices." (2 Cor. 2:11.) "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and wicked spirits in high places." (Eph. 6:12.) "But greater is he that is for us, than all they that be against us." (2 Kings 6:16.) The revised version translation of the 28th verse is preferable. It reads, "And the report of him went out straightway everywhere in all that region of Galilee round about." This fame of Jesus subsequently aided greatly

in his ministry, when he went to all the towns and villages throughout Galilee.

ST. PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW CURED.

After the synagogue incident our Lord went to the home of Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John accompanying him. Peter's mother-in-law lay sick of a fever, and one of the evangelists intimates that it was a violent form of fever. For the first time it seems to have occurred to the disciples that the Lord's power, which they had seen manifested on various occasions, might be exercised on behalf of this sick woman. Now, their faith grown stronger, they mentioned her case to Jesus and he took her by the hand and lifted her up. Immediately the fever left her. Not only so, but instead of being weak and enervated, as is usually the case after a severe **[R3311 : page 30]** fever, she was strong and vigorous and able to serve the family, probably in the setting forth of refreshments and other household matters. This demonstrates that her cure could have been nothing short of miraculous. The operation of the mind, even if it could in any measure have destroyed the fever condition, could not have made good the waste of strength in the system accomplished by the fever.

Sunset saw the gathering of numbers of the sick and demon-possessed ones. This was probably for two reasons: (1) that it would be during the cooler time of the day in which the diseased could come in a warm country such as Palestine; (2) it was the Sabbath day, and the Jews, however irreligious and even devilish some of them were, were all strict Sabbatharians. We remember how on another occasion the Pharisees found fault with Jesus because he had healed a man on the Sabbath day, and how our Lord exposed their hypocrisy in the matter by showing that if it had been an ox or an ass that had fallen into a ditch, and where there might be a monetary loss if the creature were not assisted, their reasoning would be more correct. Our Lord, however, seems to have preferred the Sabbath days for his healing work: at all events some of his most notable miracles were done on the

Sabbath days. His reason for so doing was not, we believe, to exasperate the Pharisees and Scribes or merely to show the hypocrisy of their formalism, but because the Sabbath days served a special purpose as an illustration of the great Sabbath that is to come, the Millennium, in which all the families of the earth shall be blessed by this good Physician, who has already given his life for the redemption of the life of the world, and who during the millennial age (his Bride, the Church, cooperating) will bless and heal all the willing and obedient of the human family – lifting them up, up, up out of Adamic sin and death conditions to the perfection of life lost in Eden through the disobedience of the first Adam.

SATANIC POWER CAN AND DOES NOW CURE.

Many of the Lord's consecrated people of today, [R3311 : page 31] noting the cure of diseases by spirit mediums, mind curists, hypnotists, Christian Scientists, Mormons, etc., are inclined to think of these cures of our day in much the same light as we think of our Lord's cures recorded in this lesson and its Golden text. This is a natural tendency – it is natural for us to seek to walk by sight and not by faith. Some of these dear friends inquire of us, Is not our Lord Jesus as able to heal the sickness of our bodies today as he was able to heal the sickness of the Jews at Capernaum? We answer, Yes, unquestionably. More than this, we hold that our Lord has more power today than he had then.

It was after our Lord had finished his sacrifice, after he had risen from the dead, a life-giving spirit, that he declared to the disciples, "All power is given me in heaven and in earth." We have not a question, therefore, respecting the ability of our Lord to perform today and through his people of today any miracles that he performed at the first advent in person. We are asked, If this be so, should we not expect such healings? Did not our Lord say, "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils and heal the sick, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not harm them, etc."? (Mark

16:18.) We answer, that these words are spurious, – that they are not found in any of the *old* manuscripts, that all scholars admit that they are forgeries, and that no part of the 16th chapter of Mark, after the 8th verse, is genuine.

[R3311 : page 31]

THE PILGRIM'S WANTS.

I want that adorning divine,
Thou only, my God, canst bestow;
I want in those beautiful garments to shine,
Which distinguish thy household below.

I want – Oh! I want to attain
Some likeness, my Saviour, to Thee,
That this longed for resemblance I at once may attain,
Thy comeliness put upon me!

I want to be marked for Thine own,
Thy seal on my forehead to wear;
To receive that "new name" on the mystic white stone
Which none but thyself can declare.

I want so in Thee to abide
As to bring forth some fruit to Thy praise.
The branch which thou prunest, though feeble and dried,
May languish, but never decays.

I want Thine own hand to unbind
Each tie to terrestrial things –
Too tenderly cherished, too closely entwined,
Where my heart too tenaciously clings.

I want, by my aspect serene,
My actions and words, to declare
That my treasure is safe in a country unseen –
That my heart's best affections are there.

I want, as a traveller, to haste
Straight onward, nor pause on my way;
Nor forethought, nor anxious contrivance to waste
On the tent only pitched for a day.

I want – and this sums up my prayer –
To glorify Thee till I die;
Then calmly to yield up my soul to thy care,
And breathe out, in faith, my last sigh!

– *Selected.*

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