

The Miracles of Jesus
Miracle # 5

"Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-In-Law"
Mark 1:29-34, Matthew 8:14-17, Luke 4:38-41

After casting out a demon of the possessed man in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus went directly to house of Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, they were accompanied, according to Mark, by James and John.

"The picture of Jesus in this miracle contrasts with that in the miracle accounts which immediately preceded it. There, Jesus was described as a figure with immense authority displayed both in his teaching and in his casting out of a demon. In this miracle, Jesus seems more of an ordinary man. He walked home from synagogue with his friends. He went into the house where he was staying, ready to eat a meal. When Jesus learned that Peter's mother in law was sick, he sent in to see her. These are all ordinary acts – the acts of a common man. And then they remind us that while Jesus was truly God, he was also fully human." [Larry Richards. "Every Miracle In the Bible." (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub, 1998) p. 175.]

This miracle is told in three of the gospel accounts and because each writer adds some details of what happened in that room, I want us to read all three of them.

Mark 1:29-34

"Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. (30) But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once. (31) So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them. (32) At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. (33) And the whole city was gathered together at the door. (34) Then He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He did not allow the demons to speak, because they knew Him."

Matthew 8:14-17

"Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. (15) So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. (16) When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, (17) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses."

Now I want us to examine at some length the account in Luke 4:38-41, *"Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. (39) So He*

stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them."

So once inside the house, Jesus was told that Peter's mother-in-law was ill. Jesus was taken in to see the patient and in Mark's account, he went up to her without a **word**, took her by the hand and raised her up. Luke states that Jesus "*rebuked*" the fever. These accounts do not conflict. Each writer chose to emphasize different details of the story in order to emphasize a different characteristic of Jesus. The Greek word for "*rebuked*" (**epetimesan**) is the same word that is used to describe how Jesus cast out the demon in the synagogue (Luke 4:35). This word has a technical meaning, it indicated a **commanding** word spoken by God or by his spokesman, by which evil powers are forced to submit.

Mark says she was suffering from a **fever**, and Luke, who by tradition was a doctor, called a "*great*" or "*high*" fever. There were three kinds of fever that were common in that day. First, Malta fever, was characterized by weakness, anemia and a wasting away. It lasted several months and usually ended in death. A second type was an intermittent fever, which is similar in nature to what is today known as "typhoid fever." And the third type, was mosquito-born malaria, bred in the plains where the Jordan River meanders into the Sea of Galilee, which was a problem for the lakeside towns of Galilee.

Luke who was trained as a physician, as a man of science he used a technical term (**Megalo**) for a **violent** fever. We do not know the cause of this fever but the facts that it was high and the fact that the woman was too sick to get up suggest an extremely serious and perhaps life threatening illness. The demands of every life in that time did not allow most people the luxury of going to bed whenever they felt badly.

What we have before us in the accounts of this miracle is reality a **double** miracle. First of all, Jesus took her by the hand, lifted her up and the fever was immediately gone. And the second aspect of the miracle was according to Dr. Luke was that she was immediately infused with a complete restoration of her strength, she arose and "*served them.*" In all the accounts, the effect was **immediate**; the fever not only left her, but she was able to "*serve them.*"

There are several observations that should be made from the story of the cure of Peter's mother-in-law. First, Peter had a **wife**. If as the Roman Catholic Church claims, Peter was the first Pope, then his marital status flies in the face of the enforced celibacy of all priests, including the Pope. In fact the requirement of celibate ministry denies what God has permitted. The apostle Paul rather pointedly says in 1 Corinthians 9:5, "*Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas (Peter)?*"

A second observation is that this miracle occurred in a **private** place not a public auditorium. This act of mercy on the part of Jesus was down simply in a home. How many of the modern "healers" do you think would be content to do so today. How many modern "faith healers" have you ever heard of who make house calls? No rather they publicly exploit the desperate men and women who come to them for their own gain and profit.

A third observation, is it is wrong to assume that if a person suffers some sickness or disease that they are suffering because of some **sin** in their lives. Sickness

is also permitted by God for His glory and that His Son might be glorified also (John 11:4).

According to Luke's account after the miracle Jesus stayed on in Peter's house – which in all probability became the headquarters for His Galilean ministry. Then after sunset, people began to arrive at the house bringing with them all those who were sick (v. 40). *"When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them."*

From our Gentile perspective the reason why the people waited until sunset is not obvious at first. Verse thirty-one tells us that it was the Sabbath day. It was unlawful for the Jewish people to carry anything including the sick on the Sabbath. The Jewish "day" ends at **sundown**, so as soon as the sun had set the people of this region of Galilee bundled up their sick and brought them to Christ.

Jesus has just demonstrated that he could heal with just a word (v. 39), yet in the next verse Luke is careful to tell us (v. 40) that Jesus *"laid His hands on every one of them and healed them."* Hands-on-healing was most unusual we see no mention of it in rabbinical literature or in the Old Testament. The method that Jesus used was radically new and was both symbolic of the outflow of **divine** power and a demonstration of the **tenderness** of Jesus. Every single person that evening felt the loving touch of the Master's hand.

By telling us that he *"healed every one of them"* we are told that no disease was too difficult for Him and no disease was beyond His power to heal.

The final observation that I would like to make from this miracle is that reflect what is so often true of our own experiences. The Lord's miracles in our lives are often quiet and ordinary. It is the small miracles that are performed for us by our Lord, behind closed doors that allow ordinary people to carry on in their seemingly ordinary lives that are the most significant miracles of all.

In verse forty-one we are told, *"And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!' And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ."* From this passage we learn that Jesus healed many more people – people with *"various kinds of sickness."* Jesus was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4, *"He himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases."*

Jesus continued by casting out demons, but Mark adds the curious detail that Jesus did not allow the demons to speak. Apparently the demons knew that he was *"the Christ,"* but he would not allow them to speak. According to Luke 4:31, the demons were continually crying out, *"You are the Son of God."* It is possible that their shouts were not confessions but futile attempts to exercise mastery over Jesus by showing that they knew his name. But whatever the reasons for their shouts Jesus would not allow these representatives of the evil one to announce Him as the Messiah.

It had been a busy day and even busier evening for Jesus. According to verse forty-two sometime between 4:30 and 6:00 a.m. the Lord arose and slipped out of the house and went to a lonely place by the lake and there he began to pray. *"Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; (43) but He said to them, 'I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.' (44) And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee."*

In this passage we find a wonderful reminder that our lives and our ministries are not to be determined by the press of the crowd, or by what may be popular at the moment, but by what is the will of the Father. Although Jesus did heal many his purpose and his mission never changed, he came to declare the kingdom of God and to call men to it.

Charles Swindoll in his study guide on this story in Luke finds three principles worth remembering in this incident.

- Time alone, away from the demands of ministry, is neither **selfish** nor **unimportant**.
- Others may not always **understand** our need to get away. People won't set our boundaries for us; we must set them ourselves.
- We must guard against a limited **scope** of ministry. The Lord may lead us to other places and we must go.

[Charles Swindoll. "**The Origination of Something.**" Bible Study Guide (Luke 1:1-6:49) (Anaheim, Calif.: Insight For Living, 1994) p. 106]