

THE HOME OF SIMON PETER TO STIMULATE SERVICE  
THE HOME OF SIMON PETER TO STIMULATE SERVICE (MARK 1:28-31)

The service in the synagogue had ended. The congregation was standing outside discussing the event that had electrified the sabbath audience. A demon possessed man had been miraculously delivered by Jesus of Nazareth, but the people could hardly believe what had happened. Peter was probably looking toward the shimmering waters of the Sea of Galilee, and perhaps the gentle breeze blowing upon the trees increased the music already within his soul. He saw the neighbors returning to their homes, but the Preacher remained motionless; none of the citizens had invited Him to dinner. The fisherman asked the Lord and His few disciples if they would like to come to his home to rest and meet his wife.

Many years later Mark wrote, "And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her and she ministered unto them" (Mark 1:29-31). Simon's wife had meals to prepare, a mother confined to her bed with a fever, and then she thought of the impending arrival of the additional guests. Had someone rebuked Peter, he would probably have shrugged his shoulders and replied, "She can manage it." Some wives placed in that position would have accused the husband of being thoughtless!

The hostess must have been very worried. Under normal circumstances she would have been assisted by her mother, but unfortunately the older woman was stricken with a great fever—she was burning up! When she heard of her son-in-law's action, she probably burned even more! Simon had been born without brains! Her daughter only had one pair of hands, and filled with frustration, the mother was helpless. Outside in the living room conversation might have been difficult. Then "anon they tell him of her." He smiled and rose to His feet. Jesus was not only a great Physician, He was exciting and gracious. His bedside manner was perfect. "And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them." Her instant recovery was astounding, but her response was even more amazing.

When Mark described the miracle, he never mentioned any returning of thanks. Apparently the mother did not even kneel at the

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Lord's feet; she was urgently needed in the kitchen. If thanks were necessary, they could be given later. The Lord was hungry, the guests were waiting, her daughter was overworked. "Peter, get out of my way, I have a job to do." Within a short time the meal was served. She never received a doctor's bill. She knew a better way of paying her debt—she ministered to the Lord.

Perhaps within that home in Capernaum, Peter did most of the talking; the women did the work. Nothing more was recorded about that energetic mother-in-law, but it may be assumed her gratitude was overwhelming. The news of her healing spread swiftly through the city, and soon the house was surrounded by an immense crowd of neighbors who brought with them a variety of sick people. "And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of diverse diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him" (Mark 1:32-34).

The streets were filled with many types of suffering people. The area resembled an overflow from a hospital. The sun was setting upon a scene never to be forgotten. When the Savior moved among

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the sufferers, His touch brought life and peace to their troubled souls. His ministry continued until, completely exhausted, the Lord sought refuge in the home of His friend. Maybe the grateful mother-in-law made His bed and gently closed the door, telling the others to lower their voices; the Master needed rest. "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35).

Did the healed woman prepare a special breakfast and wonder why her Guest was not even in the house? She became a startling contrast to the citizens of Capernaum who, although they saw so much, deserved God's condemnation. It was not surprising when the Lord eventually said, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be cast down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day" (Matt. 11:23). Nevertheless, in the midst of those unbelieving people lived the gracious woman who never forgot how the Lord had turned her night into day. It has often been claimed that Christians are saved to serve. This lady was a glorious example of that fact. The story suggests four things.

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The Serious Problem. . . Threatening

"But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever." There were marshes in the area and high fevers were common. The name of Peter's wife was never mentioned, but we may assume that she and her husband provided a home for the mother-in-law. When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he intimated that Simon Peter was a married man whose wife accompanied him on his missionary journeys (see 1 Cor. 9:5). According to the testimonies of two of the early church leaders, Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius, Peter's wife gave her life for the Lord, and her husband was compelled to watch as she was led away. His last words to her were, "Remember thou the Lord." That information provides a brief glimpse of the woman who welcomed the Lord and His disciples. She must have been very tolerant and patient; living with Simon Peter could not have been easy. It is not known how long her husband had been away from home, but it could not have been more than a few days. During his absence his mother-in-law had contracted this troublesome fever and was confined to her bed. If Peter knew what had taken place at home, he possibly was glad to escape responsibilities by attending the service in the local synagogue.

He never forgot that meeting in the sanctuary when his new Master addressed the congregation. During the sermon a raucous voice was heard interrupting the Speaker, and the disciple saw the man who was disturbing everybody. The demon possessed fellow was waving his arms and shouting, "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" (Mark 1:24). The audience was perplexed, and some were afraid for the interrupter was known to be a dangerous man. Peter was amazed when Jesus said, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." After the service he continued to think of these things, but trouble awaited him at home, and the miracle in the synagogue could not solve that problem.

Families can be like the Sea of Galilee. Some days they are covered by blue skies and attractive sunshine. At other times they are beset by storm clouds; the atmosphere is chilling, and the outlook bleak. Sickness brings its own problems, but when the illness is life threatening, increasing concern disturbs the entire household. The best thing to do with a problem is to lay it before Jesus. He can help when other sources fail.

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The Simple Prayer... Telling

It would have been interesting had the New Testament supplied more information concerning events on that memorable day. It is almost certain that Jesus was asked to visit Peter's home. It would have been surprising had He invited Himself. Simon was already a disciple, and since they were in the vicinity of his home, Peter said, "Master, would you like to come to my home to rest and meet my wife?" A fisherman's cottage was unpretentious, the furniture ordinary and unspectacular. If the wife were not given advance warning of the arrival of additional guests, she would have been agitated and worried as she endeavored to adjust to the new circumstances. Maybe she asked the guests to be seated in the living room while she hurried to the kitchen.

There is no mention of any conversation prior to the serving of the meal. Perhaps speaking was a little difficult as the men sat in the Lord's presence. Did Jesus ask about other members of the family, and was it then that "anon, they tell him of her"? (see Mark 1:30). Luke, who specialized in recording details, wrote, "And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her" (Luke 4:38). The text suggests this was intercession and not a casual reference to the older woman. The statement is thought provoking, for evidently some person believed the Visitor was able to heal the mother. Was that informant influenced by the miraculous deliverance in the synagogue? Was that basically the reason why Simon invited Jesus to visit his home? It would be foolish to seek medicine when the great Physician was near. Many years after that event James wrote, "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss" (James 4:2-3).

The strength of the early church was its ability to pray. Those Christians spent more time on their knees than they did in pulpits. Prior to the Day of Pentecost, the saints prayed for ten days. Later, when Peter was brought out of the prison, he considered the nature of his miraculous deliverance and realized prayer was being made on his behalf. "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying" (Acts 12:12). The Lord loved to share the problems of His followers, and that was evident during His visit to the home of Simon Peter.

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The Sublime Power... Transforming

"And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her" (Mark 1:31). The Englishmen's Greek New Testament says the mother-in-law was "oppressed with a great fever." The New English Bible translates the passage, "she was in the grip of a great fever." The woman was dangerously ill and helpless. It should be remembered that this miracle was performed early in the Lord's ministry. Later, when His power was known throughout the country, people were unimpressed, and some of His enemies attributed His success to His association with Beelzebub the prince of evil. The news regarding the mother of Simon's wife astonished the citizens of Capernaum, who hoped He would continue His efforts.

The woman was seriously ill when Jesus entered her bedroom. What she thought or said was never revealed, but the Lord graciously took her hand, rebuked the fever, and carefully helped her to sit up. The New English Bible translated the passage, "Her temperature returned to normal, and she got up and prepared a meal for them."

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During the time when Christ ministered, there were numerous magicians who claimed to be exorcists. The Talmud, which is the official collection of Jewish writings relative to Hebrew civil and religious laws, mentions the methods by which their performances were supposedly accomplished. An iron knife was tied by human hair to a thorn bush, certain Scriptures were read on successive days, and finally magical formulas were used to complete the procedure. Many people believed these deceivers to be indispensable. Peter met one of them in Samaria. "But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God" (Acts 8:9-10). Paul also met similar men. "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:13-16).

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These evil practitioners were completely different from the Savior who was not a deceiver. When He stood beside the bed of Peter's relative, His eyes were filled with compassion. Gently He touched her, and she was instantly healed. There was nothing ostentatious. What happened was dignified and inspiring. His touch brought peace to her soul.

The Stirring Praise... Thrilling

"And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of diverse diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak because they knew him" (Mark 1:32-34). News travels fast! Dr. William Barkley, in his commentary on Mark states, "According to Jewish custom the main sabbath meal came immediately after the synagogue service, at the sixth hour, that is at twelve o'clock midday. The Jewish day began at 6 A.M. and the hours are counted from then." The healing of the mother-in-law probably occurred soon afterward. During the four or five hours that followed, the news of the miracle spread throughout Capernaum, and the people were filled with excitement. Families brought their sick, and the streets were filled with eager people. Mark said, "And all the city was gathered together at the door."

The air was filled with the joyful shouts of delivered people. Parents threw their arms around healed children, and others were amazed when demons were expelled. It was such an extraordinary scene that even angels might have watched in amazement. Somewhere in the background stood the mother whose deliverance caused the excitement. Maybe she wept for joy—*who can tell?* That wonderful woman never forgot the time when she first met the Savior. To her He would always be "The Great Physician."

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