

"FIND ME A MAN"

"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it." Jeremiah 5:11

Jeremiah lived in a wicked age. The chosen race was rapidly degenerating. The manhood of the nation was impoverished. The call of matchless causes fell on deaf ears. Impurity and injustice were widespread. The impending judgments of God were evident. Was there any hope of deliverance? Yes, if a man could be found. However, he must be a man who would seek the truth and do the right.

In many ways the age in which Jeremiah lived is like our own age. Each is an age of crisis, of decaying faith, and of change -- both actual and impending. We need prophets to bring home to us the consciousness of our selfishness, our unreality, and our false security on the very edge of peril. We need real men of God who will be faithful to Him regardless of the cost. God wants men of righteous convictions, godly purposes, faultless integrity, and unfaltering loyalty.

God wants and needs men of vision. "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Many men who have vision in other fields are woefully nearsighted in kingdom matters and interests. The people of our Colonial days had the vision of an empire. Their vision caused them to face hardships and conquer difficulties which the world thought unconquerable. With heads erect and purposes undaunted, with eyes on God and faith unclouded, the early settlers converted a howling wilderness into harvest fields, poverty into plenty, shadows into sunshine, and despair into triumph.

God is calling for men of integrity. When Marshall Field was burned out in the great Chicago fire and his possessions lay in ashes, Eastern financiers wired him to draw on them to the limit of his needs. The devastating fires could not burn up his fireproof integrity, character, and sterling worth. When Robert E. Lee was offered \$50,000 to head a questionable business concern, and was told that they needed his name, he replied: "My name is the heritage of my parents. It is all I have, and it is not for sale."

God is calling for men of fidelity. He is seeking for men who can be trusted. To be faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest privilege of life, and it should be the chief aim in life. Our churches need men of conviction and the courage to match their convictions. They need men whose hearts hunger for the things which Christ offers. They need men who are willing to fill places of responsibility. Some men will give their best in other organizations, but refuse to do their part when their church calls upon them. Nowhere else will a man's life count for as much as it will in the cause of Christ and His church. We must give our best to Christ through the church.

In the second chapter of the Gospel according to Mark we find a charming story about four men bringing a friend to Jesus. Their example is an inspiration and a challenge to each of us to do his very best. The record does not tell us who these men were. Nor does it tell us in what type of work or business they were engaged. Neither do we know how long they had been Christians. They had an implicit faith in Christ and in His ability to heal.

They had a feeling of compassion for the paralytic. They planned to take him to Jesus for healing. Perhaps, when the first one suggested it, the second one said, "We can't do it." Likely, he replied, "We will get somebody to help us." So a third and a fourth man were approached and told, "We want you to help us." And each responded when he was asked. Often find that to be the case.

Many have never been asked. One man said he went forward to join the church twenty-five years ago, and that when he did, he was asked to sit down, and that was the only thing he had ever been asked to do. We would be agreeably surprised what some people would be willing to do if they were invited in the right spirit. We want you to do it, it needs to be done, and it would be good for you to do it. I thank God for those who plan to bring others to Christ.

Those four men did not stop with planning. They pushed their plans. It requires effort to execute plans after they have been made. Those four men had certain traits which each of us needs to exemplify in the work which we do for our Lord through our churches, namely,

1. A recognition of need.

They were fully conscious of the serious condition of their friends. Each was willing to do his part to bring the poor man to Christ in order that he might be healed. It is so easy to see the material, physical, and mental needs of those about us, but we are almost blind to their spiritual needs. We must be conscious of the helpless and hopeless condition of unsaved people, before we will ever do anything about bringing them to Jesus for salvation.

2. An implicit faith in Christ.

Each man was fully convinced that Jesus could heal his sick friend. Each had faith to believe that He would do so if they brought the paralytic to Him.

3. A purposeful desire.

Each wanted to bring the need and the fulness of power together. To that end he was perfectly willing and glad to tenderly and lovingly carry one corner of the pallet on which his friend was lying and take him to the house where Jesus was in order that the Saviour might cure him.

4. A sacrificial attitude.

To get their friend to Jesus required a sacrifice on the part of each of these men. Each man had to take time out from his personal business, to put out his own physical energy, and to give up the privilege of hearing the greatest preacher of all time. It always costs something to carry your corner. If we are willing to do so in other matters, why not do so in the Lord's work? I admire the spirit of a former president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. As you well know, that great institution was first located in Greenville, South Carolina. The struggle became too hard, and the load became too heavy for mere men. The future looked exceedingly dark. Four men, two of whom were Doctors James P. Boyce and John A. Broadus, were together. One said, "We will have to let it die." Another arose and said, "I will agree on one condition, namely, that we die first." I knew of a beautiful church building which was ruined by a devastating fire. It was in the midst of the depression and the insurance had lapsed. One man in the church said to a lumber dealer, "Bobbie, if the good Lord lets me live that church is going to be rebuilt if I have to pay every cent of it; furnish whatever is needed, and I will see that the bill is paid."

5. A persistent effort.

After they had agreed upon their plan of action, and were filled with enthusiasm, they started with their afflicted friend. When they reached the house where Jesus was, the door was blocked by a crowd. This crowd was a barrier between the man and the blessing that Jesus had for him. This crowd was unwilling to get out

of the way and let them enter with the paralytic. That was almost enough to dampen their ardor, daunt their courage, and frustrate their enterprise. They might have convinced themselves that the case was hopeless, and they had as well turn back home. But, true faith is not so quickly defeated. They would not be defeated. They refused to give up. If they could not get in the door, they would see that the man reached Jesus in some other way. Their faith was energetic, industrious, and inventive. Here was the sick man, and on the inside of the house was the Healer, and it was their business to bring the two together somehow, cost what it might. They climbed up the outside stairway to the low and flat roof, and walked out on it. They laid the pallet down, removed some of the tile, and let the paralytic down through the opening into the presence of Christ. May God help us to press on in the face of every possible obstacle, and do our very best for our Master. "When God guides, He provides."

6. A cooperative spirit.

It was one thing to be aware of their friend's condition, it was another thing to believe in the certainty of Christ's power to heal him, and it was an altogether different thing to effect a meeting between the two. Besides, bringing the man to Jesus was more than a one man job. One man was inadequate, two were insufficient, three was a lopsided party, but four made the perfect combination. There was a corner for each man and he took hold of it. They took hold at the same time, they lifted together, and they walked in unison, so it did not take long to get the man to Jesus. Neither objected to either of the others carrying a corner. Neither complained or refused to carry his corner because of the method or manner by which the others were doing their part.

Oh, how we need to get away from the spectator psychology in our churches. Too many go to church to listen to the choir and to hear the preacher. We must re-emphasize participation in every phase of the work. We need to work together. Each one must carry his own corner. Don't fail to carry yours. Be a real man for Christ. Don't belong to the knocker's gang. I'd rather light a candle than to curse the darkness.