

PRAY THAT THE BRUISED MAY BE HEALED

Mark 2:1-12

After one of the tours in His early ministry in Galilee, Christ returned to Capernaum. Upon His arrival there He went to a certain house where He always received a cordial welcome, probably to rest for a few days. The news of His arrival soon spread throughout the village. When Christ entered a heart, a home, a village or a city, it soon became known. As soon as the word got out that He was at this particular house, the crowds assembled there also.

Although our Lord was tired, He did not turn the people away. He saw their needs and did something for them. "He preached the word unto them." Some people do not think that preaching can help them, so they refuse to hear it.

In Capernaum was one man who could not go to the house where Christ was preaching because he was paralyzed. His disease was not as painful as cancer, as loathsome as leprosy, or as fatal as leukemia, but it was one which left its victim absolutely helpless. Helpless and incurable, he was truly in a pitiable condition. Then, to make bad matters worse, his soul was imprisoned in sin.

This paralytic had some friends who were believers in Christ. They were concerned about his physical condition. They firmly believed that Christ had the ability and the willingness to heal their friend. They had implicit confidence in His intention of fulfilling His own program, which was "the recovery of sight to the blind, and setting at liberty of them that are bruised." Their love prompted these four friends to action. They made their way to the afflicted man's house and advised him of their intention to carry him to Christ. They could not heal their friend, but they were willing and glad to bring him to the One Who could heal him.

They carried the man on a pallet to the house where Christ was, but the house was full and the door was blocked. Their faith was inventive and energetic enough to overcome all obstacles. They took the afflicted man up the outside stairway, removed some of the tile from the roof, and let him down into the presence of Christ, Who stopped preaching and turned His full attention to this one man who needed help. Because of the faith of these five men, Christ spoke the life-giving words, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He also said, "Arise and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." As the word was spoken the power was imparted. The man who came through the roof with his back on the pallet went out of the door with the pallet on his back. Rejoicing in his soul because of what the Saviour and Great Physician had done for him, he went forth and glorified God.

When she heard that Christ was in the house of Simon, an unnamed woman, who had been notorious for her life of sin and shame, came uninvited and stationed herself behind Christ and at His feet. She had been a sinner in the blacker, filthier and more obnoxious sense. She had sinned against the laws of purity, and had made herself one of the scarlet sinners. She had enticed others to indulge in degradation and sin also. The sinful life of this woman of the streets was common talk. Her life had been so unchaste, sordid, immoral and disreputable that she had been cut off from respectable society. People of good character had refused to associate with her because she was a prostitute.

In the meantime, perhaps from the edge of the crowd somewhere, this outcast woman had listened to the tender and gracious words of our wonderful Saviour as He preached to all who would listen to Him. Evidently she had paid careful attention to His preaching, and

through it was led to deep conviction of sin and to genuine repentance toward God and a personal faith in Christ as Saviour. She had experienced the forgiveness of sin, whereupon her soul was saved and filled with peace and joy. The purpose of this woman in coming into Simon's house was to express to Christ her sincere gratitude for the forgiveness of her sins. Her heart was simply overflowing with genuine love for Him, Who had done so much for her. She wanted to express her love to Him and to prove her love for Him by rendering some service for Him.

When this woman whom Christ had saved entered Simon's house, the invited guests were reclining on the couches with their heads toward the tables and their feet outward. Upon seeing Christ, she went straight to Him. As a token of her gratitude to Him for saving her soul and transforming her life, she fully intended to anoint His feet with the delicately scented ointment that she had carried with her. In His presence she was so overcome with emotion that she could not proceed with her task. Standing there and contrasting the woman she once was with the one she was then, she gave vent to her feelings of thankfulness and joy by shedding warm and copious tears. Her spontaneous tears rained down so abundantly that they moistened the Master's feet. For lack of a towel, she unloosed her long hair and wiped away the tears from His feet. Evidently without speaking a word, this penitent, trusting and forgiven sinner kissed His feet again and again as an expression of her gratitude to and affection for Him. Then, as an expression of her genuine faith, gratitude and love, she opened her flask of precious alabaster ointment and emptied its fragrant contents upon the feet of her blessed Lord and Master.

When love for Christ is present in the heart, it will always be made manifest in the life. In fact, it is not at all difficult to get people to do something for Christ if they really love Him. Instead of attempting to excuse themselves from service for Christ, those who have been forgiven and transformed by the Saviour will be ready to render humble service in His name. Some are glad to do the big things which the public will notice, but are not willing to serve in the significant places. Real love for Christ will produce willingness to serve where and when He desires that it be done.

Following a second tour of Galilee, Christ returned to Capernaum. On His way to the home of Jairus, a curious crowd followed Him, desirous of seeing Him perform a miracle. Among those who thronged Him was a woman who had been suffering from a constitutional illness for twelve long years. Her very touch was regarded as a defilement to other people, so she was not permitted to enjoy the ordinary privileges, such as entering the synagogue. Because of her affliction she was ostracized from society.

Having heard about Christ, because somebody who had been blessed by Him had told her about Him, she decided that she would apply to Him for a cure. Having tried every sort of a remedy about which we had heard, but all in vain, she really believed, on the basis of what she had heard, that Christ could and would heal her. She reasoned that if she could touch Christ's clothes she would be healed. Modestly she pushed her way through the crowd, came up behind Christ, stooped down and nervously, shrinkingly, and appealingly touched the kraspedon on His robe, or the tassel on the hem of His garment, and instantly she was cured.

Looking into her heart, Christ distinguished between what she wanted and her way of expressing her desire. He knew that her idea was wrong. His clothes were no more productive of healing than were the clothes of any other person. Knowing her need of healing

and her desire for it, Christ permitted her faith to lay hold upon His heart and power in such a way that she got what she wanted. Because her faith was genuine it was sufficient for Him. Just as soon as she touched the tassel of His robe she was healed and health beamed in her face.

With fear and trembling the woman cast herself on the mercy of Christ, as she fell prostrate at His feet and told Him the whole truth about the miracle of healing which had been wrought in her. She then awaited the pleasure of His will, whatever it might be. Her confession followed her cleansing. This should ever be true. On the ground of her confession, she received the threefold word of cheer: "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace." By the use of that tender word, "daughter," Christ acknowledged that she had been accepted into the family of God.

It is our privilege and task that we may be a representative of Christ, recalling that He said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40). The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention points up the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of Americans among whom we should be doing mission work. Various agencies have provided a channel for Southern Baptists to assist in the missionary work. Many established churches have provided direct help through the personal ministries of their pastors. Others have made financial gifts to young and struggling churches. The major portion of financial support has been provided through the Cooperative Program, the basic means of undergirding all of the missionary, educational benevolent programs. The annual Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions has provided a strong supplement.

Within the next two years a strong effort will be made to establish five hundred new churches or church-type missions in strategic locations in the newer fields. This thrust will give major attention to needs for Baptist churches in New York, Pennsylvania, Indiana and California, and in the states across the northern and western parts of the nation. It is understood that one million dollars of the current receipts will be used in this project. It is hoped that through this week of prayer God may open our eyes, hearts, purses and energies to the need for greater participation in the continuing effort to win the people of this nation to Christ.

In this particular service, we are requested to pray especially for our fellow-Baptists who are ministering to and working with the migrants and the juvenile delinquents. Many Americans move freely throughout our great country, some of whom are seeking a better means of earning a living or a better way of life, and others are following crops or other job assignments. Always on the move to secure more work opportunities, the migrant family lives with uncertainty. The migrants know the meaning of prejudice, discrimination, rejection and isolation. They see their children growing up with few and little opportunities. At present there are eight Southern Baptist missionaries working among the migrants. It is anticipated that by 1970 ten couples will be serving among them.

Juvenile rehabilitation work has been established in eighty-five cities in twenty-two states. Naturally, there are multiplied thousands of troubled youths who need to be won to Christ and rehabilitated. This is an exceedingly difficult work, but one which is sorely needed.