THE BEST HOUSE-VISITATION

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"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.
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."
Mark 1:29-33

WE see before us small beginnings and grand endings. One man is called by the voice of Jesus, and then another. The house wherein they dwell is consecrated by the Lord's presence, and by and by the whole city is stirred from end to end with the name and fame of the Great Teacher.

We are often wishing that God would do some great thing in the world, and we look abroad for instruments which we think would be peculiarly fit, and think of places where the work might suitably begin. It might be quite as well if we asked the Lord to make use *of us*, and if we were believingly to hope that even our feeble instrumentality might produce great results by His power, and that *our abode* might become the central point from which streams of blessing should flow forth to refresh the neighborhood.

Peter's house was by no means the most notable building in the town of Capernaum. It was probably not the poorest dwelling in the place, for Peter had a boat of his own, or perhaps a half share in a boat with his brother Andrew, or possibly he and Andrew and James and John were proprietors of some two or three fishing boats, for they were partners, and they appear to have employed hired servants (Mar 1:20).

Still Peter was not rich nor famous, he was neither a ruler of the synagogue, nor an eminent scribe, and his house was not at all remarkable among the habitations which made up the little fishing suburb down by the seashore. Yet to this house did Jesus go. He had foreknown and chosen it of old, and had resolved to make it renowned by His presence and miraculous power.

There hung the fisherman's nets outside the door—the sole escutcheon and hatchment of one who was ordained to sit upon a throne, and judge with his fellow apostles the twelve tribes of Israel. Beneath that lowly roof, Immanuel deigned to unveil Himself—God with us showed Himself God with Simon.

Little did Peter know how divine a blessing entered his house when Jesus crossed the threshold, nor how vast a river of mercy would stream forth from his door adown the streets of Capernaum. Now, dear friend, it may be that your dwelling, though very dear to you, is not very much thought of by anybody else. No poet or historian has ever written its annals, nor artist engraved its image. Perhaps it is not the very poorest cot in the place in which you live. Still it is obscure enough, and no one as he rides along asks, "Who dwells there?" or "What a remarkable house is that?"

Yet is there any reason why the Lord should not visit you and make your house like that of Obed-edom, in which the ark abode, or like that of Zaccheus to which salvation came. Our Lord can make your dwelling the center of mercy for the whole region, a little sun scattering light in all directions, a spiritual dispensary distributing health to the multitudes around.

There is no reason except in yourself why the Lord should not make your residence in a city a greater blessing to it than the cathedral and all its clergy. Jesus cares not for fine buildings and carved stones. He will not disdain to come beneath your cottage roof, and coming there He will bring a treasury of blessings with Him, which shall enrich your house, and shall ensure the richest of boons to your neighbors.

Why should it not be? Have you faith to pray this moment that it may be so? How much do I wish you would! More good by far will be done by a silent prayer now offered by yourself to that effect than by anything which can be spoken by me. If every Christian here will now put up the supplication, "Lord, dwell where I dwell, and in so doing make my house a blessing to the neighborhood," marvelous results must follow.

I am going to speak of three things this morning. The first is, *How grace came to Peter's house.* Secondly, *what grace did when it got there*. And thirdly, *how grace flowed forth from Peter's house*.

I. HOW GRACE CAME TO PETER'S HOUSE.

The first link in the chain of causes was that *a relative was converted.* Andrew had heard John the Baptist preach, and had been impressed. The text which was blessed to him was probably, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Andrew followed Jesus, and having become a disciple, he desired to lead others to be disciples too. He began, as we all ought to begin, with those nearest to him by ties of relationship, "He first findeth his own brother Simon."

Beloved friend, if you are yourself saved, you should look about you and inquire, "To what house may I become a messenger of salvation?" Perhaps you have no family of your own. I do not know whether Andrew had. He seems at the time of this narrative to have lived in a part of the same house as Peter. Possibly they each had a house at Bethesda, which was their own city, but they lived together when they went on business to Capernaum. Perhaps Andrew had no wife and no children, I cannot tell. If it were so, I feel sure that he said to himself, "I must seek the good of my brother and his family."

I believe if we are really lively and thoughtful Christians, our conversion is an omen for good to all our kinsfolk. We shall not idly say, "I ought to have looked after my own children and household, and if I had owned any, and having none I am excused." But we shall consider ourselves to be debtors to those who are kindred householders. I hope that some Andrew is here who, being himself enlisted for Jesus, will be the means of conquering for Jesus a brother and a brother's household.

If there be no Andrews, I hope some of the Marys and Marthas will be fired with zeal to make up for the deficiency of the men, and will bring brother Lazarus to the Lord. Uncles and aunts should feel an interest in the spiritual condition of nephews and nieces. Cousins should be concerned for cousins, and all ties of blood should be consecrated by being used for purposes of grace.

Moses, when he led the people out of Egypt, would not leave a hoof behind, nor ought we to be content to leave one kinsman a slave to sin. Abraham, in his old age, took up sword and buckler for his nephew Lot, and aged believers should look about them and seek the good of the most distant members of their families. If it were always so, the power of the Gospel would be felt far and wide. The household of which Peter was master might never have known the Gospel if a relative had not been converted.

This first link of grace drew on another of much greater importance, namely, that *the head of the family became a convert*. Andrew sought out his brother and spoke to him of having found the Messias. Then he brought him to Jesus, and our Lord at once accepted the new recruit, and gave him a new name. Peter believed and became a follower of Christ, and so the head of the house was on the right side.

Heads of families, what responsibilities rest upon us! We cannot shake them off, let us do what we may! God has given us little kingdoms in which our authority and influence will tell for the better or the worse to all eternity. There is not a child or a servant in our house but what will be impressed for good or evil by what we do.

True, we may have no wish to influence them, and we may endeavor to ignore our responsibility, but it cannot be done. Parental influence is a throne which no man can abdicate. The members of our family

come under our shadow, and we either drip poison upon them like a deadly upas, or else beneath our shade they breathe an atmosphere perfumed with our piety.

The little boats are fastened to our larger vessel, and are drawn along in our wake. O fathers and mothers, the ruin of your children or their salvation will, under God, very much depend upon you. The gracious Spirit may use you for their conversion, or Satan may employ you as the instruments of their destruction.

Which is it likely to be? I charge you, consider. It is a notable event in family history when the grace of God takes up its headquarters in the heart of the husband and the father. That household's story will henceforth be written by another pen. Let those of us who are the Lord's gratefully acknowledge His mercy to us personally, and then let us return to bless our household.

If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth. Let us pray to be as clouds of grace to our families. Whether we have only an Isaac and an Ishmael, like Abraham, or twelve children like Jacob, let us pray for each and all that they may live before the Lord, and that we and all that belong to us may be bound up in the bundle of life.

Note, further, that the third step in the coming of grace to Peter's house was, that after the conversion of the brother and Peter, *there were certain others converted who were partners and companions with the two brothers*.

It is a great help to a man to find godly work-fellows. If he must needs go a-fishing like Peter, it is a grand thing to have a James and a John as one's partners in the business. How helpful it is to piety when Christian men associate from day to day with their fellow Christians, and speak often one to another concerning the best things. Firebrands placed closely together will burn all the more freely, coals laid in a heap will glow and blaze, and so hearts touching hearts in divine things cause an inward burning, and a sacred fervor seldom reached by those who walk alone.

Many Christians are called to struggle hard for spiritual existence through having to work with unbelievers. They are not only sneered at and persecuted, but all sorts of doubts and blasphemies are suggested, and these materially hinder their growth in the heavenly life. When they are brought into this trial, in the course of providence, they have need of great grace to remain firm under it. Beloved brother, if in your daily business you meet with none to help but many to hinder, you must live all the nearer to God, for you require a double measure of grace.

But if in the providence of God you happen to be placed where there are helpful Christian companions, do not readily change that position, even though your income would be doubled thereby. I would sooner work with James and John for twenty shillings a week, than with swearers and drunkards for sixty.

You who reside with really consistent Christians are much favored, and ought to become eminent Christians. You are like flowers in a conservatory, and you ought to bloom to perfection. You live in a lavender garden and you ought to smell sweetly. Prove that you appreciate and rightly use your privileged position by endeavoring to bring grace to your house, that it may be altogether the Lord's.

A fourth and more manifest step was taken when *Peter and his friends were drawn closer to their Lord*. The good man of the house was already saved, and his brother and companions, but by the grace of God they rose to be something more than merely saved, for they received a call to a higher occupation and a nobler service. From fishers they were to rise into fishers of men, and from rowing in their own boats to become pilots of the barque of the church.

Peter was already a disciple, but he was in the background. He must come to the front. He had been more a fisherman than a disciple, but now he must be more a disciple than a fisherman. He must now follow Jesus by a more open avowal, a more constant service, a nearer communion, a more attentive discipleship, a fuller fellowship in suffering, and for this he must receive an inward preparation by the Divine Spirit.

He was, in fact, by the call of his Lord and Master, lifted to a higher platform altogether, upon which he would abide and learn by the Spirit what flesh and blood could never reveal.

Beloved, what a difference there may be between one Christian and another. I have sometimes seen it with astonishment, and though I would not go so far as to say that I have seen as much difference between one Christian and another, as between a Christian and a worldling. For there must ever be between the lowest grade of life and the fairest form of death a wider distinction than between the lowest and highest grades of life, yet still it is a very solemn difference. We know some who are saved—at least we hope they are—but oh, how few are the fruits of the Spirit. How feeble is the light they give. How slender is their consecration. How small is their likeness to Him whom they call Master and Lord.

Thank God, we have seen others who live in quite another atmosphere, and exhibit a far different life. It is not a higher life, I hardly like that term, for the life of God is one and the same in all believers. But it is a higher condition of the life, more developed, more vigorous, more influential. A condition of life which has a clearer eye, and a nimbler hand, a quicker ear, and a more musical speech.

A life of health, whereas too many only know life as laboring under disease, and ready to give up the ghost. There are Mephibosheths among the king's favorites, but give me the life of Naphtali, "satisfied with favour and full of the blessing of the LORD." Or of Asher, of whom it is written, "Let him dip his foot in oil."

An owl is alive though it loves the darkness, and a mole is alive though it is always digging its own grave, but give me the life of those who mount as on the wings of eagles, who live upon the fat things, full of marrow, and drink the wines on the lees well-refined. These are the mighties of Israel, whose joyous energy far surpasses that of the weary and faint, whose faith is feeble and whose love is cold.

Now, Peter and his friends at this time had been called from their fishing tackle and their boats to abide with Jesus in His humiliation, and learn of Him the secrets of the kingdom, which afterwards they were to teach to others. They had heard the Master say, "Follow me," and they had left all at His bidding. They were in the path of fellowship, boldly pressing on at their Lord's command, so that now they had taken a grand stride in their Christian career. And that is the time, beloved, when men bring blessings on their houses.

Oh, I could sigh to think of the capacities which lie dormant in some Christians! It is sad to think how their children might grow up, and with God's blessing become pillars in the house of the Lord, and perhaps ministers of the Gospel, under the influence of an earnest consecrated father and mother. But instead thereof, the dullness, the lukewarmness, the worldliness, and the inconsistencies of parents are hindering the children from coming to Christ, hampering them as to any great advances in the divine life, dwarfing their stature in grace, and doing them lifelong injury.

Brethren, you do not know the possibilities which are in you when God's Spirit rests upon you. But this much is certain, if you yourselves be called into a higher form of divine life, you shall then become mediums of blessing to your relatives. Your husband, your wife, your child, your friend, and the whole of your family shall be the better for your advance in spiritual things.

Now, observe further, that at this time when the Lord was about to bless the household of Peter, *He had been further instructing Peter and Andrew and James and John*, for He took them to the synagogue and they heard Him preach. A delightful sermon it was—a sermon very full of energy, and very unlike the discourses of ordinary preachers, for it had authority and power about it. And it was when they came home from synagogue, after hearing such a sermon, that the blessing descended upon the house.

The best of us need instruction. It is unwise for Christian people to be so busy about Christ's work that they cannot listen to Christ's words. We must be fed or we cannot feed others. The synagogue must not be deserted, if it be a synagogue where Christ is present.

And oh, sometimes when the Master is present, what a power there is in the Word. It is not the preacher's eloquence, it is neither the flow of language, nor the novelty of thought. There is a secret, quiet influence which enters into the soul and subdues it to the majesty of divine love. You feel the vital energy of the divine Word, and it is not man's word to you, but the quickening voice of God sounding through the chambers of your spirit, and making your whole being to live in His sight.

At such times the sermon is as manna from the skies, or as the bread and wine with which Melchizedec met Abraham. You are cheered and strengthened by it, and go away refreshed. My dear brother, my dear sister, then is the time to go home and take your Lord home with you. Peter and his friends had so enjoyed the great Teacher's company at the synagogue that they begged Him to abide with them, and so they went straight away with Him from the synagogue into the house.

Can you do that this morning? If my Lord shall come and smile upon you and warm your hearts, do not lose Him as you go down the aisles, do not let Him go when you reach the streets and are walking home. Do not grieve Him by chitchat about worthless matters, but take Jesus home with you. Tell Him it is noon-day and entreat Him to tarry with you during the heat of the day. Or if it be in the eventide, tell Him the day is far spent, and beseech Him to abide with you. You can always find some good reason for detaining your Lord.

Do as did the spouse of old, when she said, "I found him whom my soul loveth; I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me." Is there not a sick one at home? Take Jesus home to her. Is there no sorrow at home? Entreat your Lord to come home to help you in your distress. Is there no sin at home? I am sure there is. Take Jesus home to purge it away.

But remember, you cannot take Him home with you unless you first have Him with you personally. Labor after this then, be not satisfied without it. Resolve to be His servant—that I trust you are, to be His servant walking in the light as He is in the light, and having fellowship with Him—that I hope you are. And then, having gone so far, resolve that you will take Him to your friends and to your kinsfolk, that so your whole house may be blest.

I desire, before I pass to the second point, to lay great stress upon this. We have an old proverb that charity must begin at home. Let me shape it into this—piety must begin with yourself. Before you ask salvation for your family, lay hold upon it for yourself. This is not selfishness. Indeed, the purest benevolence makes a man desire to be qualified to benefit others. And you cannot be prepared to bless others unless God has first blessed you.

Is it selfishness which makes a man stand at the fountain to fill his own cup, when he intends to hand that cup round for others to drink? Is it selfishness for us to pray that in us there may be a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, when our second thought is that out of us may flow rivers of living water whereby others may be replenished? It is not selfishness to wish that the power of the Lord may be upon you, if you long to exercise that power upon the hearts of others for their good.

Look you well, brethren, to yourselves. You cannot bless your children, you cannot bless your households, till first of all upon yourselves the anointing of the Lord does rests. O Spirit of the living God, breathe upon us that we may live yet more abundantly, and then shall we be chosen vessels to bear the name of Jesus to others.

II. Now we take the second step and show WHAT GRACE DID IN PETER'S HOUSE WHEN IT CAME THERE.

The first effect that grace produced was, *it led the family to prayer*. The four friends have come in, and no sooner are they in than they begin to speak with the Master, for the text tells us, "Anon they tell him of her,"—of Peter's wife's mother who lay sick. I like that expression—I do not know whether you have noticed it, "Anon they tell him of her." Luke tells us, "They besought him." I have no doubt Luke is right, but Mark is right too. "They tell him of her."

It looks to me as if it taught me this—that sometimes all I may do with my sore affliction is just to tell my own dear Lord about it, and leave it to His loving judgment to act as He sees fit. Have you any temporal trouble or sickness in the house? Tell Jesus of it. Sometimes that is almost as much as you may do.

You may beseech Him to heal that dear one, but you will have to say, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," and so will feel that all you may do is to tell Jesus the case and leave it with Him. He is so gentle

and loving, that He is sure to do the kindest thing, and the thing which is most right to do. Therefore, we may be content to "tell him of her."

With regard to spiritual things, we may press and be very importunate, but with regard to temporal things, we must draw a line, and be satisfied when we have told Jesus and left the matter to His discretion. Some parents may, when their children are ill, plead with God in a way which shows more of nature then of grace, more clearly the affection of the mother than the resignation of the Christian, but such should not be the case.

If we have committed our way unto the Lord in prayer, and meekly told Him of our grief, it will be our wisdom to be still, and watch till God the Lord shall speak. He cannot be either unjust or unkind, therefore should we say, "Let him do what seemeth him good."

Very likely this good woman, Peter's wife's mother, was herself a believer in Christ. But I venture to take her case as typical of spiritual success, not at all wishing, however, to insinuate that she was spiritually sick, for she may have been one of the most devoted of Christians. But now, suppose you take Jesus Christ home with you, dear friend, if you have an unconverted one in the house, you will immediately begin to "tell him of her."

"They told him of her." That is a very simple type of prayer, is it not? Yes, in some respects it is, and therefore I urge you to use it. Do not say you cannot pray for your child, you can tell Jesus of her. Do not say you cannot plead for your brother or your sister. You can go, and in a childlike manner tell Jesus about the case, and that is prayer.

To describe your needs is often the best way of asking for help. I have known a person say to a man of whom he needed aid, "Now, I am not going to ask you for anything, I only want you to hear my story, and then you shall do as you like." And if he wisely tells his story, the other begins to smile and says, "You do not call that asking, I suppose?" Tell Jesus Christ all about it. His view of the matter will be to your advantage.

This elementary form of prayer is very powerful. The police do not allow people to beg in the streets, but I do not know that there is any law to prevent their sitting down in attitudes of misery, and exhibiting holes at the knees of their trousers, and bare feet staring through soleless shoes. I saw that exhibition this morning.

The man was not begging, but it was wonderfully like it, and answered the purpose better than words. To tell Jesus Christ about your unconverted relative or friend may have in it a great deal of power, may be, in fact, one of the most earnest things you could do. Because the absence of spoken pleas and arguments may arise from your being so burdened with anxiety that you cannot find words to say, "Lord relieve me." But you stand there and sigh under the burden, and those groanings which cannot be uttered act as urgent pleas with the pitiful heart of Christ, and cry aloud in His ear, "Lord, help me."

Telling Jesus is a simple mode of praying, but methinks it is a very believing mode. It is as if they felt, "We only need to tell the case, and our blessed Lord will attend to it. If anon we tell Him of her, there shall be no need to clasp His knees, and cry with bitter tears for pity upon the fevered one. For as soon as He hears, so loving is His heart, He will stretch out His hand of power." Go to Jesus, then, dear friends, in that spirit, about your unconverted friend or child, and "Tell him of her."

There is something very instructive about this particular case, because we are apt to think we must not tell the Lord of the more common troubles which occur in our family, but this is a great error. Too common? How can the commonness of an evil put it out of the list of proper subjects for supplication? The seaboard of Capernaum in which Peter dwelt is said by travelers to be a peculiarly damp, marshy, aguish, feverish place. No end of people had the fever just around the house. But Peter and Andrew did not argue that they must not tell the Lord because it was a common disease.

Do not let Satan get an advantage over you by persuading you to keep back commonplace troubles or sins from your loving Lord. Beloved, if He counts the hairs of your heads, if not a sparrow falls to the

ground without His knowledge, depend upon it, your commonest trouble will be sympathized in by Him. "In *all* their afflictions he was afflicted."

It is a great mistake to think you may not carry to your Redeemer the ordinary trials of the day. Tell Him, yea, tell Him all. If your child is only a common sinner, if there is no unusual depravity in him, if your son has never grieved you by perverseness, if your daughter has always been amiable and gentle, do not think there is no need to pray. If it is only a common case of the fever of sin, yet it will be deadly in the end unless a balm is found, therefore, tell Jesus of it at once. Do not wait till your son becomes a prodigal, pray at once! Do not delay till your child is at death's door, pray now!

But sometimes a difficulty arises from the other side of the matter. Peter's wife's mother was attacked by no ordinary fever. We are told it was "a great fever." The expression used implies that she was burning with fever, and she was intensely debilitated, for she was laid or prostrate.

Now the devil will sometimes insinuate, "It is of no use for you to take such a case to Jesus. Your son has acted so shamefully, your daughter is so willful, such a case will never yield to divine grace in answer to prayer." Do not be held back by this wicked suggestion. Our Lord Jesus Christ can rebuke great fevers, and He can lift up those that are broken down, and rendered powerless by raging sin. "Wonders of grace to God belong." Go and tell Jesus of the case, common or uncommon, ordinary or extraordinary, even as they told Jesus of her.

Now notice one or two reasons why we think they were driven to tell Jesus of her. I know the great reason, but I will mention the little ones first. I fancy they told Jesus of her, at first, because it was a contagious fever, and it is hardly right to bring a person into a house that has a great fever in it, without letting them know.

If there is a great sin in your house, you may perhaps feel in your heart, "How can Jesus Christ come to my house while my drunken husband acts as he does?" Perhaps, more sorrowful still, the wife drinks in secret, and the husband, who sees it with deep regret, says, "How can I expect the Lord to bless us?"

Or perhaps some great, sad sin has defiled your child and you may well say, "How can I expect the Lord to smile on this house? I might as well expect a man to come into a house which is infected with typhus fever." Never mind. Tell Jesus all about it, and He will come, fever or no fever, sin or no sin.

I think perhaps they told Him of her because it would be some excuse for the scantiness of the entertainment they were likely to give. What could Peter and Andrew do at preparing a meal? The principal person in the house was ill and could not serve. We poor men are miserable hands at spreading a table, we need a Mary or a Martha to help us, or a Peter's wife, or a Peter's wife's mother. And so they say, with long faces, "Good Master, we would gladly entertain You well, but she who would delight to serve You is sick."

How often a family is hindered from entertaining Christ through some sick soul that is in the house. "O Lord, we would have family prayer, but we cannot—the husband will not permit it." "Lord, we would make this household ring with Your praises, but we should make one tenant of it so angry that we are obliged to be quiet." "We cannot give You a feast, good Lord. We have to set before You a little as best we can, or the house would grow too hot to hold us." Never mind. Tell Jesus about it, and Jesus will come and sup with you, and turn the impediment into an assistance.

Moreover, the faces of the friends looked so sad. I dare say while in the synagogue Peter had almost forgotten about his wife's mother, he had been so pleased with the preaching. But when he reached home, the first question when he crossed the door was, "How is she now?" The servants replied, "Alas, master, the fever rages terribly."

Down went Peter's spirits. A cloud came over his countenance, and he turned to Jesus and cried, "Good Master, I cannot help being sad, even though You are here, for my wife's mother, whom I love much, is sick of a fever." That sadness may have helped Peter to "tell him of her."

But I think the grand reason was this, that our blessed Lord had such a sympathetic heart that He always drew everybody's grief out of them. Men could not keep anything to themselves where He was.

He looked like one who was so much like yourself, so much in all points tried like as you are, that you could not help telling Him.

I exhort you that love my Lord to allow His sweet sympathy to extract from you the grief which wrings your heart. Let it constrain you to tell Him of your unconverted relative. He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, He loved the souls of men, and died for them. And therefore, He can tenderly enter into the anxieties which you feel for souls rebellious and hardened in sin. Therefore, "tell him of her."

I think, however, that they told Him of her because they expected that He would heal her. Tell Jesus about your child, or your friend, who is unconverted, and expect that He will look upon them with an eye of love. He can save. It is like Him to do it. He delights to do it. It will honor Him to do it. Expect Him to do it, and tell Him the case of your unregenerate friend this very day.

May I put the question all round? You have each of you, probably, someone left in your family unsaved, and you have said, "I was in hopes that this one would be converted." Have you ever told Jesus of her or of him? Oh, I hope you can answer, "Yes, I have many times." But it is just possible you have not made a set business of it.

Begin now, and go upstairs and take time every day to tell the Lord every bit about Jane, or Mary, or Thomas, or John. Wrestle with God, if need be, all night long, and say, "I will not let you go except thou bless me." I do not think that many of you will be very long with that trouble to carry when you have in that manner told it to your Lord.

This is what they did when Jesus came. *Immediately* they told Him of her, for the word "Anon" is really in the Greek "immediately." Directly Christ went in, they told Him of her, and directly Christ went to heal her.

So the first work grace wrought in the house was it led them to pray, and secondly, *this led the Savior to heal their sick*. He went into the chamber, spoke a word, gave a touch, lifted up the sick woman, and she was restored, and the wonderful thing was she was able to rise from the bed immediately and wait upon them.

This never occurs in the cure of a fever, for when a fever goes, it leaves the patient very weak and he needs days and weeks, and sometimes months, before he recovers his wonted strength. But the cures of Christ are perfect, and so at once the patient rose and ministered unto them.

Thus we see that when grace came into that house and wrought its cure *it quite transformed the family*. Look at the difference. There is the poor woman, the patient, shivering, and then again burning, for the fever is on her. She can scarcely lift hand or foot. Now look at her, she is busily serving, with a smiling face. No one is more happy or healthy than she.

So when God's grace comes, the one who has been the object of the most anxiety becomes the happiest of all. The sinner, saved by sovereign grace, becomes a servant of the Lord. The patient becomes the hostess.

Note the change in the rest of them. They had all been heavy of heart, but now they are rejoicing. There is no anxiety on Peter's face now. Andrew is no more troubled, the skeleton in the closet has disappeared, the sickness has been chased out, and they can all sing a gladsome hymn. The house is changed from a hospital to a church, from an infirmary to a banqueting hall.

The Lord Himself seems changed, too, if change can come over Him, for from a physician going carefully into a sick room, He comes forth a King who has subdued an enemy, and they all look upon Him with wonder and reverence as the mighty Lord, victorious over invisible spirits.

Now, I pray God that our household may be transformed and transfigured in this way. Our Luz may become a Bethel, our valley of Achor a door of hope, our sons of perverseness a seed to serve the Lord. If you yourself get a fullness of grace, the next step is for your families to receive of the boundless fullness, till not one shall be soul-sick at home, but all shall be happy in the Lord, all, all shall serve Him.

III. When mercy had once entered, let us see HOW GRACE FLOWED FORTH FROM THE HOUSE.

They could not keep the fact hidden indoors that Peter's wife's mother was cured. I do not know who told about it. Had it been in our day, I should have thought it was one of the servants over the palings of the backyard, where they are so fond of talking, or perhaps some friend who came in, and was told the news.

Perhaps the doctor called round to see the good woman, and to his utter astonishment, found her up and about the house. He goes to his next patient and says, "My business will soon come to an end. My patient, who had fever yesterday, has been made perfectly whole by one Jesus, a Prophet of Nazareth." Somehow or other it oozed out. You cannot keep the grace of God a secret. It will reveal itself. You need not advertise your religion—live it, and other people will talk about it. It is good to speak for Christ whenever you have a fair opportunity, but your life will be the best sermon.

The story went through the town, and a poor man on crutches said to himself, "I will hobble out to Peter's house!" Another who used to creep through the streets on all fours quietly whispered, "I will go to Peter's house and see." Others, moved by the same impulse, started for the same place.

Many who had sick ones said, "We will carry our friends to Peter's house." So the house grew popular, and lo, around the door there was such a sight as Peter had never seen before. It was a great hospital, all down the street patients were clamoring to see the great Prophet. "Almost the whole city came round about the door."

And now, what say you about Peter's house? We began with calling it a humble lodging, where a fisherman dwelt. Why, it is become a royal hospital, a palace of mercy. Here they come with every kind of complaint, lepers, and halt, and lame, and withered, and there is the loving Master, moving here and there till He has healed every one of them.

The streets of Capernaum rang that night with song of joy. There was dancing in the street of a new kind, for the lame man was leaping. And the music that accompanied the dancing was of a new kind too, for then did the tongue of the dumb sing, "Glory be to God." It was out of Peter's house that all this mercy came.

Ah, brethren, I would to God He would look first on Peter, and then on Peter's wife's mother, or Peter's child or relative, and then on the whole house, and then from the house cause an influence to stream forth and to be felt by all the neighborhood.

"It cannot be so with my home," says one. Why not, dear brother? If you are straitened at all, you are not straitened in God, you are straitened in yourself. "But I live in a place," says one, "where the ministry is lifeless." The more reason why you should be a blessing to the town. "Oh, but I live where many active Christians are doing a great deal of good." The more reason why you should be encouraged to do good too.

"Oh, but ours is an aristocratic neighborhood." They want the Gospel most of all. How few of the great and mighty are ever saved! "Oh, but ours is such a low neighborhood." That is just the place where the Gospel is likely to meet with a glad reception, for the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and they will hear it.

You cannot invent an excuse which will hold water for a moment. God can make your house to be the center of blessing to all who dwell around it, if you are willing to have it so. But the way to have it so I have described. First, you must yourself be saved, yourself called to the highest form of life, yourself warmed in heart by the presence of your Master. Then your family must be blessed, and after that the widening circle around your habitation. Oh that it might be so.

I know some brethren who, wherever they are, are burning and shining lights. But I know some others who are lamps, but it would be difficult to say whether they are alight or not. I think I see a flicker, but I am not sure.

Brethren, aspire to be abundantly useful. Do you wish to live ignoble lives? Do you wish to be bound to the loathsome carcass of a dead Christianity? I abhor lukewarmness from my very soul, let us

have done with it! We have a very short time in which to bear our testimony, we shall soon be at rest, let us work while we can. The shadows are lengthening, the day is drawing to a close. Up! brethren, up! If you are to bring jewels to Jesus, if you are to crown His head with many crowns, up, I pray you, and labor for Him while you can.

There are some here who are unconverted. I have not spoken to them, but I have tried to set you all speaking to them. Will you do it, or shall I keep you to hear the second half of my sermon? No, I will trust you to deliver it, and may God bless you for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 1:14-45

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—89 (PART II), 391, 394

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