

JANUARY 9, 1994

CALLED TO CARE

There are many situations that we see where we feel helpless to do anything. We would like to do something but just do not have the means to do the job. In many other cases, we just don't know what to do. Caring enough to see a need is a good first step in such situations. We have human compassion that is taught to us by our parents and others who influenced us as we were growing up. However, a lot of time we fail to recognize when and where there is a need. This is when we need a perception that goes beyond ourselves. We need a perception that flow out of the "love of God that is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." There is a popular song that talks about seeing the world around us through our Heavenly Father's eyes. Well, when we have the Father's love in our hearts, then we will be able to see through our Father's eyes.

Even after we have seen the need and really want to help, we still need resources beyond our own ability in order to do anything of truly lasting good. When we realize the meaning of Paul's words "For it is God Who works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure," then we can recognize that we need to look to Jesus to work through us to provide the care for those in need. We can see from His earthly ministry the kind of care that He provided then and He will provide now (Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever) as He lives His life and continues His ministry in us. After all, didn't Paul say, "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live, nevertheless, it is not I who lives, but Christ Who lives in me. The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God . . ." We can see from the writing of Luke some of the things to which Jesus ministered.

LUKE 4:31-37 Jesus had ministered in the Capernaum area prior to going to His home town of Nazareth. He returned to the area and resumed ministry to people. Jesus ministered by teaching people. He taught with authority. He knew what the Word said because He is the Word of God.

We have a tendency to tell a person about Jesus one time and never have any follow up. However, the ministry Jesus had was an on going one. He taught on the

sabbath days - not just one time. One of the most important ministries Christians have today is to tell (teach) others the Word of God.

In the process of teaching, other opportunities arose. One situation involved a man with an unclean spirit. Most Christians get very uncomfortable when anyone talks about demons and unclean spirits. Jesus dealt with such situations openly and He recognized it for what it is. He did not try to find another name for it. He didn't call it a fixation, or an obsession or any other the other names we have tried to use to cover up the reality of the spiritual world.

The unclean spirit could speak through the person and, amazingly enough, it recognized Jesus and knew that the final judgement on unclean spirit was destruction by Jesus. They just did not know when. We can also see that the unclean spirit was powerless against Jesus and had to do as He commanded. When Jesus said, "Shut up and get out," that was what it did.

If the way we are to minister in the world today is to let Jesus work His works through us, then we ought to be about the business of teaching the Word of God with authority and ministering to spiritual needs of people as these needs arise.

Admittedly, we don't spend all our time in the synagogue or church building, but have families and friends with whom we interact as just part of the daily routine of life. Jesus was involved in such things also.

LUKE 4:38-39 From teaching the truth of the Word of God and casting out demons in a worship center setting, Jesus shifted emphasis to the physical welfare of a family member of one of His disciples in a home setting. I would imagine that after the synagogue service, Simon Peter invite the group to his house for a meal. When they arrived they found Peter's mother-in-law sick with a great fever. All they had to do was to ask Jesus for help. Just as Jesus had rebuked the demon at the synagogue, He rebuked the fever in this woman. Jesus is Lord of ALL. Whether the problem is spiritual or physical, Jesus has authority over it. In both cases, the miraculous nature of what was happening

could not be denied by those who saw it. The results were immediate. In the case of Peter's mother-in-law she immediately got up and fixed lunch.

Both these miracles were supportive of the teaching ministry of Jesus in that these confirmed His words and authenticated the claims He made. In the same way, the preaching of Paul was carried out as he said in I Thess 5:5, "our gospel came unto you not in word only but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." If there was ever a need today, it is for the Word of God to be proclaimed from the pulpits of the land with great authority and with power and in the Holy Spirit. If that were being done, then we would be seeing far less lawlessness and iniquity in the world today.

LUKE 4:40-41 It is interesting to see the ever widening range of those to whom Jesus ministered. First, Luke shows Him in a religious center and this is where people usually go to find God. Then we see Jesus ministering to close friends and their family members, which should be a natural thing to expect. Now Luke shows the sphere of concern for giving care to people to those in the neighborhood. These people came in the evening. Apparently, word had gotten around that Jesus was at the home of Peter and so people came to Him.

In some of the other accounts of the healing that Jesus did, the religious leader had criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath day. This may explain what people in the neighborhood waited until evening (the Sabbath day ended at 6:00 pm) before coming for help. They came for help and help they found. People with various types of diseases either came or were brought to Him.

Luke pointed out that Jesus laid His hands on them and healed them. In Jewish life, those with diseases were considered to be (ceremonially) unclean and other did not want to touch them lest they become unclean also. There was a good practical reason for this practice. Such precautions helped prevent the spread of communicable diseases. The disregard shown for the precaution was indicative of the absolute power Jesus had over even the microbes that He created.

Among those that came that evening, some had unclean spirit that were afflicting them. Jesus again showed His authority and

power over these. The demons and devils recognized Jesus for who He was (is), yet the Jews could not see it and refused to accept it.

LUKE 4:42-43 From the synagogue, to the home, the surrounding neighborhood, and now on to other cities, the ministry of Jesus reached out to others. He told the people that wanted Him to stay that He had to preach the Kingdom of God to others. That is interesting: Jesus had been healing the sick and casting out demons and He said He was proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Maybe there is a lesson for us as evangelical Christians. Sometimes we get so caught up in **talking** about the Kingdom of God that we forget that the best way to proclaim it is by demonstrating the power and authority of the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus will do as He lives in us.