



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 8:14–22

Gospel of Matthew

“Healings, the Atonement,”  
and the Implications of Discipleship

TRANSCRIPT

Now we’re turning in our Scripture reading to Matthew chapter 8 and verse 14. Matthew chapter 8 and verse 14:

“And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto him. When the evening was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses. Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, ‘Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.’ And Jesus saith unto him, ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.’ And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.”

May God’s blessing rest upon his inspired Word.

The subject for the message today is “Healings, the Atonement, and the Implications of Discipleship.” What a change takes place when mothers become mothers-in-law. [Laughter] You have perhaps heard the story of the young lady who said, “My husband got angry with me last night, and told me to go to the devil.”

“What are you going to do about that?” someone said to her.

“I’m going straight home to mother.” [Laughter]

These jokes about mother-in-law do not, of course, carry a great deal of conviction with us. Most of us are probably very grateful for those mothers-in-law about whom we sometimes jest. In my case, particularly, one in the chain of events that led to my conversion is the Christian testimony of my mother-in-law, with whom I debated considerably. I always thought I won the arguments. But it turned out, in the long run, I didn’t, and I truly can say a great part of my salvation is traceable to the constant testimony of my mother-in-law, as well as my wife, when I was not a Christian.

So, I think I can appreciate this very tender and human story of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, and I think I can understand very thoroughly how, when she had been healed, she arose and ministered to the Lord Jesus.

The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law is the third of the miracles of healing recorded by Matthew in this section on the miracles. As I’ve been saying on the last two Sundays, these miracles are the credentials of the King. They are the means by which he demonstrates to Israel that he is the one that the Old Testament had prophesied should come, for one of the signs by which the Messiah would be known would be the fact that he should perform mighty acts of healing: that the leper should be cleansed, that the sick should be healed, that the lame should be enabled to walk. These were messianic signs.

Now this fact of the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, and then the healing of the many who are referred to in the 16th verse, raises the question of whether healing is in the atonement. Because, as we’ve read in our Scripture reading, Matthew the evangelist takes the healing of the many to be

one of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming of Christ, Isaiah chapter 53 to be exact (perhaps the greatest of the Old Testament prophecy concerning Christ).

Now it is the claim of the so-called divine healers that we have the right today, in the light of our Lord’s ministry, and in the light of Matthew’s statement, that he fulfill the prophecies of healing to claim healing for the body today. And later on, I want to speak specifically to that question which is raised in this passage here: can we claim such healing for the body for now?

It’s not surprising that these miracles that Jesus performed should have a profound effect upon the observers. And so we also read in this account of the reactions of two who have observed the healings which Jesus performed, and who responded to them. We have a scribe who comes to Jesus with those remarkable words, “I want to follow you wherever you go,” and the Lord Jesus represses the willingness of this scribe. And then one of the disciples comes to the Lord, and this disciple comes with, also, a desire to follow him with one proviso, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my Father,” and the Lord Jesus stimulates the unwillingness of this disciple. So we have a very interesting series of three sections, dealing with a number of miracles and the effects of the miracles upon others.

But first of all, the private healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, recorded for us in Matthew chapter 8 verse 14 and verse 15. We know from the study of the context of these passages that are found here in Matthew chapter 8 that these miracles occurred on the Sabbath Day. As he returned from the synagogue service of that day, he healed the centurion’s servant. Mark tells us of another healing that he performed, although Matthew does not record it.

So, finally, after a lengthy day of ministry both in connection with the synagogue and outside the synagogue, the Lord Jesus, invited by Peter, perhaps, to come to his home for an evening meal, thinking, it would seem to me, that it would afford an opportunity for rest, discovered that there is no rest for, what Alexander McLaren has called, “the unwearied Christ.”

The moment that he came into Peter’s home, they besought him for Peter’s mother-in-law. Now there are a number of characters who are associated with this story. There was Peter. The texts,

when you put them together, tell us that Andrew, Peter’s brother, was there. Whether he was an invited guest or whether he lived with Peter, we are not told. Then there are the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, who were invited guests, evidently, and the Great Physician himself.

Of course, one of the first things we note with a great deal of interest and some amusement is the fact that Peter was married. Imagine that: the first pope, a married man. [Laughter] And stranger still, perhaps, he loved his mother-in-law, for evidently he has included, when it is said, they besought him for her—he must’ve been one of the “they.” And so he loved his mother-in-law. He didn’t do what we might imagine him to do when someone came to the Lord Jesus about his mother-in-law. He might’ve said, “Well, let’s leave well enough alone, for the moment.” [Laughter]

Someone has said, the definition of mixed emotions is someone driving your new convertible over a cliff with your mother-in-law in it, or something like that [more laughter.] Now this morning, I made a statement like that, and someone informed me afterwards, there’s no such thing as convertibles any more, so we’re changing the definition. It is, your mother-in-law driving your new Seville over a cliff. Mixed emotions.

Well, they came into the home and immediately, they besought the Lord Jesus for Peter’s mother-in-law, who evidently was ill from malaria. Responding, the text says, the Lord Jesus touched her hand and the malaria left her. You’ll notice a pattern is developing here as we read through the Gospel of Matthew, and that pattern is this: that when anyone appeals to the Lord Jesus, there is response. And so here, they appeal, and there is response.

Now, appeal is not given in the Matthean text, it is given in the Lucan text, in Luke chapter 4 and verse 38, but the appeals always produced healing, and furthermore, they always produce healing immediately. In the other texts we are told that immediately, the fever left her.

The fever left her, not only immediately, but she was so strong after our Lord healed her that she immediately got up and began to minister to him. Quite a bit different from the kinds of miracles that are supposedly performed today by the divine healers.

Incidentally, this miracle is a miracle for the member of the family of one of our Lord’s close followers, the Apostle Peter. We do not have many of these miracles in the New Testament of that kind. There is the restoration of Lazarus, and Lazarus was the brother of Martha and Mary who were close followers of our Lord, and furthermore, this miracle was not a miracle that was done in public but in private.

It was done in a home, and it illustrates for us the ennobling effect of the Lord Jesus upon domestic life. Domestic life never finds its true meaning and purpose unless it is finally related to him. And we have in this account here an instance of something that would shed a great deal of light on the domestic troubles that plague the families of the United States today. You can never have a true understanding of domestic life until it is related, ultimately, to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who has offered a redemption for sinners. So complete, I said, was her recovery, that she began to minister to him immediately.

Now there are two things that I think we should note from this simple little incident. In the first place, all of the miracles of the Lord Jesus are designed to be parables of what he can do for individuals who are troubled with the deeper problems of life. Now the physical problems of life are great problems, but the deepest problem of life is our relationship spiritually to the Lord. And this text suggests to us the passage in Romans in which the Apostle Paul says, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly.”

Because of the effects of human sin in the human race, it is impossible for anyone to fulfill his destiny. We are without strength. Not simply without strength physically—without strength spiritually to do the will of God. This is human inability, and this text illustrates in the physical sphere that which the Lord Jesus is able to do in the spiritual sphere. As Paul puts it in Titus chapter 3, dealing with the mercy of God through the Lord Jesus, the Apostle writes there, “But after the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

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And so there is illustrated for us here the wonderful work of the Lord Jesus by which he is able to take people who are unable in themselves to serve God, unable to do the things that the Holy Spirit might bring to their hearts to do, and is able through his saving ministry to transform us to enable us to do the things that we could not do otherwise.

Now one of the clichés that we learn from the study of the New Testament—and it’s become a kind of cliché among evangelicals; it’s not a cliché in the Bible, of course—is the expression “saved to serve.” And while that is an evangelical cliché, it nevertheless is a biblical truth, expressed most plainly for us in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 verse 9 and 10, and referred to in 1 Peter chapter 2 verses 9 and 10. Both of these passages stress the fact that when we come to conversion through Jesus Christ, our lives ideally become his, so that from that time on, we are his bond-slaves.

So here we have a beautiful illustration of it in Peter’s mother-in-law, sick of malaria, when our Lord reaches out his hand and touches her with the cooling balm of his healing, she immediately rises and begins to serve him. That’s the meaning of “ministered.”

But there’s another thing here that I think we should not pass by without noticing. This incident is designed to show us what he can do for us, and this is true of these other miracles that we have been looking at. Suppose you are a leper and need cleansing, spiritual cleansing, for you are a spiritual leper. Well, the thing to do is to come to him with, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst cleanse me,” or, supposing you are palsied as the servant of the centurion. You may come to him if you need healing, fever-stricken, and need the touch of the coolness of our Lord’s healing power.

Now, it is wonderful to know that our Lord Jesus is always a great teacher, but it is also comforting to know that he not only teaches, but he has activity and power to back up his teaching, and so when men come to the Lord with the need for healing, the need for cleansing, the need for the cooling power of his touch, he is there to give it to us. What a tremendous invitation this is to every one of us to come to him with the needs that we, ourselves, particularly have.

But now we move to the public healings of the many. It was the Sabbath, remember, and so on the Sabbath day, among the Jews, there were strict regulations. The general Jewish law was that

steps toward healing involving any kind of work could only be taken if that person’s life was in danger. Furthermore, it was illegal to carry burdens on the Sabbath day. Now, in order to measure what a burden was, if a burden—a weight—weighed more than two dried figs, it could not be carried, according to Jewish law. So you can see that people who had demon-possessed individuals and others who needed healing could not be carried to our Lord Jesus.

But the Sabbath day ended when you could look into the sky and see two stars. Now when the two stars were seen in the evening—for the days in Jewish times began at sundown and ended at the sundown of the following day—it was possible at that time for individuals to be brought. And that’s why we read in verse 16, “And when evening was come, they were brought unto him many that were possessed with demons.” He is truly the unwearied Christ, for he had come for a rest. He is hardly in the home until he is being besieged by requests for aid from many.

Now Matthew tells us that he healed many, and he adds a word of interpretation. And this comes from Matthew himself, that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken through Isaiah the prophet saying, “He himself took our infirmities; he bore our sicknesses.” Now does not this say exactly what the divine healers have said? Does this not say that Isaiah prophesied that he would take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses, and because this text says that and because Matthew says that is what Isaiah meant—and it is true that this text does refer to sicknesses—can we not say, then, that one of the results of the coming of the Lord Jesus is that bodily disease is curable by him if we as divine healers pray over you to that end? Now that is the question.

I want you to turn with me, first of all, to the 53rd chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, and we want to take a look at the context of the passage which Matthew finds fulfilled in this healing ministry of the Lord Jesus. Isaiah chapter 53; what a great chapter this is. It’s always a temptation to expound this chapter. I resist the temptation this morning purely because of the heat.

Now this prophecy begins in chapter 52 verse 13 and closes with chapter 53 verse 12. It is the prophecy of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, perhaps the greatest Old Testament messianic

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prophecies. Someone has called it the Mt. Everest of Old Testament prophecy, in which “The Son of Man, the Son of God, the Man of Nazareth, is right visible in the verses,” Mr. Spurgeon has said.

Now there are five strophes in the fifteen verses, three verses for each strophe, so we are looking in verses 4 through 6 and the third of the strophes in this hymn of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, and here we read,

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows (and there is no question but that this Old Testament text does refer to the sicknesses of individuals) yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

What is the meaning of this great prophecy and, specifically, the 4th verse which seems to say to us that our griefs, our sorrows, our sicknesses were carried by the Lord Jesus?

The position of the so-called divine healers is: healing is in the atonement. And in the atonement of the Lord Jesus, we have just claims for claiming that through divine healing we may have healing of the body. And furthermore—and this point is very important—it is the claim of the divine healers that we may have this healing now. Now that is an important point.

Now if there is some modification of this, because the failures are obvious, the divine healers frequently say we may expect earnestness of that from time to time, or we may expect some bodily quickening on the basis of a passage in the eighth chapter of Romans, to which we shall refer. So, the claim of the divine healers is that healing is in the atonement, and we may have this healing now, or at least some earnestness of it.



What has been the position of the orthodox? Well, the position of the orthodox has been that Jesus Christ bears our sins, and that he also bears the effects of our sins. And so, it is perfectly all right for us to say that Jesus Christ died for sin and its effects. He dies for the rebellion against God of unbelief, but he also dies for all of the issues of that unbelief.

For example, unbelief is this characteristic feature of human sin. Unbelief is the root of all sin. Everything that manifests itself in a rebellious act is the product of unbelief. Unbelief issues in rebellion which, in turn, issues in immorality. Unbelief is the essential character of sin. But unbelief also brings us under divine condemnation, because of our guilt. Sin brings guilt before God, and because we are guilty, we are also under divine condemnation. That is why it is necessary for us to come to faith in Jesus Christ, in order to be delivered from sin, its guilt and its condemnation.

Now every kind of preaching of the gospel which does not stress this is a failure to preach the essential character of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And even though sin is not a popular word and guilt is probably even less popular, and condemnation is unthinkable on the part of the world—if we preach the gospel, we must preach all of these things: sin, guilt and condemnation.

Now the effects of sin issue in sickness. They issue in all of the many manifestations of illnesses, and finally the effects bring bodily death. Everyone, ultimately, dies. That is an effect of sin. All of our little sicknesses—I suppose even the common cold—are evidences to us that we are sinners. So every time you sniffle, think about the fact that you do stand under divine condemnation, and you're headed for a Christless eternity apart from the saving ministry of Jesus Christ. Every epidemic of the flu reminds us of sin, for these are all anticipations of the ultimate death which our body must experience.

Now, I know looking out over you, most of you—not everybody—you look very healthy. But actually, you're a dying people, even the youngest of you have within your bodies the principle of sin, and you are in process of dying. Therefore, you need the redemption that it is in Jesus Christ.

Now the Bible tells us that not only does the Lord Jesus die for our sin—for its guilt and for its condemnation—but also as a product of the saving work of Christ. He dies for our sicknesses, he

dies for all of the effects of sin, and there is going to come a day in which we are going to be delivered from this sinning, sick and dying body. Now that deliverance of the body is produced by the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, the Bible holds for us the hope that we may not have to die. We may meet him in the air, and meeting him in the air, our bodies shall be transformed. The bodies of those who have died shall be caught up in resurrection, made like unto his own glorious body. Our bodies shall be changed, so we as a company of redeemed people, possessed of glorified bodies, shall meet the Lord in the air. That is the resurrection of the body. It is part of the Christian faith. It is the thing, when we recite the Apostle’s Creed we say, when we say we believe in “the resurrection of the body.”

Now the striking thing about this, and the thing that we need to bear in mind, is that the Bible presents the resurrection of the body as a future hope. It does not present the resurrection of the body as something we may expect today individually, but it is a great event by which all the saints of this age have a part, to which we all look and have a part, and it is then that we receive our glorified body. In other words, the Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus dies for the root of sin, and he dies for the fruit of sin. He dies for sin and he dies for its effects. But, the effect, as it touches the body, is something that is healed at the resurrection of the body.

In other words, the biblical principle is, healing is in the atonement. That is true. The Lord Jesus has died for everything necessary to make us totally whole: whole in spirit, whole in soul, and whole in body. But the bodily wholeness is something for which we look in the future.

Now, let’s turn to a passage in Romans chapter 8 in order to see that this is the teaching of the New Testament apostles. Romans chapter 8, and we’ll read first of all verse 23. Romans chapter 8 and verse 23. The Apostle Paul writes,

“And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,  
(that is, all of us who are truly believers in Jesus Christ, we possess the Holy  
Spirit who is the firstfruits of our redemption that we shall possess fully  
some day) even we ourselves groan within ourselves (all of us do this; sooner

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or later everyone of us longs to have a body that is not afflicted by sin),  
waiting for the adoption (what is the adoption? Paul explains it is) the  
redemption of our body.”

The redemption of the body is a future hope. It is something for which we wait.

Now let's look at Romans chapter 8 and verse 11. Now this text is sometimes quoted by  
divine healers in support of the fact that we may have a kind of earnest of our anticipated deliverance  
in the future today. But I want to show you that this text does not give us any reason for believing  
that we can, through divine healers, have an earnest or a little quickening of what is to take place in  
the future.

“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you,  
he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken (or give life to)  
your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

But notice the future tense: *shall also give* life to your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”  
To what is the reference? It is to the future, the resurrection of the body. It is in the future tense. So  
this is something that we may look forward to: the redemption of our bodies; the quickening of our  
mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwells in us.

Now we are not saying that God does not heal in the present. God does heal in the present  
age. We do not know how he heals, for he heals sovereignly. When he wishes to heal someone, he heals.  
He does not today heal through divine healers. Never in the Bible are we exhorted to go to divine  
healers to be healed. The idea of a man coming into town, taking a page out in the newspaper, saying  
there's going to be a great healing at the service of Main and Akard street on Saturday night is fully  
contrary to the Word of God.

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In the Word of God we are told that if we desire healing, we should call for the elders of the church. James says, “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” That is the divine method for seeking healing: to call for the elders of the church. Many people have called for the elders of Believers Chapel, and have had them pray over them with a view to the healing of God.

Now that promise, however, is a promise that is given only within the will of God. If it is not God’s will, why then, of course, we do not wish the healing. But if it is God’s will, that is the method by which the healing should take place. The idea of divine healers who call men to come to them is thoroughly contrary to the Word of God, and is shown to be so not only by the fact that there is not only no Scripture that supports it, but the claims are also unscriptural.

Now we must learn, when we are Christians, to follow the teaching of the Word of God. Our experience is not to be our guide. The doctrines of the Word of God are to be our guide. So, this text referred to by Matthew in chapter 8 and verse 17 of this great Gospel is a text in which Matthew plainly says that these were anticipations of our Lord’s healing power which would ultimately be consummated by the sufferings of the cross and finally of the resurrection of the body which would take place in the future.

Well now, he has performed a mighty group of healings. It’s to be expected that there would be some response to the healing ministry of the messianic king. And so two individuals are mentioned by Matthew to show our Lord’s two methods of dealing with men affected by the miracles. In one case, he discourages rash discipleship, and in the other he discourages sluggish discipleship.

Like Ruth with her great confession in chapter 1 verse 16 and 17 of the book of Ruth who said, “Entreat me not to leave thee or turn away from following after thee, for where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge, and thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be

my God,” one of the scribes, who had been listening and seeing the things that Jesus had done, came to him and said, “Master, I will follow thee wherever thou goest.”

Now I’m sure that if we had been there, we would have marked the decision card with a plus, and said here is a man who truly wants to follow the Lord Jesus, and we would have been very excited. But the Lord, evidently, saw something about this man which convinced him that he was not yet ready for true discipleship. Someone has said he was very impulsive. Now, mind you, I do not think that it is wrong to be impulsive—would that there were more impulsive people today. Others have said he was a man who was very emotional. Well, I don’t think there is anything wrong with emotion, as a matter of fact, we need a new kind of baptism of emotion in evangelicalism providing it is grounded in the Word of God.

I have never felt myself that emotion was bad. To me, it is a strange thing that people can hear the Word of God, hear the great truths of Holy Scripture expounded, particularly the saving ministry of our Lord Jesus, and sit in a pew like a clod [laughter]. That has always disturbed me. I do not understand how it is possible.

Now, I know I was a Presbyterian, and you’re not supposed to say “amens” in Presbyterian churches, incidentally. I’m not really for amens, either. I’m not inviting any of them, because most of the amens I’ve heard in churches come at the wrong times [laughter]. I want to say, “Now it’s not time yet to say amen!” [More laughter] But I do think that there is a need for true Christian emotion, provided it is in the sphere of the truths of the Word of God. It must be emotion that is grounded in and guarded by and limited by the great orthodox truths of Holy Scripture. Nothing is more beautiful than an emotional Calvinist. [Loud, sustained laughter]

But, one can be too swift in taking the step of discipleship. And here is a man who, evidently, was too swift in taking the step of discipleship: Lord, I will follow you wherever you are going.

Now, the Lord Jesus is uncompromisingly honest, and seeing that there was in the life of this man emotion only at this stage, deals very soberly with him, reminding him of the lonely poverty

that he must expect if he is to follow the Son of Man. He replies, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests (even the animals have it better than I); but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” So if you’re going to follow Jesus Christ, you must be prepared to be a stranger in the world. Emotion alone will not sustain you when you come to the tragedies and trials of life as a follower of Jesus Christ. Emotion is insufficient.

Now I’ve seen *Fiddler on the Roof*, both in the movies and on the stage. There are two gems that come from Tevye, the Russian milkman. One of them has to do with poverty, and the other has to do with election. The one on poverty is, “I realize it’s no shame to be poor, but it’s no honor, either.” And then the one on election, which I think is even better. He’s looking at the Lord. He says, “I know that we are the chosen people, but once in a while couldn’t you chose someone else?” [Laughter] Because, you see, when we are the chosen people, it does demand a form of suffering—a deepest kind of suffering.

For it means when someone is taken out of this world as a believer in Jesus Christ and becomes a follower of him, he is forever a stranger and a sojourner on this earth. He is never at home in this world any more after that. No one ever knew what homelessness was better than Jesus Christ. His home was perfectly in heaven, and as long as he was here, he had no place to even lay his head. And if you’re going to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, that is what is involved in it, and emotion will not do the job.

G. Campbell Morgan was one of the greatest expositors of the 20th century. There was a contest in the London *News* many years ago for the best definition of home. Some of the answers that were given in the London *News* were, “home is the place where our stomachs get three square meals a day, and our hearts a thousand.” Not bad. Here is a second, “home is the place where we grumble the most and are treated the best.” That’s a little better; that could even be a definition of the church. Third and best, “home is the place where the great are small and the small are great.” That’s good.

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Mr. Morgan was addressing a very large audience shortly after this contest appeared in the London *News*, although there is not direct evidence that he had listened to definitions that were sent in, but he said in his message, “I have the best definition of home.” And he was willing to compare it with anyone else’s after the meeting was over. He said, “My definition of home is, home is the only place where I feel at home.”

And then he went on to say, “I frequently travel in my ministry; I travel to all the corners of the earth.” He said, “When I come into the Christians’ homes in various places, the first thing they say to me when they take my bags in and show me to my room is, ‘Now we want you to make yourself at home.’” But he said, “I never can make myself at home. In the first place, I like to raid the icebox before breakfast in the morning [laughter], and that would violate all the conventions of the homes in which I’m staying. And secondly, I like to, at the conclusion of the day, sit down in front of the fire, take off my shoes, put my feet in my socks in front of the fire and wiggle my toes.” He said, “That would break all the habits of your home.”

He said, “I can never feel at home in your home. Paul was referring to this when, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 8 he said, ‘To be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord.’” And then looking out over the vast audience in the silence of the moment he said, “Since I’ve become a Christian, this world is not my home.” That’s beautiful, but that is the exact fact.

Since we have become believers, this world is not our home. The foxes have holes. The birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. And the disciple of Jesus Christ, who intends to truly follow him wherever he goes, can never be at home in this world. The world is not my home. We are passing through, on the way, to our true home, for our citizenship is in heaven.

Well now, another disciple is standing by, and he has response to make, too. Since this man is a disciple, evidently the Lord replies to him about Christian service. Another of his disciples said unto him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” Now he had called him, Lord, you’ll

notice: Lord, permit me to first go and bury my father. The trouble with this man is not emotion.

The trouble with this man is that he had a conflicting affection.

There were competing things in his heart. There was one attitude which wanted to serve the Lord, but there was another attitude which wanted to put things before the service of the Lord. And he has already said, remember, in this gospel, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and it’s righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” And so the Lord Jesus replied, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.” Let the spiritually dead do the things for which they are here: to bury their dead. But as for you, come follow me. It was the strangest of claims. It was the most dynamic of claims. It was the most demanding of claims, for it is the claim of absolute obedience. Let the dead bury their dead and come follow me.

Now evidently that statement, “Permit me first to go and bury my Father,” is not to be taken too seriously. After all, it is a noble thing to want to take care of one’s family, and the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy exhorts us that we have responsibility for our families—incidentally, Christians, you have responsibility for your family, for your parents and for your children. But there is something even higher than that which is good.

George Adam Smith, who was very well-acquainted with things in the east, said that once when he was traveling in the east, he wanted a young Arab to be his guide into an area which he had never penetrated and in which there was very little travel. And he went to this young Arab guide who was standing not far from his tent in which he and his family lived, and by the side of the tent was his father in perfect health, evidently. And so he asked this young man to be his guide, and Mr. Smith said he replied, “Permit me first to bury my father.” It was, evidently, an Arabic proverb, an excuse by which he said that’s really not what you want to do. Let me bury my father—and his father was right there in excellent health.

So this young man evidently, if that is the true sense of it, was simply saying to our Lord that there are some things at the moment that are more important than following you, after I do them, I will then follow you. And that is why Jesus said, follow me and let the spiritually dead bury their own



dead. I mean an absolute claim upon you. You call me Lord, but you do not understand the full significance of it.

Isn't this an outrageous claim? The Lord Jesus claiming that he himself should have implicit obedience even above our responsibilities to our families? Why if he were only a man, this is an outrageous claim. But if he is more than a man, then it's the only wise and right claim for God to make.

Now if you are here in the audience this morning, and again, as I have so often said, the Lord Jesus Christ has come and has died for sinners. This salvation is available for men who know that they are under sin, guilt and condemnation. And this atoning death of the Lord Jesus and its benefits may be yours as the Holy Spirit brings home to you your condition, and as you in your heart turn to him by the Holy Spirit and say, I do thank Thee, Lord for dying for sinners. I'm a sinner. I take Thee as my Savior.

Now if you're here as a Christian, and your call to discipleship has come home to you, it, too, is a work of grace. It can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit, and perhaps God in his wonderful grace has moved in your heart and you do desire to be his disciple, truly. May God give you grace to come follow him and from thenceforth, this world is no longer your home. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] We are so grateful to Thee, Lord, for these great incidents in the life of our matchless Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, for they reveal to us the great and essential principles of our life before Thee.

O God, if there are some here who have not come to Christ, give them no rest nor peace until they come. And for the believers, we pray, O God, that the call of Christ for discipleship may rest heavy upon them, and by the grace of God the Holy Spirit, may they be enabled to put Thee first, above all of the noble claims of the life Thou has given us.

We give Thee thanks and praise for Thy blessing upon us through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.