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# JESUS HAS A PROBLEM

Luke 4:42-5:39

by Daniel A. Brown, PhD

It's easy to spot ourselves in the Bible—and I don't mean just at the end in the *Book of Revelation* among the throng, praising and worshiping Jesus before the throne. The Bible is a book about people just like us, at every stage of spiritual development, and in every messy situation that we have been in. Don't let the evolutionists fool you. Even though we talk on cell phones today, we're saying essentially the same things our ancestors said in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century (A.D. or B.C.): our fears and hopes; the stuff of personal relationship; problems and promises; suspicions about ourselves, and others. Oh, and the things we don't talk about are the same, too!

This commonality between Bible people, and us, is one reason why it's so important to read the Bible in light of today, not just yesteryear. We're supposed to watch for our appearance on the pages. In the actions and reactions of people in the stories, we spot characteristics and attitudes remarkably like our own. If we can translate the particulars of Bible episodes into today's language and logistics, we get a fantastic glimpse of what we're doing/thinking and how God wants to handle things pertaining to us.

Furthermore, Jesus never changes. He's the same "*yesterday, today and forever*" (*Hebrews 13:8*). And, since we're just like the people He worked with when He walked the Earth, it's quite illuminating to see what He did and said to His friends in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Twenty centuries later, the lessons hold true for us.

That leads me to a problem Jesus has had since He began His ministry. I know it sounds strange to say Jesus has a problem. After all, He is the Son of God. He has all authority (expertise, insight and knowhow) in both the physical and spiritual dimensions of reality. Legions of angels stand ready to serve Him. Surely, whatever problem He had before He ascended to the right hand of God, is no longer an issue, is it? Actually, yes—let me explain.

## THE NATURE OF LOVE

Part of the problem—or maybe the backdrop to why He has the problem—is that He loves (*Greek, agape*) us so much. Don't misunderstand me. He has no problem loving us. That's easy for Him. His problem stems from the nature of His love. *Agape* love can best be understood by combining two concepts in our language. The first is an *engaging welcome*, an irresistible wooing to draw us near and include us in everything He does; He wants us in on His life! "Let's do this together," He exclaims.

The second concept is *esteem*; He prizes us more than anything, and He shows that valuation by offering us ministry involvement far beyond our capabilities. We're like college sophomores who've just completed one economics class, and He recruits us to lead one of the branches of His multi-trillion dollar company. He isn't setting us up for failure, or getting us in on things over our head—quite the contrary; because of the inestimable worth He sees in us, He selects us for partnership with Him to bear fruit beyond what we can do on our own! It's a thrill for Him; like a jeweler eyeing magnificent (uncut) diamonds, He purposefully selects (inadequate) people like us for stunning positions in His purposes.

Simply put, He is determined to use us; in fact, He has constrained Himself to use us, so He wants/needs us to do His work on Earth. From our perspective it would be easy to jump to the wrong conclusion about His problem. It isn't what you might think; His problem is NOT that He's stuck with losers like us, and that He has to make the best of a really weak team. No, He's convinced He has the strongest team! Winning isn't in doubt, and He certainly doesn't regret choosing us.

## PERSONAL SAVIOR

Jesus' problem stems from His love. Because He loves us so profoundly, He wants to touch us at the deepest places in our heart—to speak comfort, insight, correction, and counsel to answer our every need. He longs to be our very personal Savior, intimate with every particular (good and bad) in our lives. He wants to convince us that He is always there for us.

*"More. More,"* our soul cries out to Him, *"I want more of You and more of Your life extended to me."* Like the earliest of Jesus' seekers, we're tempted to exclaim, *"Stay with us; don't leave us!"* Ah, but as He said to the people of Capernaum, He *"must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for I was sent to for this purpose"* (Luke 4:43). He has an assignment far larger than just to us. He is the Savior of the whole world, the one and only mediator between God and people, the One *"who gave Himself as ransom for all"* (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

How can Jesus convince you and me that He is our personal Savior, without being just ours? By what means can He touch the whole world as deeply as He touches us? Love supplies the answer.

Here is His solution. First, He ministers to us, and with every touch, every whisper, He builds up a marvelous intimacy—a sweet dependency in us. Subsequently, He begins to minister through us, touching and speaking to others in His name. In the early stages of our relationship with Him, most of the thrilling activity takes place as He ministers to us (often through other people). As we develop in our relationship with Him, He intentionally shifts things about so that a larger portion of spiritual excitement and fulfillment comes as we minister to others!

## EXCHANGING WINESKINS

Humans want things to remain as they once were. We are easily satisfied with “old wine” and we get fooled into thinking we’re “right” because that’s how it used to be. For the remainder of our spiritual life/ministry, we’d like the exclusive arrangement when it was just Jesus ministering to us. But Jesus won’t stay as our captive Savior. He comes to us, ministering to us in such depth that we instinctively are willing to follow Him. That’s the plan, for Him to take us with Him as He goes *about doing good and healing all those oppressed...* (Acts 10:38). That’s when we get anointed with power, and stand amazed at what He can do through us.

From my many years of experience, I know many believers never quite catch on to the plan. They don’t understand that Jesus is trying to get them to make the transition from being a person who seeks ministry, to one who offers it. Much of the malaise believers experience—the boredom, dissatisfaction and blah feeling—can be explained with this simple truth: because God wants to do His work through us, He gradually decreases the satisfaction/thrill we experience when receiving ministry, and increases the fulfillment we get when offering it!

It happened to Peter and all the disciples. Jesus stepped into Peter’s boat and astounded him with His personal attention. Ultimately, though, Jesus transformed him from a fisherman to a fisher of men. Even knowing of Peter’s imminent triple-denial, Jesus reminded Peter of the long-range plan: *“strengthen your brothers”* (Luke 22:32).

You and I are God’s tool of choice, instruments of His love for all the world. Once you grasp that truth, you will begin to interpret much of your spiritual doldrums as a glorious hint from God that you were made for more than just receiving. True, a knife needs frequent sharpening. But after the blade has been forged and set in the handle, it doesn’t get worked on in the same way it did before. Your spirit will increasingly and inevitably itch for more use; don’t misinterpret that longing to cut as a desire for a better finish on your handle.

You are the answer to Jesus’ problem. Come with Him and do to others what He has done for you; the thrill in that life never wanes.