

OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE

“They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, ‘Do you see anything?’ He looked up and said, ‘I see people; they look like trees walking around.’ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, ‘Don’t even go into the village.’” (Mk. 8:22-26)

We must remember that Bethsaida was a citadel of unbelief. Jesus considered it worse than the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 11:21). So when Jesus was challenged to heal a blind man in Bethsaida, He took him by the hand and led him “outside the village”. Even outside the village Jesus was not able to heal the blind man immediately. Initially the blind man saw people “like trees walking around”. Jesus then touched the man a second time and he saw clearly. Then Jesus sent him home with specific instructions not to go back “into the village”.

Paul Marcarelli is an actor best known as the “Test Man” for Verizon Wireless. He appeared in commercials from 2002 – 2011 wearing a gray Verizon jacket and saying “Can you hear me now?” Those familiar with cell phones know that some times you can move in and out of areas of clear reception. It appears that the same is true with reference to prayer. In some areas prayers are impeded. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus took the blind man “out of the village” and commanded him not to go back “into the village”.

The same was true of Nazareth. Jesus had lived there for almost 30 years and thus His neighbors knew more about His life as a carpenter than anyone else on earth. When Jesus taught in their synagogue, however, they were amazed and unable to process the supernatural nature of His life. Note: **“Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. ‘Where did this man get these things?’ they asked. ‘What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?’ And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.’ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.” (Mk. 6:2-6)**

Neither Satan nor his angels are omnipresent! Their influence is therefore limited and territorial. The devil had more influence in Sodom and Gomorrah where Lot lived than he did in the hill country where Abram lived (Gen. 14). When Daniel prayed his message did not immediately get through because the “Prince of the Persian kingdom” resisted him for 21 days (Dan. 10:13). The church in Pergamum had more opposition than others because they were living where “Satan had his throne” (Rev. 2:13). Demons apparently abounded in the region of the Gerasenes but were still not free to go anywhere they wanted. Note that when Jesus cast a legion of demons out of a man living there, they requested to be sent into a herd of swine (Mk. 5:1-13). John the Baptist was to prepare the way for Jesus by shining on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death (Lk. 1:79).

It is undeniable that a spiritual environment can affect our prayers. It certainly did in the case of Jesus. As we have already pointed out, Jesus could do miracles at other places that He could not do in Nazareth. Consider this principle when attempted to understand how a “prayer offered in faith can make the sick person well” (Ja. 5:13-18). Perhaps, when we “confess our sins to each other” we create a spiritual environment that enables us to “pray for each other so that you may be healed”. How sad that sometimes people are forced to leave the village where they live so that their prayers can be heard!