

The Miracles of Jesus

Miracle # 25

"Jesus Heals A Woman With A Bent Back"

Luke 13:10-17

Tonight we are going to be considering another of the Sabbath miracles. This miracle is found only in the gospel of Luke. Like the other healings that occurred on the Sabbath, it **offended** the religious leaders. Although the rabbis' rules made allowance for a physician treating a person with a life-threatening emergency on the Sabbath not such allowances were made for **chronic** illnesses. These illnesses were expected to wait for treatment on another day.

The Ten Commandments outline the principle of resting on the Sabbath in the **Fourth** Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11). But by the time of Jesus' ministry – Sabbath-keeping was being interpreted by rabbis was an impossible bundle of legalist rules.

The opposition to Jesus is growing and this is the last time in the book of Luke that we find Jesus in a synagogue.

"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. (11) And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. (12) But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." (13) And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. (14) But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." (15) The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? (16) "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound - think of it - for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" (17) And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him."

The Background of the Miracle (vv.10-11)

"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. (11) And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up."

As Jesus was teaching he saw a woman with a bent back, who had been unable to straighten herself and stand upright for eighteen years. Here in the South we have an expression "bent out of shape" when we are upset about something that has happened we say, "**Boy he was bent out of shape.**" There are really two individuals in this story that are "bent out of shape." The woman is "bent out of shape" **physically** and the other was the head of the synagogue that was "bent out of shape" **spiritually**. Both are in their own way equally bound. The woman was bound by "a spirit of infirmity" the man was bound by a spirit of **legalism**.

The words used to describe this woman's condition are not the words usually used to mean an illness, disease or injury. In verse eleven he uses the phrase "bound by a spirit" and in then in verse twelve he uses the word "infirmity" (**asthenia**) which doesn't mean sickness caused by disease it means **weakness**.

The exact nature of this woman's physical ailment is unknown though it was obviously some sort of curvature of the spine, which could have been caused by osteoporosis or a condition called Marie-Strumpbell Disease (Amkylosing Spondylitis). If it is the later this is a chronic **progressive** form of arthritis that result in the fusion of the spinal bones, even today there is no **cure** for this condition. Early in the course of the disease, sufferers often find that the pain is relieved somewhat when they lean forward. So they often go through the day leaning slightly forward, and gradually their spine begins to fuse. The more they lean in order to relieve the pain, the greater the angle, until the patient might be bent almost double, as the lady in our story.

The Elements of the Miracle (vv. 12-13a)

"But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." (13) And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight..."

I want you to notice that Jesus is not indifferent to the hurt, pain and despair that this woman was going through. She did not go unnoticed by the Lord. Jesus deeply cares for people who are hurting. You may not understand many things that you are going through and you may feel like your prayers are not being heard, but you can be confident that Jesus notices and cares about your pain.

Jesus compassion would be nice but of limited comfort and encouragement if that were all He could offer us. If all Jesus could do is

sympathize with our pain, we would still be hopeless. But the good news is that Jesus is not only compassionate He is powerful!

Jesus called to this woman and announced that she was loosed from her infirmity. Then he touched her and she straightened up. He cured her of a condition that to this day we do not have a cure.

The Effect of the Miracle (vv. 13-17)

It aroused the **Praise** of This Woman (v 13)

“... and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.”

This was not a gradual recovery. There was no lingering convalescence. Immediately she was made straight.

As a response to her healing the woman “glorified God” that is she poured forth her joy in a continuous strain of **praise**.

It aroused the **Protest** of the Religious Leaders (vv. 14-17)

In marked contrast, as the woman poured out her adoration upon the Lord the ruler of the synagogue poured out his anger. As she became no longer “*bent out of shape*” physically he became “*bent out of shape*” emotionally and spiritually.

- The Ruler’s Rebuke (14)

“But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”

Luke describes the ruler of the synagogue as indignant (***aganatkteo***) or angry, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. He is angry because the artificial and arbitrary Sabbath rules are being broken. He even quotes **Scripture** (Ex. 25:4) to support his position. But it is one thing to quote Scripture it is another to apply it **correctly**.

The ruler of the synagogue was the one responsible for keeping order in the services during the Sabbath services. This healing done on the Sabbath by Jesus so scandalized the ruler of the synagogue that he rebuked Jesus. But this man lacked the courage to rebuke Jesus face to face and addressed his remarks to the crowd.

As we stated earlier this man is also bound, he is bound by the chains of legalism.

Max Lucado wrote, “Legalism has not pity on people. Legalism makes my opinion - your burden; makes my opinion – your boundary; makes my

opinion – your obligation. Nothing will keep a Christian more immature than trying to keep a long list of rules.” [Up Words. May, 1993]

- The Lord’s Response (15-17a)

“The Lord then answered him and said, Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? (16) “So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” (17) And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame...” Jesus calls this man a hypocrite. This word described the Greek actors who held masks over their faces to represent the person they portrayed. It came to mean any one that was guilty of playacting or **inconsistency** – pretending to be some one that they were not.

I want to deal with at least three areas in which this ruler’s objections which were hypocritical. First, he says that there are six days on which people can be healed. How many healings do you think occurred in that synagogue? Do you think that this woman could have come back on the following day and been healed? Not if Jesus were gone. I suspect that this woman was a “regular” at this synagogue, there is little to suggest that she found sympathy (let alone healing) in 18 years. How could the ruler of the synagogue dare to even suggest that healing would be available at some other time?

Secondly, if we read between the lines in this story, you understand this man who is the leader in **worship**, as well as in teaching in the synagogue is not at all happy with what is happening. While most of those present were actively praising God - worshipping as they had never done before - this leader was doing everything possible to “**shut down**” what was going on.

Third, the greatest hypocrisy was that he points out that even the most legalistic among them, the **Pharisees**, untie their animals on the Sabbath to give them water. Jesus accused the religious leaders of hypocrisy because they would routinely sanction “breaking the Sabbath” for the benefit of one of their animals, but not for the benefit of this woman, a daughter of Abraham. Their compassion was selective, self-centered, and hypocritical. He points out how much more precious this poor woman whom he has loosed after she has literally been tied in knots for years by Satan, than a mere animal. It is the argument from the lesser to the greater.

When Jesus calls this woman a “**daughter of Abraham**” (v. 16) means more than just that she was racially a Jew, it means that she inherited Abraham’s **faith**.

When it says that his “adversaries were put to shame” it does not mean they felt shame, but means that the emptiness of their claim to **represent** God was exposed to the people.

It Aroused a **Celebration** from the Crowd (v. 17b)

“... and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.”

The people responded honestly and favorably to the things which Jesus did.