

Miracles and Deliverance

Luke 13:10-17 (KJV)

10 And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. **11** And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. **12** And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. **13** And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. **14** And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. **15** The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? **16** And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? **17** And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Focus Thought: Jesus worked miracles on the Sabbath and demonstrated the true purpose for the Sabbath.

One of the hallmarks of the Church is its belief in present-day miracles. Furthermore, not only are we marked by our belief in miracles today, but also numerous witnesses testify that God has worked miraculously in their behalf. Evidences of God's miraculous power exists all around us! It would be a great liability to the church to believe that God no longer performs miracles in our time.

All the miracles that occurred on the Sabbath have direct spiritual lessons for our times. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, He proved He had power over physical deformities, spiritual oppression, and religious repression. When discussing the laws of the Sabbath, it is important to understand what was and was not permitted under first century interpretation of the Law. In general, any "creative activity" is not permitted because God rested on the seventh day of Creation. However, there were four main exceptions:

Circumcision

Genesis 17:12 (KJV) And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

What if the eighth day occurs on a Sabbath? The answer is the circumcision command takes priority over the Sabbath commandment. Because we can't choose the day of a birth, we can't ensure that neither birth nor circumcision occurs on a Sabbath. Saving a life is not only permitted, but required.

This shows us is that there is a hierarchy or a priority to the Law. Some laws can be superseded by other laws in their application. When two laws conflict, the law with the higher moral standing takes precedent. Be added to the covenant of Abraham through circumcision, or obey the Sabbath? Honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, or love your neighbor as yourself?

Leviticus 10:19-20 (KJV)

19 And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold, this day have they offered their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord; and such things have befallen me: and if I had eaten the sin offering to day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord? **20** And when Moses heard that, he was content.

Likewise, the burnt offering was one freely given while the sin offering was required. When both were offered on the same day, the burnt offering was considered a higher offering than the sin offering.

That which you freely give to the Lord is always considered to be of higher value than that which you are required to give. The burnt offering is better than the sin offering. Financial offerings are better than tithes. One is required, but the other is freely given.

Luke 6:6-11 (KJV)

6 And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. **7** And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. **8** But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. **9** Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? **10** And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. **11** And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.

The first miracle of the Sabbath covered in this lesson took place in the synagogue in Galilee. It appears not only in Luke, but also in Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:6-11, and their surrounding texts reveal that a confrontation had already been brewing between the Healer and the Pharisees.

The Pharisees' adherence to the sacredness of the Sabbath was noble, but Jesus attempted to lead them into a greater understanding of its meaning. He wanted to alter the whole intent and spirit of the Sabbath as it had become in their day.

The Gospels list six occurrences of Sabbath violations. Of the six, five of them involved Jesus and one had to do with the disciples' action of harvesting heads of grain.

The Man with a Problem

Fresh from His confrontation with the Pharisees over the concept of the Sabbath, Jesus walked into the synagogue looking for an opportunity to illustrate the higher call of the Sabbath. Perhaps both Jesus and the Pharisees knew that the man with a withered hand was in the synagogue that day. Jesus knew that it would offer Him an occasion to demonstrate

His earlier principles set forth to the Pharisees in their confrontation with Him.

The Bible offers no account of who the man with the withered hand was. The scriptures do not tell of his occupation, social standing, any attachments to a religious system, or even his name. The man with the withered hand came from the common fabric of life. Everything about him was ordinary except for his troubling problem of having a withered hand.

The Greek word for “withered” reveals that this man’s hand was not always in such a state. It once was whole and full of strength, but it had withered in a similar way to a plant that shrivels from water deprivation. Because of disease or injury to this man’s hand, it had become useless and was possibly a cause for shame.

According to Mark, it appears that this man’s weakened faith had not entirely disappeared. There was still a flickering flame of faith that caused him to go to the synagogue. One of the principles we can learn from this miracle is that worship is crucial despite what may have withered within our lives. This man had neither given up on God nor had he allowed his difficult circumstances to diminish his desire to press into the synagogue to worship. If ever people needed to understand the power of consistently going to a place of worship with fellow believers, it’s now.

Certainly, this miracle encourages such commitment.

Hebrews 10:25 (KJV) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

God planned for and established the church. The church is designed to be victorious. Despite human problems and difficulties, the local church is one of the most resilient entities ever to exist. It is no wonder, however, because God designed the church to bring salvation to the lost and to add blessings and benefits to the lives of believers. God’s plan is that everyone should be involved in a local church.

When a person consistently goes to the house of God and immerses himself in corporate worship with fellow believers, he reaps several benefits:

A fellowship of believers to encourage and challenge him. A place to grasp the understanding and meaning of Scripture. An opportunity to learn how to pray and see the blessings of answered prayer. A place to invest one's time and money into the efforts of local and world evangelism. A safe haven from the world. A place that allows the opportunity for spiritual maturity to occur in one's life. A place to bring lost family and friends for evangelism. A place of preparation for greater spiritual impact upon the lives of others.

The man with the withered hand could not see into the future on that day and was simply fulfilling his obligation to go to the house of worship. However, his sense of responsibility to the synagogue became the vehicle that ushered him into his own healing experience. At the appropriate moment intended, Jesus instructed the man to stand up and stretch forth his withered hand in the presence of the Pharisees. Jesus was about to perform a miracle in their midst.

The Man, Not the Problem

Jesus' focus was on the man and not solely on his problem. The man's problem had debilitated him so much that he was unable to provide for his family. It was something with which he had to battle every day of his life. If the focus had been on the withered hand, it could have been discouraging. However, when Jesus focused on the man rather than the problem, the power of God overcame the man's limitation.

If the efforts of the church focus solely on the problems of mankind, the force of the gospel will be minimized. Social and even humanitarian investments can carry a person only a short distance, and in the long run could possibly enable their destructive habits. Rather, the church should focus on the person with needs and not on what has withered in his life. If the person can experience the miraculous power of God, God will make right what the withered problem has caused to become neglected.

We believe in healing. We pray for healing. But you do not see us putting out signs that say, "Healing meeting! Bring your sick!" We would much rather see someone in a wheelchair saved from sin than to have them saved from their wheelchair and die in sin.

Woman Bent Over

Luke 13:10-16 (KJV)

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The second miracle of the Sabbath in this study proves that the Lord has power over spiritual oppression. The man whose hand had been withered proved the power of God over physical deformity, but in the case of the woman suffering from a physical infirmity, the Lord proved that He has power over spiritual deformity. Because of the years she had suffered physically and had suffered defeat, she was bent low in her spirit.

Because of the calamitous effects of sin in our culture, we should consider the proper perspective of the church toward spiritual warfare. It is not spiritually healthy for a church or an individual to focus exclusively on spiritual warfare and seek out spiritual confrontations. Anecdotal stories abound of churches, ministries, and individuals who focused so much on spiritual warfare that it led to their own spiritual demise.

However, it is essential that the church recognize the continual working of evil spirits that oppose the church. Further, it would be spiritually negligent to avoid engaging the enemy and not to use the God-given power of the Holy Ghost to confront and overcome these foul spirits.

A Spirit Brought Bondage

Luke clearly desired the reader to understand that more was involved in this story than what readily meets the eyes. Luke revealed that this woman's disorder was entirely related to an oppressing spirit in her life. For eighteen weary and troubling years, she struggled with a spiritual problem that manifested itself physically. Her problem was so bad that she was "bowed together" (Luke 13:11), a phrase that appears nowhere else in the New Testament. This lady was doubled over with the affliction that had come into her life.

Just like the man with the withered hand, Jesus encountered her in the place of worship. Eighteen years had passed with her condition unchanged, and now it was obvious that the power of the oppressing spirit had her in a state of bondage—a bondage so crippling that she could not even lift herself up. A spiritual stronghold had taken control over her.

The life of a believer involves spiritual warfare. (See II Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 6:10-18; I Timothy 1:18; II Timothy 2:3-4; 4:7.) The battle does not call for human ingenuity, worldly wisdom, or clever methods to overcome the wicked one. Paul used the metaphor of "strongholds," a term with which the citizens of Corinth were well acquainted. Most ancient cities were built like fortresses on hills where the inhabitants could maintain a vigilant lookout for enemies who approached the city. It also provided the citizens a place of safety when the enemy armies came to attack. Most of the fortresses were impenetrable and well defended. Paul affirmed that the devil had been manning the "strongholds," and the only way to overcome him and his hordes of demons was to use the battle implements that God has provided.

Enemy strongholds may exist as thoughts, ideas, speculations, imaginations, philosophies, and false doctrines that barricade themselves against the whole purpose of God. Perhaps some of these strongholds had come to occupy the mind of the woman through the spirit of infirmity.

Jesus Brought Liberty

Luke informed us that Jesus spoke to this woman and then touched her. Immediately, she was healed and set free of the spirit of infirmity. Incredible liberty comes to those who come into the presence of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity” (Luke 13:12).

Some scholars have indicated that this is a medical term referring to the releasing of diseases and the removal of bandages. Those present at the resurrection of Lazarus heard the Lord speak in a similar manner: “Loose him, and let him go” (John 11:44). Whatever the tentacles may be, whether of disease or of death, Jesus Christ has great power to provide liberty and salvation.

Man With Dropsy

The third miracle on the Sabbath depicts the Lord’s power over religious repression. Having demonstrated in the other two miracles that He has power over physical deformity and spiritual oppression, the Lord now completes the task by proving His power over the systems of man-made institutions of religion. This miracle did not take place in the synagogue but in the home of one of the chief Pharisees.

Jesus Perceived a Problem with a Man

In some medical conditions, one who has a trained and skilled eye can determine what type of illness an individual may have. Apparently, this was the case with an invited guest in the home of one of the chief Pharisees. (See Luke 14:1-3.) The man had a condition that the Pharisees knew existed by their observation. His medical condition would serve them as a form of potential entrapment against the Lord.

The King James Bible uses the term “dropsy” to denote the man’s condition. Some scholars believe that the man either had a problem with his heart or his kidneys. The general thought was that the man manifested some form of swelling that affected both his appearance and his mobility. Despite the Pharisees’ desire to entrap Him, still the Lord was willing to meet this man’s need. Jesus turned the occasion into an opportunity to demonstrate His power over their religious repression.

Jesus Solved the Problem for the Man

Jesus never really addressed the man at all. Instead, He directed His words to the Pharisees who were watching Him. He spoke to His critics and then healed the man, entirely setting him free of his confining condition. This brings into sharper focus the message and emphasis of the church in our times. The church is not a place for philosophical debates to create a “holy huddle.” It is not a place to showcase the building, the programs, the singers, or its ministers. The whole focus of the church is to work diligently to bring salvation to the lost and to disciple them, bringing them to spiritual maturity.

Jesus Exposed a Greater Problem

The fact that Jesus healed on the Sabbath is not the focus of this miracle. Rather, it involved His confrontation of the Pharisees over the reality that they valued animals more than they valued individuals. If one of their farm animals had fallen into a ditch on the Sabbath, they would have rescued it. However, the same could not be said for a person who needed a true miracle in his life.

On this day, the Pharisees, despite all their judicial edicts about upholding the law, were investing themselves in a smorgasbord of feasting. They had chosen to squeeze the people with their rules, but they themselves were involved in profaning the Sabbath. They had lowered it to the place of entertainment where it was serving their own selfish and lustful desires. By comparison, the Pharisees were treating their Sabbath like the church in Corinth was treating the Lord’s Supper. Both had degenerated into excess and had lost much of the originally intended spiritual emphasis.

The Sabbath was God's loving provision for mankind so that he could be blessed and renewed through both fellowship and worship. It was never intended to be a burden that one must bear. The Lord fully intended that the Sabbath be an opportunity for Him to infuse His rest and healing into the lives of believers. It was only after spiritually proud religious leaders had corrupted the Sabbath that the Lord had to confront the hypocritical Pharisees.

Matthew 22:36-40 (KJV)

36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? **37** Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. **38** This is the first and great commandment. **39** And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. **40** On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Jesus shows us that keeping the two main laws is more important than following the other laws. Loving your neighbor is more important than following the rules. Helping the soul is more important than helping the body.