

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Healing A Stooped Woman (Part One)

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Luke records one of the few miracles of Jesus Christ performed in a synagogue, His healing of a stooped woman (Luke 13:10-17). His Sabbath-day miracles picture the purposes of God's plan of salvation. The Sabbath incidents recorded in Luke 6:1-11 involve Jesus' lordship over the Sabbath, while this account illustrates its meaning.

The seventh day is a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:3), and Jesus used it to teach God's way. The Sabbath service's purpose is not for entertainment, as so many churches seem to stress today, but it is for vital and joyful worship of the one true God.

Jesus' adversaries closely watched Him, especially on the Sabbath, in hope of trapping Him in some breach of the law concerning it. In their unbelief and perversity, those blind leaders of the blind failed to understand that they were condemning the original Giver of the law. That they were supposed to be the religious leaders of God's chosen people exacerbated their sin. Instead, they burdened the people with humanly-reasoned restrictions and taboos.

1. How serious is the stooped woman's condition? Luke 13:11.

Comment: The woman has a severe and pitiful physical problem, which she has endured for eighteen long years. She is bent completely forward, utterly unable to straighten herself or to look upward. The phrase "bowed down" (KJV) or "bent over" (NKJV), found only here in the New Testament, is a medical term indicating a harmful curvature of the spinal vertebrae.

Her stooped posture aptly illustrates humanity's spiritual condition due to sin. Sin does not straighten a person up but bends him over so all he can see is the way of the world. The sinner, unable to look up into the face of God, cannot remedy his evil plight before being called (Psalm 40:12; Romans 5:6).

Her stooped condition is so severe that she has no power to straighten herself, and in this weak condition, she is thus unable to help herself. Unless Christ heals and saves, the condition will only worsen with time.

2. What is this "spirit of infirmity"? How was she loosed from it? Luke 13:11-12, 16.

Comment: The woman has a strange derangement of the nervous system, having its source in the mind rather than in the body. Her stooped condition results at least partially from psychological instability, making her depressed. Her strange malady, then, is partly physical and partly mental. Satan has had his hand in her disability to the extent that her mind is susceptible to his influence, and her body has malfunctioned, producing a severe case of an unhealthy, hunched condition.

Jesus' words in verse 16, "whom Satan has bound," do not mean that Satan's involvement here is demon-possession but more like demon-oppression. Luke does not indicate that Christ exorcised a demon from her, which would have been the case had she been possessed. Satan oppresses her in a way that affects her physical body, like Paul, who describes his affliction as "the messenger of Satan to buffet me" (II Corinthians 12:7).

God's people in every age—Job, for instance—have been aware of this work of Satan. "Whom Satan has bound" reminds us that Satan does not free anyone; he only enslaves. Not only does Satan bow people down, but so do sin (Psalm 38:6), sorrow (Psalm 42:5), and suffering (Psalm 44:25). Only God can set a person free. While they create the illusion that breaking God's law liberates, sin and Satan never truly free anyone (John 8:34). In reality, evil habits grip people with terrible tenacity. Unbelievers sometimes criticize believers, saying that their church and religious convictions restrict their fun and freedom, but such an argument is the exact opposite of the truth.

3. Does the woman let her infirmity keep her from attending Sabbath services? Luke 13:10-11.

Comment: Though physically disabled and disfigured by her stooped spine, she, just like the man with the withered hand (Luke 6:6), does not allow her problem to keep her from formal worship of God on the Sabbath. Her physical condition makes it very difficult for her to go to the synagogue and sit through the service. It is also humbling for her, since people often feel awkward around those with disfigurements. She goes anyway.

Surely, she has prayed and asked God for help, yet she has not been delivered. However, God's seemingly neglectful and unconcerned lack of intervention does not make her bitter or resentful. She attends synagogue despite the obstacles, appreciating her spiritual opportunities and cherishing the worship of God. Her dedication and faithfulness do not go unrewarded.

How many blessings do people give up when they skip going to church? Spiritually and physically, we benefit by regularly attending where we can hear God's Word and worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). This woman learns that the best help she can give her body is to be first concerned about her spiritual health. Had she not been concerned enough about her spiritual needs to be in the synagogue in spite of her condition, she would never have been healed. As Jesus promises, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).