

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

by Martin G. Collins

Forerunner, "Bible Study," September-December 2013

Luke 13:10-17 relates the story of Jesus' healing of a deformed woman who had endured a debilitating infirmity for eighteen years. What began as a slightly bent posture developed into a stoop so profound that she could no longer look up. Every year increased her suffering, and after all those years, her situation became extremely severe. In this, we see a parallel with sin. Its effects begin slowly and almost unnoticeably, but with the passing of time, its influence increasingly corrupts the sinner. The longer the sinner continues in his sin, the more his heart hardens.

While teaching in the synagogue, Jesus sees her in the audience and is immediately moved with compassion and grace to heal her (Luke 13:10-12). She does not appeal to Him for help, but He takes it upon Himself to help her, expressing His deep compassion. It is inherent in God's character to take special notice of the needy.

What He saw would certainly not have been attractive, but, unlike men, Christ does not aid just the beautiful but those who truly need His help. Sinners sometimes feel they are too repugnant to God to be saved (Psalm 44:24-26), but Christ's healing of this disfigured woman emphasizes that His ability to help is determined, not by the state of the needy person, but by the limitless power of God. Christ's blood is able to wash away even the greatest of sins!

1. How important is it to follow God's instruction carefully? Luke 13:10-13.

Comment: Luke describes the woman as crippled by "a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" and "bound" (verse 16) by Satan. Without denying the historicity of the event, Luke's placing this miracle at this point in his narrative has obvious symbolic value. Jesus' mission among the Jews was to "loose" them from crippling influences and bring them to uprightness. This miracle is a graphic example of Jesus making a literally crooked woman upright.

Jesus healed her by His words and by touching her. He could have healed her by a word only, and as seen in other miracles, He did not even need to be in the same place, city, or country. However, in laying His hands on her, He shows everyone the value of her obeying God and coming to Him. Had she refused, He could not have touched her. Nothing good comes to those who disregard God's Word (Romans 2:8; II Thessalonians 1:8; I Peter 4:17).

People often pray for the "touch" of God upon their lives, which is not a bad prayer. Yet, if we want God to touch us, we must draw near to Him. We cannot keep our distance from Him in fellowship. We must walk closely with Him at all times if we want His influence upon our lives.

2. Why do those present have such a contrast of attitudes? Luke 13:14, 17.

Comment: While the woman and common people respond to the miracle positively—she, with *praise* (she “glorified God”; Luke 13:13), and they, with *pleasure* (they “rejoiced”; verse 17)—the ruler responds with *provocation* (he speaks with “indignation”; verse 14). He appeals to the crowd to reject the miracle. “Indignation” is a strong word, indicating the extreme quality of the ruler’s wrath. His anger causes him to condemn Jesus of having committed a great sin in healing the poor woman. His attitude illustrates Jesus’ criticism about religious leaders keeping others from entering the Kingdom (Luke 11:52).

Because evil hates good (Proverbs 29:27), it is not surprising that some become angry over good works. It is Satan’s nature to oppose God, and the greater the work and the more it glorifies God, the greater his opposition. Some of the most severe persecutions of Christians have come from other “Christians” rising in indignation. Satan sends his minions to infiltrate and corrupt churches to try to destroy God’s people from within (see II Corinthians 11:13-15). But Christ says, “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

3. Why do the gospels show so much conflict over the Sabbath? Luke 13:15-17.

Comment: This healing is one of seven performed on the Sabbath. Jesus’ adversaries closely scrutinized Him on the Sabbath in hopes of trapping Him in a breach of the law. A person’s Sabbath conduct was the Jewish religious leaders’ litmus test of conformity. Their tests followed their burdensome and humanly reasoned Sabbath rules (I John 5:3). While their rules bound people to unyielding strictures, Christ loosed the woman from Satan’s bond.

Their rules against healing on the Sabbath gave them ammunition to attack despite His compassionate healings. Jesus later points out that a person is far more important than an animal, and even His enemies see no wrong in helping distressed animals on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5). The hypocrisy and foolishness of the religious leaders is obvious.

As a result, Jesus’ opponents are humiliated, but the crowds are delighted. Having dishonored Christ and done the people great disservice, “All His adversaries were put to shame” (Luke 13:17). Shame will always be the result of sin. If a person does not repent of his opposition to Christ, shame will be his reward.

When sin and its curses are dealt with properly, good people rejoice. Dealing with sin in a lenient and lackadaisical way does not bring true happiness. David writes, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity” (Psalm 32:1-2). When sin is forgiven and overcome, people find true joy.