

The Woman Bent Double

by John Edmiston

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Luke 13:10-17 EMTV *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 she was bent over and was not able to straighten herself up. (12) And seeing her, Jesus called her to Him and said, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." (13) And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and was glorifying God. (14) But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the crowd, "There are six days in which one should work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." (15) The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrites! 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, lo, these eighteen years, should she not 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 crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things which were done by Him.*

What does the woman do in order to be healed? Nothing. She is just an ordinary person with no special qualities that are mentioned in Scripture, not even faith. The only thing that Scripture mentions is her need. Her long-suffering, her pain and humiliation, her spiritual affliction at the hands of the Devil! Jesus sees the need and He has compassion!

God is good to us, not because we are good, or because we have great faith, or because we have done a special good deed, or "sown a seed" in an offering plate - but because He is good. No one who was healed by Jesus had to first give an offering. We cannot buy God, impress God or deserve God. God loves us first and is good to us first.

Goodness comes from God because He is compassionate, merciful, kind and faithful. Your miracle is already in God's heart. God fills our emptiness and blesses our neediness. He gives faith to the poor. The meek inherit the earth. Those who mourn are comforted.

Miracles are not 'deserved'. You cannot earn a miracle. Miracles are God's gracious initiative that come from His love. This includes the miracle of salvation:

1 John 4:9-10 MKJV *In this the love of God was revealed in us, because God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. (10) In this is*

love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation concerning our sins.

1 John 4:19 MKJV *We love Him because He first loved us.*

Lazarus did nothing to deserve resurrection except to lie wrapped in cloths in the grave! The demoniac of Gadara was in a terrible state of multiple possession. Legion had no faith, no virtue and no sanity – yet Jesus delivered him! And the Israelites in Egypt were not delivered because of their greatness for they were the least of all peoples (Deut. 7:7,8) nor because of their goodness - for they were “stiff-necked people” (Deut. 9:6). The Israelites were delivered because of their groaning and great bondage and because of God's faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 3:6-9).

Our need is the point at which God's grace meets our life. In fact we only receive as much grace as we think we need! In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector in Luke 18, the Pharisee who thinks he needs nothing receives nothing, while the humble and needy tax collector who knows he needs everything goes home justified before God! The woman bent double turned up at the synagogue because she knew that she needed God! And God met her need! Miracles come to those who know they need them!

Hebrews 4:16 MKJV *Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

The unconditional love of God infuriates the ruler of the synagogue. Instead of rejoicing at grace, he argues with grace. Like the 'elder brother' in the parable of the Prodigal Son he is annoyed at God's goodness to another and explodes in rage - picking the Sabbath issue as his point of complaint.

Spiritual pride and religious envy is everywhere. God's grace, we think, should be rationed out to those who most deserve it. We can be envious of God's blessing on another servant of God – so we find fault with their dress or their doctrine or their level of income or the style of their church building. Or we can wonder why the new Christian got the healing, while we lack a miracle, and so we find some occasion to 'put them in their place'. This is plain wrong; God is huge and His grace is infinite. There is plenty for all and we should not be jealous of His goodness to another. In the parable of the vineyard owner the first laborers are paid the same denarius as the last and the owner (God) replies:

Matthew 20:15-16 MKJV *Is it not lawful for me to do what I want with my own? Is your eye evil because I am good? (16) So the last shall be first, and the first last, for many are called, but few are chosen.*

Jesus deals with the Sabbath issue swiftly by pointing out that if we release an ox from its bondage and water it on the Sabbath, then how much more should the woman be able to be released from her long bondage and given living water on the Sabbath.

The bondage was Satanic. It was a 'spirit of infirmity', a bondage from Satan that held her for eighteen years. It was not her fate, or her cross, or her instrument for teaching and growth. It was devilish, crippling, painful, humiliating and demonic. Jesus got rid of it because it was an evil thing. God does not want anyone to be 'bent over' and held in bondage. God wants you free. God wants you to stand straight and tall. No matter what your bondage is, Jesus wants you to be released from that bondage into His image!

Jesus told her that she was free – and she was! Jesus laid hands upon her and she was healed!

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

God speaks to you, God touches you and you are free and you rejoice and glorify Him!

The woman rejoices, and the crowds rejoice (v17) *and all the crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things which were done by Him.* But those who oppose grace are put to shame! *And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame;*

If you are on the side of grace you will rejoice as others are set free. If you are opposed to grace you will weep and wail at the wisdom of God! You will envy His goodness and snarl at His mercy. You will say 'but she was not worthy'! But grace is NOT about worthiness. Grace is a gift. A free gift, given by God, as He wills and as He chooses:

Romans 9:15-16 MKJV *For He said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." (16) So then it is not of the one willing, nor of the one running, but of God, the One showing mercy.*

Romans 11:6 ESV *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.*

Ephesians 2:8-9 MKJV *For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

Do not despair – if you are saved you are one of those that God has chosen to have mercy and compassion on – and with Christ He will give you all good things:

Romans 8:31-34 MKJV *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) Truly He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (33) Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is*

he condemning? It is Christ who has died, but rather also who is raised, who is also at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

If you feel like the woman bent double, if you feel that your life is being lived at a level far below what it should be, and that you are in bondage to Satan in your mind, in your body, in your spirit, or in the habits and patterns of your life - then now is the time for deliverance!

You must believe that God loves you, that He wants to set you free and that He will deliver you just as you are, in the very state that you are in now, without having to improve at all. Just like the Israelites in Egypt or Lazarus in the tomb, or Legion among the graves, or the woman bent double the word of God and the touch of Jesus can set you free right now, just as you are, while you read these very words.

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