

Called Forward And Set Free

Turn with me to Luke 13:10. I want to read Luke's account of an encounter Jesus has with a woman in the synagogue and then I want to share a few thoughts I believe the Lord has placed on my heart for this message. The story is found only in the gospel of Luke. I can't recall preaching about this woman before, but T. D. Jakes wrote a book based upon the words Jesus spoke to this woman (at least what Jesus spoke to her in the King James Version – "Woman, thou art loosed.") Jesus is teaching in the synagogue when he sees this woman and he stops teaching to minister to her. Let's read **Luke 13:10-17**.

Let's talk first about the woman and her condition. We don't know her name. We don't know how old she is although we know she has been infirm for 18 years. We don't know if she was single or married. What we do know: **She was physically afflicted.** The bible says she was crippled. Luke who was a physician used the word "infirmity" which could mean sickness or disease, it also meant weakness or feebleness. Her body had grown weaker and more feeble and Luke explains with further detail that she was bent over and could not straighten up at all. Her physical body was bent and twisted. Imagine for eighteen years being unable to straighten up! I have back pain from time to time and can't straighten up for a minute, but imagine 18 years.

Think of the times you've had a crick in your neck and unable to turn your head from side to side. You couldn't look around. This lady couldn't look up and she had been in this condition for 18 years! Unable to straighten up, in constant pain and perhaps her condition continued to worsen. Some of you know what I'm talking about. You know what this lady was experiencing. Constant and chronic pain. Debilitating pain in your back, your sciatic nerve. Unable to straighten, unable to rest or sleep, making it difficult to walk. She was suffering physically.

She was emotionally suffering. The bible doesn't say so, but to bear this kind of chronic physical pain leads to emotional pain and suffering. Eighteen years of suffering will take a toll on your emotional health. Your emotions are always right at the surface. You're depressed, discouraged, weakened, fighting back the tears. You can't work, can't function, can't take care of yourself, your house or your household. You can't enjoy life because you are in such pain. You can't plan because you never know if it will be a good day or a bad day.

As her body betrayed her and she became more and more stooped and bent, I imagine she became an object of pity, of whispers and stares from others. She began to feel rejection. Maybe her friends didn't mean to reject her or exclude her, they just figured she didn't feel like going with them. They hated to ask her knowing she wasn't really able. Perhaps she became more and more isolated, more solitary and withdrawn.

She was spiritually attacked. Luke said she was crippled by a spirit of infirmity. Jesus said she had been kept bound for 18 years by Satan. Jesus attributed the ultimate source of her sickness, her infirmity to the devil. Satan is the one who has come to kill, steal and destroy, but Jesus has come to give us abundant life. He has come to call us to salvation, to life, and to himself.

Not all sickness is personally brought on by the devil or would need to be viewed as a spiritual attack. You may just have a cold. The source of your stomach ache might just be the massive amount of jalapenos you ate on top of the mountain of nachos rather than the devil. You've afflicted yourself. But Satan afflicts and he capitalizes on our weakness, on natural infirmity that comes along. The devil made sure to keep pushing this woman down, down, down. As much as she was physically stooped over and bowed down, I believe the devil was spiritually crippling her, oppressing her, preventing her from being able to straighten up. She was overwhelmed and spiritually bound.

Maybe you can identify with the spiritual attack and the spiritual bondage this lady was experiencing. Maybe you are suffering oppression. Spiritually crippled and bound. Let me ask: What has you bound? Is it sickness? Physical infirmity like this woman? Is it sin? Bitterness? Addiction? Unforgiveness? Temptation? Past mistakes? Old wounds? Lust? Envy? Greed? Fear? Worry? Rejection? Anger? Jealousy? Sexual immorality?

Luke said she was "bent over and couldn't straighten up at all." She needed someone to deliver her, to loose her and set her free from this bondage. Perhaps you feel that way today. You are bound and you can't get yourself free. You can't get loose. You can't straighten up or raise up. Well, there is someone who can set you free. Jesus can loose you from those bonds.

This woman was physically afflicted, emotionally suffering, spiritually under attack, but there is something else that identifies this woman. Jesus called her "a daughter of Abraham."

She was a daughter of Abraham. Who was Abraham? He was the father of the Jewish people. He was the man God called to leave his home and journey to a land God said he would give him, a land of promise. God told Abraham he would make him father of a nation and that all the world would be blessed through him and yet for many years Abraham and his wife Sarah remained childless. Abraham faced a hopeless situation and Jesus makes a point of saying this woman was a daughter of Abraham. Abraham, who held on to a promise for years and years without seeing it come to pass. Abraham, who though he was childless was called “father of a nation.” Abraham, who at 99 was still believing God could work a miracle and give him a son and heir. Abraham was holding on to the promise of God by faith and Jesus said this woman was a daughter of Abraham in her faith.

She was a daughter of Abraham because against all hope, in hope she kept on believing God would heal her and set her free from bondage. She kept coming to synagogue every week, praying and believing, expecting and waiting for God’s help. She kept coming when it would have been easier to stay home. No one would blame her, as difficult as it was for her to walk and get around. In fact, they might have preferred she not come because it was so painful to them to watch her try to maneuver through the people to find a seat in the synagogue, but she was a daughter of Abraham. Like Abraham she had a promise. She didn’t know when it would happen, but she must have believed God would heal and deliver her so she kept on coming.

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans about Abraham’s faith and our faith. **“Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. As it is written: ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed – the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.” Romans 4:16-17**

I know that verse is rather wordy, but hear what he is saying. The promise of salvation, the promise of being set free from bondage to Satan and slavery to sin is not just for those who keep the law, not just for those of Jewish birth, but to all those who have faith and trust in God’s grace. The promise comes by faith and because we have faith in God’s saving grace, he calls us Abraham’s offspring as well.

This woman was a daughter of Abraham because by faith she believed God would keep

his promise. She believed God would see her through. By faith we too are Abraham's offspring because we also, like Abraham have faith. We believe God will keep his promise and honor his word. We believe he is the God who gives life to the dead, who can do anything, who calls those things that are not as though they are.

We have a promise, by faith in God's grace. We have a promise of hope, of salvation, of deliverance, of healing, of heaven. This daughter of Abraham believed God would deliver and so do we! So here she was, week after week, praising God, serving him, glorifying God, and although she was still bent over and unable to straighten up, although she was still bound by Satan's attack, she believed the day would come when God would deliver her from this infirmity and make her whole. She didn't realize it, but it just so happened, today was her day!

On the Sabbath Jesus was teaching in the synagogue and as always, this lady was there. Notice what Jesus did. **Jesus saw her as she really was.** Jesus saw her and stopped his sermon. This unknown lady mattered to Jesus just like you matter to Jesus. He allows himself to be interrupted on her behalf. She is valuable to Jesus! He sees her, not as a cripple, not as a mistake, not as a problem as other folks do, but Jesus sees her as a woman. He doesn't just see her bent over from 18 years of pain and bondage, he sees her future, her potential, he knows not just who she is but who she can become. He sees her and he cares. You may feel like no one knows you, no one sees you, no one cares about you, but Jesus cares. He sees you as you really are. With all of your scars and wounds. He sees your twisted condition. He sees you bent over and struggling, unable to straighten up, but he doesn't abandon you. He doesn't reject you because of your condition. He doesn't reject you because of a crippled body or a crippled soul. He doesn't reject you because you're being oppressed by the devil. He loves you and has come to deliver you, heal you and set you free. He sees who for who you really are and for what you can become.

Jesus knew about her situation. She doesn't tell him anything, but Jesus knew. He knew her past. He knew how long she had been suffering. He knew it had been 18 "long years." Jesus says, **"Should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"** **Luke 13:16** Jesus knew about this woman and he knows about you. He knows your condition. He knows how long you've been suffering, how long you've been bound. He knows what

you've been through, the lonely days, the long nights, the long years. He knows your past, your failures, the mistakes and he still cares. Jesus saw her and he sees you. Look what happened next:

Jesus called her forward. Jesus saw this crippled lady and called her to come forward, to come to himself. He doesn't plan to leave her as he found her. He has come to call her to freedom and deliverance. That's why he came, remember? It was in the synagogue in Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah, **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** **Luke 4:18-19** This woman, and you and me and all who have been bound by the enemy, we are the reason he has come. He has come to release this woman and all the imprisoned and all the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. She's been bound for 18 years, but Jesus won't leave her as he found her. He calls her forward and to himself and to his favor.

For someone today, he has seen you and he is calling you forward. Calling you to himself, he is telling you its time to move forward. You've been paralyzed, afraid to move. It's been painful to move, painful to even try. But something is changing today. Jesus is calling you. "But I'm crippled. I'm bound. I'm sick. I'm a victim. I can't move. I can't make it. I can't go to him." Listen to me - Look at this woman. **She couldn't straighten up, but she could still get to Jesus!** She was determined because Jesus was her only hope!

I believe he is calling you to rise up and move forward, to move toward him, to move toward the only One who can loose you and set you free from bondage. Move toward the one who can heal you and deliver you. He is your only hope. But you'll have to decide and you'll have to be determined. I heard T. D. Jakes say "Deliverance isn't always convenient." Jesus called attention to this woman when he called her forward. She may have felt uncomfortable in front of the whole congregation as she made the effort to stand and walk to the front, bent over and shuffling. Imagine her as she struggles to stand, holding on to her walker, her body stooped, her face marked by pain. Her walk wasn't convenient, but it was full of faith. She wasn't going to let her circumstances, her condition, what anyone thought about her, other's opinions, she wasn't going to allow any of those things keep her from getting to Jesus and answering his

call.

Jesus saw her, called her forward and then, **Jesus set her free!** What she could not do for herself, Jesus did, with his word and his touch. **“When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, ‘Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.’ Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.” Luke 13:12**

Can you imagine the feeling, after 18 years of pain, 18 years of being unable to stand straight, 18 years of being unable to lift your head, unable to see where you were going? 18 years and now in one instant, you are free. No wonder she began to praise God.

Luke tells us an argument occurred as she was healed. She begins to praise God and give thanks and the ruler of the synagogue begins to complain and accuse the people of breaking the Sabbath. **“Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue ruler said to the people, ‘There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.’” Luke 13:14**

It seems there are always some misguided folks in the church, trying to restrict someone's access to Christ and his healing and grace. Jesus rebuked the synagogue ruler and called him a hypocrite. This guy was insisting that man made rules concerning the Sabbath were more important than the needs of this woman. The woman didn't break the Sabbath by responding to Jesus. She didn't do any work, she just obeyed the call of the Lord. God did the healing. Jesus is the one who touched her and made her whole.

Don't worry about what someone else is going to do or say about your obedience to Christ. Jesus sees you, he cares for you, he is speaking to you today, he is calling you to get up and move toward him in faith. I believe he wants to touch you and speak a word of healing and deliverance to you. Is there something that has kept you bound? Is there some hurt, some sin, some guilt or bitterness or unforgiveness or something from your past that has managed to wedge itself deep down in your heart and soul? It's kept you bound, broken, bowed down. Perhaps it's the devil oppressing you, tormenting you with worry, doubt and fear. Whatever it is, I believe Jesus says it's time for you to be set free. He's calling you today.

Maybe this is the first time you sense Jesus calling you, to come to him and receive his gift of salvation. If you will answer his call, if you will come to him and ask him in faith, he will save you. He will forgive your sins and give you a new life. If you need his help, come to

him today.

This daughter of Abraham found the healing and deliverance she needed. We are sons and daughters of Abraham when we respond in faith and come to the Lord. If you need to be set free, if you need healing, if you need his help, I invite you to come forward in response to His call.