

**Luke 13:10-17**  
***Freed From Bondage***

10 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 was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

12 But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity."

13 And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

14 But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day."

15 The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! 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 -- think of it -- for eighteen years, 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 multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

***Why do you wake up early on Sunday morning and come to church, and then come back again in the evening?***

Ok, you're here at this church, so we know its not the high tech facility and the plethora of programs or the laser light show or the miracle healing service or the world famous pastor.

So we can dismiss that kind of thing right away. But what else could cause you to do that?

*Is it because it's your God ordained duty to do so?* Come on kids, get out of bed. Yeah I know its tough but its your duty to do this, just like when I was your age, it was mine, of course when I was your age we had to go to church through 5 foot snowdrifts...

*Is it because it's a family tradition?* We've always done this, we aren't quite sure why, but we do it none-the-less. We're just thankful that our family tradition doesn't involve snake handling.

*Is it perhaps because you look forward to socializing with other Christians?*

Well there may be a smigen of all of those factors in your decision to observe the Lord's Day and attend church, but I suspect that considered alone or even altogether, those factors would never be sufficient to keep you coming back to church Sabbath after Sabbath. I suspect that the largest and most compelling reason, no matter how we choose to speak about it, ***is because you expect to gain some sort of benefit on this day in this place.***

Now before you are tempted to inwardly say "***No, I would never say that, that's a selfish reason, this isn't about me, I come here for God's benefit.***" think about what you are saying. Does God benefit from your going to church? Is something added to Him that he doesn't have? ***Were you made for the Sabbath?***

No, brothers and sisters, ***this day, the Lord's day, was actually made for you,*** it is to your benefit to be in the assembly of the Lord on His Day. Yes, Jesus is the object of our worship, but you are the one who is ultimately supposed to benefit from it. It is intended for your good.

In the verses we read that was what brought that poor woman to the synagogue, she went expecting a benefit. *How do I know that?* Well this was a woman afflicted for 18 years with a terrible condition, most commentators think it was a condition called *Spondylitis Deformans* which causes the bones of the spine to fuse together into a rigid mass, which caused her to be bent over. The condition was undoubtedly very painful, as most problems of the spine are, and certainly made it very difficult to move and get about. It required a major effort for that woman to go to synagogue at all and yet she did. We do not read that anyone carried her, but faith in God's promises, and probably like the woman with the flow of Blood, faith that Christ was indeed the Son of God, the Messiah compelled her to go to him no matter what the difficulty.

Christ sees her in the women's section of the synagogue as He is teaching, and He has compassion on her. Here is a child of Abraham who has been in bondage to a physical ailment caused by Satan's malicious work. So he calls Her forward and heals her, freeing her from the terrible bondage and pain she has been in for so long.

What a wonderful testimony from Christ to the very purpose of Sabbath! As so many have remarked, the Lord's day is above all a day of deliverance from bondage. Not merely as day of rest on which we are delivered from the bondage of our daily routine with all of its toil and tiresome activity. But if you were to go back and figure out on what day most people were saved by coming to faith in Jesus Christ, which day do you think would be the winner. I don't know for certain, but I think the Lord's Day would be head and shoulders above the rest! On this day, millions and millions have been freed from bondage to Satan, this is the day when above all others people are set free from slavery to sin and become bondservants of Christ. This is perhaps the day when as Spurgeon put it, *the gates of the kingdom of heaven are open widest*.

Now the woman knows that she has been delivered, and by whom. The Pharisees might sinfully claim that the mighty miracles of Christ are done by the power of Baalzebul but not this woman. She immediately begins praising God. She knows that when Jesus touched her, he did so with the finger of God.

You would expect that at that point, that the ruler of the synagogue would also begin to offer up praise as a mighty miracle, was done in their midst. *ESPECIALLY* because it was proof that the long awaited Messiah, the Son of God, was standing right there in their midst. The promises of God are being fulfilled right in front of Him!

But the ruler of the synagogue is not happy, he is in fact livid, hopping mad. He views what has happened not as a blessing, but as sin. The Sabbath has been desecrated in his view.

***Had the Sabbath been desecrated? NO. How do you know that:***

**1) Well first you know** because the word of God tells you that Jesus has always kept God's law perfectly and never sinned:

Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin."

1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth";

1 John 3:5 "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin." Jesus is as 2 Cor. 5:21 puts it Him "Him who knew no sin "

2) Secondly you know because Christ repeatedly told us that deeds of mercy were not only allowable on the Sabbath day, they were required. As Jesus taught in Matthew 12:7 " 7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath is a day of mercy, and that is as it should be. You remember what God did on the Seventh Day after he created the world? Gen. 2:2 "He rested on the seventh day from all His work" but he had to interrupt that Sabbath rest for the greatest deed of mercy. God had to interrupt His rest in order to redeem us. Ever since the fall, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have been actively working to save sinful and fallen people who without that work would have remained in bondage, and would certainly have perished forever.

So in John 5:16 and 17 we read: 16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." And that synagogue ruler should have been thanking God, like that woman was that they were still working on the Sabbath!

But like all legalists, *those who think that they are saved by their own works*, the synagogue ruler saw the Sabbath only in terms of weekly set of boxes to be filled in with tick marks. ***Didn't kindle a fire – check, didn't carry a load – check, didn't walk too far – check.*** Tick box after tick box, the vast majority of which were made up regulations no where to be found in the bible. This system was so absurd that healing – *doing good* – had become a forbidden work. Friends your Sabbath is fundamentally out of whack if it is simply a set of strictures telling you what **not** to do. Rather, the primary thing you should be asking is *What should I do on the Sabbath? How best can this day be a blessing to me and God's people?*

Now the Ruler is afraid to open up on Christ, so he veils his comments with a diatribe delivered to the people. Calvin's critique of His words is particularly valuable: ***"He bids them come on the other days to seek a cure, as if the power of God lay asleep on Sabbath, and were not rather exerted chiefly on that day for the salvation of his people. What purpose is to be served by the holy assemblies, except to give an opportunity to believers for entreating the Divine assistance? That ungodly hypocrite talks as if the lawful observation of the Sabbath interrupted the course of God's favors, hindered men from calling upon him, and took away from them all feeling of his kindness."*** – Calvin

Jesus rightly calls him a Hypocrite, because this was a man who would show mercy to one of his animals on the Sabbath day, but not to this poor woman who had been suffering for 18 years!

Could an animal be kept in a stall for an entire day without being let out and not die? Yes, but is it kind? **No**. Even if you put water in the stall with the animal the day before, this is going to be one miserable beast by the next day. Even the Pharisees therefore, loosed their animals rather than watching and listening to them suffer throughout the Sabbath day. If it was no breach of the Sabbath

to show mercy to your animals by loosing them, then certainly it was no breach to free a person from a far worse bondage. And what, as Calvin put it, was the Sabbath for if not saving people??? For the synagogue ruler man was made for the Sabbath, not vice versa.

So let me give you 2 applications:

***1) Do you come to Church expecting to benefit from the word and the sacraments?***

I remember being struck by a story told by Sinclair Ferguson in one of his classes. He commented that as young man growing up in Scotland he had led an aimless dissipated life, although he had been brought up in a Presbyterian family, observing the Sabbath and going to church was just an empty tradition, just a duty, void of meaning and something he cast off as soon as he could.

His sister however, had come to faith in Christ, and her entire life had changed. Now she wanted to share that faith with her brother but didn't know how to do it. So on a visit with him she did that awkward thing where she wanted to talk about Christ but didn't know how and she fumbled about trying to broach the subject awkwardly but couldn't quite find a clear moment to do it. [If you are an introverted believer you'll know exactly what that feels like] Finally, as he was getting on the bus to go back home, she shocked him by thrusting a bible into his hands and said ***"Read this, it will do you good."***

Not exactly the greatest presentation of the gospel in history, but a profound truth none-the-less. Ferguson read it, and it was the means that God used to Save him, it did him eternal good.

The Lord's day is intended to be a day when we meet God in His Word and we find unspeakable delight there. ***Is. 58:13 " If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, 14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."***

This is a day, when Christ still meets you and is eager to free you from bondage. He must do the freeing. The woman could in no way raise herself up. Neither can we. We can't even cooperate in the process, our hearts are naturally as hard as that spine was. And yet, by touching hearts with the finger of God, Jesus graciously redeems even the most twisted and bowed down of sinners. I know, for I was bowed down by sin and misery not for 18 years but for 23. He freed me from that as easily as he did that woman. And he can free you as well, the time you have labored matters not at all.

***2) Is this a Day you use for doing deeds of mercy?*** Its true that the Lord's Day shouldn't be merely another a day of work and recreation for us, utterly indistinguishable from Monday through Saturday, that means that this isn't the day to set aside for cleaning out your own gutters, but it is a day that you could use for cleaning out the gutters of your bed-ridden neighbor. This isn't a day that we should set aside for partying in an attempt to find our own pleasure, but it is a day that is well used by inviting someone badly in need of Christian fellowship over for a meal.

Let me if I can encourage you, in your doing an important deed of mercy. I know that many of you struggle to keep your kids in worship and that it isn't easy to do so. They fight the process tooth and

nail, but parents as you do persevere in this you are doing them a great mercy. You are sacrificing, but you are teaching them to be where they can obtain the greatest benefit on the Lord's day. This is an act of love and mercy, greater even than physically feeding them. And often more trying, especially considering that they don't often manage to actually get the oatmeal all over you as well.

The great temptation is to say, worship is for *me*, and if they are here, I can't worship, so it's better to keep them out of it. But worship is for you and your children, and if you truly love them and want to train them for that eternal Sabbath in heaven, then you will persevere. Know this, it does get better the more you persevere.

Now the flip side of that *children, are you showing mercy to your parents and doing what will benefit you most by trying your hardest to pay attention in worship?* [talk about struggling against it and the purpose of the Lord's Day to them, why your mom and dad bring you here. NOT Tradition The parents desire that these "children of Abraham" would close with Christ]