

Eighteen Years for Whose Sake?

Luke 13:10-17; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 6-24-18

A Miraculous Healing

Luke 13:10-17 records an actual historical event in which the Lord Jesus heals an unnamed woman in an unnamed synagogue. A synagogue was a 'gathering place' for the Jewish people to hear the teaching of the Law on the Sabbath day (Saturday). (10) These synagogues were not places of worship per se, since the only place for sacrifice was in the temple in Jerusalem. It had a 'ruler' who was in charge of selecting a Scripture reader, people to lead in prayer, and someone from the congregation to teach. The one reading Scripture and the one teaching was usually elevated above the crowd. Evidently, on this day, the Lord Jesus is given the opportunity to teach and from His elevated position, He notices the woman bent double in women's section of the synagogue. The Lord Jesus sees her and calls us to Him and heals with a word and a touch. (12-13) It appears she had a spine problem that caused her to bend at the waist and not be able to straighten up or see anything but the ground in front of her. (11)

A Serious Conflict

Luke 13:10-17 highlights the serious conflict between the Lord Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders in His day, which would culminate in their crucifixion of Him. The ruler of the synagogue is angered by this act of love! (14) The ruler saw it as a breaking of the ten commandments regarding the Sabbath in the 10 commandments. The ruler saw it as 'work' that is forbidden on the Sabbath. (Exodus 20:8-9) But the Lord Jesus immediately points out this man's and others hypocrisy ('saying one thing and doing another'). The Lord Jesus highlights the fact they all agreed that animals should be watered and their needs met on the Sabbath day. (15) The religious leaders were more compassionate toward animals than they were toward men! This was not Sabbath breaking because all God's commands are commands to love God and neighbor. (Mark 2:27) This was no small matter for the religious leaders; they saw it as proof that Jesus was not from God and needed to be killed! (John 5:18) This is another illustration of the lack of fruit on the fig tree of Israel! (see Luke 13:6-9) This highlights the reality that God is more compassionate than we will ever be!

The Kingdom of God

Luke 13:10-17 is a picture of what God was doing in Christ to bring in His kingdom and to set people free from bondage to the devil. It is clear that this physical condition was caused by Satan but it does not appear that this woman was demon possessed. (11, 16) It does not say she was 'demonized' but that she had a 'spirit of weakness' (11) Jesus does not speak to or cast out a demon but simply frees her from her physical affliction (12) Jesus does not tell her to 'go and sin no more or something worse will befall you'! It says she was a 'daughter of Abraham' which is a way of referring to her having a faith like Abraham (ie, a believer). (16) It says she was 'bound' by Satan and 'binding' is something that can be done from the outside, so to speak. (16) So, it appears, this woman is a true believer who has been suffering as a result of the work of Satan even as Job suffered. And the good news of the kingdom of God is that the domain of Satan would be overthrown and those afflicted by him would be set free. (12) (Isaiah 61:1-3) The Lord

Jesus had earlier proclaimed that He would do these kinds of things! (see Luke 4:14-30) This highlights the reality that God is more powerful than the most evil person will ever be.

The Spiritually Downcast

Luke 13:10-17 highlights the reality of shame and depression that believers can experience because of society's prejudices and physical afflictions. It's helpful to try to imagine the physical challenges that would be the result of being in this condition. It's also helpful to try to imagine the social implications of being a woman in that day and time and being an afflicted woman in that day when most associated great and unusual suffering with great sin. As a woman she would already be treated as a second class citizen and as one suffering in a great and unusual way she would be considered 'unclean' and someone to be avoided. And yet she was still a woman of faith (16) and she still attended the synagogue to hear the Word of God (11). She was 'physically bent' and likely, 'emotionally bent' because of her condition, yet she did not turn her back on God. So when the Lord Jesus healed her physically, He also healed her emotionally and socially! (13) This highlights the reality that God pictures our spiritual condition in our deformed physical condition.

The Whys of Suffering

Luke 13:10-17 also illustrates for us the reality of terrible suffering in the lives of God's children and, by implication, addresses the reasons that lie behind it. In this passage, twice it says that this woman suffered in this terrible condition for eighteen (18) years (11, 18) Two things the Lord Jesus says about this are interesting. One, the Lord Jesus says it was a 'long' eighteen years. ('lo and behold, eighteen years' or 'think of it – eighteen years') (16) God is not unconcerned or indifferent to the real and long struggles we go through. Two, the Lord Jesus says 'Satan has bound' this woman, not God. (16) This cannot mean that Satan did something that God could not stop or that God did not ordain. It must mean that it was Satan's heart to bind this woman, not God's heart. (Jeremiah 32:35; Lamentations 3:32-33; Job 1:12, 21-22) So what is God's heart in our suffering (believers and to some degree even unbelievers)? (1 Peter 1:6-7) This woman's suffering was for Christ's sake. (12-13, 17) It is God's heart in our suffering, not simply to cause us pain, but to glorify His Son. (1 Corinthians 4:10-13; Philippians 1:29; 2 Corinthians 12:10; Psalm 44:22; Psalm 69:7; Acts 9:16; 2 Corinthians 4:11) This woman's suffering was for her sake. (13, 16) It is God's heart in our suffering, not simply to cause us pain, but to bring us good. (Romans 8:28; Psalm 119:71; Revelation 16:11) This woman's suffering was for the sake of others. (14, 17) It is God's heart in our suffering, not simply to cause us pain, but to bring good to others. (Colossians 1:24; 2 Timothy 2:10; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Mark 13:9) This highlights the reality that God uses suffering for Christ's sake, for our sake, and for the sake of others.

The Glory of Christ

Luke 13:10-17 is a testimony to who Jesus is and what He offers all. What do the healing miracles say about Jesus? They are intended, not only to relieve suffering, but to testify of Jesus to a watching world. He speaks for God. He said He was God the Son and the only way to God. He must be telling the truth. It is a call to come to Him for physical healing. It is a call to come to Him for spiritual healing.