

JESUS HEALS A CRIPPLED WOMAN

Luke 13:1-17

Key Verse: 13:12,13

"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."

Study Questions:

1. What was the gruesome news that some people brought to Jesus? How did people who saw or heard about this event interpret what had happened? (Compare Jn 9:2) In what way were they fatalistic?
2. What did Jesus say about this event and a similar one? What challenge did he give to those who had told him about it? How does real repentance solve the fundamental problem of human beings, that is, sin?
3. How does the parable of the fig tree show what repentance is? How did he repent?
4. Read verses 10-17. What was the life-long agony of a woman who came to the synagogue one Sabbath? What did Jesus say and do? What happened? What was her response? The response of the synagogue ruler? How did Jesus expose his hypocrisy? What can we learn from Jesus?

We must remember, still, Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem as a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world. Because of this, he was distressed to the maximum degree. But Jesus did what he should do. Today Jesus urges those who came to him to repent. In the first part, we learn the true concept of repentance. When Jesus healed a crippled woman, the ruler of the synagogue should have been happy. Instead, he was indignant on the pretext that Jesus broke the Sabbath law by healing a crippled woman. In response to their criticism, Jesus said, "You hypocrites!" Most importantly, in this passage, we see God's mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ.

First, unless you repent (1-9).

Luke recorded an eerie and grotesque story in verse 1. Look at verse 1. "Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices." One of those who had seen this shocking event was terrified and angry. The man came and told Jesus the story, stammering in a startled state of mind. When some Galileans were preparing the blood sacrifice of animals, probably Pilate was disgusted by the Jewish people's blood sacrifice. So in his megalomania, he killed them and mixed their blood with the sacrifices. As we know well, Galileans were highly revengeful and belligerent against their enemy, Rome. But they could not express their ideas. Only they came to Jesus and freely talked about what was on their minds.

Traditionally, Jewish people had a fatalistic idea. For example, once, Jesus and his disciples were walking along the road. They saw a beggar, born blind. Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Jn 9:2) When they saw the blind man begging on the street, saying, "Alms for the blind! Alms for the blind!" they felt very fatalistic, reflecting the miserable beggar's situation on their own poor situation. In times past and present, the world has been full of such fatalistic people who have a habit of reflecting all the tragedies of the world upon themselves. They become fatalistic, thinking they will die tragically like those killed by Pilate. Once, a beautiful 18-year-old girl died all of a sudden, in a car accident. Then her fiance and her 10-year-old uncle became very fatalistic that they would also die tragically, like her. The serious problem is that the devil comes in through their fatalism and sears their consciences with a hot iron (1Ti 4:2). Fatalism is not a light matter.

What did Jesus say to them? Look at verses 2,3. "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish." Jesus told them plainly that those who died by accident, died. But they died at God's appointed time. Here, Jesus is saying that people die anyway; some by accident, some by sickness, some die young, some die old. In truth, death is a universal truth for all mankind. Most cultural Christians believe that death is the end of everything. But that's not true. After death, there is God's judgment. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says, "For we

must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." In verse 3, when Jesus emphasized the word "perish," he meant eternal condemnation after the judgment of God. Jesus does not want us to perish, but to have eternal life (Jn 3:16).

In order to lead them to repentance, Jesus told a similar story, a story about an accident he had heard of a few days before, in which eighteen laborers had been crushed to death while getting a water tower system installed (4,5). What a tragic story! These eighteen laborers, who barely maintained a hand-to-mouth existence, were crushed to death by an accident. How tragic the poor family members might have been! But to Jesus, they died at God's appointed time. Jesus was not concerned with those who had been killed in an unexpected accident. Rather, Jesus was concerned with those who would perish because they did not repent.

What kind of solution did Jesus suggest when he saw the fatalistic people of the times? Jesus repeatedly urged them to repent. "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (3,5). Here, Jesus says that repentance is the solution to man's eternal tragedy. Jesus tells them a parable to help them solve their fatalistic view of life. The parable in verses 6-9 is recorded only in Luke's account. But it is recorded with the background of the song of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-7. The song of the vineyard is a song which explains the relationship between God and his chosen people. In the parable of the vineyard, God is the owner of the vineyard, and the farmers are his chosen people.

Second, true repentance comes when one accepts God's mission.

Jesus told them this parable to help them repent. Look at verses 6,7. "Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, "For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'" Jesus gave this parable to the Pharisees to help them repent of their unbelief.

When we read this parable, we learn that the man who was entrusted

with the task of caring for a fig tree did not work hard, because he was lazy. A fig tree draws strength and sustenance from the soil. So the man should have fertilized the tree. But he did not take care of it. He knew that he should work hard to take care of the fig tree. But his work was encumbered with many good excuses. He said to himself, "Isn't it too cold to take care of the tree? Let's do it tomorrow." When it was too hot, he said, "Wow! It's too hot. Let's do it tomorrow." When the weather was nice, he said, "Let's go swimming first in the morning and do the work in the afternoon." But he swam until 6:00 p.m. At the death of his father, he was sorrowful, so he could not take care of it, because he was sorrowful. In this way, he wasted his first 20 years loafing around. He wasted another 20 years with a poor attitude of dilly-dallying. He wasted the final 20 years in desperation, because he felt that it was too late to take care of it. Every day he thought he should take care of the fig tree, but he could not take action. Here we learn that laziness is the fountain of fatalism.

True repentance requires a person to admit his sins before the holy God. Look at verse 8. "'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it.'" In this parable, the lazy steward did not make good excuses. Immediately he repented his laziness and lack of stewardship. In the past, he was lazy. But now, for the first time, he realized that he had to uphold his mission to take care of the fig tree. This was a small mission, but it was a mission from God. God made each person with a specific mission. So each person must realize his or her mission from God and live and die for it. Otherwise, people become miserable, not knowing why they have to exist. On the other hand, to a man of mission, suffering is a source of strength and inspiration.

God made man to be the steward of his world. For example, after making the heavens and the earth, God gave Adam a job to name all his creation. What a tremendous task! Naming several children is not so easy.

Jesus is the best example of a hardworking person. When we study the Luke's Gospel narratives, we find that Jesus preached the good news to the people and healed the sick repeatedly. On the road, or during

eating time, he taught the secrets of the kingdom of God to his disciples. In Luke 12:50 Jesus said, "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!" This means that Jesus was greatly distressed because of his upcoming crucifixion. But Jesus taught the Bible to the people, even in Jerusalem, from early morning. Luke 20:1a says, "One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel...." Jesus taught the Bible in any adverse circumstance. Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb 13:8).

Third, Jesus heals a crippled woman on a Sabbath (10-17).

This part teaches us that God's mercy is better than legalism. Again, Luke alone records this event of the healing of a crippled woman. Luke saw the mercy of the Messiah in Jesus. Look at verse 10. "On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues...." At that time, all the Jews customarily went to the synagogues. Jesus also went to the synagogues, where the people were. Look at verse 11. While Jesus was proclaiming the word of life to those who had gathered in the synagogue, a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. To a woman, outward appearance is important. But this woman was bent over. When she tried to straighten up, her eyeballs protruded in reaction.

When Jesus saw this fatalistic woman, his heart went out to her. Jesus stopped his Bible teaching to the audience. Look at verses 12,13. "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." This scene reminds us of King David, who fasted and cried when his son born by Bathsheba was dying (2Sa 12:16). When we go to many church ceremonies, ministers use only the tip of the index finger to perform a ceremony. But Jesus laid his two hands on her and prayed to God that God would heal her. We cannot ignore the fact that the woman with a hunched back obeyed Jesus' words, "Come forward." This was her expression of faith. Then she was set free from her infirmity, and immediately she straightened up, praising God. In order to heal her, Jesus violated the law of the Sabbath. By healing this woman on the Sabbath, Jesus was branded as a breaker of the Sabbath law. But Jesus practiced the mercy

of God.

Divine mercy goes beyond the Sabbath law. On this joyful occasion, there was an unhappy man. Look at verse 14. "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.'" He did not know the spirit of the Sabbath based on God's mercy in the commandments. Jesus' healing a crippled woman was an event to rejoice over together, an event through which people could see Jesus as the Messiah. But in his ostentation, the synagogue ruler was indignant, because he did not know the mercy of God.

What did Jesus say to him? Look at verse 15. Jesus rebuked him, saying, "You hypocrites!" Jesus rebuked not only the synagogue ruler, but also Jesus rebuked all the hypocritical people who were attached to the superficial religious formality and habitual practice of rituals. In order to awaken them from their hypocrisy, Jesus told them a simple story. Look at verses 15,16. "Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then 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?" According to Jesus' saying, the hypocrite knew how to take care of his ox or donkey, but he did not care for a crippled woman. In short, he did not know the mercy of God. Also, this legalistic synagogue ruler debilitated the spirit of the Law, that is, the mercy of God.

Fourth, a daughter of Abraham (16).

As we studied, these hypocrites carefully protected their animals, even on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, they gave their animals milk and sausages, yet they ignored a sick soul bound by Satan; maybe she did not look so beautiful. But Jesus regarded the crippled woman as a daughter of God. He also regarded her as a daughter of Abraham, together with King David and our eternal King Jesus Christ. Jesus saw her as a heavenly princess who deserved all the glory and privileges of the heavenly kingdom. Jesus saw her with tremendous respect, that she would have a place of honor along with Abraham, David and Jesus himself. But she was caught by a demon and suffered from a hunchback for

eighteen years. Now, by the mercy of God, she became a beautiful, normal woman. Because of this, Jesus' joy was endless.

What was the result of this healing? Look at verse 17. "When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing." There are always two kinds of people: One kind are the enemies of God; the other are God's people who experience the mercy of the Messiah in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this passage, we learn that we must see women as the precious daughters of God. Most importantly, we must learn the mercy of God. May God help us to experience the mercy of God and enjoy the peace of God.