

Jesus Preaches Repentance and 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.”

In this passage we will study two main subjects. First, Jesus taught the absolute necessity and urgency of repentance. “Repent” is a word we Christians are pretty familiar with, or at least we should be. But sometimes we fail to understand what real repentance is. Let’s learn what it is and why it is so important. Most of all, let’s do it; let’s repent. Second, Jesus healed a crippled woman and revealed the compassion, mercy and power of God. This Jesus gives us real hope. In this study, we can learn how repentance and faith procure Jesus’ grace, and lead to the restoration of a right relationship with God--for a person, and for a nation.

I. Repent or perish (1-9)

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.”** Apparently, some Galileans were offering sacrifices at the Jerusalem temple. Since Galileans were known to be revolutionaries, they were perceived as rebels against Rome. So Pilate killed them and mixed their blood with the animal blood of their sacrifices. This cruel, godless and irreverent act incited the Jewish people, who were sensitive about God's holiness and about blood. They were greatly insulted. They demanded, "Why did this happen?" They concluded that the Galileans were worse sinners than others. This is the tendency of people who know the law but do not live by it (Ro 2:21-24). They judge others and avoid confronting their own sins.

Jesus redirected them quickly and emphatically. Look at verses 2-3. **“Jesus answered, ‘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.’”** Then Jesus repeated this teaching in verses 4-5, using a story from Jerusalem about a tower in Siloam that fell accidentally and killed eighteen people. In this way Jesus declares that each person, regardless of human background, should be most concerned about repenting their own sins. Our great task is not to assign blame to others, but to repent of our own sins. Jesus urges us to repent.

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Then what does it mean to repent? The word “repent” comes from a Greek word “metanoeo,” which means “to turn” or “to change one’s mind and purpose after acquiring knowledge.” In brief, when we learn that we are doing something we should not do, or failing to do something we should do, we change accordingly. Many assume that the purpose of repentance is to improve well being or productivity. In the 1950’s many smoked cigarettes. When studies showed that it was bad for health, they “repented.” Many self-improvement books teach one how to improve communication skills, time management, and social ability. Often, however, these efforts are purely for selfish gain, and without any relationship to God.

Biblical repentance is much more than an attempt to improve oneself. Biblical repentance is turning from sin and self, and turning toward God. It requires recognizing God as God, and recognizing sin as sin. Sin is not only harmful to us, it is a transgression of God’s law, and deserves punishment. Real repentance recognizes that our sins make God sorry. It is accompanied by deep contrition. Yet it goes beyond feelings. Real repentance involves a change of life goal and purpose. Instead of living to please ourselves, we live to please God. True repentance involves a change in value system. It is to acknowledge that the things of this world are mere trinkets, and that the real eternal treasures are in the kingdom of God. Let's have a “big picture” idea of repentance. Repentance is a drastic change of direction from sin and self, to God and his kingdom. It is to renounce self-rule and welcomes God’s rule through his King, Jesus Christ. When this basic repentance is ongoing, all the details of a changed life will follow.

As a young man, I saw a movie called, “Rich man, Poor man.” I thought it was better to be the rich man. So I studied business administration in college. I planned to make millions by age 35 and to prosper further through investments. However, an ill-fated romantic relationship interrupted my plan. To ease my guilt and sorrow, I sought God’s help through Bible study. Jesus forgave my sins and gave me peace. However, I found that my real problem was much more than a wounded heart; it was a misdirected life. Instead of seeking God and his kingdom, I had been seeking money and pleasure in this world. Especially, Matthew’s gospel helped me to repent my selfishness and to seek God and his kingdom. As my life direction changed, God blessed me abundantly. He gave me life-giving words from the Bible. He opened my eyes to his glorious kingdom. He gave me a meaningful mission to pray for North America to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. He blessed me with a godly wife of 25 years, and six independent and talented

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children, whom I pray for daily. I still struggle with many things. But I am sure that I have repented, and I desire to continue to repent, by God's grace.

What should motivate repentance? Ideally it is godly sorrow for our sins (2 Cor 7:10). However, Jesus gives us another motive: to avoid perishing. Jesus said, **“But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”** “Perish” means to be utterly destroyed--spiritually and physically. It was this fear of perishing that led John Newton to repent. The son of a ship's captain, he became a corrupted sailor. During a fierce storm at sea, he remembered Bible verses his grandmother had read to him as a boy. Convinced that he would go to hell if he died at sea, he repented with tears. The storm subsided. When the ship landed, Newton went straight to the nearest church and gave his life to Christ. Later, he said that this dramatic experience was just the beginning of his spiritual journey. To the surprise of many historians, he continued in the slave trade for more than five years after that. He remained silent about the slave trade for nearly 40 years after his original repentance. Finally in 1788, he published a confessional history, “Thoughts About the Slave Trade.” It was an exposé that helped bring about the end of the slave trade in England. Newton began to repent out of a fear of hell. As time went by, he became genuinely sorry for his sins. He trusted only in the grace of God alone for his salvation. He is the author of “Amazing Grace.”

Our real problem is not death. It is what comes after death. Everyone will die physically (Heb 9:27). How a person dies is not so significant. A great Christian musician, Keith Green, died in a plane accident. A great Christian disciple maker, Dawson Trotman, died in a drowning accident. Jesus teaches us not to attribute much meaning to how a person dies. What really matters is what happens afterward. Where do we go when we die?

The Bible says that a **“..man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..”** (Heb 9:27). After death comes judgment. Those who die in the Lord will go to be with him in paradise (Php 1:23; 2 Cor 5:8). When Jesus comes again to this world in power and great glory, they will accompany him (1 Th 4:14). Then at a word from his mouth the resurrection of all people will occur. The saints will receive new resurrection bodies that are imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual (Jn 5:28-29; 1 Cor 15:42-44). They will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever. However, those who die without the Lord will go to a place called Hades, an interim place of torment. At the final judgment, they will be thrown into hell (Rev 20:14). The Bible calls it **“...the fiery lake of burning sulfur”** (Rev 21:8). In Luke's gospel, Jesus began to talk about hell in 12:5. Jesus spoke clearly about hell

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11 times in the synoptic gospels. Hell is horrible beyond our imagination. Hell was made for the devil and his angels. Jesus does not want any human being to go there. He is not willing that anyone perish, but wants everyone to come to salvation (1 Ti 2:4). However, we must decide to repent. We must repent, or we will perish.

Repentance is the most urgent matter for any human being. It should be done today, with no delay. Though repentance is so urgent, most people think they have a lot of time to repent. Jesus proclaimed repentance even through tragic events. People need to be told to repent (Lk 3:7; Mk 1:15). We should learn from Jesus. In times of tragedy, we must repent and help others to repent, instead of judging the dead. After the 9-11 tragedy, Dr. Billy Graham delivered a message of repentance to the leaders of our nation and to all of us. He challenged us to repent instead of condemning others. Let's remember Jesus' words, **“But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”**

Jesus followed his teaching about repentance with a parable in verses 6-7 about a fruitless fig tree, its owner who demanded fruit, and its caretaker who interceded for it. This parable teaches us that real repentance produces fruit (Lk 3:8). The fig tree refers first of all to the nation of Israel. God planted them in the best place with the best blessings to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God used them to bring the Messiah into the world. Through the Messiah's reign he wanted to see the restoration of spiritual order. He wanted the blessings of peace, justice and righteousness to flow throughout the earth from Israel. He wanted to see all nations stream to Israel to share their blessing. But wicked religious leaders guided Israel to reject Messiah Jesus. They abandoned God's purpose (Lk 7:30) in order to maintain their puny establishment power. Many ordinary people were too cowardly to make independent decisions, even though they saw that Jesus was the Christ (12:57). To these people, to repent meant welcoming the Messiah and fulfilling their God-given purpose. They needed to make a commitment to the Christ. It required a costly decision and time was short; God's judgment was imminent. Only the intercession of Jesus stood between them and judgment (8,9). This is the spiritual condition of the world of our time.

We believe that God has used America as a missionary-sending nation according to his will. For this purpose, the Lord has blessed America in every way: spiritually, intellectually, and materially. In light of Jesus' world mission command and his promise to come again, the most urgent thing American Christians should do is evangelize the nations, both overseas and at home. If we lose this purpose of God for blessing our land, we will lose the privilege of being a Christian nation as

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well, very quickly. This is why we must pray earnestly for American missionaries and for the upcoming regional summer Bible conference. We need to see the vision of God's kingdom to inspire a new sense of missionary purpose in our hearts! Let's recognize that we are living on borrowed time. Let's make the most of every opportunity to advance God's purpose as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

II. Jesus said, "Woman, you are set free...." (10-17)

In the previous section, Jesus taught plain truth: **"Repent or perish."** It is because Jesus loves people and does not want anyone to perish. In this section, Jesus reveals the compassion and power of God in a life-giving healing. It is a story of Jesus' pure grace. On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. This woman had suffered physically due to the curvature of her spine. She had practical difficulties each day in dressing herself, preparing food, doing laundry, and cleaning her house. She suffered emotionally and socially. Instead of hearing, "You are beautiful," she heard, "Humpback!" Worst of all, she suffered spiritually. Luke, a medical doctor, says her condition was caused by a spirit. Jesus said that she was bound by Satan. She was under spiritual oppression. The devil shouted in her ear, "You are no good. God doesn't love you. Why don't you just die." Maybe she did want to die. But as a human being made in God's image, she desired to live. She existed in an oppressed, tormented state, day after painful day, for eighteen long years.

Many people are tormented by Satan. Even though their bodies may seem healthy, they are oppressed by a dark power which they cannot overcome. One Christian medical doctor testified that nearly ten percent of his patients were so depressed that considered suicide. Satan's oppression makes people feel empty and meaningless. They lose all joy and hope and just exist in dark misery from day to day.

Though this woman suffered terribly, she was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. She struggled hard to love God, overcoming herself. Look at verse 12a. **"When Jesus saw her, he called her forward...."** Jesus immediately understood the pain and suffering of this woman as though it were his own. He did not wait for her to ask for help, but immediately called her forward. It might have been hard for her to come. But upon hearing Jesus' words of power and compassion, she was strengthened to try. She moved inch by inch and came to the

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front. It was a great act of faith on her part. Then, Jesus spoke to her, **“Woman, you are set free from your infirmity”** (12b). The spirit that had crippled her was driven out. Her soul was freed from the terrible oppression. Though her body was freed, she did not move right away. So Jesus put his hands on her and helped her. Her bones became strong and straight. Her muscles healed and all of her nerves were restored. Her back was fully healed in an instant and she became like a young woman again. She straightened up for the first time in 18 years, holding her head level. She beheld Jesus’ compassionate face. She saw the amazed smiles on the faces of people in the synagogue. Then she praised God. She knew that it was the power of God and the compassion of God which had healed her.

In this way Jesus showed us that he came to set us free from the oppression of the devil. Through his healing we can assume our rightful place as his children who serve his purpose and bring glory to him. One woman in our congregation was sorrowful. Though she had been married several years, she could not bear children. Through God’s servant’s challenge, she got up and went to the campus and shared the word of God with students. Many beautiful girls responded. She became a spiritual mother. Then God also blessed her with three of her own children. Another woman was heart-broken after being rejected by a spiritually blind young man. When she came to God for help, she found that her problem was not only a broken heart, but a self-centered lifestyle. She was spoiled and useless. She felt that she could never change. But she repented with tears and sought God’s help. She studied the Bible diligently and began to share his word with students. God bore spiritual fruits through her. Then he granted her the best man of God who is spiritual, handsome, artistic and intellectual to be her husband. Now they have one daughter as well. There are many women in our ministry who have received Jesus’ grace of healing and have become fruitful members of his kingdom. Jesus still heals through his power and compassion.

However, the synagogue ruler was indignant. He did not care at all about the woman. Rather, he became critical that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. Lacking the courage to confront Jesus, he rebuked the people, **“There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.”** Jesus answered, **“You hypocrites! 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?”** Jesus rebuked them for caring for their animals but not needy people. They were wolves

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in shepherd's clothes. They were humiliated. But the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing (17).

In this passage we learn that we must repent or we will perish in the fire of hell. We also learn that Jesus is full of compassion and power to heal. Jesus' healing makes us strong, strong enough to live for God's purpose and to bear the fruit he is seeking. Jesus heals individuals, and nations as well. Let's repent and trust Jesus, and pray for the needy people of our time.