

The Crippling Spirit

This story of the woman with the physical ailment or infirmity brings mind many of our friends or loved ones or someone we know who also suffers or suffered with one or other ailment.

An example of someone close to home is a former member of St Michael's, the late Ken Philipson. When I met Ken he was an active and healthy man, coaching sport at the school where he taught. Ken changed from a healthy man to a man bent over and suffering much in his last few years and finally being confined to a wheelchair. My late mother was the captain of the girl's brigade in Paarl and played netball for her club as a young woman. In her last few years her body became wracked with arthritis which confined her mostly to her bed as she found it too painful to move around. It is so sad to see our loved ones suffering the way they do and not being able to do anything about it.

The scripture passage tells us of a woman who suffered for 18 years, being crippled by a **spirit of infirmity**. This must have been extremely painful and uncomfortable. Jesus says in verse 16: 'whom Satan has kept bound for 18 years.' This is not a demon possession but a case similar to that of Job where Satan afflicted his body. The only way she could see the world was out of the corner of her eye by looking up and sideways. Although she suffered so much and endured the pain of a bent spine, she regularly attended the synagogue on the Sabbath where she went to worship. She always had a hope that God would be merciful on her and heal her.

This day there was a special excitement at the synagogue, a Galilean preacher and prophet was teaching there. She heard reports that Jesus spoke about God's reign and how he healed sick people. She decided to go to the synagogue as she usually did and to see if this teacher would heal her. The place was abuzz when she arrived and everybody was excited about what might happen on that day. As soon as Jesus started to preach you could probably hear a pin drop as everybody was listening attentively.

At a certain point Luke 13:12 – 13 *When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and called 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.*

Every miracle has a purpose and this miracle proclaims the freedom from bondage that Jesus achieves for us in his kingdom. The difference between the healing of this woman and that of many others whom Jesus healed was that she did not bring attention to herself. Many others called out to Jesus "Lord have mercy on me". Jesus calls out to her and frees her from her bondage. She was in the right place at the right time. Jesus not only frees us from spiritual bondage but also from the law. He proclaims in this passage that he is the Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus has bound Satan and set us free. What relevance does that have to our burdens?
What does Christ's victory have for us?

Mat 11: 28 – 30 "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Every day we live with the painful fact that life is difficult. We all have different burdens or spirits that cripple us. Our only hope is in Jesus who has won for us a victory on Calvary.

What is it that holds you and me in bondage? Whatever your bondage is, bring Jesus is also here today to perform a miracle. Are you and I excited when we come to worship? Are we expecting miracles to happen when we come to this place?

I can probably say without being prejudiced that some or many of us are being crippled by one or other spirit.

What is the spirit which is crippling you? What is your spirit of infirmity?
I am going to look at a number of different spirits that may be evident in your and my life.

1. Spirit of Pride

*Prov. 16: 18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before the fall
Gal. 6: 3 For everyone who thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself*

The kind of pride that stems from self-righteousness is sin, and God hates it because it is a hindrance to seeking him. This kind of haughty pride is the opposite of the spirit of humility that God seeks: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" ([Matthew 5:3](#)). The "poor in spirit" are those who recognize their utter spiritual bankruptcy and their inability to come to God aside from His divine grace. The proud, on the other hand, are so blinded by their pride that they think they have no need of God or, worse, that God should accept them as they are because they deserve His acceptance.

Pride is taking the glory that belongs to God alone and keeping it for ourselves. Pride is essentially self-worship.

Is there anybody who finds themselves in this situation? Just like Jesus called the woman in the passage, so he is calling you this morning.

My son/my daughter you are set free from your infirmity!!!

2. Spirit of addiction

James 1:12-15 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

There are many types of addictions: Sexual immorality, pornography, alcohol, nicotine, drugs, idolatry, gambling, TV, social media(Twitter, Facebook etc.), food, sport, etc. These addictions do not only prevent us having true a relationship with God but also harms our relationships with our loved ones. Others suffer because of the bad choices we make in life.

1 Corinthians 6:12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me but I will not be enslaved by anything.

Is there anybody here this morning that feels that they are being enslaved in the flesh? Jesus is also calling out to you this morning to come to Him. Allow him to set you free from that spirit that is crippling you.

3. Spirit of unforgiveness

Many people ruin their health and their lives by taking the poison of bitterness, resentment and unforgiveness. Who are you helping most when you forgive the person who hurt you? Actually, you're helping yourself more than the other person.

An Anglican priest who specialised in the healing ministry shared the following story about a woman who was suffering major depression.

Is your heart hardened when you have to forgive someone?

Mark 11: 25 And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins. "

We cannot expect God to forgive us if we are unable to forgive others!!

4. Spirit of dishonesty

Many people find themselves crippled by this spirit. They cheat in their relationships, husbands and wives. They take things that do not belong to them. Their version of the truth is very suspect. I know someone who from a very young age lied about where he worked to all his friends and even his parish priest. Over the years it got worse and a few months ago I met someone who lives close to him in his new country and this person said that the lies have now gone into taking things that do not belong to him. When we tell lies, we have to tell more lies to cover up those lies. *Colossians 3:9 – 10 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*

Luke 16: 10 – 12 “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

5. Spirit of Anger/Rage

James 1:19 – 20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Ephesians 4: 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Vs. 31 Get rid of bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice.

Very often we let our tempers get hold of us. We forget who we are and we say and do things that we regret later. However, we do it every time and when we are angry we do not display the image of God. I am not saying that we should never get angry. What I am saying is what proverbs 29:11 says “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

A very good Christian friend and I were discussing an incident that happened to him and his family. A reckless driver cut in front of his car and put him and his family's life in danger. He said to me that he got so angry, and if his family was not in the car with him, he would have pulled the other driver off the road and given him a good hiding. I said to him that it was not worth it and that we should not put other peoples monkeys on our backs.

Do you have a spirit that drives you to anger that you lose control? Jesus is also calling you to be loosed of this burden, this spirit that is keeping you bound.

6. Spirit of hurts of the past

I have 2 colleagues who are bound by this spirit and cannot let go of it. The one lost her husband unexpectedly about 5 years ago at a very young age leaving her with 2 very young daughters. Veronica and I went to their wedding and they were a wonderful couple. Unfortunately, this woman has not been able to deal with this and let it go. She suffers from severe depression and in the past few years have been off for long periods of time from work. She has just returned to work after being off for about 6 weeks. The other colleague's husband had an affair with another woman and they are now divorced. However, she has not been able to deal with this. She also suffers from severe depression and is also off from work for long periods of time. Jesus is saying to anybody this morning that is bound by things of the past, to come to Him so that he can release them from their burdens.

7. Spirit of negativity

Do you know people who are always critical of others? Are you a person who is always negative and complaining about one thing or another? We are never happy about anything unless it is done our way.

Galatians 5:20 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

If you find yourself to be a person like this, Jesus is also calling you to himself this morning.

Jesus was always compassionate about people and especially the women, children, orphans and those who were suffering. He dealt with people differently. Some came to him and asked him to heal them. Others came on behalf of their friend or loved ones and others he called to him. The message that the lord laid on my heart this morning may not have addressed any of your burdens be it spiritual or physical.

However, whatever it is that has been burdening you or crippling you emotionally, spiritually or physically please do not leave this place this morning the same way you came in. We need to take Jesus at his word "whatever you ask in my name I will give it unto you." Do you really want to suffer the way you have been or do you want to be free. If the son sets you free, you are free indeed.

Prayers