

A Changed Life

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of taking all that God means us to have, including the Holy Spirit, and making God the king of our lives to experience victory over sin, cleanness of life, and the representation of Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Luke 13:11, John 14:12, John 14:26, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 3:17, Hebrews 7:25, 1 Peter 1:22

Topics: "Spiritual Freedom", "Healing Ministry"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the miraculous healing of a woman with a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years by Jesus, emphasizing the overflow ministry of Jesus where his power and virtue bring healing and restoration unexpectedly. The sermon delves into the bondage that holds many Christians back, such as fashion, pride, and secret sins, highlighting the need for Jesus to detect and release us from these bondages. It illustrates the powerlessness of trying to lift ourselves up and the transformative power of Jesus to set us free, enabling us to stand straight and glorify God.

Transcript

TEXT: "And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity: And he laid his hands on her; and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God."--Luke 13:11-13.

These verses present to us one of the most interesting stories imaginable--of interest to us first because it is one of our Lord's miracles, and one has only to study these manifestations of his power to be persuaded of his divinity; interesting, again, because it is the account of a remarkable recovery from a great infirmity, for instead of bondage which had held this woman for eighteen years we behold her standing upright glorifying God. But it is all the more interesting to us because it presents a picture of what may be called the overflow ministry of Jesus, of which there are many instances--as, for example, the account of the staunching of the issue of blood when the woman touched the hem of his garment. He was going upon another errand, but was so filled with virtue that when one of the multitude at his side touched him, by faith healing was the result. And, again, we have an illustration in the raising of Jairus' daughter, and once again in the rescue of the widow's son from death. He was on his journey across the country and beheld the funeral procession coming. Mr. Moody used to say that Jesus broke up every funeral he attended, and he stops long enough in this journey to restore this boy to his broken-hearted mother. Again, in the case of

the woman of Samaria, when he is going about his Father's business, he stops by the wellside to rest, and even in his resting moments forgives a woman's sins, so that under her influence an entire city is moved. Would that we could learn that it is the overflow of our lives that gives power to our Christian experience! This text is one of the best illustrations of this truth in the life of our Savior.

I

Many lessons might be drawn from this scripture, the first of which would be his power to uplift womanhood; but this is so well understood that it is unnecessary to take a moment of time to discuss it, except to say in passing that all that woman is today she owes to Jesus of Nazareth. She was as truly bound as this afflicted woman, and just as truly was she set free. But I prefer rather to let the woman of Samaria illustrate many Christians to-day who are bound in one way or another and so are shorn of power. For this suggestion I am indebted to my dear friend, the Rev. F. B. Meyer, a brief outline of whose sermon I recently had the privilege of reading.

She was a daughter of Abraham, as we read in verse 16, "And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" And therefore she was like many children of God whom we know. What it is that binds them we cannot always tell. With this person it is fashion, and with that it is earnings; with another it is pride, and still another selfishness; with this one it is the encouragement of some passion, and with still another it is the practice of some secret sin. It is not necessary to describe the bondage; it is true, alas, that many of us are sadly crippled in our influence because of these things, for this woman was just as truly bound as if she had been in chains. When Jesus entered the synagogue his eye saw her instantly, and he detected her difficulty. He is in the midst of us to-day, and while we are unconscious of the bondage of the one who is beside us, he understands it perfectly. That minister who has lost his old power and is therefore an enigma to his people, that church officer who is out of communion and whose testimony has lost its old ring of genuineness, that young woman bordering on despair because in her heart she knows she is not right with God, and that young man whose character is being undermined by the cultivation of a secret sin--all these are known to him. He looks them through and through, and not a point of weakness is hidden from his gaze.

Note again, that she was powerless to help herself. I doubt not that she had tried again and again to lift herself up. She had been unable to turn her eyes upward to see the stars, her vision had been centered upon things below, and in this way she is like many a Christian attempting to be satisfied with earthly things and making life a miserable failure. The Scriptures declare that she "could in no wise lift up herself," and I have been told that this expression is the same word which is used in another place in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Jesus is said to be able to save to the uttermost; so that really the Scriptures mean that she tried to the uttermost to lift herself up and failed, and that she had gone to the uttermost in the matter of bondage, and then because Jesus is able to save to the uttermost he set her free; or, in other words, her need was met by his power. Oh, what an encouragement to know that the thing which has been your defeat and mine he may easily conquer! It is a striking picture to me; he laid his hands on her and said, "Woman, thou art loosed," and she stood straight and glorified God.

Some years ago there came into the McAuley mission, in New York City, a man who was, because of his sin, unable to speak and was bound down until, instead of standing a man six feet high, as he should have done, he was like a dwarf. He came to Christ in the old mission, and when kneeling at the altar he accepted him, as if by a miracle Jesus set him free also, and when he stood up the bonds were snapped

that held him, and he had his old stature back again. His speech, however, was not entirely recovered. It is the custom in the mission for one to observe his anniversary each year and to give a testimony. Whenever the anniversary of this man occurred he always had another read his lesson, then he would stand before the people bowed down as he had been in sin and suddenly rise before them in the full dignity of his Christian manhood, glorifying God in his standing. This was like the woman of the text, and oh, that it might be like some one reading this who, bound by an appetite or a passion, shall be set free by the power of God!

The difference between this woman in the one case bound and wretched and in the other straight and glorifying God is the difference between Christians bound by appetite, pride or sin and when set free by the power of Christ. It is the difference between the average Christian experience and what God means we should be.

Two things this woman had--first, his word, when he said, "Woman, thou art loosed"; and, second, the touch of his hand as he laid his hands upon her. Both of these privileges we may have.

II

Have you really taken all that God meant you should have? Your life is the test of this question. If you are constantly failing at the same point, if you are dominated by a spirit of unrest, if you are lacking in spiritual power, something is wrong and you need the touch of the living Christ. The early disciples were an illustration of those of us who have not yet fully appreciated and appropriated our Savior. He had given them life, for in the seventeenth of John he declares that this is true. They had peace as a possession, for in the fourteenth chapter and twenty-seventh verse he says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." They also had joy as a gift, for he said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full"; and yet they quarreled among themselves, one of them denied him with an oath, and all of them forsook him. They were a weak, vacillating company of men, but suddenly there came a remarkable change. It was as if there had been two Peters. The first was a coward, the second a perfect giant in his fearlessness. The first was afraid of a little girl, the second faced a mob and fearlessly proclaimed the truth of God that condemned him; and the secret of this change is found in the fact that the Holy Ghost had fallen upon him and upon them. This is what we need. Jesus was God's gift to the world, and the Holy Ghost is his gift to the church. Have we failed to take both? A man over in England, telling his pastor about his experience, said that he had taken Jesus for his eternal life and the Holy Ghost for his internal life. This is certainly what we need to do more than anything else. We need the Holy Spirit of God in our lives. He would illuminate our minds as we read the Bible, strengthen our faith as we appropriate Christ, transform our lives as he came to do, and enable us to live and preach in demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Have you ever stopped to think what is really associated with the full acceptance of the third Person of the Trinity?

First, Power. "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you."

Second, Ability to pray. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us."

Third, Victory over sin. "For the law of the Spirit of Christ in Christ Jesus sets me free from the law of sin and death."

Fourth, Cleanness of life. "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit."

Fifth, The representation of Jesus Christ. Not imitation, but reproduction, is what we need.

Two artists are painting before a picture. The work of one is sadly deficient, the other an inspiration, for one is copying while the other is reproducing his own work. Oh, that we might be so filled with the spirit of God that men should take knowledge of us that we not only had been with Jesus but were like him! Two things we need, both of which we may have: His word and his touch. First, his Word. We surely have this. Has he not said, "Ye shall receive power"? But with this there is coupled a condition, "Come out from among them and be ye separate." Fulfilling this condition, we have only to step out upon his promise on the ground of the fact that he has said, "That ye might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Second, we have the touch of his hand. This emphasizes his reality. One of the greatest dangers of the day, it seems to me, is the fact that we are so inclined to make him unreal. It also indicates his nearness. He can fill us so that his life may come throbbing into our very being, and this is the secret of victory in the time of temptation. We must be empty to be filled, but no man can empty himself. Two ways may be presented for the emptying of a jar of air. First, use the air pump; but in this way it cannot be perfectly done. Second, fill the jar with water. This is the better way. When Christ fills our lives he empties us of self and sin. To some unknown friend I am indebted for four steps which we must take if we would be loosed from our bondage and stand straight in the presence of God and men.

First: What God claims I will yield; that is myself.

Second: What I yield God accepts. Since I have taken my hands off from myself I am not my own.

"I have not much to bring Thee, Lord. For that great love which made Thee mine, I have not much to bring Thee, Lord, But all I am is Thine."

Third: What God accepts he fills.

Fourth: What God fills he uses.

III

Mind you, it is not once and for all that we are filled with the Spirit of God; there will be a necessity for daily renewal, not only because we may sin but also because we may use the strength which he has imparted to us. Three suggestions may be made, therefore, for our constant infilling.

First: Make his word your daily portion. Count that day lost which passes without a portion of his word absorbed into your life.

Second: Make his will supreme. There can be no joy in the household when the children rebel against the parents. There can be no power in Christian experience when our wills are contrary to his.

Third: Make him the king of your life. His coronation will one day come, when he shall be proclaimed King of kings and Lord of lords; but while we wait for that we may crown him in our own lives.

When Queen Victoria had just ascended her throne she went, as is the custom of Royalty, to hear "The Messiah" rendered. She had been instructed as to her conduct by those who knew, and was told that she must not rise when the others stood at the singing of the Hallelujah chorus. When that magnificent chorus

was being sung and the singers were shouting "Hallelujah! hallelujah! hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth," she sat with great difficulty. It seemed as if she would rise in spite of the custom of kings and queens, but finally when they came to that part of the chorus where with a shout they proclaim him King of kings suddenly the young queen rose and stood with bowed head, as if she would take her own crown from off her head and cast it at his feet. Let us make him our King and every day be loyal to him. This is the secret of peace.

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