



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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December 9, 2012

JUMP START #290

Luke 13:10-13- “ And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And there was a woman who for eighteen years had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, ‘ Woman, you are freed from your sickness.’ ”

This is a fascinating story that shows both the love of God and the power of God. Luke, who happened to be a doctor, gives us some details about this woman. She had been sick for a long time, 18 years. That alone makes one weary. Eighteen years, can you imagine? Then, Luke tells us that she was bent double and could not straighten up at all. Can you imagine how difficult it is to walk that way? She couldn't reach up very well. It would be hard to get dressed. Shopping would be difficult. When a person is bent double, it's hard to look up. People have told me that they knew folks who had a similar problem. I've never seen one like this. I expect she walked slow.

There she is in the synagogue on a Saturday. Jesus was there. I don't see anything in the text that makes us think that she knew Jesus was going to be there or for that matter, if she even knew who Jesus was. He calls her to come to him. That took time. All eyes watching. He heals her and the official throws a fit because it was the Sabbath day. Jesus used the occasion to teach.

Have you ever wondered, why her? Did Jesus just randomly pick her? Was there something about her that caught the eye of Jesus? I think there was. She had not given up on God. For 18 years she suffered. For 18 years her world was limited. Yet, there she is on the Sabbath day, worshipping God. You can imagine how many prayers she had prayed in those 18 years, asking God for help and recovery. And nothing. Eighteen years of people staring at her. Eighteen years of whispers—some thinking that God was punishing her for some sin. That was a common thought then, and still is today. Eighteen years and she still returns to the synagogue. That's impressive! I think in our culture after about a week or two many of us would have thrown in the towel on God and walked away. Some may have blamed God. She doesn't seem to. There she is on a typical Sabbath, worshipping.

Everyone in the audience would have seen this bent over woman who is slow and rather odd looking. Jesus saw this “ Daughter of Abraham,” as he called her, who loved and worshipped her God. That impressed Jesus. We look to Jesus as the teacher, which he is, but we learn from this marvelous, unnamed woman.

Don't quit on God just because things aren't turning out as you think they should. Don't stop worshipping with God's people just because life is now difficult for you. Don't allow your faith to

become crippled just because your body is crippled. Actually, in this story there were two crippled people---the bent over woman and the synagogue official. The woman was crippled on the outside and the official on the inside. The woman knew she was crippled, the official didn't know he was. The official threw a real fit at Jesus for healing her. Jesus responded by reminding the official that he unties the donkey and leads it to water, even on the Sabbath. The conclusion being, that Jesus did the same thing. This woman had been tied by Satan and all Jesus did was untie her. How simple Jesus makes his powerful miracles. The woman left that day healed. The official remained bent over on the inside.

Makes you wonder doesn't it? Are you bent on the outside? If so, are you still following the Lord and worshipping him? Are you bent on the inside? Attitudes, feelings, thoughts about God just not what they should be. You think God ought to do this, but he doesn't. You think God ought to answer to you, but he won't.

Bent on the inside and bent on the outside. Jesus healed one. The other, he didn't because the official didn't have the heart.

Today, you will see those bent on the outside. They have physical disabilities and problems. When you see them, say a prayer for them. You'll see others who look fine, but they are bent over on the inside. It comes out when they talk. Prejudice, hatred, meanness, selfishness are the common things you'll notice. Say a prayer for them as well. They need Jesus, as we all do.

Bent, inside and outside. Both are uncomfortable. Both are difficult. Both need Jesus. Sadly only one realized it.

Roger Shouse