

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – Get Up and Walk! Faith and Healing – 16-22 April 2016

Christ healed both the physical and spiritual diseases of the people. But the Pharisees and Scribes did not believe He could do both. Thus He asked them, “For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?” (Matthew 9:5). We will focus on why the record of miracles and why on Sabbath, and the centurion’s faith.

The reason given in Scripture as to why we have the record of so many of the miracles of Jesus, is this: “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:30-31).

In the teaching of Jesus and the apostles we are told the way of life; but in the miracles which God wrought by them we have visible manifestations of the reality of the life, and of its power. There is not a spiritual truth set forth in the Epistles, that does not find an illustration in some of the miracles performed in the bodies of men. We do well to study those lessons.

God gave to Jesus “power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life” to all who come to Him. By the power which He had to deliver the bodies of men from disease, He showed power to release their souls from sin. “For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then He saith to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitude saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men” (Matthew 9:5-8).

Some of the most striking of the miracles of Jesus were done on the Sabbath day. In none of them was the need so urgent that the healing might not have been deferred another day. The blind man could have waited another day without special inconvenience. The man who lay by the pool was not in such imminent danger that he must necessarily be healed immediately. So also in the other cases, their infirmities were not immediately endangering their lives. Besides, none of them were expecting to be healed, so that they would not have suffered any disappointment if Jesus had said nothing to them until the Sabbath was past.

But Jesus did not delay an hour. Moreover He healed them on the Sabbath day, knowing full well that it would offend the Pharisees, and increase their hatred for Him. These things show that He had a special object in doing these miracles on the Sabbath day, and also that His Spirit (Galatians 4:6) had a purpose in calling our attention especially to the day in which they were performed. What was that object? The answer is easy. We may dismiss at once any likely supposition that Jesus acted in a spirit of bravado, to show His contempt for the Pharisees, or that He would unnecessarily stir up their hatred towards Him. The miracles were done for the same purpose that they were recorded, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.”

Jesus did not do these miracles out of disrespect to the Sabbath day. Jesus did not do them to show that the Sabbath may be broken in case of necessity. But Jesus did not break the Sabbath, although the Jews falsely accused Him of so doing. It is never necessary to break the Sabbath, but Jesus Himself said, “It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days” (Matthew 12:12). We learn therefore that Jesus, instead of breaking the Sabbath, as the blind Pharisees suppose, was showing its true meaning. True, He worked upon it, but how? – It was by His Word. Ever since the creation of the world, when the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their host, and “God did rest the seventh day from all His works” (Genesis 2:2), He has still continued to work by the Word of His power, upholding all things.

God gave the Sabbath that we might know that He is the God that sanctifies us (Ezekiel 20:12). So in performing those miracles on the Sabbath day, Jesus was showing that the Sabbath is to free man from bondage, and not to be a bondage to them. It commemorates creative power, by which all who believe are made new creatures in Christ. “For we which have believed do enter into rest,” even God’s rest. God rested when He had finished His work. He rested upon His Word of power. So we find rest through work, – not our work but God’s work. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6:29). But believing, as we have seen, gives us rest. The work of God gives us rest from sin, for we triumph in the work of His hands (Psalms 92:4). So by these miracles Christ teaches us that the Sabbath, even the day which the Jews held as the Sabbath, but which they did not keep according to God’s commandment, is the crowning glory of the Gospel.

Kept as God has given it to us, it enables us to see Christ as both Redeemer and Creator, – as Redeemer because He is Creator. The Sabbath of the Lord – the memorial of creation reminds us of the power of God to salvation to everyone that believeth. It reveals to us, as nothing else can, Christ was the anointed by the Spirit of His Father, that is, by the Holy Spirit, “to preach the Gospel to the poor;” “to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19); thus the miracles on the Sabbath.

It was customary for our Lord and Saviour as He went about healing the sick throughout Judea, to come and lay His hand upon them, or allow them to touch Him, and thus impart to them the healing virtue which restored their strength; and as we read the narrative of His ministry among the sick and afflicted, we naturally receive the impression that the miraculous blessings which He bestowed upon the people came through their personal contact with Him. We think that if we but had the chance to secure personal contact with the visible, tangible Jesus of Nazareth whom they knew, our opportunities of being blessed as they were would be much greater than they are. But there was one miracle performed by the Saviour, the account of which leads the thoughtful mind toward quite another conclusion. We refer to the healing of the centurion's servant. This event is thus related by Matthew:

“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” “And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour” (Matthew 8:5-10, 13).

Jesus did not come near the centurion's servant; the latter neither touched Him nor saw Him; yet he was healed as effectually as were any upon whom Christ laid His hands. The centurion said to Jesus, “Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed,” and the Saviour put the stamp of truthfulness upon the utterance by saying, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.” “The word only”! Is sufficient, and this is the language of faith. Those words, and not “I will come,” spoke the necessity of the occasion. Then cannot we speak them with the same assurance, and do we not stand upon a level with the centurion in relation to the healing power of Christ? How far off from the needy one must the Saviour be for His word to lose its power? Farther, we may be sure, than heaven is from the earth.

And this is what we read in another scripture. For it is declared that “the righteousness which is of faith speaketh this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The *word* is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:6-9). And this is the same word by which Christ healed all diseases. Like the centurion, let us by faith receive the healing from Christ.

Speaking of faith, there is also lack of faith and the strangeness of unbelief. There was one thing at which our Lord Himself marveled while here on the earth, and that was unbelief. Many things caused great surprise to His disciples and the multitudes that attended Him, but the most surprising thing to Christ Himself was the blindness and hardness of the human heart. This so hindered in His own country that He could do no mighty work there; and “He marvelled because of their unbelief” (Mark 6:5-6). Also when He healed the centurion's servant (Luke 7:2-9) He marvelled, not because the centurion had faith, but because His own people had less faith than did this Roman. Unbelief is a stranger thing than is the mightiest miracle ever performed; because there has been a cause for every miracle, but for unbelief there is no cause. It is not strange that God can do most astonishing things, for He is omnipotent and omniscient; but it is strange indeed that man will not believe His word. It is so strange as to be absolutely without reason. Do you believe the Lord? If not, why not?