

HEALING IN THE SYNAOGUE

***Mat 12:10** And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.*

***Mat 12:13** Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.*

The first thing we ought to notice is the determination of this man with the withered hand to come to the house of God. There are Christians who enjoy perfect health and still find excuses to stay away from the house of God. Not this man though. His withered hand must have been clearly visible to everyone as the Lord appeared to easily spot his hand. This man must have endured many stares at his hand, but he determined to be in the house of God. What about a employment and a means of living? Luke informs the reader that this man's right hand was withered (Luke 6:6). Let us assume that he was right-handed. Perhaps he was reduced to poverty being unable to find a suitable job. Despite these stigma, the man did not let this stop him from going to the house of God. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

This man's life and example serves as an inspiration and a rebuke to us today. Inspiration because he is a role model for anyone struggling with physical disability. But he also serves as a rebuke. Just consider that there are people in the Church whose hands are whole and healthy but refuse to raise them up in worship to Jesus, but here was a man who must have raised his one good hand in worship to the Lord. We are reminded of Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. David was not ashamed to assign him a place at the King's table because of his love and promise to Jonathan.

***2Samuel 9:7** And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually.*

***2Samuel 9:8** And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?*

When we are not ashamed, God is not ashamed to be called our God. The world may consider Mephibosheth and the man with the withered hand disabled or as "dead dogs" but not Jesus. The day came when this man's faithfulness to the house of God impressed the Lord so much that Jesus came just for him. Isn't it interesting that the Lord appeared not to notice anything else in the Synagogue that day except this man's withered hand? There were many

other things going on in the Synagogue that day, but the Lord was transfixed only on one issue: the withered hand of the man who was faithful in church attendance. How often do we read in the Bible that the Lord was transfixed with issues that appeared to be banal or trivial but were actually of great value in his sight: the widow who gave two mites (Luke 21) and Zacchaeus in a tree (Luke 19) are just two examples. This man was truly a Philadelphian in the sense that he was patient, faithful and never denied the name of God, in a manner reminiscent of the Church of Philadelphia in the Book of Revelation. Hence the promise: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Revelation 3:12).

***Mat 12:11** And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?*

Note the answer of the Lord to the Pharisees! The Lord called this man the “one sheep”. What an honor! Indeed, he left the 99 just for this one sheep. The man with the withered hand now witnessed a spiritual battle between the Lord and the Pharisees – grace versus the Law. It was a no-brainer for him. He chose the Lord and his grace because had worshipped in this Synagogue for many years with the Pharisees and knew the callousness of their hearts firsthand. Imagine having so-called brothers for years in the Church who one day oppose your healing! Even in the Synagogue, at the crucial point of healing, the Devil was around to oppose. The man decided to obey Jesus! He stretched out his hand. “Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other” (Matthew 12:13). This is precisely how the new birth is: we don’t know the mechanism at work, but we see the dead coming back to life. Obeying Acts 2:38 will restore our deadness. All it takes is to obey the command of Jesus to see the withered hand become new, and all it takes for a soul to be saved is to obey the commands of Jesus through his Apostles. At the same time, there will always be some who witness all this while wearing religious garments and will not rejoice. This is the nature of salvation: always newness of life through Jesus, and always displeasure from the enemy. Are we willing to obey Jesus and stretch forth our hands to receive life-changing blessings?