

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON #7
**"HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES, AND BARE OUR
SICKNESSES"**

(Mark 1:21-45; 2:1-12; 4:34-5:43; Luke 7:11-17)

By Ted L. Gibbons

Which of all the Savior's miracles would you most like to have witnessed for yourself?

Imagine the experience of watching him walk toward you on the tempestuous waters of the Sea of Galilee, or seeing him standing on the deck of a storm-tossed ship commanding, "Peace, be still!" What would it have been like to eat the bread and fish so miraculously provided to the thousands of hungry followers, or to watch the man with palsy lowered through the roof of the house for a healing? If you were in the group at the temple in Bountiful and heard the Savior's invitation to bring all that were sick, and his promise to heal them, who would you bring? Why?

Consider this question: since the Savior did not heal all the sick in the world, nor even all the sick in Jerusalem—since he clearly did not come to heal everybody and solve every problem—why do you think he performed the miracles he did perform?

1. THE SAVIOR PERFORMED MIRACLES BECAUSE OF HIS COMPASSION

Read the account of the healing of the leper

And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the

matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter (Mark 1:40-45).

Read the following account of the healing of the two blind men.

And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, [thou] son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, [thou] son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion [on them], and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him (Matt. 20:30-34).

What reason do the scriptures suggest for the Savior performing these miracles? ('Jesus, moved with compassion," and "Jesus had compassion on them." Here are other examples of the Savior using his power because of his compassion: Matt 14:14; Luke 7:13; Matt 20:34; Mark 5:19; 3 Nephi 17:6,7)

The scriptures record no examples of the Savior ever refusing to heal when he was asked to do so by people who had faith in his power. They record several instances of his healing without being asked at all. (See Luke 7:11-15; 3 Nephi 17:6,7, etc.) In some instances, great numbers were healed by the power of the Savior (See Matt. 12:15; Luke 4:40; 6:19; 1 Nephi 11:31, etc.) What does this tell us about his character? How does he feel when he encounters people who are suffering. Do you think he feels differently now that he did in the meridian of time?

We can find instruction in these miracles about how we can be more like him. How can we show increased compassion for those around us who suffer?

2. THE SAVIOR PERFORMED MIRACLES TO BUILD AND TO CONFIRM FAITH

Throughout the Savior's ministry, we learn another reason for the miracles performed by the Lord. The Savior performed miracles to build and to confirm faith. This truth is emphasized in Matthew 13:58 where we read,

And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."
Read the following verses for more examples of this doctrinal truth:

Notice the language of Ether 12:12: "For if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them."

John 2:11 tells us this of the miracle of the wine at the wedding feast at Cana:

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

And in Mark 16:17,18 we read

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The Savior spoke most clearly about this purpose of miracles in the Book of Mormon.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying he came again to the disciples, and said unto them: So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief (3 Nephi 19:35).

And the reason why he ceaseth to do miracles among the children of men is because that they dwindle in unbelief, and depart from the right way, and know not the God in whom they should trust (Mormon 9:20).

Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain (Moroni 7:37).

Think about the story of Gaurus and his daughter. What did Gaurus say to the Savior that gives evidence of his faith?

And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live (Mark 5:23).

What did the Savior say to Gaurus to help build his faith when he was told his daughter was dead?

. . . there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, *Be not afraid, only believe* (Mark 5:35,36, emphasis added).

This is powerful counsel for people in need of a miracle. “Be not afraid, only believe.” Fear and faith do not mix well.

In this same chapter we are introduced to a woman who has been ill for a dozen years. What evidence do her own words give of her faith?

When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole (Mark 5:27,28).

What did the Savior say to the woman to confirm her faith? “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague” (Mark 5:34).

The lessons learned from the man with palsy are useful also.

And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee (Mark 2:2-5).

We have been taught to exercise our faith" in behalf of others. Whose faith contributed to the healing of this man with palsy? How did they demonstrate this faith? (Mark 2:2-4) Can you remember times when you have exercised your faith in behalf of others who have received healing blessings from the Lord through his servants and the priesthood?

3. THE SAVIOR PERFORMED MIRACLES THAT TAUGHT SPIRITUAL TRUTHS

As you know, the Savior came to overcome the two major consequences of the Fall: physical and spiritual death. The atonement overcomes spiritual death by making it possible for us to be cleansed from our sins. The resurrection overcomes physical death.

Miracles performed by Jesus frequently remind us that he has the power to cleanse us from our sins. Notice that the leper's words in Mark 1:40 are also true of spiritual sickness? "And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

What miracle did the Savior perform for the widow of Nain (Luke 7) Jairus (Mark 5), and (later) Lazarus (John 11)? These miracles demonstrated to the disciples of the Savior that he had power over death and would bring to pass the resurrection of the dead.

What the spiritual realities are behind the miracles already discussed in this lesson? What are the spiritual realities behind the following miracles and others with which you are familiar?

A. CASTING OUT DEVILS (Mark 5:1-20)

1 And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes.

2 And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,

3 Who had [his] dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains:

4 Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.

5 And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.

6 But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him,

7 And cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not.

8 For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit.

9 And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.

10 And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country.

11 Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding.

12 And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them.

13 And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea.

14 And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done.

15 And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

16 And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine.

17 And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts.

18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them bow great things the Lord bath done for thee, and bath had compassion on thee.

20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

The awareness of Christ's power over Satan inspires hope in me. I know that since he can expel a legion of evil spirits from a man in the country of the

Gadarenes, he can do the same for me. I do not need to be in constant bondage to the evil around me or in me. With his help I can put off the natural man (see Mosiah 3:19).

B. CALMING THE SEA (Mark 4:35-39)

35 And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them,
Let us pass over unto the other side.

36 And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even
as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships.

37 And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into
the ship, so that it was now full.

38 And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and
they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we
perish?

39 And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace,
be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

40 And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye
have no faith?

41 And they feared exceedingly, and said one to another, What
manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?

Once again, this experience speaks to my heart. When I face insurmountable obstacles, when problems arise and they seem bigger than I am, when I find myself helpless before the inflexible madness of mortality, I must remember this and other similar miracles. Jesus calmed the storm; he walked on water. He withered the fig tree. The elements know their master, for “even the wind and the sea obey him.”

4. THE MIRACLES OF THE SAVIOR TEACH US THAT WE CAN ALWAYS TURN TO HIM WHEN THERE IS NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN FOR HELP. THEY OFFER EVIDENCE OF HIS POWER TO HELP US WITH ANY PROBLEM OR DIFFICULTY

[I wrote the following piece in an attempt to capture the feelings of love and gratitude that enveloped me when the Savior assisted my family with a problem utterly beyond the ability of those I first consulted. I reproduce it here in the hope that it will convey something of what we ought to learn from the power of the Savior to perform miracles in our behalf: It was published in the Latter-Day Digest, vol. 3, #4, and originally entitled, Nowhere Else To Go. Ted Gibbons]

"I have been driven many times to my knees." said Abraham Lincoln, "by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." When the burdens of life become so oppressive, when the pains of life become so unbearable, when the uncertainties of life become so pervasive that the common solutions no longer suffice-when we search our environment and our circumstances and find no prospect of peace, then we may have the great fortune to be driven to the Teacher where we may learn at last that the weight and pain and ambivalence that drive us to Him are not suffering at all, but the seedbed of joy.

The desperation of our circumstances, teaching us humility, may one day reveal itself to be the beckoning hand of the Teacher, calling us home, inviting us to abandon our own convoluted solutions to the problems of our lives and to try His simpler ones.

The famine that sent the prodigal son back to his home (see Luke 15:14-18) had more in it of hope and helpfulness than of hunger, and even the ignominy of longing to eat husks with the pigs was transfigured by the greeting, the kiss, the forgiveness, and the welcome of the father into a priceless incentive.

We believe that for the Savior, there are no insurmountable obstacles, no insoluble problems, no incurable injuries. We believe that if he is willing to assist us, we can avoid at least some of the difficulty of life. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" the Lord asked a laughing, soon-to-be-pregnant Sarah. (Genesis 18:14.) Jeremiah testified in prayer, "There is nothing too hard for thee." Jeremiah 32:17.) And the Savior affirmed to the doubting disciples, "With God, all things are possible." (Matt. 19:26.) Gabriel told Mary, "With God, nothing shall be impossible." (Luke 1:37.)

The Savior, during his time in the mortality, was becoming increasingly popular. The records suggest that people came more for the miracles than for the message, but come they did, in relentless multitudes. He had recently healed the centurion's servant without even being in the same residence, and then had raised the lifeless son of the widow in Nain. (See Luke 7:1-18.) "Whereupon the "rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about." (Luke 7 : 17.) The telling of these wonders must have set the minds of the possessed, the diseased, and the crippled on fire with hope for a healing. The evening after the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8: 14, 15), the people of Capernaum "brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick." (Matthew 8:16.)

The crush of the multitudes finally caused the Teacher to sail across the Sea of Galilee to the land of the Gergesenes. But immediately upon his return, "much people gathered unto him" while he was still "nigh unto the sea." (Mark 5:21, 22.) One of those who came was Jairus, a scribe and the ruler of a synagogue. He pressed his way forward until he could be heard, and appealed for help for his twelve-year-old daughter who "lay a-dying. " (Luke 8:42.) "But come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him, and his disciples, and much people thronged him." (Matthew 9:18, 19.)

As he walked those narrow Capernaum streets, the people surrounded and engulfed him, each of them with needs, longing, pain, curiosity, wonder. ..and one of them, a woman, with an issue of blood of twelve years duration. Her malady is a metaphor, perhaps for the whole human family. Which of us does not suffer from debilitating *spiritual* hemorrhaging? Often for periods much in excess of twelve years. Always knowing, but somehow not acting on the knowledge that the Savior has the power to help.

Leviticus 15:19 instructs the congregation of Israel that a woman with a normal condition of menstruation is to be considered unclean for seven days. If the issue of blood continues beyond the normal time, "all the days of her issue shall be as the days of her separation." (Lev. 15:25.) During that time, anyone who touches

her is to be considered unclean for a day (Lev. 19:19}, and touching the place where she slept or sat would result in the same restriction. (Leviticus 15:25-30.)

Such observations begin to provide an insight into the pattern of the life of this woman during the passing of twelve years. As a faithful Israelite and follower of the Law of Moses, she must have been in utter physical isolation, without the comfort of a single caring caress for one hundred and forty-four months-more than four thousand, three hundred and eighty days. These numbers begin to make us aware that her life is one of terrifying difficulty.

She had tried to find relief. Mark 5:26 tells us that she "had suffered many things of many physicians." We know from historical records and ancient Jewish sources something of the practice of medicine from this time. The *Talmud* prescribes suggested remedies for this very condition.

Take of the gum of Alexandria the weight of a fuzee [a small silver coin]; of alum the same; of crocus the same. Let them be bruised [beaten] together, and given in wine to the woman that has an issue of blood. If this does not benefit, take of Persian onions three logs [pints], boil them in wine and give her to drink~ and say "Arise from thy flux [flowing or bleeding]." If this does not cure her, set her in a place where two ways meet, and let her hold a cup of wine in her right hand, and let some one come behind and frighten her, and say, "Arise from thy flux." But if that do no good, take a handful of cummin, a handful of crocus, and a handful of fenugreek. Let these be boiled in wine, and give them her to drink, and say, "Arise from thy flux."

Another recommended cure (there are ten more suggestions, all equally amazing):

Let them dig seven ditches, in which let them burn some cuttings of vines not yet four years old. Let her take in her hand a cup of wine, and let them lead her away from this ditch, and make her sit down

over that. And let them remove her from that and make her sit down over another, saying to her at each. .." Arise from thy flux."

Other prescriptions in vogue for various ailments included such remarkable stuff as the ashes of burnt wolf skull, the heads of mice, the eyes of crabs, owls brains, frog livers, pig gall, woman's milk, bear fat, and cow urine. (See Geikie, *Life of Christ*, pages 157,158.)

Having access to such information enables us to agree thoroughly that she had suffered "many things" of "many physicians." Her longing to be cured, to return to a normal life, to be free from this most embarrassing and limiting infirmity, had driven her from doctor to doctor until she "had spent all that she had." And the conclusion? "She was nothing bettered, but grew worse." (Mark 5:26.) Somehow we are not surprised. But the lesson must speak to our hearts. How often in the midst of our own continuing tribulations do we drift from one useless solution to another, suffering all manner of needless pain and stress, until, Lincoln-like, we are driven to the hope of the hopeless, as was the woman in Mark.

For she had heard of Jesus, the ultimate physician of both soul and body. She knew what Jairus knew. Anything the Lord lays his hands on, or touches, lives.

But how was she to approach him? Jairus came (she might have been a witness to this) and "fell at his feet, and *besought him greatly.*" (Mark 5:22,23, *emphasis added.*) The ten Lepers "*lifted up their voices.*" (Luke 17: 13 *emphasis added.*) Another leper came "*beseeking him.* .." (Mark 1:41 *emphasis added.*) Even the diseased of Gennesaret "*besought him*" before they touched "the hem of his garment." (Matthew 14:34-36 *emphasis added.*) But this woman asked nothing, spoke not a word, called no smallest amount of attention to herself. Twelve years as a social pariah must have left scars like canyons. She could not ask for a touch. The imposition of his hands would make him unclean.

Thus, in the silence that her condition had taught her, she thought, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole." (Mark 5:28.) And she "came in the press behind, and touched his garment." (Mark 5:27.)

A and was healed! What an explosion of joy and wonder and devotion must have rocked her as she felt the miracle and sensed the wholeness in her organs. She came to the Savior when there was no place else to go, and now, we suppose, she will never go any place else at all.

Jesus knew. This seems almost as miraculous as the healing. His disciples were amazed at the question, "Who touched my clothes?" "Master," they replied, "the multitude *throng* thee and *press upon* thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" (Luke 8:45.) In a narrow street with a swirling crowd desperate to be near him, he felt the touch and knew that it was more than a touch. The Savior felt virtue [better: *power*] go out of him. (Mark 5:30.)

And so he asked, "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30.) Again the woman's personality appears. She made no rush of gratitude and amazement to fall at his feet and give thanks. Rather, when she "found that she was not hid, " as she had hoped to be (Luke 8:47), "she came trembling." (Mark 5:33.) Again we sense that her affliction has driven her deep within herself.

But she came, the miracle still burning inside, "and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him and how she was healed immediately." (Luke 8:47.)

Jesus saw her kneeling there, perceived her remarkable faith and the goodness of her heart and said simply, "Daughter, thy faith [*not the clothes, not the touch*] hath made thee whole; go in peace. ..." (Mark 5:34).

My wife suffered for years with incapacitating, demoralizing headaches. She took her problem to many doctors, anti they all had suggestions and they all had prescriptions and they all charged money, sometimes amazing amounts of it. And when it was all over she was not better, but seemed to grow worse. Finally, when it seemed that there was no place else to go, we went to our knees and to the Savior, and in his quiet, gentle way, after sufficient time and faith, he showed us the solution.

This is not an indictment of doctors. Those we visited were marvelous, dedicated men who offered the common solutions. None of them prescribed owl brains or frog livers. But it took us so long to make our way to the Savior . . .

I fear that many of us misunderstand the atonement and the power of the Lord to help us: to heal any wound, resolve any difficulty, purge any pain. Only after we have suffered enough to exhaust all the dimmer hopes do we come before Him, driven finally to our knees by the joyous but painfully learned knowledge that there is no place else to go. Once there we may learn that if we had been willing, we could have been there all the time.

CONCLUSION: Certain qualities possessed by the Savior draw us to him in times of need and pain and sorrow. He has a **perfect knowledge** of each of us. He has compassion for us; his **empathy** is absolute. When we are afflicted, he is afflicted (see D&C 133:53). His **love** passeth knowledge (see Eph. 3:17-19), and he has all **power**. Nothing is too hard for him. When he acts in our behalf, the result is always miraculous. Thus, even though his personal miracles were confined to a small place and a short time, their messages reach across the ages to us. And the promise come with those messages. He will do for us what he did for them, and for the same reasons: because of his compassion; to build and confirm faith; and to teach us spiritual realities.

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