

Jesus & Physical Problems!

Breakthrough Christianity:

Mark 8:22-25

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These past weeks have been amazing. When I began to study *Breakthrough Christianity*, I had no idea what was coming. I could not predict how the Bible would come alive, and how truth after truth would leap off its pages. I have learned so much and experienced breakthroughs myself. If you missed any sermon, you'll want to visit our website at www.bethanyum.com. This series is there, and the website offers all kinds of information that is updated daily.

Besides being challenged to seek a breakthrough for our community, we have explored four traps in this series. The *righteous trap* robs us of joy and renders us useless to God. The *reliance trap* isolates us in guilt and pain. The *riches trap* deceives and ensnares us. The *religion trap* hardens us so that we reject who God sends. Today, we will take a final look at how God has broken through and renewed church people. This series has been targeted at church people. Many church-goers, even pastors, are experiencing life-changing breakthroughs after years of being in church. God is pouring the water of life, his amazing love, into the dry soil of many souls; and it is stunning to see what sprouts as a result.

On March 30th, we begin a series designed for people who are new to Christianity and the church. It is called *Steps to a New Life*. If you have friends that have been turned off Christianity or are struggling with marriage, work, depression or health, bring them. The series will open eyes to the love and power of God in Jesus that changes lives and destinies.

Ten years ago Cynthia was in a meeting where I talked about Jesus and physical problems. Cynthia was broken. From childhood her life had been bitter. She was so needy that she repulsed even the most patient soul. She would start a conversation with, “Do you know me?” Notice the focus. With Cynthia it was always about “me.” She would interrupt, dominate, disrupt and aggravate. It was tough to have her in your church because she caused problems wherever she was. Every act of hers was driven by her need to be important, valid, accepted, and attended to. With her age and inner pain came arthritis and other crippling problems. She had too many ailments to number, and for eight years she could walk only with the help of a cane. During a clinic time, this lonely, haunted and crippled woman sat in a chair while I examined how much shorter her left leg was than her right. There was two inches difference. The group gathered around her to watch me pray; but before I prayed, we all saw the leg come out. I didn’t know if the leg grew or if the hips realigned. Whatever the case, her pain immediately left. We didn’t pray. She got up and began to walk. Soon she lifted up her cane and walked without it. Tears began to flow as she quickened her pace to nearly a jog. She felt no pain and had good balance. When we finally prayed, we just gave thanks.

You know the song:

Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so...

Cynthia, that day discovered that she was loved by Jesus, not just because the Bible told her. That day Cynthia discovered that she was precious to God because in her affliction Jesus reached out, touched her, released her from pain and enabled her to walk. Cynthia was not totally healed. She had other problems. However, Cynthia knew that she was loved by God because of what Jesus did with her physical problems. No matter how others responded to Cynthia’s obnoxious behavior, nobody could take away the love of Jesus she felt. Cynthia knew God loved her.

What's more, that loving God promised her eternal life free from all torment. That gave Cynthia much peace. In our time with Cynthia, she experienced some inner healing; but that moment of physical healing was pivotal. It was a breakthrough.

There is a pattern in the Bible. Often when Jesus deals with physical problems, people are helped spiritually. People frequently come to faith because of how Jesus deals with their physical problems or the physical problems of a loved one. Many people from the village of Bethany believed when Jesus healed Lazarus (John 11:45). John reports that people flocked to see Jesus and Lazarus (John 12:6). Indeed, that may have been the motivation for crowds lining the road Jesus traveled that first Palm Sunday (John 12:12-13). Crowds came to hear Jesus teach, not because he was a magnetic speaker. They came because they saw physical healing. They wanted to hear what knowledge this man had who healed people from all kinds of diseases. Indeed, Jesus said that those healings were testimonies from God.

I have a greater witness than John--my teachings and my miracles. They have been assigned to me by the Father, and they testify that the Father has sent me.
(John 5:36, NLT)

Peter, on the day of Pentecost, declared:

People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus of Nazareth by doing wonderful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. (Acts 2:22, NLT)

Physical healing was important. It was a sign from God. God was signaling something to humanity. The ministry of God was not confined to inward work. God made people both body and soul, and God's redeeming work encompassed both body and soul. God's love and work is not confined to things of the spirit. It encompasses everything he created.

When Phillip proclaimed the gospel in Samaria, crowds gathered. The Bible says:

Crowds listened intently to what he had to say because of the miracles he did. Many evil spirits were cast out, screaming as they left their victims. And many

who had been paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was great joy in that city.
(Acts 8:6-8, NLT)

What caused the gospel to spread was not clever talk, but God healing the bodies and souls of men, women and children. The Apostle Paul wrote:

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. (1 Corinthians 2:4-5, NIV)

If there is any question about what Paul meant, Luke makes it clear as he documents Paul's ministry in the city of Iconium. Luke writes:

Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders. (Acts 14:3, NIV)

The proclamation of the gospel was accompanied by healing and that demonstrated that Christianity is not just a matter of personal opinion. In Jesus people were receiving the bread of life. In Jesus people were experiencing freedom, both physically and spiritually.

In Mark 8 some people brought a blind man to Jesus. They begged Jesus to touch and heal him. They may have thought Jesus could just touch him or say a few words and that would be it. However, Jesus took the man away from the village to a private location where he worked with him. Jesus applied his own spit to the eyes of the blind man. I don't know how he did it. I figure he must have spit into his hands and got a pretty good amount, and then applied it. He then laid hands on the man. It doesn't say he prayed. He may have, but the Bible does not report it. Jesus then evaluated, "***Do you see anything?***" (Mark 8:23). The man's vision was blurred. Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes again. This time as the man stared for a while, things came into focus. The Bible doesn't tell how much time passed before the blind man could see. It doesn't say why Jesus used spit. It doesn't even discuss prayer. Moreover, there is no record of spiritual coaching this time. Some times there is, but this time it isn't reported. Simply put,

Jesus had compassion on a man with a physical problem, and he worked with him until he was well. For the blind man, healing came through a process of ministry by Jesus.

How did Jesus explain healing? His teaching was about the arrival of the kingdom of God. He sent his disciples to heal and proclaim the kingdom. What did he mean by the kingdom? When Jesus spoke, he declared that the rule or reign of God was at hand, and that this realm was displacing the control of God's enemies. He invited people to experience this rule through repentance and faith in him. Jesus taught that this battle between kingdoms will continue until he returns a second time to judge. The first time Jesus came to save, not judge. Next time he comes to judge. Then our salvation from sin and death will be complete. Sin and death, our enemies, though defeated now and often forced to surrender control of people, will then be destroyed.

Physical healing, in Jesus' teaching and ministry, is not a side show of Christianity. It is one aspect of God's rule that displaces the control of God's enemies. Therefore, Jesus told his disciples to pray for and make disciples who obey the commission to heal and proclaim.

When you experience physical healing in Jesus' name or when you see it, you witness God's love and gain a glimpse of what Jesus' return will mean for every believer. That's a breakthrough. That breakthrough often involves a process of ministry, like the blind man.

If you are sick, injured or hurting, your condition is not a blessing. In no way does God desire to afflict his children. Otherwise, Jesus' ministry would have opposed God. You may experience blessings in your pain, but your suffering is not blessing. In the New Testament times, I'm sure that there were people who were healed through the natural body processes that were assisted by physicians. Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, was one such physician. However, for those who continued to suffer, no one experienced the power of

healing unless they sought it from Jesus or from the ministry of his disciples. As many as experienced it, so many more didn't because they didn't believe enough to ask or seek. However, of those who sought it, good and bad, righteous and evil, none were driven away.

In a few minutes, teams of believers will line the communion railing, ready to anoint and pray with anyone who seeks physical healing. If you seek it, I cannot tell you that you will be healed right now. Some will be healed, and their healing is a sign to us all of what is coming for every believer. What I can promise is that God won't drive you away. You will taste God's Spirit and compassion in action through the faith and spiritual gifts of your brothers and sisters. That taste, that experience is worth their effort and your time. Moreover, often there is a process where God ministers to you, and not just your condition. Do you want that? The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.