

Healing the Sick: Being Faithful in Small Beginnings

INTRODUCTION

I want to talk a little about the healing anointing of Jesus, to stir our attention and our faith and our focus, and then to tell a few stories and ask the Lord to heal the sick.

It says in Matthew 15:21, “Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him saying, ‘Have mercy on me!’” (Mt. 15:21).

So this woman is a Gentile woman; she’s not Jewish. The Jewish community in the nation of Israel wasn’t very friendly to the Gentiles, and vice versa. So in verse 22, we have this Syro-Phoenician woman, one translation says, who comes and hears that Jesus is healing the sick, etc. She wants to get in on the action.

She calls Him “Son of David,” which was a distinctly Jewish title. So, she’s using the inside terminology. Some of the Jewish people in the midst looked at her and said, “Hey, you’re not one of us; what’s going on here?” She has quite an afternoon here.

She cries out, “Son of David!”—again, here’s a Gentile claiming the Jewish terminology; it was obviously strange for her even to speak like this—“My daughter is severely demon-possessed!”

Jesus does not answer her—not even one word (v. 23). It’s like He’s looking at her and He seems to be rejecting her. She says, “Please, have mercy on me! My daughter is severely demon-possessed!” and He stares at her but says nothing—seeming rejection number one.

“Then His disciples came and urged Him”—they got on His team; but they completely misunderstand what He’s doing, because He fully intends to heal her in a little while, but they don’t know that.

So the disciples say, “Yeah, Jesus! Send her away. She cries out, she’s bugging us. Yeah, she’s a Gentile, we understand that. Look, You’re not going to heal her, let’s move on, let’s get her out of here.”

Now He answers her as she stands there persistently (v. 24). He basically gives her the answer, “I was not sent to the Gentiles,” is what He’s saying. “I was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He says, “I was sent to the Jews, not to the Gentiles.”

So, first, He seems to reject her request by silence. Now, by His answer, He turns her away the second time.

What strikes me is the woman’s response in verse 25: “She came and worshipped Him saying, ‘Lord, help me!’”

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

What happens often is that in our request, in our pursuit of the Lord to break in and touch us, often (v. 23), the Lord doesn’t answer us with one word. He doesn’t say “yes” or “no,” He says nothing. Silence is His response.

Of course, more often than not, we interpret silence as a “no.” Jesus wasn’t saying “no,” He was saying nothing and the apostles assumed Jesus was saying “no.” Often we assume the answer was no when the Lord was silent.

What the Lord was doing was using this whole process. It’s a three-step process. He was stirring her heart and causing what was in her to come to full boil, so to speak—the passion and the desire in her to be awakened and stirred. In that process, a lot of people go the other direction. Instead of being stirred, instead of becoming more urgent and more diligent, what happens is that they get offended at God and they get bitter and cynical and jaded in their faith. They lose that sense of anticipation for the Lord to break in with power.

In verse 25, she worships Him; she’s not offended, but rather she’s worshipping. Her spirit is open instead of being angry and drawing back. The next thing she does in verse 25 is, she continues eagerly and urgently to ask Him to break in and help her in the present tense.

WHEN GOD IS SILENT

This is amazing to me. Now in every situation that this principle applies—it doesn’t always have to do with healing; obviously it’s a healing situation here, but sometimes it’s finances, sometimes it’s a restored relationship. Sometimes, like we’re praying at IHOP–KC, we’re praying for a breaking-in of God’s power for revival in our city and our nation; for the renewing of the Spirit in power; for apostolic power and authority.

It seems as though the Lord says “no,” because His first response is that He doesn’t answer us. He’s silent.

His second answer is, He gives the answer, but it’s a seeming rejection. There in verse 24, He’s not rejecting her, but He looks like He’s rejecting her. She doesn’t respond to those two seeming rejections in a negative way, but she presses in. “I love You, I love You, break in with power!” It’s an amazing response that she’s giving to the Lord here.

THE CRIES OF DOGS

Now, in verse 26, He takes it up a notch. He’s really pushing her. The Lord knows where this is going; she doesn’t know where it’s going and the apostles don’t know where it’s going.

Now, He’s going to give her an answer that would be so offensive if her spirit was at all postured to be offended before the Lord. He looks at her as a Gentile and says, “It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the little dogs” (Mt. 15:26).

Now, the idea of calling the Gentiles *dogs* is an idea found in the Old Testament. Not because Gentiles, and the vast majority of us are Gentiles, are by nature dogs; that’s not intrinsically who we are. In that context, what they’re talking about is that the Gentile nations were idolatrous, and demon-worshippers of false gods, and they had no morality. They did not honor God’s justice or wisdom; they were really godless, pagan, idolatrous people. They lived in the animal instincts of dogs in a total disregard for God.

So, several times in the book of Psalms, and a few times in the prophets, there are references to this animalistic, no-regard-for-human-decency-or-God type of spirit in the Gentiles around. So Jesus is actually quoting a biblical concept. He didn’t tell her she was that, but He lays it out.

THE CHILDREN’S BREAD

He says, “It is not good to take the children’s bread”—He’s talking about the children of Israel. “The children’s bread” is clearly healing the sick. It’s the bread, because it’s the bread the Father provides for His children.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Give us this day, our daily bread” (Mt. 6:11). Part of our daily bread, the Father’s bread for His children, according to Jesus, is healing. He gives us daily bread; He provides for our needs physically with actual food and money. He gives us daily bread in terms of direction. He gives us daily bread through inspiring our hearts in grace to walk in holiness and intimacy and revelation.

He directs us; He corrects us. There are many dimensions of bread God promises as a Father to give His children on a daily basis.

Jesus tells us a child cannot produce bread; nor does a child try to produce bread under the care of the Father. A child comes innocently and full of confidence: “Father, I’m hungry, I need lunch.” It never crosses their minds that the Father won’t feed them in that day if the relationship is healthy.

Jesus puts the healing into that context, into the normal, open-handed provision of God the Father.

The little four-or-five-year old child doesn’t have a second thought about whether it was in the heart of the Father to give them bread that day or not. Most four-year olds aren’t going to go up and say, “Dad, what do you think? Is lunch on the menu today? I mean, is that on the agenda? Are you going to feed us today?” Four-year olds don’t do that! It’s, “Hey, I’m hungry, give me a hamburger.” They’re going full-steam ahead.

Jesus is putting healing into the category of what a child would expect their Father to minister on a routine, daily basis. Jesus says, “It is not good”—this is powerful, it’s negative. This is a negative thing. He’s saying, “It is not good to give the healing ministry, that daily flow of healing, to the dogs”—to throw it down to the dogs.

SILENCE, REFUSAL, INSULT

She answers in such humility; there’s no offense at all. Rather, her desire gets stronger to see the breakthrough of God. She says, “Yes, Lord; but even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table” (Mt. 15:27).

So she was acknowledging even the glance of His eye, because, she says, “Because of who You are. You are the Master, I know who You are. Even just the flick of Your hand is all I need, and this demon will leave my daughter.”

Jesus looks at her, and she is not at all manifesting or operating in that spirit of the godless, pagan Gentile in which the Jewish people were expecting her to operate. Now, Jesus was operating with supernatural understanding. He knew what was going on; He was stirring her heart in these three responses. Remember, the first response in verse 23 is silence. The second response is when He seemingly refuses her, in verse 24. Then, in verse 26, He seemingly insults her.

Silence, refusal, insult.

This is God's seeming threefold rejection that He has given this woman. This woman doesn't draw back; she does not quit. She worships and honors Him. She says, "Even just the glance of Your eye, even a crumb from Your table, is all that I need."

THE PERSISTENT, UNRELENTING PRESSING-IN OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus looks at her (v. 28). He gives one of the greatest responses that He gives to anyone in the four Gospels.

He looks at her and says, "Oh woman"—I like to put a little pause in there; I don't know if it really happened this way, but I'm putting it in there anyway. He says, "Oh woman"—one-thousand-one, one-thousand-two, one-thousand-three... Peter and the boys saying, "Yeah!" and scowling at her. "Get out of here, you old dog! They're looking meanly at her."

"Oh woman"—one, two...

Remember the apostles back in verse 23: "Send her away, she's bugging us! She's crying out after us!"

Jesus wouldn't heal her, so she turns and starts crying out to them. "Heal me, heal me, tell Him to heal me!"

They say, "Get rid of this lady, she won't stop."

Jesus loves this persistent, unrelenting pressing-in of her spirit to see the goodness of God touch her. So He says in verse 28, "Oh woman"—pause—"Great is your faith." He could have all but said, "Far greater than all the apostles' faith."

"LET IT BE TO YOU AS YOU DESIRE"

The faith isn't necessarily because of the way she asked, or the style. It's the fact that, in her spirit, she would not let go. She would not take "no" for an answer. She continued to worship, and she continued to ask for the breakthrough of God.

He said a very important phrase to her in verse 28. He said, "Let it be to you as you desire."

What an incredible statement: "Let it be to IHOP-KC as IHOP-KC desires. Let it be to your family and to your individual life and to your assignment in the marketplace or in ministry; let it be to you as you desire it to be."

Now, the problem with this is, Jesus means it for real. Some people take the word *desire* and they take it at its lowest, meaning its lowest meaning and application. "Oh, I went to a healing conference once or I read a book on healing by John G. Lake. I desired healing for about ten days!"

From Jesus' definition, that is not a desire; that's a passing mood. You were in a desperate, two-week period and got stirred up by a few things. Jesus will give the people what they truly desire, what they carry in their hearts in an unrelenting way.

"I have to have the fullness of what God will give the human spirit in our generation!" If that's really what we desire, I have the authority of the lips of Jesus to tell you this: Let it be to you according to what you continually desire, even in the secret place when no one is looking in your life.

THE DESIRE OF THE SECRET PLACES OF THE HEART

It's not what you desire at the healing conference; it's what you continually desire in the secret place of your heart. That is precisely what God gives His Church.

It's very easy in the Church to get stirred up for a moment and then settle into what we really desire long-term, which is to have things as business as usual. None of us really like business as usual, but we want to do our own thing or carry our heart in our own way, without that relentless pressing into God.

That is how we desire to live. That is how the Lord allows us to live: "Well, if that's what you really want, church in America, if you want superficial Christianity, if that's really what you're persistently after, I'm going to give it to you."

I want to live in a way before God where I don't just have a fiery mood for ten or fifteen days. For month after month, year after year, in public and in private, I live with several desires for which I won't take "no" for an answer, from which I won't draw back.

Those are the things that God will give me. Those are the things that God will give you. Those are the things that God will give His Church.

"Her daughter was healed that very hour."

ACCLIMATING TO MEDIOCRITY

Now, most of us in this room are somewhere in between those three responses. We're either in the silence mode—"Lord, does that mean 'no?'"—or the Lord gave us an answer and it certainly sounded like a "no," but it wasn't actually a "no," that was how we concluded. Or, we feel insulted by the Lord, so we said, "Forget it, we're going to go on to business as usual. I guess that's how it is these days; this is not the hour, this is not the season, I'm not going to bother with it."

We acclimate to whatever run-of-the-mill, whatever the popular way in the Church is. Beloved, I want to have everything that God will give the human spirit in this generation. I want to experience everything that God has proportioned to us in this nation and this hour in time.

"EARNESTLY DESIRE THE BEST GIFTS"

1 Corinthians 12:31 is a well-known verse if you've been around here for a while. We talk about it a lot. "Earnestly desire the best gifts" (1. Cor. 12:31). Earnestly desire the best gifts.

Now, there's this little preacher statement that goes around the Body of Christ. The saying is really cool, but it's a deception. I've said it a few times; you've probably said it a few times. It's this: "We seek the Giver, not the gifts."

That is not biblical. God never told us to choose between seeking the Giver or the gifts. We seek both, but we seek them in the right order. We don't have to choose whom we like the most, the Father or the Son; we get both. "What's your favorite organ, your kidney or your liver?" Well, you get both of them.

We don't choose between the gifts and the Giver. The Word of God gives us both of them, just in proper sequence.

Now, it's true that we see the face of the Giver before the gifts, but not instead of the gifts. Paul said that we earnestly, earnestly desire the best gifts, the most powerful gifts; the gifts that edify people the most.

MORE THAN MERE BELIEF

The problem in the Church today isn't that the Church doesn't believe, technically, in the gifts of the Spirit. Much of the Church believes in the gifts of the Spirit. They have definitions typed out, they've got a couple of books in their library on the gifts of the Spirit. They're for today. Much of the Church believes in the gifts of the Spirit. That's not the issue.

The issue is, it's not enough to believe in them. We must earnestly desire them, and in the spirit of which Jesus told the Syro-Phoenician woman, or the Canaanite woman, back in Matthew 15. He says, "I am going to give you according to what you desire." That's what you desire consistently, even in your private life; not just what you desire when you're there and the big conference is there. That's what you desire for that two-hour period.

Beloved, if that is the only time you desire the gifts, is when you're with a whole bunch of believers, and that's the exciting thing to do, then I want to say this, it's true that you don't desire the gifts, not earnestly. You casually would like them to follow your way, to come your way, but that's not enough.

He says we are to desire the gifts of the Spirit. The very desiring of them changes the way we posture our heart on the inside.

THE WAYS WE DESIRE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Now, we desire them in several ways. The way we've walked this out, we pray and we fast and we ask God to release them more. We have prayer meetings for the manifestation of the Spirit's presence. We cry out to God and ask Him for an increase of His manifest power.

That's one way, but it's not enough.

To some folks, this is new. They join IHOP-KC and say, "Hey, we're pursuing the gifts!" That's one part of pursuing the gifts. Another part of pursuing the gifts is, we take our hands out of our pockets on a regular basis and lay hands on people in the days of smallness, when very little is happening.

We're pursuing the increase of the spiritual gifts, not just by praying for them to be released. It's valid to have fasting and prayer and corporate times; I never want to minimize that. That's not enough in terms of the biblical mandate to pursue gifts. We actually have to pursue them, meaning to operate in them in the present tense when seemingly very little is happening. We have to pursue them in that way.

BE FAITHFUL IN THE DAY OF SMALL BEGINNINGS

The analogy I've used over the years is, put a sailboat out on the lake. It's a very calm day on the lake. The guy says, "Well, there's no wind blowing today; I can't feel any wind." Well, they go ahead and put the sail up and, ever so slightly, there is this subtle wind. You can hardly feel it, but the sail picks it up and the boat moves a little.

You think, “Well, there you go. The wind is blowing, but none of us could have discerned it.”

Beloved, the wind is blowing many times when we gather; the wind is blowing many times when we’re alone and we encounter someone in the marketplace.

The wind is blowing, but a lot of us say, “When the wind blows heavily, I’ll put my sailboat up and I’ll take the wind seriously.”

The Lord’s answer is, “No, I want you to put your sail up when the wind is blowing slightly, and then we’ll go from there. Be faithful in the days of small beginnings, and then I will make you faithful, and then you will be faithful in the days of much.”

Many people in the Body of Christ say, “I’ll jump into the healing ministry 100 percent when the great, the powerful, outstanding miracles start happening.”

The Lord says, “No, let’s do it the other way around. I will call you. I will give you the outstanding miracles if you will pursue the gifts of the Spirit when seemingly nothing is happening.”

“LORD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?”

Put your sail up; that is the posture of your heart. It’s asking the question throughout the day in our spirit, “Lord, what are You doing? Lord, I want to see what You see. Lord, I want to move in the Spirit right now.” It means having eyes to see where there might be a need and stepping out with an ever-so-slight breeze; a breeze that no one can even feel.

You don’t even see it until you put the sail up; then, lo and behold, the boat did move a foot. “It did move a little, look at it!”

Beloved, there are a lot of times where the wind is blowing, but it’s not blowing enough for the Church to want to bother with it. That is called not pursuing the spiritual gifts. We got stirred for a season; a week, a month, maybe even a year in some different ministry contexts.

They go hard for a year; not enough happens, and, like the Syro-Phoenician woman—well, like the opposite of her, actually—they have the silent response from God, but they get offended instead of worshipping and asking, “Lord, break in and help!”

They go the other direction. They shut down and say, “This isn’t the season; we’re going to settle down and acclimate to a spiritual culture where there’s no power. Somehow we’re going to be positive about a spiritual culture where there’s no power. Let’s acclimate; let’s settle down. Let’s not stir the boat up, let’s not pull the sail up every day. It’s so much work.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITHFULNESS AND FOCUS

Beloved, it takes work to put the sail up; meaning, we have to dial down what our natural, normal pursuits are on the inside. We have got to refocus and say, “Lord, I have time to work together with You. I have time to see what You’re doing. I’m making time for You to use me, even though I don’t feel like it right now.”

Now, everyone has time to be used when it's really dramatic. The way that the Lord runs His kingdom is, He says, "I want you faithful when it's really small. We'll do the dramatic things later."

People say, "I have time when it's dramatic. I don't have time to re-gear my inward man to be available and to be eager and to reach for you. I would rather do the normal soulish occupation of my soul—fill my mind with the other things and not bother getting into this waiting, watching, reading mode on the inside."

It takes some spiritual vigilance in our spirit; it takes an aggressively vibrant spirit to reach, to reach, to reach, to turn the switch on, on the inside, instead of being on/off and being in our normal pursuit of things according to the natural realm."

"DESIRE SPIRITUAL GIFTS"

1 Corinthians 14:1 says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."
"Desire"—he says it again—"desire spiritual gifts."

It's biblical to desire them. The reason we don't operate in the spiritual gifts is that the Church doesn't desire them by the biblical definition of desiring them.

Yes, we want them for ten days after a healing conference, after we read a book on healing. That's not the same thing as desiring. Desiring is consistent; it's what we do publicly, and it's how we carry our hearts privately. We live in desire and it doesn't mean that we're red hot with an intense desire all the time. It's a decision—we're going after these things. We're going to align our life with the Word of God and with the Spirit in private and public.

So we can be vehicles and vessels used by the Lord in this, as a spiritual community and as the Body of Christ as a whole. As we in our nation begin more greatly to desire spiritual gifts in this definition of reaching for them, of valuing them, of being faithful with them when the wind is barely blowing, of posturing our inner man to go with it when nothing big is happening, that is what desiring gifts means, biblically.

It doesn't mean that we technically, theologically agree that they exist, and we buy a book on them. When the debate is, "Are the gifts for today or not?" you stand up, say, "Yes, they're for today," and mark that down. "I voted yes. Lord, here I am."

That's not desiring the spiritual gifts. It's giving mental assent to them, but that's not what desiring is.

DEFINING DESIRE IN THE RIGHT WAY

Jesus told this lady in Matthew 15, "I am going to give you according to what you desire."

That wasn't a special desire He gave her. Beloved, He gives to everyone according to what they consistently desire. That is the way He runs His kingdom.

We have to define desire in the right way. One of the most painful, offensive definitions of biblical desire is that we stay steady when we don't receive the answer we want. Beloved, will we reach for healing when we only see the little nickel-and-dime healings? We despise them—"Lord, I don't want to bother with those."

The Lord's response is, "Then as a community, you don't desire healing, then."

"No, Lord, I desire healing—the big ones! Here I am!"

The Lord says, "No, what you desire is exciting meetings, and to establish your name in ministry." I mean, that's what the rock concert is all about. The world is filled with people who desire exciting meetings; the world is filled with people who want to make a name for themselves.

The Lord isn't looking for people who just want exciting church meetings and who want to make a name for themselves by healing the big one. He's looking for people who really see the value of this and will be steady and faithful in the day of small beginnings. Those are the people He can trust with healing.

"YOU'RE CALLED TO THE HEALING MINISTRY"

I remember watching different prophetic people who had a lot of prophetic ministries come and go through the years. I've seen a lot of things in that regard. One of the things I remember is that Bob Jones, who was with us for about ten years in the early days, would lay hands on people. The Lord gave him an ability, in the grace of God, to tell people what gifts they operate in.

It was really accurate. He would tell people, "You know, you're called to this and this."

"That's exactly right! No one knows that! That's exactly right." They're from out of town. "No one in town, no one here knows that. How did you know? No one here knows that."

"The Lord showed it to me." I remember carnally having a lot of fun with this. I would see Bob and he would tell the guy or gal, "You're called to the healing ministry."

They would say, "Yes, yes, I knew it!" They were so full of joy. What they were imagining was stadiums and posters. "Jesus is the only way, only for His glory, featuring me!" That's what they were thinking.

What the Lord was talking about was hours and hours in a lonely hospital room with one guy laying hands over them for hours. That's what he said: "You're called to the healing ministry."

They would say, "I knew it! Are you sure, Bob? I can't wait to go call my friends. 'I'm called to healing,' the prophet said. Yes, I will remember you in my kingdom. I will remember you."

In my orneriness, I would smile and say, "That poor guy; he has no idea. He just got enlisted to live a life of death. He's going to die to his flesh all the days of his life, if he's faithful to this healing anointing."

I know some people who are faithful to the healing anointing, and they are. Bob Jones is one of them. I've seen him so many times pray for five and eight and nine or ten hours at a setting. Everyone else goes and grabs lunch and comes back; Bob is still there, praying and laboring; not in the crowds, not up in the platform.

Now that's what the healing anointing is. The Lord says to the Body of Christ, "Now you want healing. Do you desire it?"

"Yes!"

“Then you’ll get what you desire. If you only desire it in the fanfare, the big dramatic, then I’m only going to give you according to what you desire, and you don’t desire healing by the biblical definition of desire.”

So Paul tells them, “Desire that you would desire spiritual gifts.”

HEARING THE WORD OF GOD WITH CONFIDENCE

Turn to Galatians 3. OK, where are we at? We’re at 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians... I’ve got this memorized. Galatians, oh, there you go. Galatians, G-E-P-C: Gentiles eat pork chops. OK, that’s how you remember it—Galatians. Or, if you’re kosher, “Girls eat popcorn.” There you go.

OK, Galatians 3:2. “This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?”

Paul says, “This is what I want to understand: Did you receive the person of the Holy Spirit and the operation of the Holy Spirit and the moving of the Spirit? It’s all one big subject: Did you receive it by earning it or did you receive it by hearing the Word of God with confidence?”

The hearing means hearing the Word of God and hearing about the character of God and what He did on the cross; who Jesus is and His passion for people and His compassion for people; hearing from the Word of God with confidence. Instead of the word *faith*, put the word *confidence*.

So Paul says, “Here’s what I want to learn from you: Do you operate in the anointing, did you receive the Holy Spirit because you earned it? Or do you operate in the Holy Spirit because you hear the Word of God on a regular basis, in a way that stirs confidence in your spirit?”

THE BONFIRE OF GOD’S PRESENCE

Now, there’s a point of confusion that I run into a lot in the IHOP–KC world. It’s the idea that fasting and prayer somehow earns the move of the Spirit. It does not. Fasting and praying positions us to hear better so that we have confidence. Fasting and prayer doesn’t earn anything. Fasting and prayer takes our cold heart and puts it in front of the bonfire of God’s presence so we can hear more precisely and more clearly and we can have confidence when we hear.

So, fasting and prayer is part of our lifestyle. We don’t fast and pray on Monday and Tuesday so we earn healing on Wednesday; we fast and pray as a lifestyle while we heal and while we walk in holiness.

Fasting and prayer postures us to be more tender in the subject of holiness; more tender in the subject of revelation of the Word. Our hearts are more tender in receiving the Word of God with confidence to move in the Spirit. Fasting and prayer positions our spirits to be tender to hear so that we can receive.

So don’t say, “OK, fasting and prayer. We’re going to pray and fast for a week. Therefore, we have confidence that next week we will move in healing.”

No, don’t get into that equation. But don’t go the other way: “I have no confidence in healing, so I’m going to throw away fasting and prayer. I’m not earning it!”

God never meant fasting and prayer to be a means of earning anything. It's a means of increasing your ability to hear the Word of God with confidence.

FILLING OUR HEARTS WITH THE WORD OF GOD

Look at verse 5. "Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Gal. 3:5).

He asks the same question again. So the question is, "Does God, who supplies the anointing of the Spirit, or the Person of the Spirit, or the gifts of the Spirit"—when you talk about the Spirit, it's all of his administrations and activities—"When God gives you the Spirit, does He do it because you earn it or does He do it because you hear with faith?"

Beloved, we need to hear the Word; we need to fill ourselves with the Word. We need to remove the other things, like compromise and darkness, that obscure our hearing. They block our hearing.

The things that people fill their minds with in the media and the conversations they have, slander and gossip and sin and sensuality and darkness, obscure our hearing. Fasting and prayer and faithfulness with meekness enhance hearing. It doesn't earn anything, it enhances hearing.

Paul said, "God supplies the Spirit to you and He works miracles because your hearing increases with confidence."

"GOD ANOINTED JESUS OF NAZARETH WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT..."

Let's go to Acts 10:38. We're going to read Acts 10:38 and then 1 John 3:8 and then we're going to be done with this part. No, then I'm going to tell a story; I forgot.

Peter is preaching at Cornelius' house. He talks about (v. 38) how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, the Man Jesus.

Now, we know Jesus is fully God, but we're talking about in His humanity. There's this Man from Nazareth, whom "God anointed... with the Holy Spirit, and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

"HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL"

Beloved, Jesus went about healing all who were oppressed by the devil. There are many within the Body of Christ, and outside the Body of Christ, but even within the Body of Christ who are being oppressed by the devil.

We can seek medical solutions to curb some of this; we can seek medical solutions to minimize some of this oppression. This oppression will not go away without a supernatural manifestation of power. At the end of the day, when the oppression is of the devil, the oppression needs a Holy Spirit encounter for the devil to move.

Some people, because of the sophistication of medicine and science, can take some oppressions and stabilize and neutralize them. I'm not making a negative point about it; that's not my point. My point is that we need power to move this thing so that the oppression is gone, where the activity of Satan is oppressing the sick.

Some sickness is because of a direct spirit that's oppressing. With some sickness, the person invited the spirit, and other times it's an attack that's not related to the person inviting the spirit. I don't want to go into all the different categories. But I don't want to reduce healing to, "Well, we do one little equation and everyone is going to get healed all the time."

There are all kinds of points to make on the subject of healing. I'm not trying to make those tonight. What I'm saying is, Jesus went about healing all, and He knew He had to move in supernatural power to get the devil's work broken. A medical answer will not solve the problem if a demon is causing it, even though it would steady a person for a while.

We want to solve the problem.

"THAT HE MIGHT DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL"

OK, final verse—1 John 3:8, in the middle of the verse. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested"—Jesus was manifest. Why did Jesus come?—"That He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 Jn. 3:8).

Not the only work; there are many things He came to destroy. One of them is the oppression the devil puts on people. The devil oppresses saints and he oppresses unbelievers as well. We need to be in the midst of a supernatural community. I don't mean a people who are charged with power all the time; I'm talking about being supernaturally natural.

THE STORY OF JOHN WIMBER

I had a chance to travel with John Wimber for three years. Some of you know the name John Wimber; he went home to be with the Lord in 1997. He had a very dynamic healing ministry in the Western world for maybe twenty years. I don't know, some number like that, a long time. He had large conferences of 5,000 and 10,000, all over the Western world, and many people healed, and many leaders would go and get trained for ten days, and then they would operate in healing.

I loved the opportunity to get to travel with him. It was in 1988—1991. He brought me up on the platform and taught me a lot of this. I asked him a lot of questions, got to be with him a lot and pick his brain.

John Wimber's story is truly amazing. "John, how did you get into healing? Did you go to a healing service?"

"No, never went to a healing service!"

"OK, did you read a book on healing? My favorite is John G. Lake."

"No, I never heard of John G. Lake."

I'd say, "Really? He's like the main guy." (We've got all the stuff in the bookstore; you really want to read John G. Lake, trust me.)

He'd say, "Nope!"

"Well, how did you get into it?"

He said, “I read the Bible. You know, that one book...”

I’d say, “Oh, yeah...”

He said, “No, I just read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John over and over and over. I said, ‘I’m going to do it, I’m just going to do it.’”

THE PERSEVERANCE OF JOHN WIMBER

He prayed for the sick. He had never seen healing, never heard anyone teach on it, never witnessed it with his eyes. He just read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John over and over and over and said, “I want to do this healing stuff.” He always said, “I want to do the stuff.”

Gary, who was up here a minute ago, is going to come up here again. How long were you a vineyard pastor, Gary? Ten years, as part of the national leadership.

Lenny LaGuardia was in the vineyard for about fifteen years. Something like that—many years. Some others have been in the vineyard as well. They got to know John a bit and traveled with him as well, and did some healing things, so that a handful of us have that common legacy and history, together, from back in the eighties and nineties.

So we’re looking at things today and saying, “We’ve got to see more happen; we’ve got to go back to some of our roots, and God wants to give more; every decade He wants to do more than He did the decade before. So we’re believing for more. There are some things back there that are valuable, that we have lost a handle on.”

John prayed for healing, and—this is remarkable, remarkable—He taught on healing every Sunday, fifty-two weeks a year, every Sunday for two years in a row. He preached a hundred sermons on healing and never saw one healing.

He said, “We called them up, prayed for the sick every week.”

I said, “Wow, no healings ever? You never went out anywhere and saw anyone healed?”

He said, “No.”

I said, “This is a miracle, that you didn’t quit!”

He said, “No, I had to see healing.” He operated under the principle, “I’m going to be faithful in small things; I’m not going to quit.” He had that Canaanite woman’s mentality: “I’m not going to get offended. Seemingly the Lord’s answer is ‘no,’ but I’m going to keep doing it.”

He said, “The only thing that consistently happened when I prayed for the sick is, I got the disease of the person I prayed for. I mean it! Someone had the flu, I would go to their house and I would get the flu. Someone would have a really bad cold and migraine headaches; I would pray for them and get migraine headaches.”

He said, “I was scared to death to pray for a pregnant woman.” He told that joke so many times, drove me crazy. I have heard him say that joke so many times. Still works, though. I’ll meet him in heaven and he’ll say, “Bickle, are you stealing my corny stuff down there?”

So, one Sunday, they saw their first healing. It was a great story; not that it was so dramatic, but there were some dramatic things. He went on to see many things: blind eyes opened, deaf ears opened, all manner of diseases were healed after that.

THE LEGACY OF JOHN WIMBER

The legacy of John Wimber was his faithfulness for two years. Every meeting, people were getting angry with him. Every Sunday, for 104 Sundays—“OK, turn to the gospel of Matthew, the healing...”

They would say, “Oh no!” None of them had seen healings. They’d say, “John, we’re quitting this crazy church if you don’t stop teaching on healings.” Little did they know that God was going to look on him and say, “John, I will give you what you desire.”

He gave John what he desired. John had one of the most significant healing ministries in the twentieth century in the Western world. It just started breaking out.

So I would get to be on platforms with John and he would help me do ministry. He would whisper in my ear and tell me what to do or not do. Mostly, what he told me to do was, “Shut up, you’re talking way too much.” He said, “You’ve got to dial down, you’ve got to listen way more than you talk. Listen.”

So I would ask John after the meetings, “John, what were you feeling?”

He would say, “I felt as I have always felt.”

“What?”

He said, “You know my first big conference.”

I said, “What?”

“I felt what I always feel.”

“What?”

He said, “Nothing, ever, never.” He had done some hundreds of conferences. “I’ve never, ever once had a feeling on a platform.”

I said, “No way!”

He said, “You other guys”—we had a ton of different guys—“feel a little of this and that. You feel the Spirit’s presence. That upsets me; I don’t ever feel anything anywhere.” He had the manifestations of power that were continual.

I said, “Really?”

He said, “Yeah; for some reason the Lord just set it up that way.”

LIVING IN UNRESOLVED TENSION

He said, “The way I spell faith is R-I-S-K. That’s how I spell faith. I just say things and get people. I don’t say, ‘The Lord said...’ if the Lord didn’t tell me. I just say, ‘I’m going to pray, and speak things.’ ‘Lady, I’m going to pray for you; I’m going to ask that cancer in your body to leave,’” and he would command it to leave.

Lots of times the cancer didn’t leave, and John was so open about the many, many times it didn’t happen. John was remarkable, because he was one of those rare guys in the healing ministry who didn’t have to answer for it when it didn’t work. Most people who get well-known for healing, after a decade or two, they almost always have to answer for it when it doesn’t work.

John was content to live in unresolved tension.

He said, “I don’t know why it doesn’t work. I don’t want to give that answer. I’m going to live in that tension unresolved.”

John said, “Here’s what I’ve found out: I would rather see one out of 100 people get healed, than zero out of zero.”

I said, “One out of a hundred?”

He said, “Yeah. You get a lot of people healed, one out of a hundred.”

I said, “Really?”

He said, “Yeah. If you’re me, I pray for thousands of people every week. So, if I get one out of a hundred, I get a lot of healings every week.”

John’s point wasn’t to have one out of a hundred; that wasn’t his point. His point was, he said, “I am not going to wait until the number is big and then start.” I heard him say it many times. “A lot of you are content. You would rather have zero out of zero. You would rather have a perfect record than one out of a hundred and pray for thousands of people.”

He said, “I would rather see the one out of 100 get healed. I will pray for the sick all the days of my life.”

LIVING IN THE SUPERNATURALLY NATURAL

OK, now I’ll end with this story. It was some years ago, in 1984, actually. We were at the church and it was one of those really oppressed meetings. The worship was really oppressed; I mean, it was oppressed like, “Yuck!” My preaching was really oppressed; it wasn’t dead, it was doubly dead.

I left and it was a horrible feeling. So I just wanted to get out of the building. Bob Jones runs up on the platform, grabs the microphone, which he never really did, and said, “Mike, I’ve got a word that’s so important!”

I said, “Let’s just get this meeting over.” He gave the most horrible word I can imagine. He said, “The Lord spoke to me this morning in the morning visions. Mike”—he pointed at me—“is going to move in supernatural faith tonight!”

I mean, the meeting was so bad, it was one of those drives home in the car where my wife says, “It was pretty good tonight,” and I said, “Shut up, don’t go there!”

“It was, you know, volume 2—it was kind of good…”

“Don’t go there!”

So then I got her to where she wouldn’t go there; then we would drive home and I would say, “How come you never said anything?”

She said, “Well, what am I supposed to do?”

Well, anyway, that’s another story. I’m trying to get out of that meeting. Bob comes up on the platform; there are a couple hundred people in the room. He says, “If any of you need a supernatural miracle tonight, Mike will pray for you and it will happen.”

I was literally angry with him for that! I took the microphone and said, “No, that’s not going to happen!”

I wasn’t happy with that, because it was such a horrible night. If I had been in a good mood, maybe it would have been different. I just wanted to get out of there.

So no one came up, praise God. I mean, really I was thinking, “Let’s get this thing over with.” I don’t know if you’ve been in a meeting where you led and it was really bad. I’ve had plenty of them. So on the way out, this one lady comes up. People are all shuffling out. She says, “Mike, I need a miracle.” She was so sincere. She said, “I’m going in tomorrow,” and she gave me a list of ailments. She said, “I’m getting a hysterectomy tomorrow; I have a number of other serious problems.”

I said, “Wow.”

She said, “Will you pray for me? Maybe I’m the person Bob Jones was talking about.”

I said, “OK Jesus, in Your name, in the name of Jesus heal her. Bye!”

I’m walking away and she says, “That’s it?”

I said, “I don’t really know what else do to. I can do it a third time. Heal her! OK, now you’ve got your money’s worth. I don’t know what else to do.”

She said, “That’s it?”

See, I don’t want to create a culture where we have to tune into Whoever So-and-So on TV. I want a supernaturally natural culture of weak and broken people; everyone can do it, and we all believe for it, and we don’t have the answers for when it doesn’t happen. We stay like this Syro-Phoenician woman, when the answer is seemingly no and insulting or a total rejection; we worship and we ask yet again. We stay; we keep pressing in. That’s the kind of culture I want here.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE STORY

That was a Tuesday night. So maybe three or four days later, she came back in. She said, “Mike, did you hear?”

I said, “No, no, I didn’t hear anything.”

She said, “I was totally healed.”

I said, “What do you mean?”

She said, “I went in and asked the doctor, because I believed the Lord might have touched me when you prayed.”

I said, “Did you feel anything?”

She said, “No, nothing. Did you?”

I said, “Absolutely not. I was a little mad, that’s all I was.”

She said, “I went in and I was completely healed of everything.”

NOT HYPING IT, BUT STAYING STEADY

So I saw Bob a couple of days later and he said, “I told you!”

I said, “Bob, that was ridiculous. How did that work?”

He said, “It’s not you getting all jazzed up and all hyper about it. It’s either the name of Jesus, or it’s not. It’s not what mood you’re in. Pursuing and even believing is not about psyching yourself up; it’s about taking the time to take the hand out of your pocket”—I didn’t do it for very long—“and lay your hand on her head and say, ‘In the name of Jesus.’”

See, we can do this for years. If we’ve got to hype everything up, we can press in for months, but then we’re going to be worn out.

If we can do it in this tension of going hard, not hyping it but staying steady; not getting offended, but being happy; I mean, one out of a hundred is better than zero out of zero. We have to let the days of small beginnings increase. We have to ask for more and more. OK. We can do that.