

## Use it or lose it—Breaking through Barriers to Our Full Potential

Mark 3:1-6;

A breakthrough, for the purposes of our thoughts today is where one has a dream, a vision, a promise or a desired situation in God, where some aspect of one's life in Christ is realized, and becomes the cultural norm in one's heart instead of a far off distant dream. It is permanently moving from one level positively upwards to a new level. It is a changing of spiritual gear. It isn't a rare thing that one touches and then has to forget. It is a definite move into a different sphere in some aspect of life, living, activity or ministry. It could be a breakthrough in understanding, in a grasp of a truth or an activity.

The story of the man with the withered hand is one that has significance in that it presents Jesus as a man of compassion. It is often referred to by scholars and theologians alike for its placement in the scriptures. In the Gospels it is seen as one of the first miracles Jesus performs and it catapults Him onto the public stage; partly because of the nature of the encounter but primarily because Jesus performs this miracle on the Sabbath.

The bible has much to say about the Sabbath and the sanctity of this solemn ritual. It is because the Sabbath is so revered that this story takes on greater significance. In chapter 2 of Mark Jesus is faced with the challenge of allowing His disciples to eat grain from the field on the Sabbath. The question is, "Is it lawful to do what is seen as necessary when it goes directly against the law?" Jesus answers this question with a citation of scripture that clearly showed that this wasn't the first time the Sabbath law was broken out of necessity. He cites Israel's greatest ruler David as having set precedence by eating the showbread, and giving it to his companions; that was only lawful to be eaten by the priest. Most of the religious leaders of the day would have had a hard time convincing the people that their beloved king was intentionally breaking the law so they would have made allowances for him.

Jesus was trying to get them to see that there are times when the end justifies the means; but even greater than that is the thought that Jesus is always concerned with the motive of the heart. Jesus knew that the religious leaders were not ready to accept a new way of viewing life and ministry; and therefore would do anything in their power to keep the masses from accepting the new reality before them. So Jesus takes matters into His own hands and creates a defining moment.

In Chapter 3 Jesus pushes the boundaries of reason as the disciples and the multitude must address the real issue of the man reaching his full potential.

### I. What the withered hand may be said to symbolize.

1. The man's capacity for work. It is by the working of our hands that we have traditionally earned our bread.
2. A symbol of fellowship. Something as simple as a hand shake, a "high five", a wave to disarm and bring others close.
3. Generosity. By the hand we convey our gifts. A closed fist allows nothing to get in and sadly allows nothing to go out.

### II. The causes of the hand's withering.

1. Like some forms of blindness and certain deformities, it is sometimes a sad, inexplicable inheritance, possessed from birth.

2. Strokes are one of the major causes of withered hands today. Because of a lack of oxygen to the brain the body suffers.

3. And then, perhaps, the most tragic of all causes—disuse of the hand, if long continued. Nature's gifts are cancelled, if not made use of.

### III. The means of healing.

1. The man is made to "stand forth." There is something to be said about the effects of being brought out of the shadows of a self-shrouded life, and being forced to stand in the company of other human beings.

2. There is another thing in this narrative—obedience to Christ. His obedience evidenced his faith.

### IV. Breaking barriers to full potential

1. There will always be opportunities increase the value of people (3:1)
  - A. There was an opportunity to increase this mans financial options
  - B. There was an opportunity to increase his family options
  - C. There was an opportunity to increase his faith
2. There are always people assigned to hinder your progress (3:2)
  - A. There mode of operation is observation (watch you)
  - B. Then they move to investigation (anything material they can gather)
  - C. Finally, in culminates in accusation (they speak out)
3. When opportunity presents itself bring the issue forward (3:3-4)
  - A. It is important to ask questions that will expose the motives of others (3)
  - B. Sometimes common sense questions destroy the argument (4a)
  - C. Pro-activity often silences your critics
4. Once you determine who/what you are dealing with proceed with boldness (3:5)
  - A. Make sure you've weighed all options (careful survey) (5a)
  - B. Become passionate yet precise in your focus (5b)
  - C. Speak to the issue and give it direction to its destiny (5c)
5. Your Enemy will retreat but will never give up (3:6)

Each of us has the challenge before us to act like Jesus. The days are past of us being the man with the withered hand. We must face the fact that there is a world around us that is filled with men and women who are not reaching their potential and in many cases we have only ourselves to blame because we have not taken on the challenge of helping others break through the barriers of their limitations.