HEALED AND WHOLE: DELIVERANCE

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INTRODUCTION

We've been going through a series. We started it last week, and we've got about three more weeks left, so I want you to hold on tight. Are we awake this morning? I'm going to need a little audience participation. There are going to be times when something stirs in your soul and you can relate to some of this story. When you can relate, go ahead and let your face know it on the outside, and let everybody else know it too. Shout an amen or whatever the Lord leads you to do, because where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. There is liberty. I believe God wants to do something in our hearts and lives this morning.

Before we start flipping through Scripture - and we're going to spend some time there, I promise you - I want your undivided attention for just a minute. One of the greatest desires we have when we're hurting, and all of us go through hurt sometimes, is relief. When we're hurting, what do we want the most? Relief.

I remember the old commercials. I think it was Rolaids: 'Now that spells relief.' Good slogan, right? Good marketing. When we're hurting, no matter what it is, we want relief. When we're in pain, when we're struggling emotionally, when we're fighting anxiety, when we're battling destructive, deteriorating, deceptive thoughts, or carrying deep wounds in our hearts, we want something that will make the pain stop.

We can get to places of desperation where the enemy tells us there is only one way out. He paints a picture that says the only hope of getting relief is to end it all. But that is a lie. The enemy wants to steal, kill, and destroy. What we're actually looking for is relief, and he is very good at disguising destruction as relief.

I also want to clarify something from last week. There is nothing wrong with seeking medical help when it is needed. God has blessed many people through doctors, counselors, good Christian counselors, medications, and treatments. Those can be valuable gifts of God's grace. But as believers in Jesus Christ, we also have to recognize that not every battle is merely physical. Scripture reminds us that there is a spiritual reality beyond the world we can see. Sometimes we become so focused on treating symptoms that we fail to ask whether there is a deeper spiritual issue that needs freedom in Jesus Christ.

That's why I want to pray over those who work in the medical field. I don't want to downgrade them or discourage them. I want to pray that God gives them wisdom and discernment. There are times when someone is dealing with symptoms, but underneath those symptoms there is a heart problem, an addiction, a bondage, something that needs Jesus to set them free. Even if all you can do is mutter it under your breath, you can pray, 'Jesus, we need You to step into this room. I plead the blood of Jesus over this soul. Set this person free in Jesus' name.'

The danger isn't medicine itself. The danger is forgetting the authority and power of Jesus to set people free. We can be tempted to run toward whatever looks quickest and easiest because we want relief right now. But sometimes the question isn't only, 'What medication do I need?' Sometimes the question is, 'What does Jesus want to heal, restore, or deliver me from?' Jesus didn't come just to let people cope. He came to make people healed and whole. That's what this series is about: healed and whole.

MARY MAGDALENE: A LIFE CHANGED BY JESUS

Luke 8:1-3 (ESV)

> 1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, 3 and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Luke introduces us to Mary Magdalene with this crazy statement: 'from whom seven demons had gone out.' Whoa. The Bible doesn't give us much description. It doesn't tell us exactly what those seven demons were doing in her life, but can you imagine the torment she must have endured? She must have been through some stuff if she was oppressed by seven demons.

Think about the fear, confusion, emotional pain, isolation, people whispering about her, being misunderstood and avoided, feeling trapped in a life she couldn't seem to escape. Whether that oppression manifested itself emotionally, mentally, spiritually, or physically, one thing is for sure: Mary was suffering until she met Jesus.

She was under torment. She was suffering. She needed relief. Then she met Jesus, and everything changed. Jesus didn't just make her feel better. Jesus made her free. The woman who once carried seven demons became one of Jesus' most faithful followers. When Jesus steps into your life and does something miraculous like that, it changes you.

The woman once known by her bondage became known by her devotion. The woman who was oppressed became a supporter of the ministry of Jesus. That's the power of deliverance. You're not here this morning by accident. You're in the right place to experience God's power and God's deliverance. That's the power of God's grace.

JESUS DEALS WITH THE ROOT, NOT JUST THE SYMPTOMS

Jesus ministered to people who were suffering from both diseases and evil spirits. Luke tells us there were women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, and Mary Magdalene was one of them. Jesus recognized a distinction. Some people needed healing. Some people needed deliverance. Some people needed both.

Jesus never treated every problem the same way. Look through the Gospels. He used all kinds of different ways to show His glory and heal people. If Jesus wanted to, He could spit in the dirt, make mud, put it on a blind man's eyes, tell him to go wash, and the man would be healed. What a God. Jesus never treated every problem the same way.

As followers of Jesus, we need spiritual discernment. Spiritual discernment strengthens our faith. We've walked into hospital rooms praying for healing without understanding what God may be doing in that moment, and then we get depressed and defeated when the healing doesn't come the way we expected.

Spiritual discernment comes from spiritual discipline, and spiritual discipline comes from spending time with Him. Don't expect to walk into a hospital room, lay hands on somebody, and pray in Jesus' name if you haven't spent time with the One who can heal them. We need spiritual discernment.

Sometimes people need medical care. Sometimes they need emotional healing. Sometimes they need repentance. Sometimes they need deliverance. Sometimes they need a combination of all those things. Bless God, some of us are messed up from the floor up. But the goal is not management. The goal is transformation. Transformation is the only thing that will last.

You can't get a dose of 'do better.' You can't just turn over a new leaf and expect everything to be okay. Jesus came to address whatever is keeping people in bondage.

DELIVERANCE IS BETTER THAN DECORATION

Luke 11:24-26 (ESV)

> 24 "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. 26 Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

That is the lie of merely turning over a new leaf and cleaning yourself up. The evil spirit leaves, you sweep the house, polish everything up, clean the windows, and everything looks good. The problem is the door is still open. Nothing has filled the house.

Then that spirit comes back and says, 'Boy, look how clean this thing is now,' and brings seven others even more evil than itself. The person winds up worse off than before. That's why deliverance is better than decoration. What we need is deliverance, not decoration - not merely cleaning up our righteousness and making the outside look better.

What we can do for ourselves will never be enough. Deliverance from Jesus is what matters. Jesus described an evil spirit leaving a person and returning later. Everything looks better. Everything appears fixed. But nothing has filled the empty space.

The problem wasn't simply that the house was dirty. The problem was that the house was empty. So many of us want a cleaned-up life. Jesus wants a surrendered life. We want behavior modification. Jesus wants transformation. We want freedom from consequences. Jesus wants Lordship.

He is Lord of all, or He's not Lord at all. That's it. Lordship. The danger is trying to remove bad habits without inviting Jesus to rule your heart. Cleaning the house isn't enough. The house must be occupied by the presence of God.

FREEDOM REQUIRES THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

Think about Mary Magdalene again. Praise God, the story doesn't end with seven demons leaving. That's not the end of the story. The story continues with Mary following Jesus. That's the difference. That's the difference-maker.

Jesus cast the demons out, and she surrendered herself to Him. She made Him Lord of her life. She didn't just experience deliverance; she entered into relationship with Jesus. She followed Jesus. She served Jesus. She remained close to Jesus.

The secret to lasting freedom isn't just getting rid of something. It's being filled with Someone, and that Someone is Jesus. That's what we need. When Jesus fills our hearts, fear loses its grip. Shame loses its power. Bondage loses its hold. Darkness loses its authority. Freedom isn't found in emptiness. Freedom is found in Jesus.

There is a modern hymn that says, 'In Christ alone my hope is found.' That's it. In Christ alone - plus nothing, minus nothing. Transformation, Lordship, healing, deliverance, freedom: it is found in Jesus.

I want you to think back to a time when you knew you were strong in your faith, close to Jesus, witnessing, fearless. You didn't care what people thought. You didn't care what people said. You were on fire for Jesus. You wanted to tell people about Him. You wanted to be an example, a witness, and a testimony for Jesus Christ.

What was the difference? How close were you with God? How much time did you spend with Him in those moments? How much time did you spend with your brothers and sisters in Christ, challenging one another, iron sharpening iron, reading and digging into the Word of God?

Now maybe you find yourself depressed, defeated, discouraged, anxious, ruled by fear, held captive by fear, oppressed by the enemy. Take me back. Take me back to that place. God, help me understand that You didn't change. You never change. I stepped away. I walked away. I moved.

Sometimes we need little reminders to help us remember. The reason I was the person I was, and I was on fire for God, was because of the time I spent with God. If now I can't find any time to spend with God, no wonder I'm in the condition I'm in. No wonder I'm trampled by fear and depression if I don't give God the time of day.

THERE IS HOPE FOR EVERYONE

Let me leave you with some hope: there is hope for everyone. Jesus was not intimidated by the severity of Mary's condition. Seven demons weren't too much for Jesus to handle. Her brokenness was not too much for Jesus. Her past was not too much for Jesus. Her pain was not too much for Jesus. And your situation today is not too much for Jesus either.

The enemy wants people to believe they're too damaged, too broken, too addicted, too wounded, too far gone. The devil is a liar in Jesus' name. Jesus says otherwise. The same Jesus who delivered Mary still transforms lives today. The same Jesus who set captives free still breaks chains today. The same Jesus who healed and restored then still heals and restores now.

Give it over to Him. Surrender it all to Him. Make Him Lord of your life. Don't just clean house. Fill it with Him. I cannot get enough of that old hymn: 'I surrender all.' God, help us get to that place, because He wants to make us healed and whole.

When Luke introduced Mary Magdalene to us, it wasn't to highlight her past and shame her. No, no, no. He highlighted her past to magnify the power of Jesus. Here was a woman who had been oppressed by seven demons, and Jesus cast them out. That's the power of Jesus.

The woman who once lived under oppression became a testimony of God's grace, and that can be your story. Her life reminds us that Jesus doesn't just cover our wounds. He heals them. He's not out just to manage our bondage. He wants to break it. He doesn't simply make people better. He makes people whole.

Today some may need physical healing. Some may need emotional healing. Some may need freedom from spiritual oppression. Some may need to stop trying to fight battles alone and surrender completely to Jesus. The good news is that you don't have to remain in bondage. You don't have to continue to be tormented. You don't have to stay broken. Praise God. There is hope in Jesus, healing in Jesus, and freedom in Jesus.

When Jesus steps into a life, He doesn't leave people half restored. Jesus never steps in and half does something. When Jesus steps in, you know it. He leaves the evidence behind. Look around this room and you see the evidence of God's amazing grace, God's miracles, God's deliverance, God's mighty power, God's restoration in people's lives and marriages, and in lives once full of addiction that Jesus set free.

That can be you. That can be your story, because when He steps in, He makes people's lives healed and whole. That's the goal. That's what all of this is about. That's what we're here for. This morning you're not here by accident. God wants to move in your heart and in your life. He wants to set you free.

COME TO JESUS

When it comes to deliverance, one of my favorite verses says, 'If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.' Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly. He didn't come so that you could clean house and then leave it empty for something worse to come back in. He is saying, 'Come.'

Come to Him, all who labor and are heavy laden, and He will give you rest. Come to Him and let Him empty the house, and then let Him fill it. Fill it with His glory. Fill it with His peace. Fill it with His comfort. Fill it with His joy, so that you know who He is.

Deliverance can be yours this morning. You don't have to walk out of this place the same way you walked in. You can be delivered and set free. Call on the name of Jesus.

We're not out to embarrass anybody. But there is something powerful when brothers and sisters in Christ who are in the same place, or have been in the same place, kneel with you, bow down

with you, lay hands on you, and start speaking Jesus over you. Jesus steps into the room. He steps into the situation. Chains break, and God moves.

CLOSING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we give You this time, Lord, to do business in our hearts. We need You. Lord, help us not to try to do this on our own. God, You want to step in right now and deliver people. You want to set people free. Help us to be obedient. Lord, give us the courage. Give us the boldness to step out, surrendering it all to You, making You Lord of all. In Jesus' name. Amen.