

Conquering The Cave

June 13, 2010

Turn to **John 11**. The cave we're going to talk about this morning was the cave where Lazarus was buried. Let's look at **the condition of Lazarus**. **Verse 1** says that Lazarus was sick.

We have to have balance in our walk with Jesus. If you think you're not going to face anything after you get saved, you are in for a rude awakening along life's journey. When you get saved, you find out there is a real live, walking, talking devil. Can I get a witness from somebody that knows what I'm talking about? If you're not grounded in the Word, you will get blown off track.

I don't know if you know this or not, but Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, were great supporters of Jesus. Most scholars believe Lazarus was a very wealthy man, and no doubt Jesus stayed in Lazarus' house. Even though Lazarus was a great physical supporter of the ministry of Jesus, even though Jesus Christ stayed in his house, Lazarus got sick; and that sickness did not come from God. It came from the devil. So Jesus receives a note from Mary and Martha asking Him to come quickly, because Lazarus is sick.

Now, how many know that Jesus didn't need to receive a note telling Him that Lazarus was sick? He is omniscient. He is an all-knowing God. He knew Lazarus was sick. Mary and Martha send a messenger to Jesus, and look at what they put in the message in **Verse 3**. They said, "He whom You love is sick."

I have known great men of God, far superior to the one you are looking at right now, who died very young, and it had nothing to do with their faith. They were great men of faith, but MY times and YOUR times are in the hands of the Lord! AMEN? The Bible says, "It is appointed once for man (and woman) to die," and God knows our beginning from our end.

When Jesus got the message that Lazarus was sick, He didn't do anything. He stayed where He was. Have you ever prayed and felt like God didn't hear you? Have you ever asked God to jump, and He didn't jump? When you start praying, God's clock doesn't start ticking.

What God does is train us in the areas of **persistence and patience**. We have to learn to **endure**. From the time you begin to cry out to God until the time you believe the answer is going to come, there is a period of time called "waiting." The waiting period is the crucifixion of the flesh.

Look at **Verse 11**. Jesus says, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." Jesus is using the word "sleep" to mean that Lazarus is dead, and Jesus refers to the body as being asleep.

Have you ever seen someone die? It's as though they go to sleep. The body does sleep but not the soul. I do not believe in soul slumber. The Bible clearly tells us, "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord." The second the bodily functions stop, the spirit leaves the body. If you are saved and you would die right now, I believe your spirit would go to be with God.

In **Verse 12**, Jesus' disciples tell Him, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." So, in **Verse 14** Jesus clarifies what He meant. The condition of Lazarus is that he is dead. Lazarus has now died, and Jesus makes the trip.

Look at **Verse 21**. Martha comes to meet Jesus and says, "Lord, if You had been here my brother would not have died." Mary and Martha blamed Jesus for their brother's death, and in the midst of this Jesus asks in **Verse 34**, "Where have you laid him?" In **Verse 33**, Jesus saw Mary weeping. He saw the Jews that were there weeping, and inside of Him His spirit began to groan. Words aren't coming out, but He is grieving.

There are all kinds of theories as to why Christ is grieving. Some believe He is grieving because of the doubters. Some believe He is grieving because Mary and Martha jumped on Him., but let me tell you what I believe. I believe He cared about Mary and Martha and knew they were just caught up in their emotions.

Do you know that you can cast all of your cares upon Jesus because He cares for you? Sometimes when you're going through something that is horrible and you're up against all kinds of battles, even in the midst when you can't see Him or feel Him, He still cares for you. Does anyone know that Jesus cares about you?

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. His love has nothing to do with how I feel or the situation I'm in. I just KNOW that He loves me! How do I know He loves me? The Bible tells me so! I have to have something to place my faith in, and my faith is fixed in God's Word. It's great to feel Him, but I know He loves me even when I don't feel Him.

Look at **the compassion of our Lord**. **Verse 35** says, "Jesus wept." That's the shortest verse in the Bible. Jesus began to cry. He is weeping. We have a High Priest, a Mediator who feels what we are feeling.

He knows what loneliness feels like. He was on the cross by Himself. He knows what rejection is. His disciples turned their backs and fled from Him. He knows what it feels like when someone sells you out. Judas sold Him out for 30 pieces of silver. He even knows what it is to have His Heavenly Father turn His back on Him. I'm glad He has never turned His back on me!

Have you ever done anything to cause God to turn His back on you? Have you ever failed Him? Have you ever done or said something you wish you hadn't? Why did Jesus cry? He cried because He cared.

Look at **the command of our Lord** in **Verse 39**. He gives a command. He says, "Take away the stone." Jesus could have removed that stone all by Himself with just a word, but He didn't.

There are times when we are facing a miracle that there is something WE have to do, because obedience is mandatory in the Kingdom of God. Jesus placed mud on a blind man's eyes and told him to go and wash, and he would receive his sight. Jesus could have just said a word or touched

the man's eyes, and his sight would have been restored; but when he obeyed and washed, he was healed. Obedience! **Your miracle is on the other side of your obedience.** Can I get a witness from anybody?

Sometimes we get so emotionally intense in our situation that we ask God, "Why?" instead of asking God, "What do you want me to do?" People come to me and ask me why such and such is happening to them. I don't have the answer for your why; but if I were you, I would begin to ask God, "What do you want me to do?"

In the situations we go through, God uses those situations to **train and teach us endurance and persistence which develop our character.** So when we get into the deep battles of this life, we go deep into His Word; because **there are things we need to get out of the way so that Jesus Christ can give us a miracle,** because no one is going to remove your stone but you!

The stone is the barrier that stops your miracle, but we want Jesus to do it all. Thank God He did it all on the cross, but now there is something for you and me to do. We have to remove the stone and get rid of anything and everything that stands in the way of our miracle.

We have to get in the Word and get the meat of the Word so that when we get in a situation and need a miracle, we know what to do. **Obedience opens the door for the miraculous.** Remove anything that stands in your way.

We have people here who are in sinful relationships, and you're in need of a miracle. Get out of that sinful relationship! You're asking for God's blessing, but it will not come while you're in that sinful relationship. Does anybody know that God demands holiness? Today, holiness is almost a dirty word; but the Bible says, "Be ye holy as He is holy."

Let's look at **the confrontation of Martha**. The moment Jesus said, "Remove the stone," Martha confronts Him. Jesus tells us what to do, and the moment He tells us what to do we come up with reasons why we can't do it. It was a clear command to remove the stone, but Martha steps forward and tells the Lord what to do. She had done it before.

Look at what she says in **Verse 39**. "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days." The Jews have a mysterious tradition about the fourth day after a person's death. They believe that when a body dies, the spirit hovers around the body, seeking to re-enter the body. So when Martha says that Lazarus' body by now is stinking, she knows his body is decomposing.

The Egyptians started the process of embalming, because they believe that when you die your body goes on a trip. They would bury their pharaohs with all kinds of stuff, even food, for their trip. They believe the physical body travels somewhere, but the Jews don't believe that.

The Jews don't embalm the body. They believe the blood is to stay in the body. They believe the spirit hovers around the body, and on the fourth day they believe the spirit can no longer recognize the body because it has decomposed so much, so it departs to Sheol, the place of departed spirits.

When Martha says that Lazarus' body now stinks, it's the fourth day, and what she is saying is that there is no longer any hope. She believes it is now too late for him to recover, but look at **Verse 43**. "Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!'"

Look at **the call of our Lord**. Lazarus had been in Sheol for four days, and all of a sudden Jesus calls out his name. If Jesus had just said, "Come forth," everyone in that graveyard would have come forth. That was how powerful the voice of Jesus was, but he called out Lazarus' name. It was a **personal and an individual call**. Then He specifically said what He wanted Lazarus to do: "Come forth!"

The moment Jesus called out Lazarus' name, his spirit left Sheol and went back into his body. When his spirit went back into his body, everything that had decayed and decomposed came to life again. His body is now **completely whole and restored**. In this cave now is life. The stone has been rolled away, light is shining in, and Lazarus heeds this **powerful call**.

When God calls your name, obey! I'm glad that when I was 18 years old, He called my name. I stepped out of darkness and death. **Ephesians 2:1** says, "And you He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins." **Christ came to give us life**. I'm glad I got saved. I'm glad I stepped out of that cave.

Lazarus is alive, but he is bound. **Verse 44** tells us that he was wrapped like a mummy. It says he was "bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth (napkin)." He is alive, but he is bound.

Let's look at **the chains that held Lazarus**. Some of you believe that when you got saved, you didn't need anything else. Someone lied to you! You can get saved, have your name written down, have your slate wiped clean, and be bound from head to foot. You can be bound with habits and hurts.

I know people who have been abused that haven't worked through it yet. They're Christians, but they haven't gotten through the abuse. They haven't gotten to the place where they have victory and haven't released forgiveness and healing. When you get saved, you have to let go of the battles you fought in the past. That is why you need the power of the Holy Ghost.

When Lazarus comes hobbling out of that cave, Jesus tells the people, "Loose him and let him go." Wait a minute. That sounds like **He is giving us an assignment, a ministry of loosening and setting people free**. Saved people need deliverance, and the church is in the deliverance ministry.

Jesus said, "I give you the keys to the Kingdom, anything you bind." There are things that need to be bound, but what we are doing is binding the people instead of binding the demons. We're not here to tie people up. We're here to loose people in Jesus' name! **Our ministry is to pray for one another**. Anything you bind on earth is bound in Heaven, and anything you loose on earth is loosed in Heaven.

In **James 5:13-15**, it talks about anointing with oil and praying the prayer of faith, but that is where we stop. That is not the end of it. **James 5:16** says that we are to "confess our faults (trespasses) to

one another.” That means we are to confess that which binds us.

Be careful whom you confess to, because there are gossips in the church. The moment you confess something, there will be people who can't wait to gossip about it. Don't tell just anyone. Tell people you trust. This is a great revelation. Don't tell your problems to people that can't help you. Get around people that love you, are concerned about you, and will pray for you. **We are called to set people free.**

2 Corinthians 3:17 says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (freedom).” **Galatians 5:13** says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty (freedom); only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Lazarus' hands were bound. His hands had to be loosed. Your hands are your work. You have a ministry to do. **Lazarus' feet were bound.** Our feet are our walk. You can get saved yet still live like the devil. You're walking a crooked pathway, but the way is straight when you're walking with Jesus.

Lazarus' eyes were covered. He came out of the cave, but he couldn't see. He had to have that napkin removed, because sight is vision; and if you don't have a vision, you will perish. **God looses our hands** so we can work for Him, and everybody has a ministry. He **looses our feet** to learn how to walk for Him. “My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me.” Then **He opens our eyes** so we can see.

Look at **Verse 44** again. “And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graves clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Loose him and let him go.’” I think if I had witnessed that, it would have stirred me up. If I was lost, I think I would have gotten saved! Wouldn't you? But did you know that miracle divided people?

Look at **Verse 45**. We see **the commitment of our Lord**. “Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did (saw a man raised from the dead), believed in Him.” That shouldn't come as a shock. Many believed on Him, because **the object of their faith was Jesus**. They believed in Jesus. Don't get your eyes on the miracles. Get your eyes on the Miracle-Worker, Jesus! Many saw the miracle and put their faith in Jesus, but not all of them.

Some doubted. They were divided over the miracle. Some believed and some rejected. Some objected to the very fact of the miracle. Look at **Verse 46**. “But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.”

Verse 47: “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, ‘What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.’” I know what I would have done. I would have joined that church! I would have followed that Nazarene! These Pharisees had never seen a miracle, yet they rejected Jesus.

Verse 48: “If we let Him alone like this everyone will believe in Him.” They were afraid the Romans would come and take over. “If we let Him alone like this everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.” They were worried about their

position.

Do you know why churches don't grow? They get locked into turf wars. They are all worried about their position. Don't worry about your position. Worry about whether or not Christ is moving.

Verse 53 is a sad verse. From that moment on, they plotted to kill Jesus. Do you know why they intensified their plans to kill Him? It's because He had the power to bring life back into a dead body. That was it. From that moment on, they plotted to kill Him.

Please don't reject what Christ can do because of your dead doctrines. People say there are no more gifts of the Spirit because some preacher said they stopped with the last apostle. That preacher was wrong! The gifts of the Spirit are for service, not for show. The power of the Holy Spirit is to help us accomplish the tasks He has given us.

Where the anointing of the Lord is, there is freedom. You were born into the Kingdom for liberty, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit destroys yokes of bondage. When we pray for each other, the anointing flows through us, and HE does the work.