



John 5:1-9
Do You Want to Be Made Well?

NKJ John 5:1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

The word here is once choosing one of the many healings of Jesus and setting it before us, and we need to remember that most of his miracles that Jesus did were not recorded by the gospel writers, John himself says it would have been impossible to do that saying in John 21:25 *"And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen."* This one then is being chosen and set before us for at least two reasons, one because it happened on the Sabbath and that appears to be the beginning of the serious conflict with the Jewish authorities, and secondly because it teaches us some very important things about the way God saves us.

Jesus has once again gone up to Jerusalem from Galilee this time for the observance of one of the Holy Days when all Jewish males were expected to go and make sacrifices at the temple, we don't know which one, its not important that we do. But while he is there, Jesus deliberately goes to a place in the city called "Bethesda", which literally means, the house of mercy.

This was a place near the Sheep Gate, which was one of Jerusalem's gates that was named because Sheep being brought in for the market or the temple would enter there. Here at Bethesda there were two connected pools with a colonnade along each side and a fifth colonnade between them.

Hundreds of the sick and infirm sat or lay about the Pool of Bethesda hoping that the water might be stirred up and that they might somehow "win the lottery" by being the first into the water. The Porticos, which were covered areas supported by columns, were built to keep the sun off them

Now everyone who reads this, naturally wonders about the stirring of the water. Was this stirring of the pool something God really did at Bethesda, or something that the people *thought* happened at Bethesda I strongly believe it was the latter, and that verse 4 is intended to explain not what was actually happening, but the reason for the presence of all these sick people

In that sense it is not unlike the modern grotto of Lourdes in France. In 1858 a 14 year old girl saw a vision of Mary and since that time over 200 million people have made a visit to the shrine hoping to be healed by the water in the grotto.

What an awful sight the pool of Bethesda must have been, hundreds of sick people, a great multitude it says, and this was before pain killers, and modern medicine. You can imagine the groans, the stench, the wretchedness of the place. All of these people all hoping that the waters would be stirred, and that they might be first in. You can imagine the hideous rush that would accompany say the wind moving the water as people literally crawled over one other in hopes of getting in.

The ironic thing is that it would undoubtedly be the least sick people not the most sick who made it into the water first!

Christ comes into the midst of that terrible scene, and apparently none recognize him, that is not surprising, their attention is fixed on the water. Think of it this way, if you go to the hospital and are sitting in the waiting room with everyone else, do you expect the person who is going to make you well to walk in off the street dressed like everyone else, or to come through the double doors dressed like a doctor or a nurse?

Jesus however, has come for a distinct purpose to heal a man whom he knows has been lying by that pool, day after day for 38 years. But before he does so, Jesus first asks the man, "Do you want to be made well?"

Question seems so ridiculous, we almost expect a sarcastic answer. If anyone had asked this in modern day America, he probably would have heard something like "*No, I'm working on my tan.*"

But the truth is the question *isn't ridiculous at all*. People can get used to almost any lifestyle, after 38 years of being an invalid, being healed might even be a scary prospect. What now will he do for a living? His friends were all the people of the pool at Bethesda. You grow accustomed to your place in life and settle into the rut. For instance, no one generally says "I want to be on Welfare, or think it's a good situation to be in" but plenty of people never really make an effort to get off once they are.

When I'm doing Marriage Counseling one of the questions I generally ask is "***Do you want a good marriage? A biblical marriage?***" Generally the answer I always get back is "yeah I want a biblical marriage" even if the husband says it without any conviction in his voice. More than once, I've wanted to respond "***no you don't***" ***What you want*** is you and your behavior to stay exactly the same, but you want the results to be different. You want your wife to stop nagging you, or you want your husband to pay attention when you speak and put the toilet lid down and pick up his pants from the floor, or for their to be no more affairs. You want your comfort zone, and your personal peace, but you don't want a biblical marriage, because that would involve radical change. You want an unbiblical marriage, but you don't want the natural results of it. Think of it this way, most people don't want to go to hell when they die, but that doesn't mean they want to be saved and live as Christ's disciples.

Now this man tells Jesus he does want to be healed, but he has despaired of it happening. He realizes he can't do it. And so he feels he can't be healed. His innate theology is "***God Helps those who help themselves***" – that is Ben Franklin incidentally, not the bible. And he thinks, I **can't** help myself, and there is no man to put me in the pool, therefore I'm doomed.

Now the world does say, "God Helps those who help themselves" but the Word teaches that "God Helps the Helpless"

And that is precisely what happens here. He didn't expect healing that day, he didn't ask Christ for it, he wasn't especially worthy of it, and he certainly can't do anything to assist in the process, and yet that is exactly what Jesus does, Jesus doesn't even touch him, he simply says pick up your bed and walk.

Now by himself the man doesn't have the power to comply, you or I could have commanded him to get up offering all sorts of incentives for doing so all day long, and at the end of the day he'd still be lying there on his mat hoping we'll go away.

But Christ word is different, his command comes with the power to enable the man to comply. His call to this man to get up is effectual. The man is healed and the next thing he knows he is standing. This power is the same power that causes Lazarus to arise even though he was four days dead and walk out of the tomb. He has that power, and you and I don't, because Jesus is the Son of God.

Three Applications:

1) In this history of the paralytic at the pool John is also showing us a picture of the true condition of humanity. When it comes to salvation, we too are by nature paralyzed, utterly impotent, completely incapable of saving themselves, healing the breach between them and God, changing their sin nature, and invariably they are looking for salvation through some sort of work, just as these people thought the first one in the pool would be healed. If I make this pilgrimage, or if I do this good work, or join this group, or give to charity, or pray five times a day, or keep the law, or die fighting unbelievers, then I'll be saved and go to heaven.

We need to come face to face with our inability and stop looking to works that will never "do the trick" Instead we need to look to Christ:

Matt. 19:25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Friends: Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6) but you are lame and can't walk to him, that is why he must come to you and draw you to him, just as he came to this man at the portico: ***John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.***

What you need most then, is to have your eyes opened to your own helplessness, and to know your need of Him. Because you can't help you, no man, not even I can. He alone Can Save You.

2) What about you? Do you want to be healed? Not of your physical ailments, for as bad as they may be, the worst they can do is kill you. I'm talking about your worst problem, the problem that if you aren't healed of it will make your life here on earth miserable and will eventually send you to hell for eternity, do you want to be healed of the curse of sin and the eternal death that is the wages of sin?

Many people attend church for a little while before they realize the answer to do you want to be healed for them is really, No. Especially when they see how difficult the journey of a pilgrim is. How much tribulation there is. They look, they see the broad way, and they realize, I like that better. If being healed means repenting and leaving behind the sin-sick life I am living now, I don't want to be healed.

Spurgeon asked this question of his listeners: Do you desire to be saved? Do you know what being saved is?" "Oh," say you, "it is escaping from hell." No, no, no; that is the result of being saved, but being saved is a different thing. Do you want to be saved from the power of sin? Do you desire to be saved from being covetous, worldly-minded, bad-tempered, unjust, ungodly, domineering, drunken, or profane? Are you willing to give up the sin that is dearest to you? "No," says one, "I cannot honestly say I desire all that." Then, you are not the man I am seeking this morning: but is there one here who says, "Yes, I long to be rid of sin, root and branch; I desire, by God's grace, this very day to become a Christian, and to be saved from sin." That is what wanting to be healed

3) Do you want to be healed now today, or are you content to wait, because you don't see the urgency of it? Are you content to keep coming to the place where you could be saved, but ever waiting for some sort of Angelic stirring of the pool of your life? So many come so near to the kingdom but they end up hanging around waiting for feelings or wonders.

God's Gospel tells you what to believe: "'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.'" And it tells you when: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Wait, wait, wait, is the Devil's gospel, keep hearing but don't go yet. You're still safe, after all you even go to church, but it isn't time to be saved just yet. There will be time later, in the meantime we have some wild oats to sow, remember as the bumper sticker says good girls go to heaven, but bad girls go everywhere and we haven't been everywhere just yet. He tells us there is time yet for two lives, the bad one and unsaved one and then when that is out of our system, the good.

Spurgeon analogized this thinking to that of the foolish drunk in the days before electricity, who staggering into his home late at night and saw the candle that had been left burning for him so that he could see his way to bed. But his drunkenness made him see double: "I will blow out one," and as he blew it out, in a moment he was in the dark. Many a man sees double through the drunkenness of sin—he thinks that he has two lives, one life to sow his wild oats in, and then the last part of life in which to turn to God; so, like a fool, he blows out the only candle that he has, and in the dark he will have to lie down for ever.