

A Remarkable Ability

SERMON

By

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TEXT: John 5:19-29

PROP: Hearing and believing are innate characteristics of those who are saved. We must praise God for His grace and recognize that this blessed estate finds its origin in the sovereign workings of God.

John 5:1-18 (ESV)

The Healing at the Pool on the Sabbath

5 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, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” 7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

Jesus Is Equal with God

18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Here we understand that Jesus was hated by the Jews not only because he disregarded the rabbinic interpretation of the Sabbath but also because He claimed to be Deity. His use of the title "Son of God" clearly indicates that Christ makes Himself equal with God. Thus, they determined to kill Him. In regard to Christ's divinity here and throughout the Gospel of John, we ought to remember John's testimony in 20:30, 31, a text which serves as the thesis statement of the book.

John 20:30-31 (ESV)

The Purpose of This Book

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ **but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

John 5:19-29 (ESV)

The Authority of the Son

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ **Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.**

²⁵ **"Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.** ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸ **Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.**

There are some things on this earth that we don't know anything about. It isn't that only a very few brilliant scholars or scientists who specialize in these areas know about them. No one knows, for example, what gravity is. We may know what it does but we don't know what it is and because we don't have the foggiest notion as to what it is, we have no

control over it. This of course makes travel into deep space impossible for us. Life is another thing we know nothing about. We can describe what living things do such as assimilate and metabolize food, move from one place to another and reproduce but again, we haven't the foggiest notion as to what it is. Nor have we ever been able to create life in a test tube. We can make the amino acids that are present in DNA from matter that already exists but we cannot make them live.

In this passage Jesus is comparing Himself with God the Father, and in so doing He clearly portrays Himself as God for He has the same power and authority as God the Father. At the same time the distinctions between God the Father and God the Son and God the Spirit are maintained. **In verse 21 we read that both the Father and the Son have power to raise the dead and to grant physical life to whomever they wish.** Let us take careful note of the fact that biological life as we know it comes from God. It is not a chemical reaction nor can we create it in a test tube; **its only source is God himself.** The law of biogenesis states that life begets life but the first life came from God and in raising the dead God intervenes in the affairs of nature to give biological life to whomever he wishes.

Verse 22 informs us that both the Father and the Son have the authority to judge and rule over the affairs of mankind. However, though the Father has the power to judge, He has given all judgment to God the Son in order that we should honor the Son even as we should honor the Father. Verse 26 informs us that Jesus has life in Himself. **He is the embodiment of life and the very source of it.** Thus would one think that everyone would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and have eternal life. Since Jesus is the only source of physical and spiritual life what would hold us back from laying hold of this life.

We have great liberty in this country to hear the word of God. Certainly not as in many countries where one grows in the knowledge of Christ at great peril; where one must worship under the threat of imprisonment; where one preaches the cross of Christ to his death or where ones children are taken away to be taught atheism and humanism. This is a liberty that many have died for in the history of our nation, yet it is a liberty that is largely ignored or abused. Instead of using their liberty for their spiritual profit, most use it to follow after a multitude of cults and entertainments with an apathy and laxness that has not often been known in the world.

Though the Lord Jesus is the only source of life, people are not subjecting themselves to the ministry of God's word. Though Jesus is the only means of salvation, though in Him resides all judgment, yet the world is not flocking to the cross of Christ. The apostle John gives us the reason for this in our text:

John 5:24 (ESV) – 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

That many people do not come to Christ for salvation is simply that they do not have the gift of hearing. They do not have the **remarkable ability** to discern spiritual truth and the Lord emphasizes what He is saying by his use of the Hebrew idiom "truly, truly." He tells us therefore that what He is saying is very important. It is very important to know that believers have been given the ability to discern spiritual truth.

"The one who **is** hearing and who **is** believing," says Jesus. This is the Greek present tense which represents a continuous action. Thus the Lord is saying that people who are regenerated, converted, or born again have been given a remarkable ability, that of hearing and believing. Believers have ears to hear!

Romans 10:17 (ESV) – 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

We don't come to faith in Christ from a book of Algebra or Physics, and I know of some who would say we don't come to anything from books like those. We don't even obtain saving faith from nature. No matter how much you like to hunt, or commune with nature, or play golf, or whatever you like to do in the out-of-doors, it will never save your soul.

Psalm 19:1-3 (ESV) – 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. **2** Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. **3** There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard.

As it stands Psalm 19 tells us that the glory of God is proclaimed everywhere on earth by what he has made. Your translation may have the italicized word *where* (*Where* their voice is not heard) in verse 3 which indicates that it was added by the translators to give a meaning they believe is there. Such a translation indicates that the voice of the things created is heard everywhere and by everyone. However the Hebrew literally reads, *not heard is their voice*.

אִין-אָמַר וְאִין דְּבָרִים בְּלִי נִשְׁמָע קוֹלָם :⁴

Therefore the ESV is correct (whose voice is not heard) to the effect that even though the heavens are declaring the glory of God - they are not heard. Nature cannot bring us to faith in Christ and that which nature declares of God's glory falls on deaf ears.

Can you discern parables? Do you long to sit under the preaching and teaching of the word of God?

Matthew 13:10-13 (ESV) – 10 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Why do you speak to them in parables?” 11 And he answered them, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, **but to them it has not been given.** 12 For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

If, therefore, you love the gospel, If you love to tell the story, you are blessed indeed. If you can say with the sons of Korah,

Psalm 42:1-2 (ESV) – 1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

If you can say this then you are blessed with ears to hear and eyes to see.

Matthew 13:16 (ESV) – 16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.

Acts 16:13-14 (ESV) – 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. **The Lord opened her heart to pay attention** to what was said by Paul.

Because God had granted her this remarkable ability to hear spiritual things she responded to the gospel and was saved. So it is that believers have ears to hear.

However, believers also have spiritual discernment. This is one of the **marks** of the Christian. Regarding his brethren in Corinth, Paul writes,

Acts 16:13-14 (ESV) – 13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. **The Lord opened her heart to pay attention** to what was said by Paul.

God reveals things to His people that are a complete mystery to those who are not the people of God. The one has eyes to see and the other does not.

The result of this is,

1 Corinthians 2:14 (ESV) – 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

On the other hand, Christians have the Spirit of God, and even though they too are natural men, they can, because God's Spirit is in them, discern spiritual things. They have eyes to see.

Another characteristic or mark of the Christian is that he has an enlightened mind. Paul prays:

Ephesians 1:17-18 (ESV) – 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, **18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened**, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

Paul prays for this knowing that Christians have the ability to hear and to see spiritual things. He prays for the enlightenment of the minds of the saints because they **can** be enlightened. God may give up the ungodly to a depraved mind but to his people He gives enlightened minds that know the hope of their calling, that appreciate the riches of glory for their inheritance, that have received the greatness of God's power, that believe in the resurrection of Christ and that know the glory of the church under king Jesus.

So then believers have ears to hear, eyes to see, and minds that are enlightened but they also have new hearts. Ezekiel writes:

Ezekiel 36:25-28 (ESV) – 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. **26** And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. **28** You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Not stony hard hearts, but hearts that love the Lord will be given to God's people. They will be obedient hearts, they will have an inheritance in heaven and a new spirit that is discerning and clean from sin and loathe idolatry. Do you have this characteristic? Are

you now in the estate of believing on God and hearing His word? This must be your estate; this must be your condition to have eternal life.

We all know that there are radio waves in this room and everywhere on earth. We cannot see them but we know they are there because we have all used appliances that can detect and utilize these radio waves. After the same manner, we must have God's receiver implanted by the Holy Spirit, in order to know and discern things that are spiritual. It is God who moves people to repentance, who enlightens, who renews and grants discernment and hearing. **God is the origin of the believer's ability to receive and discern spiritual truth.**

John 5:24 (ESV) – 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

He does not come into judgment; he has passed out of death into life. **To the one in a state of believing and hearing - this has already happened.** The believer has already passed (μεταβέβηκεν) is perfect action that starts in the past and finishes in the past) out of death into life. The one who is hearing does not even now come into judgment. This change in status with God has already occurred. God did it! God is the origin of the believer's ability to receive and discern spiritual truth.

We must understand that believers are **drawn** by God. According to John 6:44 they are dragged as one would pull in a drag net. "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws (drags) him;" No one can come to God for salvation on his own volition. No one will ever in and of himself say, 'I will arise and go to my Father.' Such is only possible if the Father draws him.

Believers are **powerfully called** by God who is the source of their ability to be saved. Paul writes:

2 Timothy 1:8-9 (ESV) – 8 Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, **9 who saved us and called us to a holy calling**, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

We are called according to His own purpose and grace from before the world began. That which was given us as believers is God's grace and purpose; it is His calling.

Then believers are also **regenerated** by God's Spirit. **John 3:5-8 (ESV) – 5** Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born

of the Spirit is spirit. **7** Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' **8** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

Therefore, the source of rebirth is God. We are reborn through an agency outside ourselves. According to verse 6 our second birth comes from the Holy Spirit. In verse 7 we read that we must be born ἄνωθεν, 'from above', and in verse 8 we understand that God brings the new birth to people as He desires to do so. Even as the wind blows where it wants to, so is every one who is born of the Spirit.

Then finally, believers are **made alive** by God. This remarkable ability of spiritual life comes from God. In Ephesians chapter two we read,

Ephesians 2:4-10 (ESV) – **4** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6** and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And **this is not your own doing**; it is the gift of God, **9** not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

God, therefore, is the source our remarkable ability our ability to believe, to see, and to hear spiritual things.

Believers in Jesus Christ are something like computers. A computer is a wonderful, complicated piece of equipment, but it cannot function as a computer until it has been programmed. Its ability to function as a computer comes from a source outside itself. All of us need to examine ourselves to see if we have this remarkable ability to discern spiritual truth. In addition to the ability to see and hear spiritual truth, we need to put this ability to work by subjecting ourselves to preaching and teaching of the word of God as often as it is possible for us to do so. Most people do not seem to be able to come to Christ for salvation. They have all of the liberty, the freedom to avail themselves of grace. They have the Lord of glory before them in the pages of scripture which they are free to study to their hearts content, but they prefer the pleasures of this world and they count as foolishness the most important thing this earthly life affords - fellowship with God through Christ.

God gives the ability. If you lack it, ask of God says James.

James 1:5 (ESV) – 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

How easy it is and how available and free; if we come to God, he will not turn us away. Repent therefore and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rejoice if you have a measure of this remarkable ability. Rejoice Christian that God has loved you and granted peace to you and the ability and longing to hear His word. You already have eternal life. You have already been moved from death to life.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.