

Subject: God's Help for the Hopeless

Scripture: John 5:1-16

This describes the third of eight miracles in John:

- John 2 (water turned into wine) – Jesus is the Master over disappointment
- John 4 (nobleman's son healed) – Jesus is the Master over distance
- John 5 (impotent man healed) – Jesus is the Master over disability

These miracles were recorded for a specific purpose:

John 20:30-31 ³⁰ *And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹ But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*

We actually see two opposing forces at work in the Gospel of John. Some people see Jesus' miracles and hear His teaching and receive Him while others see and hear the same evidence and reject Him. John mentioned this in the introduction:

John 1:11-12 ¹¹ *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹² But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

In John 5-7, we see a shift in the Jews' attitude toward Christ. At first, they had reservations about Him. Their attitude was to wait and see. In this section their reservations turn into outright rejection.

A PITIFUL MAN (vs. 1-7)

- The place – In Jerusalem was a pool called Bethesda (house of mercy, from which we have today Bethesda Naval Hospital).
- The people – A great multitude of invalids. Imagine an overcrowded nursing home without a staff. This is a picture of our needy world. Have you noticed how many needy people there are? Jesus said, "The poor you always have with you." He could also have said, "The sick and suffering you always have with you."
- The problem – This man had been sick for 38 years...just think how long that was for him to suffer and be helpless...day after day, week after week, year after year. This poor man had been sick longer than Jesus had been on this earth. He could not get into the pool, and even worse, he had no one to help him (vs. 7). He had no strength to help himself, no hope of a better life, and no one else to help him. He was helpless. Can you imagine the physical and emotional pain of this dear man?

A POWERFUL MIRACLE (vs. 8-9)

- The question – Notice three things in verse 6: what Jesus saw, what Jesus knew, and what Jesus said: "Do you want to be well?" There have been many suggestions as to why Jesus asked him that question. More than likely it was to give the man hope. He probably thought he would live and die beside that pool. Notice the man's answer in

verse 7, “I have no man.” He thought the answer to his problem was a man. There are people facing all kinds of hopeless situations and they are thinking, “I have no man.” I have no doctor who can heal me. I have no friend who can help me. I have no person who can give me money. People need more than a man. They need God.

- The command – “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.” That was humanly impossible. Whatever Jesus commands you to do, He enables you to do. He called Lazarus from the grave, “Lazarus, come forth.” In the same way Jesus commands us to repent and believe, and then He enables us to repent and believe.
- The cure – This man was healed instantly, completely, and publicly for all to see. He took up his bed (pallet) and walked. There was no turning back or relapse. There was no need for a wheelchair or walker. After 38 years of misery he was able to walk.

A PERSECUTED MASTER (vs. 10-16)

- The controversy – One of the key facts in the story is that this happened on the Sabbath day (vs. 9, 10, 16). The Jews thought this man violated the Sabbath by carrying his pallet. This wasn’t a violation of the law, but a violation their interpretation of the law. **Exodus 20:8** *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.* **Jeremiah 17:21-22** ²¹ *Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem;* ²² *Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.* It was wrong to do normal work on the Sabbath, but this man had been healed and was not doing work, but carrying his bed. Their traditions and teachings became more important than God’s Word.
- The conversion – Jesus found this man in the temple (vs. 14). We are not told why he went to the temple, but it’s likely that he was thankful and wanted to worship God. Jesus found him and told him to sin no more. Jesus warned him to repent and stop sinning. He said the same thing to the woman caught in the act of adultery, “Go and sin no more” (Jn. 8:11). If he didn’t repent and stop sinning something far worse would happen. He would go to Hell and suffer forever. At the pool of Bethesda, Jesus healed him physically. In the temple He saved him spiritually. Now this man could say, “It is well with my soul.”
- The conflict – The Jews persecuted Jesus and wanted to kill Him (vs. 16). There is nothing worse than a hard heart. This story begins with a group of helpless people who needed new bodies and it ends with a group of people who needed new hearts. The most hopeless people on earth are those who are so blind and hard-hearted they can’t see the truth and won’t believe it.

By nature we are like this poor man and we need what only Christ can do for us.

Romans 5:6 *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*
We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.