

JOHN 5:1-9
DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 5 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As I have said in our study of John, this Gospel is different than the synoptic Gospel's or the Gospel's of Matthew, Mark and Luke. They tend to cover the same territory giving us a different insight in the stories and portraying Jesus in a different way.

But John is writing so that you would believe that Jesus is Almighty God and that you would repent of your sins and ask Him to be Lord and Savior of your life.

In fact, that is exactly what John tells us in John 20:30-31. He wrote, "**And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**"

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, "**There are also many other signs and miracles which Jesus performed in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written (recorded) in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ (the Anointed One), the Son of God, and that through believing and cleaving to and trusting and relying upon Him you may have life through (in) His name [through Who He is]. [Ps 2:7,12.]**"

And if you think about it, all that Jesus did was to show to the Jewish people that He is the Messiah, the One the Old Testament prophets spoke of, but many refused to believe, especially the Jewish religious leaders who swayed the people because it went against what they believed, the traditions they had!

And, as we will see here in John chapter 5, tradition is a powerful weapon against faith. Jesus is going to heal a lame man and for the Jewish religious leaders, they could not handle that, and they are going to come against Him.

Now, before we are too quick to judge them for their actions, I think the Lord is going to be speaking to us this morning about our walk, is it lame? Are we crippled in our walk with the Lord?

And there are really two main points that I want to bring out of this study and the first is simple.

Apart from Christ, we can't walk, we are lame in sin and there is nothing we can do to rectify that problem. Also, there is nothing that religion can do to rectify that problem. And there are many answers out there, but if you can't walk you are lame!

The second point is dealing with our walk as Christians. You see, I believe that we can allow our walk to be hampered, I think we can become lame in our walk with the Lord because of the things we are not dealing with in our own lives.

So two really important points are going to emerge from the text this morning.

And as we look at our own lives, as we look at the events that have happened in this world, we tend to see them as spectacular, earth shattering, at least some of them. But when compared to what Jesus has done, they pale in comparison.

Ray Stedman put it like this. He wrote,

I picked up the latest issue of *Time Magazine* last week and found that the entire issue was devoted to a celebration of Time's sixtieth year in publishing.

The theme of the magazine was, *The most amazing sixty years in history*. It was a review of many events of the past sixty years, a highly biased one, which centered around Time's own existence.

Even for such dramatic years as the past sixty, I thought that claim was rather ludicrous. It reminded me of the man who said to me last week that his tie was the greatest thing since peanut butter! I regarded both claims as having about equal validity.

There have been some great events in the last sixty years, many of world-shaking importance, but none of them, or all of them taken together, can remotely approach the impact that has been made upon this earth and its inhabitants by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Any honest historian would have to admit that to be true.

No account of the explosion of an atom bomb, a voyage to the moon, or the outbreak of a world war equals in significance the words of John in his gospel, "the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," (John 1:14). It is that marvelous life we are focusing on in this gospel.

- <https://bit.ly/2UH156d>

How true that is. The life, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest story ever told and without it, we are lost, we are dead in our trespasses and sins.

And yet, because of God's great love for us, He died for us so we can live with Him!

Just a little background information. We have seen in our study back in John chapter 2, Jesus moved from the area of Galilee to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast.

Then in John chapter 4 He is heading back to the area of Galilee and as He is traveling, He goes through Samaria and there meets a woman by the well of Jacob and she not only gets saved, but she goes back to her town and gets the men of the city to come to see Jesus and many got saved.

Now, as we are going to see this morning, Jesus is back in Jerusalem. That is where the events here in John chapter 5 will take place.

I have called our study this morning – ***DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?***

And it does sound funny, especially if you are sick. Of course you would want to be made well.

And as we will see, we have all kinds of reasons why we can't, all kinds of excuses why this can't happen and yet the Lord is going to ask us, "***Do you want to be made well?***"

I have broken these verses we will be looking at this morning in John chapter 5 into several main points and they are as follows.

THE SETTING – JOHN 5:1-2

FALSE HOPE – JOHN 5:3-4

THE QUESTION – JOHN 5:5-6

WORLDLY HELP – JOHN 5:7

THE COMMAND – JOHN 5:8

OBEDIENCE – JOHN 5:9

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 5, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

JOHN 5

VERSES 1-2

As our story opens up, we see that Jesus went “**up**” to Jerusalem. In other words – ***THE SETTING!***

Now how can that be when he was in Galilee, which was north of Jerusalem. He should have gone down to Jerusalem, right?

As you read the Scriptures you will always see that when someone is traveling to Jerusalem, no matter where they are coming from, no matter which direction they are traveling, they are going ***UP*** to Jerusalem!

The reason being is simple. Jerusalem was elevated and it was the place the Temple was located, the worship of God. So you went up to the house of the Lord!

We are also told that there “**was a feast of the Jews**” going on in Jerusalem, but we are not told which feast it was.

Some feel it was the Feast of Passover, others it was Pentecost and still others the Feast of Booths.

The interesting thing is that John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does not tell us and I don't think that is the point of what John is writing about.

All we know is that it was one of the three Jewish feasts that every adult male within 15 miles of Jerusalem was to attend. Those feasts were Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles.

(Deuteronomy 16:16)

I think people try to fix one of these feasts to this story, but again, that is not the point that John is making here.

John also tells us that in Jerusalem there was this pool, called Bethesda and it had five porches over it.

Now there have been many who have tried to negate the existence of this pool, but this pool was excavated in around 1956 just north of the Temple Mount.

One of the reasons no one could find it was that it was covered with debris that had piled on top of it for centuries.

And when you visit St. Anne's Church in Jerusalem, they will show you the deep excavation that has revealed the ancient Pool of Bethesda.

And this is fascinating to me.

You see, the name "**Bethesda**" means "*house of mercy.*"

Also, this Pool of Bethesda had five porches or coverings for protection from the elements.

And there were actually two pools next to each other.

Also, this pool is located close to the Sheep Gate. (Nehemiah 3:1, Nehemiah 12:39)

What is the point of that?

Simple. It was through the sheep gate that the sacrifices were brought into the city of Jerusalem and where these animals were washed.

Get the picture of what this pool was like as they used it to clean animals that were to be taken to the Temple for sacrifice. Keep in mind that this pool was only some two or three feet deep, and it was just filthy with all the dirt of the animals that were washed in it.

So you have these five porches and that should remind us of the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Thus, as you looked at the one porch that extended across this pool, it gave you a picture of the stone tablets that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai.

So, I believe what we see here is a picture of the Law before us.

As we read on we are going to be introduced specifically to one man, in John 5:5-6, but before we read of this man we will see that there are many, many others in this picture as well.

And this man, as well as all these other people are looking for help with their problems, they are looking for hope that something can be done to heal them of their infirmity!

Look at what John tells us next.

VERSES 3-4

Hope is a powerful force in our life. Hal Lindsay, author of the Late Great Planet Earth said, ***“Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air . . . but only one second without hope.”***

When you eliminate hope from the picture you lose the will to go on, and we see that often today. People are desperate, they are depressed, they are discouraged, why?

Because they have lost hope!

Day in and day out the bills keep coming and you see no way out and you lose hope!

You look at this nation, you look at this world and you see all that is going on with earthquakes, pestilences, wars, rumors of wars and-so-on, and it can cause you to be very depressed because you see no way out, you have lost hope that things can change!

You watch or listen or read the news and, well, I don't even want to go there because it is very depressing, discouraging, hopeless, at least that is what it seems like!

Maybe it is our family life, relationships, jobs or whatever, and you see that it is never going to change, it is not going to get better, and you are discouraged because you have lost hope that things can change!

Specifically here we see “**. . . a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.**” John 5:3. That was their only hope and the reason why they were there!

And, as we will see, these people all gathered together at this Pool of Bethesda, which was located by the sheep gate, to be healed by these waters as they were stirred!

What is that all about?

What seems to have taken place is that over time a tradition had developed that said that the first one in the pool after the water was stirred would be healed!

As crazy as that tradition sounds, many do similar things today because they are looking for hope, but tragically, as our next point tells us, it was a – ***FALSE HOPE!***

Ray Stedman put it like this. He wrote,

They believed in a rather superstitious way that from time to time when the water was troubled - when it would rise rapidly and then sink again - that this was caused by an angel who visited the pool, and the first man who got into it when it was so troubled would be healed.

This is akin to what is found in many parts of the world today.

Lourdes, in southern France, has a spa which many believe has healing capacities.

The shrine of Guadalupe, in Mexico City, has thousands of crutches stacked along its walls where people have been healed in this special place where they thought they could receive a blessing from God.

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You see, people are looking for hope, especially when it comes to health issues.

Let me show you what I mean in regard to something that we believe will help us and, in the end, it hurts us or does nothing and yet we will spend all kinds of money to obtain this product.

I don't want to ruin something you think was right, so I won't go over too many of these healing remedies, but I will give you just a couple. We are told,

In the early 1900s people believed that radioactivity was good for you. Radioactive items sold included radium pendants for rheumatism, uranium blankets for arthritis, anti-aging radioactive cosmetics, radioactive water, and more.

Radioactive water became particularly popular when radiation was found in well-known hot springs that people thought had healing properties.

Thinking that the water was responsible for those healing properties, radioactive drinks were marketed to the public.

Eben Byers, a well-known industrialist, claimed to drink three bottles a day.

His death inspired the 1932 *Wall Street Journal* headline "***The Radium Water Worked Fine Until His Jaw Came off***".

Shark cartilage is marketed as a supplement that supporters say can be effective in the treatment of cancer.

A surgeon named John Prudden began investigating the use of animal cartilage as a medical treatment in the 1950s.

He reported that he was able to shrink tumors and treat cancers using animal cartilage.

These results have not been replicated in other studies, but after the book “Sharks Don't Get Cancer” was published in 1992, shark cartilage became popular in alternative medicine.

The thing is, sharks do get cancer, and scientists have known that for more than 150 years.

There is no scientific evidence for any health benefits from shark cartilage.

- <https://bit.ly/3gtUvaP>

And I can go on, but I think you get the idea. When health issues or other things happen in our lives, when there is nothing that we can do on our own, we start looking for an answer that will solve the problem, we are looking for hope and it doesn't matter how crazy it sounds, we will go for it, what do we have to lose?

And that is exactly what this great multitude of people were doing there at the Pool of Bethesda, looking for hope for their physical problems, as crazy as it sounds!

How did they know when to try and rush down into this water?

John tells us when the water was stirred or bubbled up.

Interestingly enough, the word for “**pool**” in the Greek is COLUMBETHRON and it means, “*a deep pool from underneath which comes bubbling.*”

Thus, when there was an eruption of this spring, you would get the bubbling or stirring of the waters and the people rushed in to be healed.

I know, kind of a strange story.

Now here is the big question. ***“Was this a healing of God or just a legend that developed, a kind of wishful thinking?”***

First of all, God can heal anyway He wants but it would seem that this is more of a hopeful feeling than an actual healing.

You see, if you were lame, blind and-so-on, those with the more severe physical problems, it would be more difficult or even impossible for them to get into the water, to beat the others in so they could be healed!

But if you had a headache, no problem, you would make it in and ultimately, you would be healed, or the headache would get better.

And because of that, and the deep desire for hope for their situation, this tradition developed, and it affected those who were in need! Think about it, what else could they do, it was their only hope!

Let me also say this. There are also others who say it was a healing and the waters were a place of contact where a person's faith could be released.

I agree, that can be true, as we saw with the woman with the bleeding problem who came just to touch the hem of His garment and she would be healed, and she was!

But if it was the water that released their faith, why would it only happen to the first person who entered in when the waters were stirred? That does not seem fair, it does not seem right.

Keep in mind that God can and does do things in unexpected ways. But something isn't necessarily from God simply because it is unexpected or unusual.

I think this is just some tradition that continued to grow and now, many came to this pool to be healed, and yet, only the first person in would be, at least that is what they thought.

It truly was a – ***FALSE HOPE!***

Now let me share with you this picture that I think the Holy Spirit is painting for us.

I think this is a great picture of the Law.

What do I mean by that?

The Law tells us, ***“Do better! Be the first! Try harder! God helps those who help themselves.”*** And that list can go on and as you can see, it is all man trying to accomplish this.

But we are going to be introduced to a man who could not get into the water to be healed because he could not walk. And we will see that what the Law could not do, heal this person, Jesus will, and He does!

As you read the Bible you can clearly see that the Law can't save you, it can't heal you, all it can do is expose your sin and as you looked at those filthy waters of your life, as much as some may see their sin being washed away, it remains.

The Law shows us our sin but Jesus cleanses us from our sin, completely!

And here's the thing. Just like back in Jesus' day, many people run for shelter under it, they want to be covered by it, but they can't be healed by it!

Make no mistake about it, there is no mercy in the Law, only judgment for failing to keep it.

And yes, some people feel good about their actions, the things they are doing, but there is not true healing in that, they are not saved by their works. In other words, it is a – **FALSE**

HOPE!

Even in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies sat the Ark of the Covenant in which the Law, the 10 Commandments were placed.

And we are told that God did not sit upon the Ark, the Law, but upon the Mercy Seat.

Keep in mind that on the Day of Atonement the High Priest would come and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat.

The Bible Tells us that Jesus is our Mercy Seat, and it is His shed blood that covers our sins!

Let me share this with you as it gives us a picture of what this area was like. We are told, *“What a pathetic sight the crowd around the pool must have been! According to verse 3, ‘a great number of disabled people’ were there. Not just a few, but hundreds of people gathered around those porches at Bethesda. The sick, including those with undiagnosed diseases. Those who were so feverish they had to stay in the shade because the heat of the sun was unbearable. The blind-some congenitally blind, some newly blind. The sightless huddled close to the edge of the pool, hoping someone would lead them into the pool when the waters quivered. The withered and the lame, who could not make it to the pool on their own. Their only hope to reach the waters was to crawl over others weaker than themselves. What a pitiful crowd of broken humanity! It does not take much imagination to see those withered, wasted bodies, to smell the stench, to see the filth, and to sense the pathos [despair] of the old and young among that impotent, suffering humanity. It had to be a horrible, distressing sight - except for one thing - Jesus was there.”*

Absolutely and how often we don't think about Jesus, we don't look to Him, but we look to ourselves to fix the problems of life and when we come to the end of ourselves, we cry out, ***“Jesus help me!”*** That should have been our first response!

Make no mistake about it, Jesus is the only hope for the hopeless. No matter what the problem, or how impossible the situation - Jesus is the answer, in Him there is always hope!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

They lingered round that uncertain, disappointing water, though the Son of God was present. . . . Surely there is a lesson for us in this. The pool thickly populated, and Jesus passing by unheeded! What a witness of man's religion! Ordinances, with all their complicated machinery, sought after, and the grace of God slighted.

- J. G. Bellett

Now there is one more point here and I want to touch on it because in some of your Bible's verse 4 is left out and part of verse 3 is left out. And they will tell you that the best manuscripts don't have these verses. Please disregard what they are saying.

I am not going to go into a study on the different manuscripts here, but let's just look at this using our common sense.

I am going to read to you how they think this should go by starting in John 5:2-3a and then verse 5 and you tell me if this makes any sense at all.

This is how they want you to read it, ***“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 . . . 5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.”***

Does that make any sense to you?

Why were these people there?

You see, by taking those verses out or altering them, you take out the reason why they were there, the hope of being healed!

I like the way that Warren Wiersbe put it. He wrote,

While it is true that some manuscripts omit the end of John 5:3 and all of verse 4, it is also true that the event (and the man's words in John 5:7) would make little sense if these words are eliminated. Why would anybody, especially a man sick for so many years, remain in one place if nothing special were occurring? You would think that after thirty-eight years of nothing happening to anybody, the man would go elsewhere and stop hoping! It seems wisest for us to accept the fact that something extraordinary kept all these handicapped people at this pool, hoping for a cure.

- Warren Wiersbe, The Wiersbe Bible Commentary – NT, p. 244

Now listen to one man's story, because it truly is sad as he was in a hopeless condition!

VERSES 5-6

Remember what we were told in John 5:3, that there were a “**great multitude of sick people**” waiting at this pool for the waters to be stirred so they could be the first one in and be healed!

And amongst that “**great multitude of sick people**” was a man who could not walk and this infirmity he had for thirty-eight years! His whole body was failing and yet he waited there by these waters to be healed!

It was a hope that had been long in disappointment! We don't know how many times he came to this pool to be healed, but he left as he came, unable to walk!

Now, out of that "**great multitude of sick people**" Jesus looks to one man. No one else looked to Jesus, but now that Jesus calls out to this man, he responds. He no longer is watching the water; he is watching Jesus!

Spurgeon said, "*A blindness had come over these people at the pool; there they were, and there was Christ, who could heal them, but not a single one of them sought him. Their eyes were fixed on the water, expecting it to be troubled; they were so taken up with their own chosen way that the true way was neglected.*"

How true that is in our world today!

Now how come Jesus did not heal all those people?

The faith teachers of today would tell you that they did not have enough faith to be healed. But this man did not have faith in Jesus to be healed. In fact, in John 5:13 we are told that this man did not even know who Jesus was at this point. It wasn't until later that Jesus revealed Himself to this man.

All we can say is that this is the Sovereignty of God, He showed mercy on this man who was crippled for thirty-eight years!

And here's the thing. I know that God is love and there is no darkness in Him at all. I know that He does what is best for our lives. Thus, in knowing God, I can trust Him even though I don't understand why some are healed and some are not. I can rest in that.

Now Jesus asks this man who can't walk a very simple question, "**Do you want to be made well?**"

Now that seems like a cruel question, right? Of course it does. Then why did Jesus ask this man if he wanted to be healed?

I believe it was to draw out his faith.

That is – ***THE QUESTION! - DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?***

Now for those who are crippled in sin, in bondage to sin, Jesus wants to set you free. He does not want you to destroy yourself by those things that have you crippled.

And apart from Christ, everyone is in bondage to sin, and they are headed for destruction, maybe not in this life, but in what is to come, eternal life. You see, apart from Christ you will spend an eternity in the Lake of Fire because you have rejected the forgiveness of your sins that is only found in Jesus.

But how does this then relate to us as Christians?

I think a lot of Christians are crippled in their walk with God, not physically crippled, but crippled because of anger, of hatred, of bitterness, of unforgiveness, and whatever else you want to put in there. Their walk is hampered because they refuse to deal with these issues, and they cling to them and won't let go!

And you look at their lives and it is not good.

Now let me be clear on this, they have a good reason why they are behaving like that, well, maybe not a good reason, but they can and we can justify our actions and we do a good job with it, at least we think we do.

And here comes Jesus and He tells them, ***“Do you want to be made well?”***

And they say, ***“No, I'm good. They are just getting what they deserve. I will show them. Thanks anyway!”***

And tragically, they remain in that condition, not because they have to but because they chose to be in that condition.

And the bottom line is this. If you want to live that abundant life in Christ, that wholeness of life and function as a healthy person you might say, it begins in the heart.

You need to let Jesus touch you and heal you of that anger, that bitterness, that hatred or whatever.

If you don't let it go, it will remain with you and you will see relationship after relationship fall away and you will have your reasons for it, but remember what Jesus said, ***“Do you want to be made well?”***

I will give you one example of someone who could not let go of her past and it crippled her walk.

There was a woman, years ago back in Chicago, that Julie was dealing with. She came to a women's Bible study.

Her parents were alcoholics, and she could not let that go. She was a Christian, but she identified herself as an adult child of parents who were alcoholics!

Julie tried to work with her. She even showed her Scripture, like II Corinthians 5:17 where Paul wrote, **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”**

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse, it is very clear, **“Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh and new has come!”**

And then there is Galatians 2:20 where Paul wrote, **“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”**

We are not to live in the past, we can learn from the past, it can help our witness to share where we were at, but we don't focus on the past, we are a new creation in Christ.

And I am not saying that the past was easy or that it was not painful, it could have been. But don't live in the past, it will cripple your walk with the Lord as it did with this woman.

She could not let it go and that is how she identified herself instead of a new creation in Christ.

And if we are holding onto things like anger, bitterness, unforgiveness and the like, are any of those things the fruit of the Spirit? No, they are the works of the flesh and thus, why are we holding on to them?

And when Jesus says, ***“Do you want to be made well?”*** He is saying, ***“Do you want to be healthy?”*** In other words, do you want to be healthy in your walk?

Don't hold on to those crutches in your life, let them go and hold onto Jesus!

As we read on, I think this man's answer shows that he is missing the point. He is thinking physically, and Jesus is talking about not just a physical healing here, but spiritual as well, which is even more important.

Look at what we are told.

VERSE 7

Remember what Jesus asked this man, **“Do you want to be made well?”**

And as you read his answer, he does not answer the question that Jesus asked him. You see, he begins to tell Jesus why he is still in this condition, because no one will place him in the water when the waters are stirred so he could be healed! In other words, he was looking for –

WORLDLY HELP!

But that is not what Jesus asked him. He asked him, **“Do you want to be made well?”**

Make no mistake about it, in our own lives God wants to set us free in areas of bondage and we tell Him all the reasons why we can't!

The question remains the same, **“Do you want to be made well?”**

And the answer should be ***“You bet I do!”***

But we come up with excuses why we ***CAN'T BE HEALED!***

In fact, we do many times what this man did. He blamed others for not helping him and we blame others why we are acting the way we do instead of allowing Jesus to heal the situation.

You see, it is not that we can't be healed, it is that we choose not to be healed!

I like the way that Pastor Chuck Smith put it. He wrote,

It's interesting, the man didn't answer the question of Jesus at all. The question was, ***“Would you like to be healed?”***

And all the man did was tell Jesus the reason why he ***wasn't*** healed.

I think that a lot of times when the Lord comes and addresses our place of impotence by asking, ***“Would you like to be set free?”***- ***“Well, Lord, you know, I have this problem and I have tried and . . .”*** we're just telling Him all of the reasons why we can't be set free.

All of the reasons why we are continuing in our place of impotency rather than responding, ***“Yes, I'd like to be set free.”***

And so, the man gives to Jesus the reasons why he isn't and can't be healed.

You probably know all the reasons why you're in the condition you're in. You could probably give the Lord a good explanation what's going on. ***"This is what's happening. This is why I'm still in this same lame condition - why I'm not healed."***

The question was, ***"Would you like to be healed?"***

- Pastor Chuck Smith, John 5

It is as Calvin said, ***"The sick man does what we nearly all do. He limits God's help to his own ideas and does not dare promise himself more than he conceives in his mind."***

May we not limit what God wants to do in our lives by putting Him in a box. He can heal, He can set us free.

It is as Jesus said, ***"Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."***
John 8:36.

Do you believe that God can heal you from your sins, that He can set you free from those things you are holding on to that are crippling your walk with Him? ***HE CAN!***

Ray Stedman sums it up like this for us and that will lead us to our next point. He wrote, Many people here this morning are like that. They have given up on their situation, refusing to believe there is any hope it can change. They see no way, from a human viewpoint, so they have resigned themselves to being weak, failing and faltering Christians for the rest of their lives.

I know there are some like that among us; there always are. I do not know what your problem is. Maybe you have tried to stop drinking. You know that alcohol is ruining your life, your family, your home. You thought you had it under control. You tried to stop but you discovered you could not.

It is amazing to me how many people casually feel they are in control of something that really has control of them.

You have heard of the person who said, "It's easy to stop smoking. I've done it hundreds of times!" That is a revelation, of course, of how much it controls him.

Many of you have tried to stop taking drugs, but you discovered you are hooked; that a habit you began by innocent experimentation has got a hold of you although you want to stop.

Maybe you have given up wrestling with an inner problem of lust, of reading pornography.

A young pastor told me recently that his problem was that he loved to read pornographic magazines - a pastor! Outwardly he was giving the impression that he was one of God's men - inwardly pure, living a lifestyle that was honoring to God - but inwardly there was a giving way.

He told me he could not pass a magazine store without going in and looking at filthy magazines, buying them and taking them home with him, hiding them. He told me he had tried to stop but he could not. "What will I do?" he asked me.

Perhaps you do not see any hope for your marriage. You have tried to correct things. You have asked for help but nobody seems to care; it only gets worse.

Many people are right where this man was, with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness of making any change.

That brings us to the critical moment of this story. What did Jesus say to a man who had lost all hope, a man who had given up on himself? Did he say, "Oh, come on, I'll help you get into the pool the next time the water is troubled"?

No, he did not say that. He did not offer that kind of help. He could have, but he did not.

Did he say, “Hang on. Keep coming here. Perhaps some day you’ll make it in time. Some day it will all work out. Some day you’ll be right at the edge of the pool when it’s troubled and all you’ll have to do is fall in”?

No, he did not say that either.

Did he say, “Let’s at least make you comfortable. Let’s get you a new mattress to lie on, put a few flowers around you and bring you two meals a day”?

No, he did not.

These are the suggestions of men, what we say to people.

But Jesus does not say any of those things to people who want to hear from him.

What does Jesus say, then?

Notice carefully his method: First, he asks an impossible thing; secondly, he removes all possibility of a relapse; and thirdly, he expects a continued success.

- <https://bit.ly/2UH156d>

Listen to what Jesus tells this man, an impossible thing for him to do, and yet, Jesus gives to this man – ***THE COMMAND!***

VERSE 8

Now as you read that doesn’t it seem cruel to you?

Think about what He said to this man who could not walk, who could not get himself up to go into the waters when they were stirred so he could be healed.

And here is this helpless and hopeless man, maybe thinking Jesus would be kind enough to pick him up and place him in those waters when they were stirred. But instead, we see Jesus command this man to **“Rise, take up your bed and walk.”**

Now as cruel as that sounds to us from a human perspective, God is never going to tell us to do something that He will not enable us to do!

That is important for us to understand.

You see, for this man it was not going to be worldly help that would cure him. He was not going to get help from others. The Law was not going to set him free from the bondage that he was in nor were any rules and regulations going to do it.

Then how?

By Jesus!

Listen carefully to what Ray Stedman said regarding this. He put it like this,

That is a critical clue many miss when they are looking for help from God. There is always something God tells them to believe, and do, and act on. This is a word of action.

Jesus does not say, “Try to build up faith in your mind. Try to fasten your thoughts on this or that.”

He tells them to do something: “Rise! Stand up!”

Obviously it was Jesus’ will that this man should do what he told him to do, and the moment the man’s will agreed with the Lord’s will the power was there.

I do not know whether he felt anything or not. All I know is that strength came into his bones and into his muscles and he could stand. He knew he could stand, and he did.

Then what?

The Lord did not merely say, “Rise,” he said, “take up your pallet.”

Why did he say that? I like the way G. Campbell Morgan has put it, “In order to make no provision for a relapse.”

The man might have said to himself, “I’m healed, but I had better leave my bed here; I may need it tomorrow.”

If he had said that he would have been back in it the next day. But he did not. Jesus said, “Take up your bed. Get rid of it; don’t leave it there.”

In those words he is saying something very important to people who need to be healed: do not make any provision to go back on what you have done.

Many people fail right here. Go home and pour out the alcohol! Go home and get rid of the drugs! Burn your bridges behind you. Say no to the friends who have been luring you on into evil.

You will probably find that some of them will come back with you. Burn your bridges. Cut off any possibility of going back. Let somebody know the new stand you have taken so that he will help hold you to it. Burn your bridges, is what Jesus is saying. That is so important.

Many a person has really been touched by God, delivered from some inner attitude, a bitter spirit or whatever, but then he has allowed the past to come back in again and he finds himself back where he was.

Our Lord knows what he is talking about - “take up your bed.”

The third thing: “walk.” Do not expect to be carried - walk. Many people want to be carried after they are healed. They expect everybody to gather around them and keep them going - a common area of failure.

But if Jesus gives you the power to rise, Jesus is the One who can give you the power to walk every day, to keep going.

That is an important thing to see - you and the Lord. Your eyes not on your friends or on yourself, your eyes on him. “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith,” (Hebrews 12:2 KJV).

That is how this man kept going.

- <https://bit.ly/2UH156d>

Now, in saying that. The Lord is doing His part, but it does not end there. You see, this man will have to do his part as well to be healed.

And we move from – ***THE COMMAND*** to ***OBEDIENCE!***

Listen to what we are told.

VERSE 9

Remember what Jesus commanded this man to do, “**Rise, take up your bed and walk.**”

And the man said back to Jesus, “*Are you kidding me? I haven’t walked for thirty-eight years and now you are telling me to grab my bed and walk! If I could do that why would I be here at this pool?*”

No, he did not say that.

And many times we read these stories and we don’t think much about it. But look at the faith of this man to Jesus. And like I have said He did not know that this was Jesus, not yet and yet Jesus spoke with authority and the man listened and stood up and walked!

Now he could have continued on making excuses why he couldn’t, but he didn’t.

He obeyed the voice of God who told him to do the impossible, and he stood up and walked and probably leaped for joy as he was set free from this bondage he was in!

We see this over and over in the Scriptures where the people of God are placed in a hopeless situation, hopeless in the eyes of man and yet, possible with God!

Remember when the children of Israel were set free from their bondage in Egypt and God placed them in a hopeless situation to test their faith.

You see, the Red Sea was before them, they had mountains on either side of them, and Pharaoh and the Egyptians were coming up from behind to bring them back into captivity.

When the people saw this, they started to complain to Moses for getting them in this mess and to God.

Now Moses could have made all kinds of excuses why they are in trouble, why they can't cross the Red Sea, but he didn't.

We are told what took place in Exodus 14:13-14, "**And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.'**"

And you know the rest of the story. God told Moses to lift up his rod and stretch out his hand and as he did the Red Sea opened up and the children of Israel crossed over on dry land and the Egyptians were drowned in the Sea as it closed up on them.

God can do the impossible because He is God!

May we not forget that!

May we stand up and walk as He commands us.

It is as Matthew 19:26 says, "**... 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'**"

I don't know where you are at this morning, what you are going through.

Maybe you are holding onto anger, bitterness, hatred, unforgiveness or the like and you want to let go but you just can't!

STAND UP AND WALK!

God is giving you the strength to do it, you just need to obey what He is telling you!

Maybe it is drugs, alcohol, pornography or the like, and you want to let go but you just can't!

STAND UP AND WALK!

God is giving you the strength to do it, you just need to obey what He is telling you!

Remember the warning that Paul gave us in Galatians 5:15, "**But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.**"

That is the warning and if we want to be crippled in our walk, we don't have to do anything, the flesh will take care of itself.

But, if we want to walk as God has called us to walk, then we need to stand up and obey Him.

Paul goes on to say in Galatians 5:16-18, "**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**"

There is the battle and whoever or whatever you give in to will be manifested in your life, either the flesh or the Spirit!

You see, what Jesus has called us to do, how He has called us to live, He has also given us the power to live accordingly.

That is different than any religion. They tell you what you can and can't do but Jesus not only tells us how to live but He empowers us to live that way.

But it is our choice just as it was the choice of this man. He could have remained on his bed or mat and stayed crippled, or he could have obeyed Jesus and stood up and walked, leaving that old life behind him! And this man stood up and walked. May we do the same!

And as verse 9 closes we are told, "**And that day was the Sabbath.**"

That is going to lead us to the problem of Jesus healing on the Sabbath day.

And, as we will see, instead of rejoicing, the Jewish religious leaders were complaining that this man was set free on the Sabbath.

That too is religion, closed to what God is doing because it does not fit what they want to believe.

As Jesus said – "***DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL?***"

And I am sure we all do!

Then Jesus tells us – "***RISE, TAKE UP YOUR BED AND WALK.***"

May we listen and obey because God's mercy is extended to this man and to us!