

Do You Want To Be Made Well? - John 5:1-14 - Jn13

We've had some real "heart surgery" in these last few studies. And we have one more of the same today.

The first 2 words of John 5:1 are "after this," but it doesn't mean immediately after the healing of the nobleman's son in Cana at the end of chapter 4. From the other 3 gospels, we learn that Jesus did much more in the Galilee on this visit than just heal the nobleman's son. It was probably on this trip to Galilee that He:

- 1) Visited His hometown of Nazareth where they tried to throw him off a cliff;
- 2) He called a number of the disciples into full-time ministry; and
- 3) He taught, healed, and performed miracles throughout the Galilee area.

So now Jesus has presented Himself as Messiah in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and all Galilee. Then we come to John 5:1.

John 5:1

"After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

Again, Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, even though it is south from Galilee. He went up for a "feast of the Jews." Now in the Greek, it's unclear exactly what feast it was, but it doesn't matter for this study because Jesus is going to Jerusalem for a very specific purpose. He was going to prove to the religious leaders exactly who He is so they would have no excuse. He's going to make it perfectly clear that He's equal with God in nature, in power, and in authority.

And so, in chapter 5, we're headed to the show-down with the Pharisees, and it all starts with the miracle that we're going to look at today.

In the northeast corner of the Wall of Jerusalem was the Sheep Gate, where probably the animals for sacrifice entered to go to the temple. Near this gate was a natural spring pool that had a "healing legend" attached to it. Its name was Bethesda (also called Bethsaida and Bethzatha) and there were built there five grand porches around the pool where the masses of the needy would gather.

These 5 porches were built so the infirm could have some protection from the weather as they waited for the "healing legend" to occur. We spent some time at this pool when we were there, and I could imagine the sick, the blind, and the lame lying almost on top of one another – a mostly hopeless and miserable crowd of broken humanity, watching and waiting for some "legend miracle" to occur.

John 5:2-3a

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

^{3a} In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed..."

There was a great multitude of the suffering and pitiful here, watching and waiting for their lives to be magically made better, and the end of verse 3 and all of verse 4 seem to be added to explain this legend of the pool of Bethesda.

John 5:3b-4

“^{3b} ...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.”

Now we don't know if this ever really happened or if it was just a legend because Bethesda was a natural spring, so periodically the water would bubble up from underground, which might have looked somewhat angelic. But either way, it doesn't change the picture here because the picture is of the mass of “down-and-out” humanity waiting with very little real hope for a “once-in-a-lifetime” break. There the blind, the lame, and the withered up clawed for position, their hopes being reduced to whatever their chance was to knock someone else over to get to the water first. People obsessed with their own pathetic condition, eyeing each new person that comes in as an enemy and competitor. Sounds kind of like life here without Jesus, doesn't it?

It is into this very depressing scene that the Lord Jesus steps, and He seems to come alone, possibly to avoid recognition for now and, as He surveys this miserable scene, He picks out . . . YOU! You are being represented today by an infirm, middle-aged man.

John 5:5

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

I don't know if this man had been at the “legend-pool” for the full 38 years, but he had probably been there for a very long time. After 38 years, his infirmity and his way of life had become who he was. It was what defined him, and Jesus came looking for him, just as He came into the mass of suffering humanity looking for you! And the question that Jesus asks this infirm and hopeless man is the same question He wants to ask you today.

John 5:6

“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?””

It seems like another strange question, doesn't it? You know, if you see a man stopped on the side of the road with his head under the hood of his car, don't walk up and ask him if he's having car trouble. And I've never walked into a hospital room and asked a person if they want to get well because it seems to be a pretty good assumption. But Jesus doesn't work on assumptions. He's works strictly on the heart. And here, in verse 6, Jesus asks you the M.I.P. (the Most Important Point) of the day, or maybe I should say “the M.I.Q.,” the Most Important Question” – “DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL? DO YOU WANT TO BE MADE WELL TODAY?”

This question requires a response. Every time Jesus speaks to a person, a response is required. NO response – NO relationship. And I believe the response to this question is the root problem to more of our spiritual paralysis than we might be willing to admit. Remember, the paralytic represents you and me, and his condition represents our condition in this world. He's been paralyzed for 38 years, waiting for that one-in-a-million chance for a quick and easy fix. But after

38 years, maybe he's grown accustomed to his condition. Maybe he's actually most comfortable in his misery.

Jesus Christ asks us if we really want to be made well and if, in the deepest place in our heart, we say "no thanks," then He will leave us in the same pitiful condition He found us in. He will not force His healing upon us. Is it possible to say on the outside that we want to be made well, but on the inside to be nursing and protecting the sin that paralyzes us.

Do you think Jesus is asking this man for a casual, superficial response? Jesus is looking for a response from the deepest part of this man's heart, and that is a place that only Jesus can see. Sometimes we manage to even fool ourselves about the answer to this Most Important Question. What if this man would have responded like, "What are You talking about? I'm here, aren't I? I'm trying, aren't I? I'm doing what I can! What do you want from me?" Then Jesus would say "I want the deepest place of your heart-of-hearts," and I want the truth at that level.

Most often, a defensive and indignant response is an outflow of a heart that is secretly protecting a paralyzing sin, and Jesus wants to break into that heart and bring healing at the deepest level. This is a critical question that we each must face. If you are a non-believer, Jesus Christ says to you, "Do you want to get well? Do you want to be forgiven and made new, or is the pleasure of your sin causing you to protect it and nurse it?" If you are a believer, Jesus Christ says to you, "Do you really want to get well? Do you really want to be healed of that bitterness and unforgiveness, or is there something about that sin that's causing you to protect and nurse it?"

So like so many good "spiritual recipes," this one has 3 steps. The FIRST STEP is an honest answer at the deepest level of our hearts to Jesus' question, "Do you want to be made well?" The SECOND STEP is an honest recognition of our own INABILITY to overcome our paralyzing sin.

John 5:7

"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.""

Have you ever heard two people say the same thing, but instinctively you know that one means it and one doesn't. Well, our instincts are miniscule compared to Christ's complete knowledge of a man's heart.

Hebrews 4:13 says

"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

So Jesus first speaks to this man's heart, and then He listens to the response of the man's heart. This man truly did want to be healed, and he truly recognized his own inability to do it. It may have taken him 38 years to finally accept the fact that he couldn't make himself well, which means he did it in less time than some of us, but at this point, he realized the utter hopelessness of his condition, and he realized he'd never be able to make himself well.

Maybe you've reached STEP ONE, where you've truly and honestly said, "I really do want to be made well," but then you've made the monstrous mistake of saying, "I'm really working on it. I'm really trying hard." Please hear this. THERE'S NOT ENOUGH TRY IN YOU! Sometimes we really do want to be made well, but we want to do it our way. Sorry, but this is not Burger

King. The reason you can't have it your way is because your way doesn't work, and that's what this paralytic man finally realized.

Jesus knew this man's heart. He did want to be made well, and he understood that he couldn't do it his own way.

- 1) STEP ONE – You must honestly want to be made well;
- 2) STEP TWO – You must honestly believe you can't do it your way; and
- 3) STEP THREE - is the same response required for every victory that we see in the entire Bible. STEP THREE is the double barrel of FAITH and OBEDIENCE. I hope you're not getting tired of hearing the phrase "Believe and Obey." I thought about coming up with some other STEP THREE, but the only way I could do it was to leave the Bible and glean some "wisdom" from man instead of from God. So if we want to keep following God and doing it His way, then we've got to get comfortable with the words "Believe and Obey" because, as far as the Bible is concerned, there is no other way.

In verses 8-9, Jesus gives this man opportunity to exercise STEP THREE.

John 5:8-9

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."

This man really wanted to be made well and he really knew he couldn't do it his way. He immediately believed and obeyed Christ's command, and the instant he believed, Jesus gave him the power to believe, and the instant he obeyed, Jesus gave him the power to obey. Suddenly, he found his legs straightening and strengthening, and as he began to stand, suddenly he had the power to stand. And after 38 years, in an instant, this man was made whole, and he found himself standing on his feet.

In Acts chapter 3, there was a similar healing, and I believe this man responded the same way, by "walking, leaping, and praising God," and heading straight for the temple. After 38 years of pitiful hope at the "legend pool," I believe this man leaped up, grabbed his cot, and went walking and leaping and praising God, just as Jesus told him to do. Unfortunately, as he was walking and leaping and praising God with his cot, he ran into the religious leaders, just as Jesus knew he would.

Now we're going to hold off looking at the Pharisees' response because it goes with our next study, but let's read through this sad commentary on the religious leaders of the day.

John 5:9b-13

^{9b} ...And that day was the Sabbath.

¹⁰ The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

¹¹ He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"

¹² Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"

¹³ But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place."

The Pharisees' response is unbelievable, but it's exactly what Jesus knew they would do, and it starts an incredible confrontation we'll look at next study. But for today, I want to finish by looking at verse 14.

John 5:14

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.””

Often Jesus' healing and His forgiveness of sin went hand-in-hand. I don't know if this man's infirmity had something to do with his sin, but I do know a warning when I hear one, and this is a warning. I believe this man was in the temple to worship God for what He had done for him, and Jesus met him there and issued him quite a warning.

The New Testament is actually full of warnings – warnings God has put there to save us. If you want to look at a few, try 2 Peter 2:20-21, Hebrews 6:4-6, and Hebrews 10:26-29. Here Jesus says, “You've been delivered. You've been healed. Don't go back to the sin from which you were saved,” which means it is possible to return to the paralyzing sin that Jesus once saved us from. The only remedy is to walk daily in the Spirit so that we will not be overcome by the flesh.

The Pool of Bethesda represents man's feeble and hopeless attempt at making himself well. We say, “My day's coming when I'm going to claw my way to victory. I'm going to get there, and then everything's going to be OK. No it's not! You're going to remain spiritually paralyzed until the day you:

- 1) Stop protecting your sin, and truly want to get well;
- 2) Recognize that you can't make yourself well; and
- 3) Put your total faith and total obedience in Jesus Christ alone.

Then you will find yourself walking and leaping and praising God!