

Giving Up or Giving In: Part 5

Pastor James Bell

John 5:1–7 NLT

¹ Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ² Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. ³ Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. ⁵ One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?” ⁷ “I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

The Pool of Bethesda where many sick people gathered with the hopes of being healed. As scripture gives us further insight to the sicknesses of those suffering with infirmities, we will see that this list includes people that are blind, lame, and paralyzed. And as this list is read and viewed in a physical aspect, Jesus is always teaching a lesson if we will only lend our ears to His heart.

As we look into the first form of sickness that surrounded the pool according to John: Blindness - The inability to see. As we will take this a lot deeper than surface we’ll find out real fast where Jesus is leading us this morning. Within scripture blindness can be comprehended or explained as:

1. A Lack of Vision
2. A Lack of Depth
3. A Lack of Understanding

But if we begin to put the pieces of the puzzle together here is what we will find that these attributes equate to:

1. Spiritual Ignorance - Lack of Spiritual insight due to a hardened heart. Also known as stiff-necked.
2. Moral Depravity - a state of extreme corruption or evil, characterized by a willful lack of morals, values, and regard for others and more importantly God, often resulting in wicked or defiant behavior that violates God’s word and standards.
3. Refusal to understand divine truth - willingly rejecting irrefutable truth. (Jesus said that He was the truth)

This understanding of blindness reminds me of the religious leaders. Turn with me to [John 9:26-34](#)

John 9:26–34 NLT

²⁶ “But what did he do?” they asked. “How did he heal you?” ²⁷ “Look!” the man exclaimed. “I told you once. Didn’t you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?” ²⁸ Then they cursed him and said, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses!” ²⁹ We know God spoke to Moses, but we don’t even know where this man comes from.” ³⁰ “Why, that’s very strange!” the man replied. “He healed my eyes, and yet you don’t know where he comes from?” ³¹ We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. ³² Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he couldn’t have done it.” ³⁴ “You were born a total sinner!” they answered. “Are you trying to teach us?” And they threw him out of the synagogue.

Sight being restored to a blind man should have been the irrefutable evidence that would have turned the hardened hearts of the Pharisees. A healing that had never taken place before but now was so plain before their very eyes but they chose not to see because they were not willing to give up on their own understanding and giving in to what God was orchestrating. Being blind and then being able to see is unfathomable to our understanding. How can this be explained or understood unless we are the ones that it is happening to?

Next on the list are the lame people. No pun intended... but the definition of lame in the greek is crippled or maimed. This can be better translated as body parts such as hands, arms, feet, legs and things of this such that are useless. These individuals are what we would label as physically disabled. Their quality of life has diminished as one that does enough to continue surviving. Their disability has caused them to have the inability to progress forward. Their lack of movement causes stagnation and growth ceases. Life seems to be apparent but within there is little to no strength. Watch how Jesus addressed this person:

Matthew 23:27–28 NLT

²⁷ “What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people’s bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

The judgement that will be sentenced upon the religious ones that look to be useful but inwardly are dead. The appearance of righteousness but within a heart of hypocrisy. These types of people look to be just like the normal or everyday christian. They say the right things, they walk around in public like they have it all together but behind closed doors they are someone else. They carry the appearance but they are spiritually disabled. Their members seem to be intact but have little to no use. Look at what Paul prophesied about the last days:

2 Timothy 3:1–5 NLT

¹ You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. ² For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. ³ They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. ⁴ They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. ⁵ They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly.

This can be so visible in the society that we are living in! But you may say Pastor... this has been an ongoing theme through out scripture. And you are correct but look at the last thing Paul said. "They will act religious, but will reject the power that could make them godly."

"They carry the appearance but are spiritually disabled." They look the part but are far from the truth. They are religious but reject the commandments of God that will make them godly. We live in a world now where everyone is a "Christian". Everyone is a christian until it becomes biblical.

Last but not least is the paralyzed individuals. The greek word for paralyzed is withered, dry, or shriveled. This comparison can become visual if we picture a tree that is flourishing next to a tree that is perishing. One is full of life while the other is practically dead. It's like be lame but with the outward manifestation. The visual of the deformity of their members is apparent that there is little to no life. Their deformity is obvious without seeing them in action. There is no hiding as their condition is obvious and forthcoming.

And the man that was a part of this group had been suffering for 38 years with a sickness that caused him to be lame. An inability to move forward in life. An infirmity that caused him to be stagnant. What has caused us to become comfortable in our position of "this is the way I was born" or "it was meant to be this way". I would image that each one that gathered around a pool that was known for healing had the mindset of these statements. They even come to the acceptance that this is how they will always be.

But Jesus approached the man and didn't ask him what his infirmity was. He didn't ask him how long he had been this way. He didn't ask him if he had been to the doctor. He didn't ask what had caused his inability. Jesus simply asked, "Would you like to be well". Are you tired of the murk and the mire? Do you want to be made whole? Are you tired of being associated with people that are hopeless. Are you tired of being around people that are spiritually blind? Are you tired of being around people that are spiritually disabled? People that are not moving forward in life. People that seem to have it together but inwardly are full of dead bones and impurities. Are you tired of being associated with people that are obviously dry in their walk and pursuit of righteousness? Are you tired of pretending that you have it together when it's obvious that what you have placed your hope in is useless? You are waiting for the assistance of the pool when the answer is right in front of you.

"But I have no one to place me in the pool when the waters bubble up." Do we respond with excuses? Do we sound like this when the Holy Spirit brings attention to the matter? I know we

addressed this last week with Simon but this show the human nature of a people. The human nature is sin but the spiritual nature is to obey God. Spiritual excuses is what we too often offer Jesus when we spiritual awareness is brought to our attention. These excuses shift the blame and responsibility of a call and purpose that has been given to us. What excuse or better yet... what Spiritual excuse have we rattled off as a shift of responsibility from us to the situation. Do we really think that Jesus cannot see beyond the word to see what is really in our heart.

What would have been easier for the man? To respond to the commandment of the word or continue to offer excuses. Believing the word is going to require a spiritual awakening. It's going to require that we neglect self and respond by faith. What is God calling each of us too that we are left at the crossroads of choosing to give up or giving in?

John 5:8–9 NLT

⁸ Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!” ⁹ Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath,

Jesus responds to the excuse with a commandment...Jesus is the word, so the word tells the man what he should be doing. The word responds to our spiritual excuses. Our spiritual excuses of “I was born this way”, “It's meant to be this way”, “I don't have anyone to help me”, “I can't or I'm not qualified”, “I'm too old or I'm too young”, “I don't have time or the money”, “I don't know how to”, “It's too hard or I'm afraid”, “I've fallen too far from grace”, or “I've sinned too much”. This list is almost inexhaustible but we offer them over and over again.

But notice the man's response to the word! He acted by faith and was instantly healed. When he chose to give up the excuse and give in to the word he was healed. He was changed when he stopped offering excuses. His corresponding action was rolling up his mat! His faith justified what he really believed. All because he rolled up his mat before he walked. Are you ready to roll up your mat today?

Listen to this statement from [1 Peter 2:9](#)

1 Peter 2:9 NLT

⁹ ... you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

We have all been called to be priest and ambassadors for the Kingdom of God but God gave Moses the very specifics of the qualifications that disqualify us from this role.

Leviticus 21:16–23 NLT

¹⁶ Then the Lord said to Moses, ¹⁷ “Give the following instructions to Aaron: In all future generations, none of your descendants who has any defect will qualify to offer food to his God. ¹⁸ No one who has a defect qualifies, whether he is blind, lame, disfigured, deformed, ¹⁹ or has a broken foot or arm, ²⁰ or is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or has a defective eye, or skin sores or scabs, or damaged testicles. ²¹ No descendant of Aaron who has a defect may approach the altar to present special gifts to the Lord. Since he has a defect, he may not approach the altar to offer food to his God. ²² However, he may eat from the food offered to God, including the holy offerings and the most holy offerings. ²³ Yet because of his physical defect, he may not enter the

room behind the inner curtain or approach the altar, for this would defile my holy places. I am the Lord who makes them holy.”

John 5:10–13 NLT

¹⁰ so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!” ¹¹ But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’ ” ¹² “Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded. ¹³ The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.

The ones that thought they had it together strived to bring confusion with their questionable comments. They didn’t question the healing but they questioned the religious aspect of “Working on the Sabbath”. Paul addresses this with the Galatia church.

Galatians 5:16–18 NLT

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

And this is exactly what the man was doing. He was in direct obedience to the word and Spirit of God. The Pharisee’s were operating in the law of gravity but the man was in operation of the law of lift. Gravity says what goes up must come down. And this is undeniably true but the law of lift says that an upward force and forward motion overcomes gravity. It’s when we walk according to the Spirit that we overcome the law of the letter. Paul said that the letter kills but the Spirit gives life.

In Closing:

John 5:14 NLT

¹⁴ But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.”

Now that you are “Well”. The same well that Jesus asked him if he wanted. This is translated as to become whole or completely healthy. Not a partial healing. Not a healing that allows your legs to work. Not a healing that will cause strength to return. A wholeness! Every part of him was healed because he responded by faith and obeyed what was spoken. Jesus wants to bring restitution to each of us just as he did for the lame man. But we must be willing and obedient to the word spoken. And Jesus clearly warns the man to stop sinning. Sinning caused his placement among those that were blind, lame, and paralyzed. His sin placed him in the same category with defected people that were disqualified from being priest. But Jesus’s warning didn’t stop there. He foretold what would happen if he continued to sin. Stopping the sin will cause us to not continue in sin. The consequence will be worse than what he had witnesses for the past 38 years. So ask yourself the question...what could be worse than what he had already suffered? Eternal death, separation from God. [Romans 6:23](#)

Romans 6:23 NLT

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

The salary of sinning is death. An eternal separation from God. Never knowing what love really is. Never having the opportunity to dwell in His presence. And we are all hearing the same message today but just as the man with 38 years of infirmity had a choice to give up and give in, we too have this decision today. Will you roll up your mat and walk? Let me pray with you today!