

## COMMENTARY ON JOHN

### LESSON NUMBER 58

John 5:5 *“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? <sup>7</sup> The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. <sup>8</sup> Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. <sup>9</sup> And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.”*..... (John 5:5-9)

### **A CERTAIN MAN WAS THERE**

#### INTRODUCTION

Jesus was going about “*doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil*” (Acts 10:38). He was doing works that bore witness of who He is (John 10:25). They also were bearing witness to the fact that the Father had sent Him (John 5:36; 10:25). He was doing the works of which He said, “*I must work the works of Him that sent Me*” (John 9:4). These were works that, if believed, enabled those believing ones to know the Father was in Him, and He was in the Father (John 10:37-38). In fact, it was the Father who was dwelling in Him that was really doing the works (John 14:10). He Himself declared, and the nature of the works He did testified to, the fact that He “*did the works which none other man did*” (John 15:24). The work of God in man – especially “*the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim 2:5) – is absolutely unique. No one else can do the works that God does in Christ. This is a fact that must be stressed again and again, for Satan is aggressively seeking to cloud this reality.

There is entirely too much earthly normality in the professed church. It is not distinct enough to confirm that it is really of God. The line between the nominal church and the world is too vague, too blurred, too difficult to identify. This strongly suggests that such a “church” is really no church at all, but is really the world dressed up in religious garb. I realize this is too strong for some, but it needs to be said. A church that possesses no uniqueness cannot possibly be the dwelling place for the unique Christ. If it gives no light, it is only because it has no light, for even men do not suppress the light they have (Matt 5:15). All of this relates to our text, for it is making a unique and unequaled Savior known. His influence and work is singular, peerless, and solitary. His miracles were mirrors of His salvation, wrought in a temporal realm so they could be seen. What Jesus does within a person is just as impossible with men, as were His works when He dwelt among us. It is imperative that this be seen.

### **A CERTAIN MAN WAS THERE**

John 5:5 “*And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?*”

**A CERTAIN MAN.** The precision made known in the work of Christ has long intrigued me. In it there is a total absence of ambiguity, vagueness, uncertainty, equivocalness, or dubiousness. In his miracles, what Jesus did was always clear, resulting in the blind seeing, the dumb speaking, the deaf hearing, the lame walking, the impotent standing, and the dead rising. Those who were lepers ceased to be lepers. Those who were bowed over abruptly stopped being bowed over. Those who were insane were immediately lucid, and in their right mind. Demon-possessed people were no longer possessed.

There was also the element of certainty and specificity, so that the works could be seen. We read of *"a certain scribe"* (Matt 8:19), *"a certain ruler"* (Matt 9:18), *"a certain man"* (Matt 17:14), *"a certain woman"* (Mk 5:25), *"a certain poor widow"* (Mk 12:42), *"a certain priest"* (Mk 1:5), *"a certain city"* (Lk 5:12), *"a certain day"* (Lk 5:17), *"a certain centurion"* (Lk 76:2), *"a certain lawyer"* (Lk 10:25), *"a certain village"* (Lk 10:38), *"a certain place"* (Lk 11:1), *"a certain Pharisee"* (Lk 11:37), *"a certain blind man"* (Lk 18:35), *"a certain maid"* (Lk 22:56), *"a certain nobleman"* (John 4:46), and *"a certain season"* (John 5:4).

Again, I want to stress that **these certainties are what made the words and works of Jesus observable.** Divine power was gathered, so to speak, and focused on a particular person or place in order that it might be seen, perused, and believed. That is involved in the Psalmic expression, *"He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion"* (Psa 111:4). It is also the peculiar prerogative of faith to see, or behold, in the record of these works, even more than was perceived with the eyes of those early beholders. There is room for a lot of improvement in this area.

Here, located in one of the five porches of the pool of Siloam, was a man among *"a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water"* (John 5:3). On this day there will only be one of them who will benefit from the presence of Jesus. A multitude has needs, but only one need will be met. Similarly, there *"many widows"* in the land of Israel in the time of Elijah during a famine, but only one Gentile woman in Sidon was helped (Lk 4:25). There were also many lepers in Israel during the ministry of Elisha, but only Naaman the Syrian was healed (Lk 4:27). **This same type of discretion is reflected throughout Scripture** in cities like Nineveh (Jonah 1:2), islands like Crete (Tit 1:5), woman like Lydia (Lk 16:14), men like Cornelius (Acts 10), and regions like Macedonia (Acts 16:9).

**WHICH HAD AN INFIRMITY.** Other versions read, *"sickness,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"an invalid,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"ill,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"diseased,"* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *"disabled,"* <sup>NET</sup> *"ailment,"* <sup>YLT</sup> *"feebleness,"* <sup>ABP</sup> and *"a deep-seated and lingering disorder."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

This was a debilitating condition, that by its very nature, grew worse and worse— a fitting likeness of sin, which disables the soul and also grows worse and worse. Men could do nothing about this condition. The man sensed that this could only be removed miraculously, and that was something with which this pool was associated. We do not know how long this man had been coming to the pool, but the text suggests it had been for some time. He apparently refused to let hope die.

**WHEN JESUS SAW HIM LIE.** Behold the eyes of the Savior. He fixed his eyes on one man – one among many that were apparently also in a helpless state. There may very well come a time when you will be brought to think, *"Whether anyone else in the whole world will be helped or not, I can find help in the Lord."* Here is an incident that can fortify

that thought.

**AND KNEW HE HAD BEEN A LONG TIME.** Jesus knew the situation. The man had been like this for *"a long time,"* and Jesus took special note of it. Other versions read, *"a great length of time"* <sup>DARBY</sup> and *"already been there a long time."* <sup>ESV</sup> The text defines that lengthy period as *"thirty-eight years."* This itself is remarkable. Few people linger in a debilitated state for nearly four decades, although there are unusual cases when that happens. Some grow weary and give up after four or five years, or perhaps ten or twenty. But here was a man who had kept hope alive for thirty eight years, and on this day, he was at the pool again. He would make another effort to get into the pool when the water was troubled, for he was not there as a spectator.

**WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE?** Jesus saw the man and made His way through the crowd to him. At that time Jesus must not have stood out to the people laying there, else they would have touched him or the hem of His garment, as others did (Matt 14:36; Mk 3:10; Lk 6:19). Their eyes were probably on the water, to detect any movement there.

What a poignant question Jesus asked this man. *"Do you want to be made well?"* <sup>NKJV</sup> or, *"Are you really in earnest about getting well?"* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> This man's illness commenced seven years before Jesus was born! Jesus sees this man as a *"bruised reed,"* and so speaks in such a manner as to **awaken faith**. He is like a *"smoking flax,"* and Jesus asks a question to which **hope can reply** (Matt 12:20)! I do not doubt that Jesus still asks this question when He probes the hearts of men. Do they really want to be delivered from infirmities of body and soul? Are they able to stretch out the arm of hope and the hand of faith?

### **THE HINDERING CIRCUMSTANCE**

*"<sup>7</sup> The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me."*

**SIR.** Other versions read, *"Yes, my lord,"* <sup>MRD</sup> *"Mister,"* <sup>IE</sup> *"O Lord,"* <sup>ABP</sup> and *"Lord."* <sup>CEV/LITV</sup> Nearly all version s read *"Sir."* The word from which this is translated [kurios] means "HE TO WHOM A PERSON OR THING BELONGS, ABOUT WHICH HE HAS THE POWER OF DECIDING; MASTER, LORD; USED UNIVERSALLY, OF THE POSSESSOR AND DISPOSER OF A THING, THE OWNER," <sup>THAYER</sup> "ONE HAVING LEGAL POWER LORD, MASTER," <sup>FRIBERG</sup> and "LORD, MASTER—GENERALLY— A. OWNER, MASTER; LORD, MASTER, ONE WHO HAS FULL CONTROL OF SOMETHING; AS A RESPECTFUL DESIGNATION USED IN ADDRESSING PERSONS OF VARYING SOCIAL OR POLITICAL RANK, OFTEN EQUIVALENT TO OUR SIR." <sup>GINGRICH</sup> I suppose the word *"Sir"* is used because the impotent man probably did not know who Jesus was. In proper English, the word "sir" means, "A MAN ENTITLED TO BE ADDRESSED AS SIR USED AS A TITLE BEFORE THE GIVEN NAME OF A KNIGHT OR BARONET AND FORMERLY SOMETIMES BEFORE THE GIVEN NAME OF A PRIEST B : A MAN OF RANK OR POSITION, A USED AS A USUALLY RESPECTFUL FORM OF ADDRESS" <sup>MERRIAM-WEBSTER</sup>

**I HAVE NO MAN.** Earlier, a paralyzed man in Capernaum had four men who carried him to Jesus for healing (Mk 2:3). But this man had no one to even assist him to get into the pool of Bethesda when it was troubled by an angel. There are people and occasions where there simply is no one to help. Properly seen, these are occasions to call upon of the Lord – like David did when he *"sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite. O LORD my God, in Thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me: Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver"* (Psa 7:1-2). David also experienced a time which prefigured Jesus on the cross, when *"there is none to help"* (Psa 22:11). It is certainly not a pleasant thing to undergo, yet it is one that most people at some time experience.

**WHEN THE WATER IS TROUBLED.** The man is not speaking of daily help, but of

help *"in the time of need"* – when an angel troubled the waters of the pool of Bethesda. That was the time he needed *"help,"* but he had *"no man"* to help him.

**PUT ME INTO THE POOL.** The kind of help he needed was not assistance to walk. He had to be lifted up and *"put . . . into the pool."* Other versions read *"help me into the pool,"* <sup>NIV</sup> and *"cast me into the pool."* <sup>DARBY</sup>

**WHILE I AM COMING.** Other versions read, *"while I am trying to get in,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"while I am making my way,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"while I am going,"* <sup>RSV</sup> *"while I am on the way down,"* <sup>BBE</sup> and *"while I am still on the way."* <sup>NJB</sup>

Although impotent, there was some way in which this poor man could move toward the pool. I have witnessed infirm people in India who moved across the ground with their arms, dragging their paralyzed body here and there. It was a pitiful condition to witness. I gather that this man was dragging himself to the edge of the pool in such a manner. Perhaps he was a little more mobile than others, and thus had hope of getting into the pool. But he never could manage to do it.

**ANOTHER STEPPETH DOWN BEFORE ME.** Other versions read, *"someone else goes down ahead of me,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"gets in before me,"* <sup>BBE</sup> and *"Someone else always gets there ahead of me."* <sup>NLT</sup>

Whoever first got to the pool had to get in the pool – touching the water was not enough. Only the first person who *"stepped in"* the pool was *"made whole of whatsoever disease he had."*

It is apparent from the text that the infirm people at the pool were not mindful of one another – at least not in this instance. No one was apparently willing to wait for the next moving of the water so they could assist this man in getting to the water. Keep in mind that this did not take place in the city of Samaria, but in Jerusalem. It did not occur among a group of Gentiles, but among a group of Jews – God's chosen people. The Law clearly said, *"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother"* (Deut 15:7). Surely an insightful person could see that Israelites should develop a heart for one another, and not be oblivious to the need for help of assistance. Everyone did not ignore this principle, for there were four men who brought an impotent man to Jesus, doing what they could to help him (Mk 2:3-4).

There are two possible reasons for this unfortunate circumstance. One is that sin hardens people, even when they are oppressed with infirmity. The other is that God cut off all avenues of help in order that He might receive glory – as when the disciples asked Jesus concerning a blind man, *"Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?"* (John 9:2). Jesus replied, *"Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"* (John 9:3). I believe this was the case with this man, and that is precisely why Jesus singled him out. In this case, the glory of God would be seen in the man, and the calloused hearts of the Jews would be made known. It appears to me that this sort of thing happens more than men have realized. **There are doubtless Divine workings that cause God's mercy and men's hardness to be made known.**

### **JESUS SPEAKS AS THOUGH THERE IS NO REAL INHIBITION**

*"<sup>8</sup> Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. <sup>9</sup> And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath."*

**JESUS SAITH UNTO HIM.** The test of a person's authority is seen in what can be

accomplished by his word. With Jesus, *"His word was with power"* (Luke 4:32). In the beginning, when *"all things were made by Him"* (John 1:3), *"the worlds were framed" by His word* (Heb 11:3). Now, as He walked among men, the words that He spoke were invested with *"spirit"* and *"life."* He would simply tell the man what he should do, and he will do it – not because he ought to do it, but because he was enabled to do it.

O, what a truth is to be seen here. When Jesus tells people what to do – i.e. *"Be...Go...Do...Be not...fear not...be not faithless"* etc, that word to this impotent man is invested with all His mighty power. If Jesus speaks through His messengers saying, *"Resist the devil...Be strong...Fight the good fight of faith...Put on...Put off...Run the race...Sin not,"* etc. **let no one imagine that they cannot do it.** Power has **not** been withdrawn from His Word! You can keep His word (John 14:21,23), and *"do"* it as well (Matt 7:21,24). Faith is the grand enabler, and it will not fail to work wherever it is found.

**RISE, TAKE UP THY BED, AND WALK.** This man had not done one of these things in thirty-eight years: rise, pick up his bed, and walk. How will he be able to do this? Is human willpower sufficient? To be sure, he does have to be willing, but that willingness must be mixed with a power that is not resident in man. The hearing of Christ's word has to be *"mixed with faith"* (Heb 4:2) – and that is something that requires a Divine initiative. There are some words with which faith cannot be mixed: human tradition, folklore, sectarian dogmas, the opinions of men, etc. That circumstance is why there is lifeless religion, and forms of godliness without power. A theology has been embraced with which faith cannot mix. But this is Christ's word!

**IT HAPPENED IMMEDIATELY.** *"And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked."* Other versions read, *"at once,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"straightway,"* <sup>ASV</sup> *"Instantly,"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"Right then,"* <sup>CEV</sup> *"was healed on the spot."* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> **The man did exactly what Jesus told him to do, and when the Lord told him to do it.** As men consider things, this was impossible – but he did it anyway.

Under the Law, when the people were commanded to offer their firstfruits to God, they were told, *"Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto Me"* (Ex 22:29). The Psalmist confessed, *"I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments"* (Psa 119:60). That is what this formerly impotent man did. Solomon said, *"When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed"* (Eccl 5:4).

When Jesus called James and John, *"they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him"* (Matt 4:22). When an angel told Cornelius to go to Peter and have him brought to his house, Cornelius later confessed to Peter, *"Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come"* (Acts 10:33). When Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia crying out, *"Come over into Macedonia and help us,"* the group concluded God had called them, and Luke reports, *"immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them"* (Acts 16:10). When the Lord called Paul to the apostleship, Paul reported, *"immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood"* (Gal 1:16). When John heard a voice out of heaven crying, *"Come up hither,"* he confessed, *"And immediately I was in the spirit"* (Rev 4:2).

Right here is where many professing "Christians" have been blinded. They do not perceive the imperative of **immediately** responding to the Lord. They have experienced impulses to follow the Lord more thoroughly, ingest His Word more completely, and even separate from contaminating influences. But they have not responded immediately. Instead

they have delayed, procrastinated, and given themselves to other things. There is a spirit of retardation and slowness in the nominal church that is alarming. Jesus once said to the two on the road to Emmaus, on the very day of His resurrection, "*O fools, and **slow of heart to believe** all that the prophets have spoken*" (Luke 24:25). O, you must not allow that to be said of you! Be quick to respond to the wooing of the Spirit, and do not grieve or quench Him (Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 5:19).

**IT WAS THE SABBATH DAY.** Other versions read, "*The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,*" <sup>NIV</sup> and "*But that happened on the Sabbath.*" <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> What a blessing that was. **The man experienced a new kind of "rest" on the day of rest.** Never again would he have to be at this pool, waiting for the moving of the water. Never again would he be frustrated in his attempts to get into the water, as he watched others step over him to get into the water. Others will object, saying the work was illegal – but it is never illegal or wrong to loose the bound, and announce liberty to the captives – never!