

Arise and Walk (subtitle: The Crippled Man)

John 5:1-17 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Healing at Bethesda

¹After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. ³In these lay **a multitude of** those who were **sick, blind, lame, and withered**, waiting for the moving of the waters; ⁴for **an angel of the Lord** went down **at certain seasons** into the pool **and stirred up the water; whoever then first**, after the stirring up of the water, **stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.** ⁵A man was there who **had been ill for thirty-eight years.** ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there, and **knew that he had already been a long time in that condition**, He *said* to him, **“Do you wish to get well?”** ⁷The 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.”** ⁸Jesus *said* to him, **“Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.”** ⁹**Immediately** the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.

Now it was the Sabbath on that day. ¹⁰So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, **“It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.”** ¹¹But he answered them, **“He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’”** ¹²They asked him, **“Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk?’”** ¹³But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. ¹⁴Afterward Jesus *found* him in the temple and said to him, **“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”** ¹⁵The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶For this reason the Jews were **persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.** ¹⁷But He answered them, **“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”**

Introduction

Once again, our journey with Jesus continues. Today, we are in Jerusalem. At a public pool called Bethesda. Here, we see a lot of sick people mostly lying down on their pallets, some sitting and talking, others standing, but all longing and awaiting the water to be stirred by an angel of the LORD.

Once again, please turn to the Scripture lesson in the bulletin.

Content

v. 1: *After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.* Let's talk about 'a feast of the Jews' here. There are three "Pilgrimage Festivals" that the LORD commands all Jewish males to appear before Him in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16):

the Feast of Unleavened Bread (a.k.a. Passover—typically in March or April), the Feast of Weeks (a.k.a. Pentecost or the Feast of Wheat Harvest—50 days—Easter + 49 days), and the Feast of Tabernacles (a.k.a. Festival of Booths / Shelters—This is Jewish Thanksgiving, sometime in Sept. or October). It is unclear which feast this verse refers to, but one thing is for sure: the population of Jerusalem swelled up with pilgrims.

v. 2: *Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.* A little bit of background information on the name of the pool.

Bethesda: The name, Beth ‘hesda’ (בֵּית חֶסֶד/חֶסֶד), is a combination of two Hebrew words: beth + hesda. The word ‘beth’ means ‘house’ and the word ‘hesda’ means ‘God’s lovingkindness and mercy.’ So, Bethesda means ‘the house of God’s mercy’ to receive healing.

v.3: *In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters;* A lot of sick people congregated around the pool waiting for the waters to be stirred.

v. 4: *for an angel of the Lord went down (κατεβαλεν) at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water;* An angel would descend at certain seasons to move the waters. It happened from time to time, but with no regular schedule. No heads up, either. You just have to be there. It is a waiting game. A hit or miss. By the way, ‘at certain seasons’ means ‘at God’s appointed times (καιρος).’ God decides, not humans. We need to learn to submit to God’s timing and His will.

whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. A stiff competition exists among the sick, blind, lame, and withered! The rule: whoever gets in there first, and only that person, is healed from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. The rest must wait for the next stir. Everyone wants to be that first person.

v. 5: *A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.* The Bible is unclear on what kind of affliction the man had. So far, we know that he was not blind. He was lying on a pallet (v. 6) and couldn’t easily or quickly move by himself (v. 7). He needed help from someone to ‘throw’ him into the pool (v. 7). So, we would just call him crippled/paralyzed. He had been that way for 38 years.

v. 6: *When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition:* No one told Jesus, yet just seeing the man, He knew right away that the man suffered for a long time—38 years!

Folks, if we're afflicted with any condition, either physical or spiritual, we don't even have to tell Jesus about our affliction; He already knows what we suffer from.

Jesus *said to him, **“Do you wish to get well?”** The same Jesus still asks you the same question: Do you wish to get well? Say to Jesus, “Yes, Lord!”

v. 7: *The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put [literal meaning, throw (βαλλω)] me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”* Do you hear and feel the frustration of the man? He needed help from others to get into the pool, yet, he had no one, either friends or family, to ‘throw’ him into the pool. When he tried by himself, since he was slow, someone else always got in there first.

v. 8, v. 9: ⁸Jesus *said to him, **“Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.”** ⁹**Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.** Surprise! Surprise! In a million years, the man wasn't expecting such a healing from Jesus. He even didn't know with whom he was conversing—the Lord of healing. All he was hoping for was the stirred water and some help to get in there first. Not an instant healing! Jesus' help was a total surprise: No angel's stir. No competition. No struggle to get to the pool. No stepping into the pool. No frustration. *Just the word.* Jesus' spoken word heals. The man stands up and walks away with his pallet in his hands.

v. 9-11: *Now it was the Sabbath on that day.* ¹⁰*So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.”* ¹¹*But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’”* The man still doesn't know who healed him.

Later, Jesus met the man again in the Temple and said,

v. 14: **“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”** Do you hear what Jesus is saying here? Do not sin anymore so that nothing worse happens to you. Sin causes something worse than physical illness to us.

Two Lessons:

The Mysteries of God: a few questions on today's story. *Why only at God's appointed times does healing take place? Why not every day? Why only the first one gets healed? Isn't it unfair to the rest?*

More questions. *Why did the man have to suffer for 38 years? Why didn't Jesus visit the man earlier? Why that particular day, and why only that particular man? Why didn't Jesus heal everyone there? If you were God, wouldn't you heal them all? Day after day?*

Until no one is sick? Even entirely eradicating all the diseases and suffering in the world? By the way, *why* did Jesus not start a divine healing clinic right there at the pool stationed and operated by His 12 disciples? 24/7. So many *why's*. It's better to leave them to the Lord for now. God will give us the answers in His time. It's the mysteries of God.

Sin Causes Suffering: Listen to Jesus one more time in verse 14. *“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”*

Consider those two words: *Nothing worse*. I wonder what can be any worse than the crippled condition. For 38 years. Obviously, there are things worse than infirmity, according to Jesus. Perhaps, He meant the worse physical condition than paralysis. Or something like living a self-centered life without Jesus. Or the life of total separation from the Lord with no perspective on eternal life or hope thereof. Beware of the sin, Jesus warns, that can bring something worse than the physical affliction.

There exists a universal spiritual law called ‘cause and effect’ between sin and suffering. Indeed, sin, death, and suffering came into the world after Adam’s disobedience (Romans 5:14). Disobedience to God brings forth sin into the world, and the fruit of sin is death. As long as sin is in the world, there will be suffering, death, and illness.

Individually, sin also affects our well-being: spiritual, emotional, and physical. Please note here: after the healing, Jesus didn’t command the man to take good care of his body (e.g., eat well, sleep well, exercise, etc.). Instead, He commanded him not to sin so that nothing worse happens to him. E.g., In Mark 2:5, to the paralytic, before Jesus healed the man, He said, your sins are forgiven. Here’s a question for us: if we have been suffering from an affliction for a long time for no apparent reasons, we may want to examine ourselves if any sin remains unrepented in us. E.g., Unforgiving spirit can cause cancer.

I am not suggesting by any means that every affliction is the consequences of our own sins. Some of them are. Others are not. However, it’s worth paying attention to what Jesus says. *Sin no more so that nothing worse than your illness happens to you.*

Conclusion

For 38 years, the crippled man was frustrated with the reality: *No chance of healing. No chance of winning the competition against others. Too slow. Too clumsy. No friends.* One day, however, everything changed. The day when Jesus visited him in person. Surprise! God surprised him that day. Totally out of the blue. Totally unexpected. Arise and walk, Jesus commanded him. He was granted a new life. Sin no more. The same Jesus meets you today. Invite Him into your heart today. He heals. Arise and walk, He commands. You are healed. No more crippled condition. Have a new life in Jesus. Sin no more. Amen.