

14. Jesus Healed a Crippled Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be able to show others from the Word of God that Jesus is the Son of God. We also want to help them learn to explain clearly to others how to come to Jesus in repentance and faith so that they can receive the eternal life that Christ promises to give to all those who come to Him. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus healed a crippled man who had lain at the pool of Bethesda for many years.

Jesus experienced opposition in Jerusalem from the day that He cleansed the temple of those who were buying and selling in the temple in John 2. In this topic, we will see that opposition becomes stronger because Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath. John 5:1-6 says, “After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 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 a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. 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?’” In these verses, we see that Jesus returned to Jerusalem for another feast.

In the city of Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate, there was a pool called Bethesda. The word “Bethesda” means *house of mercy, flowing water or house of outpouring* because the water in this pool would move at certain times. There were five porches around this pool. Many people who were sick, blind, lame or paralyzed spent their time on these porches because people considered these waters to have healing power. These people with physical problems were hoping that their diseases would be cured by the water in this pool. As a result, some people had spent a long time on one of these porches.

We read that a man who had an infirmity for 38 years was lying on one of the porches. Many people probably knew that this man had been unable to walk for many years. Jesus chose to walk by this pool while He was in Jerusalem for this feast. Jesus saw the man lying there and knew that he had been in that condition for many years. As a result, Jesus asked the man a question that would change his life. Jesus asked the man, “Do you want to be made well?” This is a key question to a man in his condition.

We see how the man answered the question of Jesus. John 5:7-10 said, “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.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, ‘It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.’” We see that the man actually did not ever answer the question of Jesus. Instead, he began to give reasons why he could not be healed. He said that he had no one to help him. He said that others always got into the water before he did when the water in the pool was

stirred up.

This man gives us an example of many people today. Many people today do not answer the questions that they are asked. Instead, they give excuses to explain why it is impossible for their lives to be changed. Jesus did not ask this man why he could not be healed. Instead, Jesus asked, “Do you want to be made well?” Jesus came to change lives. He did not come to listen to reasons that people think that they cannot be changed. Paul explained some changes that Jesus wants to make in the life of every person in Acts 26:18. Jesus told Paul that He came, ““to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”” Jesus will also work through our lives to do these same things in others: to open their eyes, to turn people from darkness to light, to turn people from the power of Satan to God, to give them forgiveness of sins, and to give them an eternal inheritance.

Jesus listened to the excuses why the man could not be healed. Then, Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” At this point, the man now had a choice. He could continue to give excuses why he could not be healed or he could obey Jesus. This man chose to obey Jesus and he was immediately made well. Then, he took up his bed and walked. However, we see that Jesus had more in mind than just healing this man. This was an opportunity for the Jewish religious leaders to make the choice whether they were going to accept or reject Jesus because Jesus chose to heal this man on the Sabbath day.

The man quickly experienced opposition from some of the Jews. They saw the man carrying his straw mat on the Sabbath day. The Jews immediately said to this man, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.” We see the answer of the man and what happened later in the following verses. John 5:11-16 says, “He answered them, ‘He who made me well said to me, “Take up your bed and walk.”’” Then they asked him, ‘Who is the Man who said to you, “Take up your bed and walk?”’” But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place. 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.’ The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath.” Here, we see that the Jews were actually accusing the man of working on the Sabbath.

The man just answered that the One who made him well told him to, “Take up your bed and walk.” Exodus 20:8-9 says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” In the Ten Commandments, God had told Israel that they were to have a day of rest from the work that they did to earn their living. However, the Jewish rabbis had added 39 things in their written traditions that were not to be done on the Sabbath. One of the 39 things that the people were not to do was carry anything from one place to another. As a result, Jesus had told this man to do something that was against a part of the traditions of the rabbis. It was not a violation of the Word of God. However, the Jews were very upset that this man was breaking their traditions.

This man just quoted the exact words that Jesus had spoken to him to answer these Jews. He said, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’” The Jews who were questioning the man immediately demanded who the Man was who had told him to take up his bed. The man said that he did not know who had healed him. Since there was a large crowd in the area of the Pool of Bethesda, Jesus had just disappeared into the crowd and the man did not know who it was that had healed him. Here, we see that the man was so excited that he was healed that he did not even think to ask Jesus His name or to find out anything about Him.

Later, Jesus found the man in the temple and gave him a further instruction. Jesus found him and said, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” We learn an important lesson from this statement of Jesus. Jesus made it clear that some sicknesses are the result of sin. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” This man, apparently, had this infirmity for 38 years as a result of some sin in his life.

In contrast, in John 9:1-3, it says, “Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’” Here, we see that this man was born blind so that the works of God could be shown in him. By comparing the two men, we see that we are never to judge. Only the Lord knows if a person has an infirmity as a result of sin or for some God given purpose. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” In this case, Paul was given an infirmity to show the Lord’s strength.

After the man learned that Jesus was the One who had healed Him, he told the Jews that it was Jesus that had made him well. We see two immediate changes in the way that the Jews in Jerusalem began to relate to Jesus. First, we see that for this reason the Jews in Jerusalem started persecuting Jesus and continued to persecute Jesus every time He came to Jerusalem from that day. Second, we see that from this time on the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had a strong desire to kill Jesus because He had ignored their traditions by healing this man on the Sabbath. Jesus also healed on the Sabbath in Galilee. Mark 3:4 says, “Then He said to them, ‘Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?’ But they kept silent.” Then, Jesus healed that man as well. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to make a clear distinction between the commandments of God and the traditions of men. Many religious people today still try to impose their traditions on others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to teach the Word of God and not the traditions of men.