



HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Healing the Paralyzed Man

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John 5:1-18

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

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” 7 The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.” 8 Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” 18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

(Pastor Prays)

In order for you to be one of the few, the proud, Marines, one of the many things you must do is pass the PFT, the Physical Fitness Test, because to be a Marine, you must be strong, have endurance, and possess tremendous physical resolve. The PFT comprises three basic elements: a 3-mile run, pull-up, and crunches. And for a man to get a perfect score, he must run 3 miles in 8 minutes and do 20 consecutive dead hang pull-ups and 100 consecutive crunches. The Marines are looking for the few, the proud. That's what Uncle Sam is looking for.

John Piper, in "Brothers, We Are Not Professionals," says, "The difference between Uncle Sam and Jesus Christ is that Uncle Sam won't enlist you unless you are healthy, and Jesus won't enlist you unless you are sick." What is God looking for in the world? Assistants? No. The Gospel is not a help-wanted ad; it is a help-available ad. God is not looking for people to work for him but people who let him work mightily in and through them. I think that's what you have a picture of in the text. This is another time when Jesus does something on the Sabbath. John tells us in verses 16 and 18 that because of what he was doing, the Jews were looking to kill him.

That's one thing, but there is more to this story, and I want you to see it. For you to do that, there are only two people we will look at: Jesus and the man in verse 5 who had been an invalid for 38 years. Just like with Nicodemus, just like the Samaritan woman, you have got to see yourself in this text. You are the invalid, and you need Jesus' miracle. I want us to look at them both and see the depth of our need and the power of the Lord.

Our Deep Need is Overcome By His Amazing Love

Let us look at the man first and see ourselves. Jesus went down to Samaria and came back through Cana of Galilee, and verse 1 tells us he went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. We don't know what kind. He goes to the pool called Bethesda, and he meets a man who, although he is invalid, is very similar to you and me.

He's desperate

⁵*One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.* It's a long time to lay there and think. Thirty-eight years, his muscles have long since atrophied. 38 years. Coincidentally, in Deuteronomy 2:14, that's the same amount of time that Israel wandered from Kadesh-Barnea to the brook Zered. This man was hopeless, and if you have ever been hopeless, you know that in that darkness of the soul, time seems to hang on for an eternity. When this man gets healed,

there won't be any cooperation with Jesus. He won't even exercise belief. Jesus will do it. This man didn't need physical therapy or a deep tissue massage. He didn't need to try harder or concentrate more. He was flat on his back, desperate, and he needed a miracle! Just like some of you. Maybe God is taking you into this valley so that you can cling to him, love him, and seek him.

Jesus didn't say, okay, if you take the first step, just step out, and I'll meet you. That would have been ridiculous. Instead, Jesus says, Get up! And then Jesus gives him the power to do so. I want you to see your paralyzed soul. Stop trying to be healed; see your desperation and call to Christ. He was desperate.

He wanted fairness

Let me show you what I mean. In verse 6, Jesus knew that he had already been there a long time, and he said to him, "Do you want to get well?" That seems like an odd question. Don't be too quick to impose modern psychology on the question. Just let it sit and listen to the man by the pool. He tells his story in verse 7, and he really feels like he is not getting a fair share. And from our spot, it doesn't look like a fair deal. And the truth is that some of you don't feel like you got a fair deal in life when you look at your marriage, kids, job, or house. What's at the bottom of feeling like that? What's underneath the feeling? If you look hard enough, you might find the feeling of, I deserve more, and the feeling that I deserve more will always land you in a spot of feeling like you have somehow gotten an unfair deal in life. That's what's going on with this man. If you couple that with his flakey theology, believing that the first one in the pool would be healed, a sort of divine "first come – first served theology, the lame man was set up for a lifetime of bitterness and resentment.

This is where Jesus comes in. He walks into the life of a lame man who is desperate and wants what is due to him. There's more to say about the paralyzed man, but let's turn our attention to Jesus as he comes up from Cana and enters Jerusalem.

His overwhelming compassion

Verse 1 tells us Jesus came to Jerusalem, but verses 2 and 3 tell us that we went straight to a depressing place. He goes to the pool where all the broken people are. Just like he went to the

woman of Samaria, Jesus moves toward need, not comfort; Jesus moves toward broken sinners, not the self-righteous; Jesus moves toward problems and toward pain and toward deadness. Throughout the New Testament, you find the compassion of Christ. He sees your pain, struggles, weakness, brokenness, and desperation, and he goes to it, not away from it, and he feels it and sympathizes and comes to heal, renew, and forgive. That's his compassion.

His omniscience

Jesus knows everything. ⁵ *One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.* ⁶ *When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?"* Jesus saw him lying there, and he knew how long he had been lying there. He knew the back story. He knew the man's mental state, his depression, his bitterness and hatred, and his strange beliefs, and Jesus came to him and stayed after him, just like he did with the Samaritan woman. He knew everything. Isn't it amazing that even though he knows everything about you, even your strangest passing thoughts, even your vilest struggles, he knows that, and yet he comes to you? Let's notice something else.

His initiating love

Notice in verse 3 that there is a multitude, maybe hundreds of invalids that are blind and lame and paralyzed. There's no reason given as to why Jesus chose this one man out of the hundreds that were there. Jesus comes in; he comes to the man and asks him, "Do you want to get well?" In verse 7, the man starts prattling on about why, for 38 years, he hasn't been able to get down to the pool when the water is stirred up, and in verse 8, Jesus almost interrupts him. Jesus says, "Get Up!" He just heals him, just interrupts and heals. Notice something here. The paralyzed man didn't believe, and then, based on his belief, Jesus healed him. He just did it. Jesus found the man, knew the man, felt for the man, and healed the man. And the man had nothing to do with it.

By the way, this debunks faith healing altogether; that if you will just have more faith or send a few more dollars... Regardless of how you view this miracle, here is an illustration of the Grace of God and the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. He comes to us when we have nothing. In our

desperate condition, paralyzed by sin with no real understanding of God, he says, Get Up! And then he gives us the power to do so. Paul said it like this in Ephesians 2:8. *⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.*

Now, there are several more things to see about Jesus. His omniscience. His power. He speaks, and the dead come alive. His Lordship, I and the Father are one. But let me point out just one more.

He heals with the end in mind

The story goes on to say that Jesus heals the man and tells him to take up his bedroll, and he does. There is only one problem. It's the Sabbath. The Jews will see him in verse 10 and tell him that it is not lawful to do that. The healed man told them, the man who did this told me to. And in verse 12, when he was asked who did this, in verse 13, he doesn't even know who Jesus was. Look at verse 14. *¹⁴ Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you."* Jesus says I didn't just randomly heal you with no purpose so you can live a few more years glad to be in good health and then die. Look at the warning and think about it. Sin no more that nothing worse may happen. You realize what Jesus was saying to him. There is a fate worse than being paralyzed for 38 years. In verses 28 & 29, Jesus about the Judgement Day and people coming out of the grave to his voice. *²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.* The love of God in Jesus presses beyond this life into eternity. Jesus healed the man to save the man. And he's brought you here to do the same thing in your life. See your desperate need, sinful and separated from God. See Jesus as your savior and Lord. Receive by faith, repentance, forgiveness, hope, healing, and joy.

(Pastor prays)