

# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED

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*By the Book™* A Chapter by  
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## Let's Begin

*Chapter five records the third of three miracles John has reported that Jesus performed. Each miracle depicts a different aspect of salvation. The wine into water depicts salvation by the Word (2: 1-11). The miracle of healing the young child depicts salvation by faith (4: 45-54). Now, the healing at the pool of Bethesda perfectly captures salvation by grace (vv. 1-9). The man here is totally helpless and undeserving yet Jesus comes and lifts him out of misery and defeat, changing his life forever. If any one of us is ever saved at all, we must be saved by grace and nothing else.*

*As we walk together through John 5, let's consider the following outline:*

- I. The Miracle Conferred: We are Delivered from Sin by Grace (vv. 1-15)**
- II. The Miracle-Worker Confirmed: He is Demonstrated by Witnesses to be Savior (vv. 16-47)**

## I. The Miracle Conferred: We are Delivered from Sin by Grace (vv. 1-15)

As we consider this section, look briefly at two significant truths. *First, let's explore the setting this miracle possesses.* Jesus is attending a feast in Jerusalem: "After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem" (v. 1). It is said that Gautama Buddha adopted the life of a religious teacher from the age of 35 until his death at the age of 80 (c. 486 B.C.). One of the reasons was because he saw the horrible suffering of humanity, and thus spent his entire life in virtual seclusion looking for the answer to this world's suffering—"enlightenment" it came to be called.

Unlike the Buddha, Jesus never ran from suffering humanity. Instead, He lived His life in the midst of sick, suffering, helpless people. That's where we find Jesus at this feast: "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water" (vv. 2-3). Where do we find ourselves during most of our free time? In the malls, on the beach, at the golf course, working out at the gym, or eating in fine restaurants? Obviously, it is not that any of the things are wrong. Rather, it is to emphasize the very heartbeat of Jesus. He shared His Father's passion for lost souls perfectly (cp. Luke 19:10).

There is a pool here known as the "pool of Bethesda," which literally translated means "house of mercy," or "house of grace." It was here countless sick people gathered in hopes of being healed. Some had seen and experienced a miracle here (v. 4), however, most were not so touched. Note that God is not obligated to bestow upon all people a miraculous healing. In fact, if miracles happened by the minute, a miracle would not be a miracle! By definition, miracles are the exceptions, not the rules. The Bethesda waters are located at the Sheep Gate (v. 2; cp. Nehemiah 3:1). Through the Sheep Gate, the lambs for the temple sacrifices were to be carried. How fitting that Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the world's sin, should enter this gate and stop at Bethesda (cp. 1:29).

### Reflection Connection

*Take a moment to reflect on your daily routine. What one thing do you most do in your spare time? Be very honest with yourself. Does any of your most valuable spare time involve doing something to alleviate the suffering of others? Be prepared to share it with the group.*



### Reflection Connection

*Why do so many people have the idea that if God accepts them, it will be based on the good deeds they do? Explain.*

*Second, let's explain the salvation this miracle pictures. We find no greater picture of the salvation grounded solely in grace than in the miracle at Bethesda.*

*In this passage, we have on clear display the condition of a sinner: "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water... And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (vv. 3, 5). The pitiful group that hung around the pool gives us a precise description of lost humanity.*

*The sinner, in essence, is *diseased*. Thus, we find in the Bible depictions of the results of sin in a person's life. The man Jesus met at the pool was impotent (v. 7), having an "infirmity thirty and eight years." He was without strength. The Apostle Paul informs us that "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). This man had no power to live right.*

*Another description Scripture offers to show us our sinfulness includes "blindness." Again, Paul writes "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not..." (2 Corinthians 4:4). Sin blinds a man to his true condition and to the need for a Savior.*

*Additionally, the man at Bethesda was "halt" (v. 3); that is, he had no use of his legs. He could not move because he was crippled. Sin does that; it cripples us, making it impossible to get on with our lives. How dreadful is the disease of sin. It wrecks our future, blights our life, and in the end, kills our soul by sending it to Hell. That is the sinner diseased.*

*We furthermore have the picture of the sinner *defeated*. This man had been sick for 38 years (v. 5). Sadly, all he had to show for it was a ride to the pool to sit all day. No one was there to offer him a helping hand: "Sir, I have no man" (v. 7). Imagine that: the only response he could offer Jesus was he had no one. This pictures the defeat that sin brings upon one's life.*

*You may not be point in your life when you must say "Sir, I have no man." However, somewhere, sometime sin will lead you to the point of despair. Any man-made path you choose inevitably leads to defeat. It could be drugs, pleasures, wealth, or even religion. But no one of these singularly or together can cure the anguish of your soul apart from God.*

*We also see the sinner depraved. Note especially the Lord's word to the man a bit later: "Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (v. 14). This man's physical ailment was caused by his sin. This isn't always true. That must be stated. But it definitely was the case with the man at the Bethesda pool.*

*The basic problem with the world is not our economy as we so often hear today. Instead, the world's fundamental problem can be summed up in one three-letter*

*Sin cripples us, making it impossible to get on with our lives.*

### Reflection Connection

*Do you think there is an unhealthy spirit of defeat in our culture? What about the church? Why or why not? How can the miracle Jesus performed at Bethesda speak to defeat? Make a note of some of the ways and share them with the group.*



### Reflection Connection

*Compare and contrast Jesus' healing of the physical body and the saving of the human soul. Do you think the body's healing is important to God? How? What role does the resurrection of the body in the future coming Kingdom have? Explain.*

word: s-i-n. It is for this reason that the Christian faith has such relevance for our world today. Sometimes Christians are accused of answering questions that no one is asking. To the contrary, the Christian faith answers what all should be asking; that is, questions about forgiveness, peace of heart, judgment, Heaven and Hell.

*We also have the compassion of the Savior.* Jesus is the only one who could help this poor destitute soul. In fact, Jesus knows all about the man: "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?" (v. 6). We cannot think Jesus is ignorant of our circumstances. He knows all about every trouble we face, every sin we commit, every thought we think (cp. 2:24). Do you want to know something good about that? Here goes: even though Jesus knows every single thing about you, He lovingly extends His grace anyway. "Wilt thou be made whole?" He asks the man. Do you desire to be well? Jesus is ready to cure you. He will not force Himself upon you. He is ready to accept any person who will genuinely turn to Him in faith.

Note the three-fold command Jesus gives the man: rise, take, walk (v. 8). The man was not expected to do what he could not. Jesus first cured Him. But he was expected to walk, avoiding the fall back into relapse. He should never be carried again. Jesus makes all things new!

*Let's notice the consequences of salvation.* Observe that the miracle was not the end of the story. Certain results were forthcoming. First, the man received criticism (v. 10). The Jewish leaders did not rejoice with the man's new life. Religious people rarely rejoice when somebody really finds Jesus.

*Jesus is ready  
to cure you.*

They were more concerned about their law than about the needs of the man being met. Every Christian who lives a holy life can expect to have criticism, ridicule, and mockery. If you surrender to Christ, get ready; it will come.

After his healing, the man went to the temple (v. 14). Think of it. He hadn't been there in 38 years! Evidence of true salvation always expresses itself in a desire to be with God's people. It comes naturally to the person who has authentically experienced the new birth (cp. Acts 3:1-6). If we love Christ, we'll love His church. And, if we do Biblical evangelism, we'll make it church centered. In the New Testament, the pattern was to win them and baptize them, bringing them into the local church.

We cannot overlook that the man was told to sin no more after he was saved (v. 14). When Jesus saves us from sin, we're no longer to live in sin. When we're saved, we must live a life that honors the Lord.

Furthermore, we find this man not only in the temple, we also find him telling others what Jesus did for him (v. 15). This is a true mark of salvation-speaking a word about Jesus to those who do not know Him. Are you branded with this mark? Is it important to you to share what Christ has done in your life?



## II. The Miracle-Worker Confirmed: He is Demonstrated by Witnesses to be Savior (vv. 16-47)

### Reflection Connection

*What do you think is the biggest obstacle to presenting the Gospel to our secular society? What do you think is the number one answer people give to the question "Who is Jesus?"*

That Jesus healed the man at the Bethesda pool was bad enough in the eyes of the skeptics. But that He dared heal him on the Sabbath was simply too much for them to bear. Immediately they went on a rampage: "And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day" (v. 16). Their calloused hearts were more interested in keeping traditions than helping people. So, they lashed out at Christ by questioning His authority, His identity, and therefore, His purpose. We face the same questions today, do we not? Who is Jesus? What did He do? Was He the Son of God or just a good man?

Four witnesses were called to the stand to testify as to who Christ was. *First, on the stand was John the Baptist*: "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth. But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved. He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light" (vv. 33-35). John was sent as a witness for Jesus (1: 6-8) and served as the forerunner for Christ. Jesus called him "a burning and a shining light." Note that this description gives a principle that is true of all witnesses. They are burning lights, aglow with the presence of Jesus Christ.

### Reflection Connection

*We've encountered John the Baptist before. What sort of witness was John? Do you think he was soft-spoken or gruff and tough? Explain. Compare Jesus' estimation of John with yours.*

Repeatedly, John bore witness to Jesus, demonstrating Him to be Savior of the world. John confessed that Jesus was "before" him (1:15) and was "the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (1:29). He further witnessed that Jesus was God's only begotten and unique Son (1:34). Everything John knew of Jesus informed his view, demonstrating He was the Christ, God's Anointed Messiah.

The second witness called to demonstrate Jesus to be the Savior was *the works of Jesus*. The Lord said: "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (v. 36). To the Jewish leaders, Jesus offered His works as demonstration of Who He was. In fact, Jesus said of His disciples that we would be know by our deeds (cp. Matthew 7:16; Titus 3:8). Similarly, we know Jesus by the miracles He did. Nicodemus observed this (3:2). And, recall that many times Jesus appealed to His works (10: 25, 38; 14:11).

### Reflection Connection

*The works of Jesus played a major role in identifying Him as the Son of God. What roles do works play in identifying us as children of God? Explain. Does the fact that one person has "more works" than another make them a better Christian? Why or why not?*

The third witness called to demonstrate Jesus to be the Savior was *the Father Himself*: " And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not" (vv. 37-38). What proof does the Father bring that Jesus is the Savior? On three separate occasions the Father spoke validating the Son as Savior.

*The Father first spoke at Jesus' baptism* (Matthew 3:17). Little had been seen of Jesus since His birth. While He did not grow up in solitude like John the Baptist, neither did Jesus have much of a public life before His baptism. Luke records one single event on about the boyhood of Jesus (2: 41-52). When we come to His baptism by John in the Jordon, however, something significant takes place: " And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending



### Reflection Connection

*There are many people who claim to hear God's audible voice. What is your response to that claim? How can you know whether or not such claims are valid? Is it possible for people to hear God's voice in another way besides audibly? Explain.*

like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3: 16-17). The Father validates His Son, publicly anointing Him into His messianic role as Savior of the world.

*Second, the Father spoke at the Transfiguration:* " While [Peter] yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). When Jesus was transformed before the disciples, it was His inner divine radiance coming through. The disciples were seeing Jesus as He, in essence, was. It is at that moment that Jesus is once again approved by the Father to be His only Son and Savior of the world.

*Third, the Father spoke before the cross.* Note the words of our Lord: " Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (12: 28). As Jesus is teaching the disciples Who He was, the Father fully affirmed both His glory and identity.

*There is a third witness to take the stand to demonstrate Jesus as the Savior: The Scriptures (vv. 39-47).* For us, this is the most important testimony of all. The words of Jesus are no longer before men's eyes. The voice of the Father no longer descends from Heaven. Yet, the testimony of Scripture does not cease to speak! Jesus said " Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (v. 39). The term "search" was used of a hunter who scouted for food. He stalked his game, focusing all his attention on the tracks of the beast before him. If you want to know if the claims of Christ are true, it will require a steady, consistent search. For the Scriptures "are they which testify of [Him]."

### Golden Greek Nugget

Jesus asks the man at Bethesda if he wanted to be made "whole" (v. 6; cp. also vv. 9, 11, 14, 15). The Greek word is one from which we get our English word "hygiene." It would be a mistake to think that Jesus was just speaking about bodily cleanliness. The word means "healthy." Thus, the miracle was, on the surface, about the health of his body. But deeper, it was about the wholeness or "health" of his entire life, which would include his spiritual life. No one can be well and healthy who is not spiritually sound.

### Wrap Up

We have observed the Bible's description of our basic problem and it is not encouraging. We are all fundamentally sick spiritually and are on the brink of human wreck. We possess no way out of this depravity ourselves. Only through Jesus Christ, Who is demonstrated as Savior to the world, can we ever hope to be delivered. By God's amazing grace, He offers salvation full and free to us for the taking.

Would you receive it today? You can. If right now, before God, you'll surrender your whole heart to Him, asking Him to forgive you, turning from your sin, the Bible says, you'll be saved: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). May our Lord grant you salvation this very moment.

