

John 5:1-9

Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ²Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. ³Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. ⁵One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

⁷“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

⁸Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

⁹Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath.

Background

The “Sheep Gate” (v2) was a gate in the wall of the Temple complex where sheep were brought in for sacrifice. Near the gate was the Pool of Bethesda, meaning “House of Mercy.”

Most modern translations, like the NLT, omit John 5:4, which describes an angel stirring the pool’s water and healing the first person to enter. This verse is not in the earliest manuscripts, raising doubts about its authenticity. The idea of “angel-stirred water” and “healing only the first person” certainly doesn’t align with God’s *usual* way of working, so it was most likely a legend or a superstitious belief due to the pool’s location by the temple.

Teaching Points

1. The healing of the paralyzed man fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

John 20:30–31 explains that Jesus performed many miracles, but only a selection of them were recorded to help readers believe He is the Christ, the Son of God. John highlights seven "sign miracles" to support this. The seven miracles are:

1. Water turned to wine (John 2)
2. Healing the nobleman’s son (John 4)
3. Healing the paralyzed man (John 5)
4. Feeding the 5,000 (John 6)
5. Walking on water (John 6)

6. Healing the blind man (John 9)
7. Raising Lazarus (John 11)

The healing in John 5 fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy that the lame would "leap like a deer" (Isaiah 35:6). Despite 38 years of paralysis, the man immediately stood and walked. This is clear evidence of divine power, reinforcing Jesus' identity as the promised Messiah.

2. The healing of the paralyzed man pictures the salvation of mankind.

The seven sign miracles in John not only prove Jesus' deity, but also illustrate His spiritual work. The healing of the paralyzed man is a powerful picture of salvation. The man was helpless and unable to save himself, just as humanity is paralyzed by sin. But Jesus, knowing his condition, came in grace and healed him instantly. That's how Jesus comes to us, fully aware of our need. He offers immediate and complete salvation by His grace.

Application

1. "Would you like to get well?"

The Lord asks each of us, "*Would you like to get well?*" For those who are not believers, the question is: do you want to be saved? Suppose the paralyzed man had said "No." The miracle wouldn't have happened.

Many today say "No" to God's offer. Perhaps because they don't realize they're paralyzed by sin, or they prefer to remain in it, or maybe they think they can save themselves. But the paralyzed man knew he needed healing and had faith when Jesus asked him, "*Would you like to get well?*" He was healed immediately. The joy of freedom from sin is available in Christ, but it requires your decision.

2. "Pick up your mat and walk."

When Jesus said, "*Pick up your mat and walk,*" He was calling the man—and us—to action. Too many believers stay stuck in self-pity, doubt, and small faith. They forget the power of the Holy Spirit within them. Jesus doesn't remove all our problems, but He gives us the strength to face them. Notice the Lord didn't carry the man's mat for him; He gave him the strength to carry it himself. Let's stop living in weakness and move forward in faith. Pick up your mat and walk!