



## TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

### John 5:1-9: A Paralyzed Man is Healed at the Pool of Bethesda

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*"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, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda,<sup>[a]</sup> having five porches. 3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 4 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. 5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. 6 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?" 7 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." 8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." 9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath."*

#### Background Notes

**Some** background notes that will help us understand the setting for this great miracle. In verse 1 we read that this miracle occurred during "a feast of the Jews." We don't know which feast, but Passover is a good possibility.

The Sheep Gate (v2) was a gate in the wall of the temple complex. Through this gate the sheep were brought for sacrifices on the altar in the Temple. There was also a sheep market nearby, and it may be that it is the sheep market that referred to here. Until just a couple of years ago, in that same area where the sheep market and Sheep Gate were located in the first century, a sheep market was held every week. Bedouin shepherds came into Jerusalem to trade sheep every Friday. As far as you can trace back, they have been doing this week after week; this practice may go all the way back to the first century when that was the sheep market where the sheep were bought for sacrifice in the Temple. Quite interesting.

Near the Sheep Gate outside the Temple area was a large pool named Bethesda – meaning "House of Mercy." Archaeologists have excavated the Pool of Bethesda, and the ruins can be seen today. The five porches (v2) were five colonnaded porticos or covered patios that were located along all four sides and across the center of the large Pool.

In these porticos, or porches a great number of sick and handicapped people waited for the "moving of the waters." There is some question about the moving or stirring of the waters by an angel. Maybe some of you can pick it up with your noted study Bibles. There is no doubt that the sick and handicapped people believed that periodically an angel came and stirred the waters, and the first one into the water was healed. However, in the earliest manuscripts or the earliest copies of John's Gospel, verse 4 is missing. So whether an angel actually stirred the water, and the people were actually healed is open to some question –

angel-stirred water certainly doesn't seem like God's normal way of operation. And why was only the first person into the pool healed?

In any case, one of the handicapped people waiting for the moving of the waters was a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. That's a long time! This man was paralyzed even before the Lord was born. In grace, the Lord sought him out and healed him. He was healed immediately and took up his bed and walked. Of course the bed (v9) was not a heavy four-poster or brass bed with headboard, frame and box spring! No, it was a pad that could easily be rolled up and carried as a bedroll.

## **Doctrinal / Teaching Points**

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

In John 20:30-31, we read: *"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."*

Seven of the miracles of the Lord Jesus were selected and recorded in the Gospel of John, in order to prove to John's readers that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah, and the Son of God. The healing of the paralyzed man in John 5 is the third of these sign miracles. Can you name the rest of them? First, in John 2, the changing of the water into wine. Second, the healing of the nobleman's son in John 4. Next the third sign miracle, the healing of the paralyzed man in John 5. Then we have two in John 6: the feeding of the five thousand, and Jesus walking on water. In John 9 we have the healing of the blind man, and finally the raising of Lazarus in John 11.

This miracle, the healing of the paralyzed man, is right in line with the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament. In Isaiah 35:5-6, we read:

*"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.  
6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
And the tongue of the dumb sing.  
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,  
And streams in the desert."*

Here in John 5 we have the healing of a paralyzed man who immediately leapt up like a deer, and walked off with his bedroll. Think of it, thirty-eight years of atrophied muscles! Did you ever try to walk on a leg that has been in a cast for only a few weeks? I once was bed-ridden for two weeks, and when I got out of bed I fell over because I didn't have any strength in my legs. And yet this man had immediate strength in his limbs! Certainly here we have evidence of God at work. John wrote that this miracle was one of the miracles he recorded so that readers, both then and today, might believe that this is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. The healing of the paralyzed man fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

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

The seven sign miracles in the Gospel of John not only attest to the deity of person of Jesus Christ, but they are also spiritual pictures of the work of Christ. In this miracle we have a wonderful picture of the salvation of mankind. The man was unable to help himself. He couldn't walk, he had no strength, his friends couldn't help, and all hope was gone. Do you see the picture? In the same way, mankind is paralyzed by sin. We can't save ourselves. Friends can't help us. There is no hope apart from Jesus Christ.

But the Lord Jesus came to where the man was! Jesus knew all about him (v6), and in sovereign grace, the Lord healed him. The healing was immediate and complete. In the same way, the Lord Jesus came and found us. He knew all about us, and by His sovereign grace, we have been healed from the disease and paralysis of sin. Our salvation was immediate and complete. What a great picture we have of the salvation of mankind! The healing of the paralyzed man pictures the salvation of mankind.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. "Do you want to be made well?"**

The Lord asks that same question of you – "Do **you** want to be made well?" Perhaps you are not a believer -- do you want to be saved? Do you want to be made well? Suppose the paralyzed man had said "No." I imagine the Lord would have passed on by, and the miracle would not have taken place.

When the Lord asks "Do you want to be made well?" today, lots of people say no! Why? Possibly they don't know they are paralyzed by sin. Maybe they would rather continue living in sin. Perhaps they think that they can save themselves. Is it possible that you are in one of those categories? This man **wanted** to be healed -- and he **was** healed!

Verse 7 shows that he had come to "the end of his rope." He knew that he couldn't help himself, and no other help was to be found. And when the Lord asked him, "Do you want to be made well?" he exercised faith -- and **immediately** (v9) the man was made well, took up his bed and walked! Can you imagine his joy after thirty-eight long years of suffering, lying helplessly on that mat?

Have you experienced the joy of freedom from the penalty and power of sin? That joy is available in Christ, but it is a matter of your will. Do you want to be made well?

### **2. "Pick up your bed and walk."**

The Lord said to the man "*Rise, take up your bed and walk*"(v8). The Lord would say the same thing to us today: "Pick up your bed and walk." Too many Christians continue to lie on their beds of self-pity and doubt and small faith. Listen! The Lord has saved us and given us new life; we have the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to deal with all the problems we may have. Let's move on in the Christian walk! Let's begin to mature in the faith. Let's no longer be weak, "basket-case" Christians. Pick up your bed and walk!

Notice that the Lord didn't carry the man's bed for him -- He gave him the strength to carry it himself. That's the way it is in the Christian life. The Lord saves us immediately, but He doesn't immediately remove all our problems. However, He gives us the strength to carry on and deal with those problems, and He is always there to encourage us. Jesus said, "Pick up your bed and walk." Let's pick up our beds and walk!