

The Jews' Reaction the Healing of the Paralyzed Man

John 5:10-18

John 5:10-18 – “The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.” ¹¹ He answered them, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’” ¹² Then they asked him, “Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’” ¹³ But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. ¹⁴ 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.” ¹⁵ The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶ For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” ¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.”

Background Notes

Wouldn't you think that the Jewish leaders would have been amazed by this great miracle? Wouldn't you think they would have glorified God for the miracle? They had just witnessed the healing of a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years? This handicapped man was a “well-known fixture” at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem - and suddenly he was completely healed?

What was the reaction? The self-righteous Jewish leaders didn't give glory to God. Instead, they found fault because the healing took place on a Sabbath day. As far as they were concerned, the Lord had broken their man-made laws for behavior on the Sabbath. In their opinion, this was wrong, and the Lord was at fault.

Notice that they found fault with both the Lord Jesus and the man who was healed! “The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed” (v10). Now **God's Law** didn't say that you couldn't carry a bedroll on the Sabbath. **God's Law** said that the Sabbath was to be set aside for rest and worship of God, so people were not to work on the Sabbath as they worked on the other six days of the week. But over the years the Jews had re-interpreted God's Law for the Sabbath. They had added their own mandates, rules, laws and traditions. By the time of Christ, they had decided that carrying a bedroll was equivalent to carrying furniture, and therefore it was “work”!

The healed man rose above such man-made legalistic trivia, and he said to the Jewish leaders: “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk’” (v11). In other words he was saying, if Jesus has the power to heal me after thirty-eight years of paralysis, then Jesus ought to be obeyed! His thinking was *right on!*

The Jews found fault with the Lord Jesus as well, because he had healed the man on the Sabbath: *“For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath”* (v16). It seems that the Lord purposely healed this man on the Sabbath to force the ridiculous man-made Sabbath rules out into the open. In fact, the Lord healed on the Sabbath on other occasions as well.

Here again, the Jews had added to the Law of God. The Law prohibited menial work on the Sabbath, but it didn't prohibit acts of necessity, or acts of mercy. In Luke 14:5 the Lord said to the Pharisees, *“Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?”* The Pharisees could not answer Him regarding these things. They knew that the law didn't prohibit acts of mercy on the Sabbath.

One more background note: some commentators find fault with the healed man because he told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well (v15). These commentators believe that the man was “squealing” on the Lord! I don't see it that way at all. I believe the man was simply giving credit where credit was due. He was a witness to the power of the Lord Jesus.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. There *is* something worse than physical problems.

The Lord found the man He had healed in the Temple area. Most likely he was there to praise God for his healing. *“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”* (v14). What did the Lord mean by that statement? There's a good possibility that this man's disability had been the result of some particular sin in his life as a young man.

Now before we go further, let's be **very** clear that **the Bible does not teach** that every physical problem, illness, or disability is the result of a sin that someone committed! In fact, in John 9 the disciples raised that very question about the man who was born blind. In John 9:3 we read, *“Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.”*

However, the Bible **does** teach that there can be “disciplinary sickness.” Some physical problems are the direct result of sin. In 1 Corinthians 11:30, *“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”* Some Corinthian believers were ill, and some had actually been taken home to Heaven. Some of them were sick and some had even died - as a result of sin. So there is “disciplinary sickness.” In view of what the Lord said to this man in verse 14, it may be that his paralysis was the result of sin.

Notice that the Lord said, *“Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”* What could be worse than thirty-eight years of paralysis? Well, eternity in hell would certainly be worse, and that may be indeed what the Lord was referring to here.

In other words, the Lord said to him “Don’t sin any more!! From now on live your life as a godly, obedient, faithful believer; then you will be assured of Heaven, not hell, when you die.

What a horrible thing if this man were to be healed physically, but never became a true believer, and then he lived a life of sin and ended up in hell. There **is** something worse than physical problems! Most people today think that the worst things in life are physical handicaps, suffering, pain - physical problems. Not so! An eternal destiny in hell is **far** worse. There *is* something worse than physical problems!

2. God's work of preservation does not stop on the Sabbath!

When the Jewish leaders accused the Lord of “working” on the Sabbath, He answered them, “*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*” (v17). Notice that the Lord was making two points with that statement.

First of all, He was claiming to be God - a claim that the Jews didn’t miss! “*Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God*”(v18). The other point the Lord made was that **God** works on the Sabbath, and certainly **God** would not be guilty of breaking His own laws!

In other words, **God’s work of preservation** does not stop on the Sabbath. God’s natural laws (such as gravity and healing) do not stop working on the Sabbath. Just imagine such a scenario! Suppose the Universal Law of Gravitation stopped on the Sabbath? The world would be up for grabs! Suppose that you cut yourself on a Saturday (Sabbath)? You would bleed to death before natural healing began the next day. Aren’t you glad that *God’s work of preservation* doesn’t stop on the Sabbath?

And that’s exactly the point that the Lord was making: “*My Father has been working until now, and I have been working*”(v17). That was His reply when they said, “You broke the Sabbath!” Basically, the Lord was saying that God’s work of preservation doesn’t stop on the Sabbath. Therefore it was not wrong for the Lord to heal on the Sabbath, because God’s work doesn’t stop on the Sabbath. God’s work of preservation doesn’t stop on the Sabbath.

God’s work of creation came to an end when He rested on the seventh day of Creation Week. We know from Hebrews 4 that God’s “rest” was not broken. But God’s work of *preservation* continues to operate. In Colossians 1:17 we read that in Christ “*all things consist [hold together].*” That’s God’s work of *conservation*, or *preservation*. God’s work of preservation does not stop on the Sabbath.

Let me extend this doctrinal point a little bit further, because some commentaries say something like, “Well, God rested from His work of creation, but then it was broken because of sin.” I believe we should not look at it that way. God’s work of creation was complete, and on the seventh day He rested. And that rest was never broken!

I believe Hebrews 4 makes it very clear that God's rest continues, and we can enter that rest. But His work of preservation continues. His work of redemption continues. And other aspects of God's work continue. Praise the Lord, it continues! God's work of preservation does not stop on the Sabbath!

Practical applications

1. Don't forget to follow up new believers!

In verse 14, the Lord went and found the man He had healed - for a "follow-up" session. We need to follow the Lord's example here. Don't forget to follow up new believers!

Tomorrow we're starting a new semester at Emmaus Bible College. I especially enjoy teaching students who are new believers. For them, every class is like a follow-up session, and it's a joy to see them grow and mature in the faith! As we were driving back from this summer's camp ministry, I told Margie, "I can't wait to get back in the classroom again!" I love to see the students coming in, particularly new believers. It's just a thrill to teach the Scriptures to them!

Do you know any new Christians? Don't forget to follow up new believers!

2. Do you live by "man-made" rules or "God-made" rules?

In this account we see that the Jewish leaders judged both the Lord and the healed man by their own **man-made** rules, **not** by **God-made** rules. Is it possible that we do the same thing - maybe without even realizing it?

How do we analyze the spirituality of our fellow-believers? Do we look down on them because of the translation of the Bible they read? By the kind of clothes they wear? By what kind of musical instruments they play? By the kind of Christian music they enjoy for worship? Are we judging them by **our own set of personal preferences**? Have we turned our own personal likes and dislikes into man-made **rules** for spirituality?

Let's be careful! Let's not make the mistake of confusing man-made rules with God-made rules. Each one of us should ask ourselves that question: Do I live by man-made rules or God-made rules?