

Do You Want to be Made Well?
John 5:1-15
February 19, 2024

In WW II an estimated that 15 million soldiers & 45 million civilian lost their lives - another estimated 25 millions more were wounded in battle - many of whom would never fully recover from those injuries.

Many years ago, I have the joy of getting to know one of these who had been wounded in battle - He was a kind, older gentleman who had been in the famous battle, known as the Battle of the Bulge.

He had spent a couple of months in a foxhole in the woods outside of city of Bastogne, Belgium - He survived heavy shelling by the Germans, in sub-freezing temperatures - He lost many of his friends die during those 43 days between December 16, 1944 and January 28, 1945.

Though a very nice man, I always sensed that something wasn't quite right with him - His wife shared with me one day why - She shared about his time in the war, specifically in this battle.

She told me that many nights he would still wake with night mares - and this was 40 years later - though his body had healed from the cold and the shrapnel, his mind and memories had not!

In my 65 years of life, I have come to realize that physical wounds often heal long before the emotional and mental wounds heal - And this is not only true with soldiers, it is true with everyone who has been wounded by this sinful, vicious world.

Today, I want us to talk about healing - We are going to do this by looking at a man Jesus healed at Pool of water in Jerusalem - Interestingly, we never learn his name - And maybe this is good because it helps us more easily place ourselves in this story - maybe we are the person in need of healing today, sitting quietly in our comfortable chair.

Let's begin reading in John 5:1 - **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, having five porches.**

The pool of Bethesda has been excavated today - and yes, it has been found to have 5 porches (or overhangs) just like John described - [\(Picture\)](#) - Under these porches were flat areas around the pool where people would gather in the shade - as we will see, they would lay out their bedrolls and wait for the waters to stir.

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.

In the latter part of verse 3-4, John is describing the folklore that had developed over time about this pool of Bethesda - He is trying to help the readers, years later, understand why the sick folks are gathering there in such great numbers.

Maybe, there had been some healing at this pool - maybe God honored the faith of a few who were looking to Him for healing - sometimes God honors faith, even when it is misguided - regardless, it was apparent by the number of people gathered, that they believed healing was possible.

I believe John is intentionally sharing the superstitions of the people concerning the pool - I say SUPERSTITION, because this description of the healing process flies in the face of what we know about the Nature of God.

Think about it - Would a loving God who cares so deeply about the widows, the orphans, the poor & the helpless, set up a system of healing that rewarded the strongest, the most connected and the most powerful?

It seems more in line with the nature of God that He would do what Jesus does here - and help the weakest and most helpless!

Superstition is a powerful motivator for people - I think this is why we need to be certain our beliefs be guided by the Bible - and not some unfounded superstition that has been handed down from past generations.

If something you believe is not clearly taught in the Bible, let it go - Don't let superstitious fear and misguided beliefs keep you in-prisoned - Trust your Bible, not some tradition that has been past down to you.

**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?"**

We don't know exactly how old this man is - but we do know he has been dealing with this disability for 38 years! - Whatever the root problem, it has caused him to be paralyzed - We know this because later he will tell Jesus that he has no one to help him into the water.

For some reason Jesus locks in on this man - Why this guy? - We don't know - maybe just the length of time he had been in this condition caused Jesus to want to help him - Maybe Jesus sensed a measure of genuine faith in him - We simply don't know why Jesus chose this guy.

Maybe this is just an example of God's amazing, undeserved grace - This guys might have been the least worthy person there - But, isn't this the person God often picks to save, to heal and to bless?

So many times we mistakenly think that we have to do something great to deserve God's blessings - When, in reality, the opposite is true - we need to recognize we could never be worthy of His goodness & mercy - that is why it is called grace.

We can't earn it! - God's Grace is most often given to the least deserving!

Have you ever wondered why Jesus didn't just heal everyone there at the pool that day? - He could have!

Jesus healed a lot of people - but not everyone - At times His healing appears random - at other times it is a response to someone's faith - like the woman who was healed by touching the hem of His garment - other times, we see Jesus responding to the faith of the friends of the sick and lamb! - Like the man let down through the ceiling by his faithful friends.

Remember, Jesus is the Messiah who came to save people - He is not just a great guy with a healing ministry - Yet, even today we want to turn Jesus into that guy!

Jesus is THE SAVIOR first and foremost - what He most wants to do in your life, **it is to Forgive you & to Save you!** - His greatest desire is to see you forgiven of your sins and Heaven bound.

Other blessings He gives us along the way, well they are just that:
Wonderful, and often unexpected blessings - sometimes healing!

What is fascinating to me is the question Jesus asked this man: **"Do you want to be made well?"** - For many years I didn't understand this question - I thought, "Jesus, EVERYONE wants to be healed!"

Then, I realized one day that, NO, they don't! - For all healing comes with A COST - Think about this man - He had not taken care of himself in 38 years! - For all that time, he had needed the HELP OF OTHERS to eat and survive.

He couldn't work - At best, He BEGGED - He depended on others for food - for help getting around - his very survival depended on the graciousness of others!

So, what would happen if he were healed? - What would it mean if he were suddenly able to walk again? - to work again? - to take care of a family again - to suddenly become responsible for himself without the assistance of others?

Once healed, people would no longer feel sorry for him - their attitudes would quickly change - everyone would look at him differently - He would no longer be the "helpless" guys - the "paralyzed" guy!

Now, suddenly he's the Miracle Man! - But, does he even know where to begin - How does a person go from needing others for almost every necessity of life, to being totally responsible for himself?

Being healed means being responsible - Being healed means no more handouts - it means no more people feeling sorry for you - Suddenly life

changes - **Life, at the same time gets easier, but it also get much more difficult!**

The cost of being made well is the responsibility that instantly returns to your life - When healed, for the first time in many years, you would find yourselves FREE FROM THE BONDAGE you had known for so long.

But quickly you'd realize that with this Freedom comes a lot of Responsibility - Responsibility we have not felt for many years - suddenly our lives experience a different kind of pressure - the pressure that comes from having to do what others have always done for you.

FREEDOM & RESPONSIBILITY are always coupled together - You can't have one without the other - this is a very important truth of life - If I want freedom (in this case to be healed from an illness or an addiction), I have to assume the responsibility that comes with that freedom!

Sure, I can keep myself dependent on others for certain needs in my life - but I must remember that with that dependency comes a loss of freedom!

It works this way: **If I take from another person, I am giving to them the right to speak into my life** - By making myself dependent on another, I am giving to them the right to have a say in my decisions - I am turning over some of my autonomy to them.

This is the lesson every parent needs to teach their children - If that child wants more freedom, then they must be willing to take more responsibility!

Here's how it works: I always understood that as long as I was living under my parents roof, they had the right to involve themselves in my decisions!

They could do things like mandate that I go to school or get a job (which they did) - they could give me a curfew (which they did) - even when I was in college, I was not free to come home any time I liked - 11:00 on weekdays, midnight on the weekends.

If I wanted more freedom, my dad made it clear I would have to provide my own housing - and pay my own rent - buy my own food - **The cost of them providing food and housing was that I had to live by their rules.**

That is always the choice - **How much Freedom do I want? Well, how much responsibility am I willing to take!**

For this man, Healing meant freedom - Suddenly, he could walk - he could work - he could be the husband and father he always wanted to be - But, the cost of that freedom would be the heavy responsibility that comes with those changes in his life!

So, Jesus asked the question, **“Do you want to be made well?”** - there is much more behind that question than we think - Our Weaknesses and our infirmities can become like a comforting blanket that a small child sleeps with!

That blanket can get nasty and dirty - it can get soaked with saliva - it can stink - and it can be stained with all kinds of awful stuff - but the child is somehow comforted by it - and he holds on to it with all his strength - The thought of saying goodbye to that stinking blanket is almost impossible!

When I was a child, I had a collection of Teddy Bears - at one time, I had 15 to 20 of them - I would line them up around my very crowded twin bed - Though my mom tried to THIN THE HERD, I held on to them tenaciously - that is until our house caught fire on afternoon.

I was 11 years old - A lightning strike blew up our television and caught the house on fire - fortunately, no one was at home - fire and smoke destroyed everything - including my teddy bears!

Funny thing - I lost everything I owned that day - But the only thing I cared about, the only thing I cried about were those silly stuffed animals! - but, it might have been the best thing that could have happened to me!

I was getting too old for those teddy bears - I needed to move on from them - but they were tough to let go of - So, God had a spring thunderstorm take care of it for me! - I had no choice but to LET GO OF that childish dependency that day!

Has God ever forced you past a childish behavior you just didn't want to let go of? - Has He ever made it clear to you that it was time to let go of childish things? - Becoming an adult is not easy - the responsibility of

adulthood is a heavy burden to carry - but we have to be willing to shoulder that load.

Has Jesus ever asked you that question? - **Do you want to be made well?** - Have you considered the cost of healing? - Let's see how our lame man answers:

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."

He didn't really answer the question, did he? - No, his attention was still focussed on the only solution he could see to his problem - To be healed, he had to be the first one in that pool - But, this had proven to be all but impossible.

He saw his pathway to healing as very narrow - His faith was in that pool - that water held the cure - So, in answer to Jesus' question, he simply pointed out the problem - I have NO ONE to get me in that pool.

Has that become your problem as well - the only answer you see TO FIND HELP & HEALING has proven difficult, elusive or maybe even impossible.

You too have limited God's ABILITY only to the solutions you can see? - But, What if Jesus has a different path for you? - What if He came along today and said, **"Do you want to be made well?"**

Can you believe there might be an answer that you just haven't seen? - Jesus didn't need the Pool at Bethesda to heal this man - Jesus wasn't limited by this man narrow beliefs & understandings.

This man was certain there could be NO HEALING unless he could UNDERSTAND HOW GOD WOULD do it! - **In other words, he limited God's abilities to his OWN ABILITIES! If he couldn't figure it out, there was no solution!**

Think about that for a minute - Isn't that so often our problem? - We limit God to our understanding of things - We trust God ONLY WHEN we can figure out how God might be able to work! - This guy was about to learn

an important lesson of faith - He is about to see God isn't quite as limited as he assumed - God doesn't have JUST ONE WAY to solve any problem.

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.

Take note of the Three COMMANDS of Jesus:

1. **Rise** - Jesus was asking this man to do something he did not think was possible - I hear in those words of Jesus: **Just try one more time!**

Yet, I hear so many responses right here - **I have tried and failed so many times. It is useless to try again.** - But, this time you have to try trusting Jesus to help you - to accomplish in you what you haven't been able to do for yourself.

I'm not saying go for it again on your own - Don't do what you have always done - this time I suggesting you TRY AGAIN, TRUSTING JESUS - looking to Him - surrendered to Him - Trying this time in response to His Command!

Yes, on your own, it has proven impossible to get up - Don't you think this man had those same thoughts - but for some reason, looking into Jesus' eyes he knew something was different this time!

2. **Take up your bed** - his bed was the COMPANION OF HIS SICKNESS - It had been the single thing he had RESTED ON & found COMFORT IN for 38 years!

By picking it up, HE IS DECLARING freedom from that bed - He has VICTORY over that Bed - NO LONGER would it be carrying him - Now he would CARRY IT.

That BED was a symbol of HIS WEAKNESS - Now he is making a statement that he is NO LONGER BOUND to that bed - he is no longer BOUND to this spot by this pool of water.

He is no longer bound to this community of SICKNESS - He is back among the Healthy, the well, the whole - He is declaring that his life is no longer DEFINED by sickness and pain.

3. **Walk** - walking was the EVIDENCE OF HIS HEALING - As we will see later, it is probable that his sin had resulted in the lose of his ability to walk - Suddenly, that ability to walk has returned!

Forgiveness had come to his life - RESTORATION had taken place - FAITH has sparked in his heart - He had become whole again, and it was evidenced by his PHYSICAL ABILITIES being restored.

Please know this: **most sicknesses and disabilities are not the direct result of some sin we commit** - we live in a sinful world where there are germs and deceases - People get sick - Accidents happen to innocent families everyday.

But, there are times when OUR OWN SIN LEADS DIRECTLY to some kind of physical problem - Our addictions and sinful habits reek havoc on our bodies.

AND, there are also times when our spiritual healing brings along with it physical healing - not always, but sometimes - This was the case here.

By walking away from HIS PLACE by the pool, he is also walking away from his old life - With the help of Jesus, he will never be that same man again - the Pool of Bethesda will always be in his past!

But we read . . . that day was the Sabbath. 10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

The Sabbath Day was a uniquely Jewish thing - God had required them to set aside one day in seven to rest and worship - it was a day to close up shop - a day to leave the horse in the barn - to give everyone the DAY OFF!

This idea was TOTALLY FOREIGN to the surrounding nations - But, God had commanded that Israel do no work on the Sabbath Day.

Exodus 20:9-11 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do

no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Encoded in The Law of Moses was this prohibition on working on the Seventh Day of each week - But, what constituted work??? - Israel's Religious leaders had spent hundreds of years trying to define exactly what God meant by WORK!

In doing so, they had turned a day God intended as a blessing, into a day of TURMOIL & CONFUSION - The Jews had LIST AFTER LIST of things you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath Day!

All God wanted to do was GIVE THEM a day of rest with their families - a day where they would be free to worship and celebrate - BUT, the Jews had turned it into a day of imprisonment!

The people were SO DISTRACTED trying to determine what they could and couldn't do, they had little time to rest or worship! - And this story is a classic example of how misguided their leaders had become.

I have no doubt that most of THE JEWISH LEADERS recognized this man who had been healed - He was most likely a WELL KNOWN BEGGER - NOW, for the first time in 38 years he is UP WALKING AROUND - YET, they totally miss the AMAZING MIRACLE - all they see is a law-breaker CARRYING HIS BED! - something they had decided constituted work on the Sabbath.

You want a working definition of legalism? - **Legalism is when you stop seeing the amazing grace of God all around you, because you are blinded by your own requirements that everyone follow your man-made rules!**

Has your Christian life become all about following your rules? - or do you live each day overwhelmed by the grace and mercy of God? - I hope it is the latter, because the former is a miserable life!

I love this man's answer to these hypocrites: **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.**

I love what He tells these guys, **"Hey, I'm just doing what the man who did the miracle in my life told me to do!"**

Let me ask you a question: If you had been unable to walk for 38 years, and someone comes along and heals you, are you going to QUESTION what He tells you to do? - You bet your last dollar you are going to do exactly what He tells you to do!

Here's the PRESSING Question: Did Jesus ask this man to break the Sabbath Law? - Absolutely NOT - Did Jesus ask him to break their interpretation of the Sabbath Law? - Yes He did! - Jesus is killing two birds with one stone!

First, He is proving HIS POWER over sin and sickness by healing the man. And, second, He's attacking these Jewish leaders for the confusion and muddled mess they had made out of God's Sabbath Law!

Jesus hated both - He hated what sin had done to people - He hated that mankind had become enslaved to the destructive power of sin!

And He hated what the Jewish Leaders had done to God's Perfect Law - They had complicated it - they had use it to ENSLAVE & FRUSTRATE God's people.

Hey, let's not make the same mistake in following Jesus - Don't make your WALK WITH JESUS about keeping a set of DO'S & DON'TS - Wake up each day embracing God's incredible, undeserved mercies that are new every morning!

But, Jesus has one more task to complete before this day is done - **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.

I love reading that Jesus WENT OUT TO FIND this man - Healing him was not enough - the healing had a purpose - Jesus wanted TO SAVE this man - The healing was a means to bring this man into a place of following Jesus.

This is why Jesus does any good work in our life - He is drawing us to be His followers - Never miss the point of His Healing grace - He heals so that we can follow Him more closely - and grow more in love with our Savior.

Notice Jesus' closing words to this man: **Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.** - It is clear from these words that some past sin had at the least contributed to his disability - we have no idea what that sin was, but it is clear it had hurt him severely.

In this command to "Sin no more", Jesus wasn't suggesting that the man could now LIVE A SINLESS LIFE - He is telling the man to stay away from habitual sins - He is warning the man to not let sin get another foothold in his life.

It is one thing to commit a sin - it is quite another to become a slave to a particular sin again - and that is the danger Jesus is warning this man to avoid - at some time in the past, sin had gotten a stronghold in his life!

The results of that stronghold had been a sickness, decease or lifestyle that had debilitated him! - Now that Jesus had saved him, he needed to guard his life from traveling that path again.

Let me close with a word of application for this study this morning - There are probably very few here today that have a need for physical healing - maybe there are a few - and possibly Jesus may want to bring physical healing to you.

Jesus heals some - He does not heal all - Remember, there were many, many, many more sitting beside that pool that day that Jesus did not heal - Don't ask me why - I don't know.

I do know this - He came to save all of those people, regardless of whether they experience physical healing or not that day - Physical healing is always a temporary fix - Forgiveness of sins and spiritual healing are eternal.

But, many more here today are struggling with HURTS THAT ARE of a different nature - Your HURTS & WOUNDS may come from a different source - You aren't physically hurting, but you have been wounded emotionally.

Let me read you a quote from Dr. Mark Rutland's book Courage to be Healed - **"You can be saved. You can be filled with the Spirit. You can love Jesus. You can read the Scriptures. You can experience God's grace in a thousand areas of your life. It is still possible, though, with all this being true, that you might have toxins in your soul, ruining your life.**

Here is the all-important and yet often misunderstood truth: Salvation does what it does. It forgives us our sins and puts us in right relationship with an eternal God. It does not make us perfect. It does not heal all our hurts or all the unexplainable behaviors that are so contrary to what we believe. It does not necessarily make us whole. It may not resolve our every inner conflict. It may not heal our every twisted memory."

There are 5 great sicknesses that can live on in every believer who has been wounded by this sinful world: Shame; Unforgiveness; Rejection; Condemnation; and Fear.

It seems more likely to me that there are many here today who have one OPEN WOUNDS - Maybe this study has been just for you - You too are lying on a blanket beside your Pool of Bethesda.

Your life has been paralyzed by Shame or Fear - You have been INFECTED by Rejection or Condemnation - You can't SEEM TO FORGIVE someone who has hurt you in the past - Or maybe you have been unable to forgive yourself - even though you know God has forgiven you.

If this is you today, Jesus is saying to you: **Rise, take up your bed and walk!** - It's time to try again - this time with Jesus' Help - it's time to pick up that bed of bitterness you have been LYING ON and carry it away - it's time walk away from that LONELY, COLD PLACE you have been stuck in for so many years!

Go - Grab the Hand of Jesus and walk away from it - If that is you this morning, I have a question for you: **Do you want to be made well?**

If you do, I want you to stand up right where you are at - Make a stand one more time - I want to pray for you.

Let's Pray.

