

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET WELL?

John 5:1-18

“He was never sure when it began. At first he fought the paralysis. Shame washed over him as friends picked up his pallet and carried him to the Bethesda pool. His mouth compressed tightly; his forehead was rigid with a frown. One could feel the determination, sense the voice inside him that demanded over and over, “I *will* walk again. I will!”

How he watched that pool! He was desperate to reach it when the waters rippled, to win the healing people said would come to the first to slip in. He dug his fingers into the pavement, frantically jerking his body across the stones. **But that was years ago. . . .** So many years!

The friends were gone now, busy with their own affairs. His world was the tiny space occupied by his pallet on the pavement. He no longer struggled to reach the water. After 38 years he had learned to live with his weakness. Now he was satisfied with an extra crust of bread in his begging bowl. 38 years! Life had settled into routine, and he was . . . resigned. It would be too complicated to go back now anyway. ***What’s the use!***

We don’t really know how his problem developed. But we can imagine what must have happened, as the reality of his physical problem wore away his spirit. We can imagine how his youthful dreams vanished, and were slowly replaced by hopelessness and despair—the realization that his dreams would never be fulfilled—that he would be like this for the rest of his life. His illness eventually took everything—strength, friends, and finally, hope. No wonder when Jesus saw him, and knew that he had been in this condition for a long time, His first words were, **“Do you want to get well?”** Do you want to be healed, or **would the return of hope now be too painful to handle?**

38 years he waited. Was there any point in hoping? **After 38 years of waiting, God seemed far away and unconcerned!** Why should we expect Him to do anything now?”

That’s how it often works

Whether the problem that plagues us is physical or emotional, after 38 years of waiting--struggling with God’s silence, we no longer dare hope for God to do anything about our pain.

It’s easier to just let it go & give up.

**3rd of 7 Signs which demonstrate that Jesus is God,
so we might believe in Him & receive gift of eternal life.**

6:45 *“Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from Him comes to me.*

7:17 *“If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”*

5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*

BACKGROUND 5:1-5

Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast **1**
Sick people gather, hoping to be healed at the pool.

2-3 *"Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda which is surrounded by 5 covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed."*

Man who suffered 38 years is waiting for his chance

Jesus demonstrates power over disease 5:1-9

Jesus asks whether he wants to be well. 5:6

"When Jesus saw him lying there & learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

This is a significant question: => *Addicted to Misery*

After 38 years, his lifestyle is centered on "hanging out" at the pool.

Does he really *want* a totally transformed lifestyle?

Has he thought through the implications?

He'd have to learn a new way to support himself; he couldn't rely on people's sympathy any more.

He'd have to take responsibility for his own life.

This isn't as easy as it might appear after 38 yrs!

What kind of references could he give when he applies for a job?

When we come to Jesus & ask Him to change our life, do we understand what that means?

Do we really want to be changed?

Sick man's condition is hopeless 5:7 *"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."*

His focus is on the pool.

Lit.: *"A man* I don't have to get me into the pool on time!"

There's no one here for me—no one will help me.

As long as his focus is on the pool, he has *NO HOPE!*

He has no hope for any other source of healing.

He has no hope he could get into the pool first.

He's been waiting for 38 years!

Somebody always gets there 1st

He has no confidence in God to heal him.

He has no confidence in Jesus to heal him.

He doesn't even know who healed him until later!

Jesus' command assumes healing. 5:8-9a *Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat & walk."*⁹ *At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat & walked.*

3 parts to the command:

"Arise" "Pick up your bed" "Walk"

There's more to this miracle than just physical healing.

Anyone who's been around people incapacitated a long time can tell you extensive physical/occupational therapy are needed.

[My thigh muscles didn't work after the doctor "healed" me.]

Jesus provides instant healing *AND* instant physical therapy!

The sick man knows something is different.

The sick man *obeys* Jesus' command. *That takes faith!*

He *discovers* he's well.

Healing on the Sabbath Results in Opposition 5:9b-18

It provokes conflict 5:9b-13

9b-10 *The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰ & so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."*

Rather than produce faith, it produces a negative reaction because the healing is performed on the Sabbath.

They aren't interested that he has been miraculously healed.

Their concern is that he's carrying his mat on the Sabbath.

The law doesn't stipulate a man can't carry a mat on Sabbath.

The law prohibits working, or traveling long distances,
but it doesn't prohibit moving your bed roll!

List of 39 rules in "tradition of the elders" spells out details of work they permit on the Sabbath.

What's wrong with their priorities?

They don't care about the man

They don't care about the sign

They only care about their tradition

The man's response is correct:

11 *"he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"*

The one who made me well, . . .

He said take your pallet & walk.

If he can do the 1st, he has the right to do the 2nd!

If Jesus can command the sick to arise, he can command them to carry a bed (even on the sabbath!)

They ask the wrong question! **12**

"So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up & walk?"

They don't ask: "Who healed you?"

They ask: "Who said 'Take it and walk?'"

Healed man doesn't even know who did it! **13**

The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

Jesus returns to deal with the man about a bigger issue 5:14-15

Jesus finds him in the temple.

He may be worshiping, out of gratitude for what God has done.

He may be offering a sacrifice for cleansing.

Either way, he has gone to the right place!

Jesus finds him there.

5:14 *“Later Jesus found him at the temple & said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

Warning implies his illness is a result of personal sin

Doesn't mean all long-term illness is caused by sin.

Jesus states clearly some illness exists to give God glory

His illness seems to be sin-induced. *“Don't keep sinning!”*

“Stop sinning!” It appears the sin is ongoing.

Jesus warns him to stop, lest a worse fate strike him.

“If you keep sinning, something worse will happen to you!”

While this could be a warning of further physical consequences, it's more likely warning of the *eternal* consequences of sin:

“The wages of sin is death!”

How does the man respond to Jesus' warning? 5:15

“The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.”

Some assume he's turning him in. (Sounds that way!)

Others believe he's bearing public witness to Jesus.

There's no question how the Jews respond!

They use it as an occasion to turn on Jesus—to *STOP Him!*

Jews confront Jesus about his failure to follow their tradition 5:16-18

They ignore the evidence affirmed by the sign.

They persecute Him because He dares to heal on the Sabbath 16 *“So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him.”*

Jesus responds on the basis of His Father's example 17 *“Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.”*

They try to kill Him because He claims to be equal with God! 18 *“For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.”*

They understand His claim & change their charge from sabbath-breaking to blasphemy.

How does Jesus respond to their charge?

He doesn't *deny* their charge!

He *IS* claiming to be equal with God!

They understand exactly what He meant.

He has *the right* to tell the man to take his bed.

They continue to ignore the evidence!

JESUS RESPONDS WITH A DISCOURSE AFFIRMING HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD 5:19-47

Jesus imitates His Father's works. 5:19-30

Jesus produces witnesses to affirm His claims. 5:31-47

In light of evidence, Jesus asks why they refuse to trust Him.

They reject Him because they're not following God Who sent Him.

HOW ABOUT US?

Have you been struggling with something for too long?

Hoping for someone to stir the water—watching for the ripples on the surface—so you can jump in and be changed?

Waiting for 38 years (or 5 years too long)?

Have you given up hope that anyone will ever come along to help you out of your despair?

It may be a physical problem like this man.

It may be a family problem

—damaged relationship

— financial crisis.

God, who intervened to heal the pain of sick man at Bethesda is still able to intervene and change *our* life, to change *our* hopelessness to joy.

Do you WANT to get well?

Are you willing to take the risk of the pain again?

God says my grace is sufficient —my strength is made perfect in your weakness!

He just wants us to trust Him! Are WE willing to trust HIM?

How should we respond to the evidence?

Call to trust Him *first* for eternal life => 5:24 *"I tell you*

the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

Call to trust Him to provide what we need

God is still able to transform *OUR* life and make us whole.

That may include physical healing—it may not.

He's still able to *heal* our dying bodies, if that fits HIS purpose for our life.

Are WE able to trust Him to do what's best for us?