

Gospel of John – Jesus and Healing

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About forty years ago, parents in a PA hospital were told that their three-month-old baby daughter would not survive the night and was given her last rites since the family was Catholic. A prayer chain was made and many people started to pray for that little baby. The baby survived the night and actually became stronger. The parents were told the baby, if it did survive, would never be able to walk or talk. The baby grew into an adult and the young woman was able to talk and walk like a normal person. We like hearing these types of stories. They give us hope and encouragement. God heals people in many different ways. Sometimes it's through medicine or therapy. Even though we don't like to talk about it, but death is healing as well for a true follower of Jesus Christ. In fact, it's the best type of healing, but we need the help of the Holy Spirit to be able to grasp our mind around that thought. God knows best what we need for healing and this is why we try to pray that God's Will to be done for healing. We read about healing in the Old Testament in some areas, but physical healing really takes a center stage with Jesus and especially in the Gospel of John. John wanted the Church of his day to understand that Jesus was the master healer. So many people tried different things to try to find healing like sitting next to a pool of water that might have healing minerals. We still see this today. You can go down to Mount St. Mary College and walk to the Grotto that is nearby and splash some water on yourself in the hopes of healing. There are all kinds of supplements available on TV or internet that may have healing properties – so we are told. John wanted the people to know that Jesus was the ultimate healer and Jesus still is today. Jesus hasn't changed – He still is the Son of God. So, let's spend some time looking into Jesus and healing.

Let's turn to John 5: 1-5 where we read this from John, "5 Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ² Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda,^[a] with five covered porches. ³ Crowds of

sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.^[b] ⁵ One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)

John quickly paints us a picture of Jesus entering Jerusalem. Jesus enters the Sheep Gate entrance which He would enter through again in His final march to the cross. Shepherds would lead their flocks through the Sheep Gate entrance and take them to the Temple area to be looked at by the Priests. The sheep needed to be without blemish so they could be used for sacrifices. I believe Jesus would make His entrance through the Sheep Gate entrance as a foreshadow of what was to come – He would become the sacrifice without blemish. Jesus had another reason to enter through the Sheep Gate entrance – part of His plan. By the gate, was a pool of water that was used for Temple use. The pool was made to collect rain water and that water would be used in the Temple. Crowds of sick people would gather around the pool hoping to be healed. If you noticed when you read the past Scripture from John, verse 4 was missing. Many translations of today no longer include verse 4 because some think it was a later add on to the original Scripture. This is what the missing verse stated: “From time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.” We do know that the sick people thought something was special about this water and they came daily in great hope. John lets us know that one of the sick people had been sick for 38 years. Maybe this man has been coming to the pool for all this time in great hope of healing. This gives us a little glimpse into the character of this man. He was determined to be healed. He had not given up hope. After 38 years, most people would have given up.

Let’s continue with this story from John chapter 5, “⁶ When 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.”

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

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

Now Jesus enters the scene. He sees the man and like the woman at the well and Nicodemus, Jesus knew all He needed to know about this man. Again, John wants us to know that this Jesus is truly the Son of God. Jesus is even better than the FBI. Jesus saw the sick man and already knew him. In fact, Jesus knew him before that. I love this piece of Scripture from Jeremiah 1: 5 where God calls Jeremiah to be His messenger to Israel, "I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb" (NLT). This tells me that God has plans for each and every one of us. God had a plan for this sick man. So, Jesus asks this sick man a question that Jesus already knew the answer to. Jesus asks this man if he wants to get well. Jesus wanted to start the conversation with this man and Jesus does the same as He did with the woman at the well and Nicodemus. He draws them in. Jesus had bigger plans for them. So, the man tells Jesus that he can't be made well because there is no one to help him and everybody else always gets in front of him. This pool was the only hope this man had – so he thought. So, this adds more to the character of this man. Not only has he been coming to the pool for 38 years, he comes knowing there is no way he can get into the pool when the water is stirred. Plus, if no one helps him to get into the pool, he must have problems getting around. Sounds like he has problems walking. Plus, it sounds like he even had to struggle to get and leave from the pool every day – he had to get around all by himself. Jesus sees something in this man that He sees in nobody else at the pool. This man has a deep fire inside him that keeps him going when the world would tell him to just give up. We need more Christians like this man. Maybe this is why Jesus stopped to deal with this man. So, without Jesus telling this man who He is (Jesus doesn't tell the man He is the Son of God), Jesus tells him directly to get up, pick up his mat, and walk. Most of us would blurt right out there is no way we could do that. This man has been in this condition for 38 years and suddenly Jesus tells this man to get up, pick up his mat, and walk. Some of you have had to stay in a hospital for a week or more. Think about how weak your legs were because you were in bed for such a long time. This man was this way for 38 years and Jesus just tells him to walk. Scripture tells us that the man was cured at once and

he walked. Jesus healed this man in an instant which gives evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. Plus, we learn more about the character of this man. Not only does he have hope and determination, he was obedient to Jesus. Scripture tells us that at once the sick man picked up his mat and walked without argument. I wish more Christians today were as obedient as this once sick man was. This term has become a dirty word today. Jesus tells us plainly in Matthew 5: 20, "But I warn you – unless you obey God better than the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees do, you can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven at all! (NLT)" Paul tells the Christians in Rome how happy he is with how obedient they are to God in Romans 16:19. If we love the Lord with everything we have, we will want to be obedient to Him – not just when we feel like it. Many will be obedient only when it's convenient to them. That's not Godly love for God. If this man was not obedient, would he have been healed? This doesn't mean if you are obedient, you will always be healed the way you want. Being obedient means wanting God's Will for the type of healing you need. It just might be the type received when Paul asked for healing and God said – "My grace is sufficient for you". Jesus knew this man was an obedient person. When you grow in your faith and become more obedient to Him and not to yourself, your life becomes more livable. You start to live out the original design God had for us before the fall in the Garden with Adam and Eve. They were not obedient and look at the mess we live in because of sin which is the opposite of being obedient. How obedient are you to the Lord in your everyday life?

A problem pops up during this story. This happy event happens on the Sabbath. We might think this is not a big deal, but it was during Jesus' day. John tells us this in John 5: 10 – 15, " ¹⁰so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, "You can't work on the Sabbath! The law doesn't allow you to carry that sleeping mat!"

¹¹ But he replied, "The man who healed me told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

¹² "Who said such a thing as that?" they demanded.

¹³ The man didn't know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd. ¹⁴ But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, "Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you." ¹⁵ Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Jesus did a no-no. The Pharisees had added all kinds of restrictions on what not to do on the Sabbath. Jesus just healed a poor man that had been sick for 38 years and the Pharisees complained about Jesus telling the man to pick up his mat – that is working on the Sabbath. These Pharisees had no compassion whatsoever. Jesus saw a need and He did something about it. This once sick man was obedient to Jesus even on the Sabbath. These things we can learn from this story. We also find out that this once sick man did not know who healed him. Jesus left before the man could find out – part of Jesus' plan. Jesus does come back to the man after the Pharisees leave and tells the man to stop sinning or something worse may happen to him. Jesus had a bigger plan in mind than just healing the man. The healing part was to lead to something bigger and that was the spiritual condition of the man. Sometimes God allows sickness or other trials to teach us lessons or help us to draw closer to Him. Apostle Paul states this in Romans 5: 3, "³ We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. ⁴ And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. ⁵ And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" You need the Holy Spirit to help you to better understand this statement from Paul. Jesus had a bigger plan than just the physical healing. Jesus was more worried about the spiritual condition of this man who had some good character traits. Some may think that Jesus is telling the man that something worse will happen to him if he continues to sin like a worse sickness. This could be the case, but I'm wondering if Jesus meant something else. In Matthew 10: 28, "²⁸ "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (NLT – www.biblegateway.com)" Was Jesus worried about the death of this man's soul if he continued to live in sin? If you remember from last week, Jesus wanted to give the woman at the well living water. Jesus was concerned for her soul. Nicodemus came to ask Jesus questions and Jesus was more concerned for his soul than answering his questions. Jesus used this man's past sickness to reach him about the condition of his soul. How often do we look at trials and sickness of life as a total negative. Yet, only the Lord can bring some type of good out of a

bad situation that brings Him glory and honor. Maybe we need to start asking the Lord to help us to get into the right frame of mind when dealing with a sickness or a trial. His Spirit can do that. The Lord is the only one who can turn a sickness or trial into a learning event for us. The hard part is trying to be obedient to Him during the event. Florence Nightingale, who set the stage for the nursing field, was bedridden for most of her later years of life. However, she was still obedient to the nursing field and she did many writings about the proper way of doing nursing even during her illness. She was obedient to her calling. In fact, some say she became more passionate about it during her long illness. You see, Jesus knows more about our illnesses and trials of life than anybody else. Jesus wants us to be obedient and depended on Him during our trials and sufferings so we can learn to be content with whatever His Will is for us during these trials and sufferings. Pray and ask the Lord to help you to get into the right frame of mind to handle the suffering and to help you to see what He sees. The Lord is more powerful than what we are going through and He can easily sustain us during the whole event. Even with death itself, the Lord will lead us Home to perfect healing. We are in a win / win situation when we put our full trust in Jesus. John wanted us to better understand that Jesus really is the Son of God. Do you believe that today?

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.: Wheaton, 1996