

GOD'S HOUSE OF MERCY

John 5:1-11

The scene is profoundly set . . . a five arched structure giving shelter from the sun and rain around a pool of water that had been a place of healing for some over the years. This building was called 'HOUSE OF MERCY' or Bethesda and it was located right by the 'Sheep Gate' that was in the wall of Jerusalem. The 'sheep gate' speaks of the first of many steps in the calling of God. The timing of this encounter was probably *the Feast of Purim* which celebrates Israel's deliverance from Babylon. When we are 'born from above', we are initially delivered from 'the world' and its unbelief. Then comes the revelation that we need to be delivered time and time again until we walk in victory.

God in His mercy moves fully in grace (5) — from man's perspective at certain times and seasons, but from God's perspective — whenever Jesus, the Living Word, is expressed.

(1) *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

Because this account took place in Jerusalem, it pictures for us situations which can be found in the Church both in a corporate and individual way.

(2) *Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market (Gate) a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.*

Under these five arches, people with problems . . . problems in their bodies . . . problems in their minds . . . simply people who were trying anything that could possibly help them out of their complaint scenario. They were there month after month hoping . . . hoping . . . that because someone had been previously helped, it just might be their turn next time. There were those who were *impotent* — unable to reproduce the Christ-life, the *blind* who could see nothing of spiritual realities — the *withered* who felt so dried up that their testimony was nonexistent — not forgetting the *halt* (lame) whose walk in the spirit was such that they kept on falling so found it easier just to sit in their pew!

(3) *In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.*

All these needy folk were either very weak or worse, paralysed . . . unable to do anything for themselves. They needed a friend (or Pastor?) to be there for them whenever the angel came. All this was by 'the Sheep Gate' . . . so accurate as a background. . . for *all like sheep have gone astray by going in one's own way* . . . in the **only** way the carnal unregenerate mind can lead. All they needed was for the Good Shepherd to come by . . . which He did!

(4) *For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.*

DIS-EASE!

Only one received release from his or her ailment each time the angel came and troubled the water. The word '*troubled*' means TO AGITATE OR STIR UP the water . . . it also means TO CAUSE ONE INWARD COMMOTION, *take away one's calmness of mind*. We can probably, at one time or another, identify with this 'man on the ground' who had a great need.

God has called each of us to enter into His rest. We are often at 'ease' from all agitated thinking that will cause us to change. These disturbing thoughts, however, have their source in the Living Word for His desire for us is

to live from *the mind of Christ* which we have (1Cor.2:16).

In other words the 'water of the word' when stirred up in one's thinking by the Spirit of God, will cause the 'status quo' of our self-centred thinking to be disquieted. . . it is the same as having Jesus come by and speak the word of deliverance or healing into one's heart. Jesus here pinpoints a specific situation . . . then stirs up this man's stagnant meditations.

(5) *And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.*

This 'certain' man, picked out by Father because he had an abiding consuming hope . . . if only he had someone to help . . . he would be set free. His days, months, years were spent thinking . . . analysing his situation, wondering how it would all end. This man had been in his paralysed state for 38 years . . . the number 38 always speaks of 'slavery to the flesh' . . . his carnal mind had so controlled him that every action, every thought was centred on himself, his present dependent situation and how to be changed. He had a deep longing to be set fully free in the only way he knew possible. This is why, when asked a question by Jesus, he blurted out the epitome of his thinking, "I have no man to help me!". This longing in his being drew Father's attention.

HEALED OR MADE WHOLE?

(6) *When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said unto him, "Wilt thou be made whole?"*

Jesus was led by the Spirit (God in Him) to go just to this man. This is a supreme example of discipline that Jesus walked in under Father's will. Jesus must have had compassion for all those sick and feeble ones. . . but *He only did what He saw His Father do*. Jesus was 'the Man' for the man!

There was one question for this man, "Do you want to be made whole?" Made 'whole' . . . brought to full health and right thinking. It is true when one is suffering, it is difficult to 'think straight', Right? Many people receive healing from the Lord and that is wonderful ... but **to be made whole** in spirit, mind and body is even greater.

(7) *The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no MAN, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me.*

The response was 'Sir' . . . this Greek word is normally translated 'Lord'! This man obviously recognised some authority in the words/voice of Jesus. However his carnal mind could only blurt out his greatest need . . . 'I don't have a man to throw or thrust me into the water'. In this competitive world, someone else will get the blessing, but not me! Father had sent His Son to be **that man** for him. Not only was this paralysed man fully earth-bound, but he expected 'The Angel' to move in a certain way whilst not knowing when. He had no idea of who had come his way. So fixed were his beliefs as to how things would be, he didn't really hear the question. He was locked into believing in a certain way and Jesus had come to change his thinking. Jesus had come to change his thinking, meet his need and make him whole.

The second word out of the abundance of his heart was '*I . . . I want to . . . I need . . . Help 'me' . . .* and so on. Oh the dangers of allowing the 'I' to grab first place in one's Christian life. What a contrast is the reaction, '*Lord, what will You have me to do?*' . . . 'What do You want?' . . . 'What can I give You?' The ego of man, always looking for improvement to one's human situation, is so predominant in us that we are specifically instructed to be *swift to hear* (Him) *and slow to speak*. . . dealing with reactions!

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE & JOHN present to us the gospel that will cause us to ACT . . . **NOT RE-ACT!** Being '*born from above*' is **NOT** adding Jesus Christ to your life, but it is a complete 'trade-in' . . . a surrender of self that produced the life that has been 'saved'. His target for us is, *for me to* (now) *live is Christ, and* (for that old self-orientated life) *to die is gain*.

THE NEEDY NEED A 'MAN'!

Eph 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto A PERFECT MAN, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:*

God is preparing ‘a man’ in His image and likeness — to move as Him in this ‘seventh (1000-year) day’ of His plan of the ages.

2 Cor 3:18 *But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

2 Cor 4:4 *In whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD, should shine unto them.*

Jesus Christ was the Seed that was sown into the earth, so that He might not abide alone. . . but as every seed brings forth after its kind, The Christ of this hour is many-membered and God is bringing His full nature, authority and provision to fullness in this hour because there is this great need in the world of ‘having a man’ come and speak the words of life.

THE 3-FOLD COMMAND

Notice Jesus never gives an ‘invitation’ ... He didn’t even ask if he was ‘saved’! When Jesus speaks it is automatically a command.

(8) *Jesus said unto him, ‘Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*

Three things Jesus commanded him to do because he knew in his heart the authority of the word that was spoken. **Rise up . . . wake up . . . and leave this place!** You now carry what has previously been carrying you .and leave! You must not remain in this depressing, lifeless environment for it will pull you down again and paralyse your growth and hinder your new walk.

RISE UP . . . come up higher — to a higher understanding and revelation — to higher thinking. You can see so much further when you stand up! The words of authority spoken by Jesus Christ pierced this man’s mental defences and create an expectation of life. Listen for the same sort of words that He will speak into your situation. In the obedience of standing up, it released God’s life in those words to accomplish the healing. **“ROLLING UP”** his bed-mat, released him from even thinking negatively. **‘WALK’** away from that place of defeat and negativeness to that place of being where Christ is, brought forth his wholeness — spirit, mind and body. These three acts were like one act of faith . . . having heard the words from Christ.

ONE CAN BECOME SPIRITUALLY LAZY!

The spirit in you, upon hearing the word ‘rise up’, will cause you to stand up. You will then leave behind the pacifism of non-activity . . . the sitting back on past testimonies . . . the lack of progress in taking new ground. In fact, you must be prepared to leave what has been your ‘*comfort zone*’ and move by faith into a new walk with your Lord in which He will give you understanding of His plans and ways.

To ‘stand up’ after being seated or laid back, requires a new vision, a new strength, a new effort and a new release of energy that allows the Holy Spirit in you to accomplish Father’s will.

In our parable, Jesus was speaking **INTO** this man who had this inward longing for a supernatural release. God was removing this man’s ‘calmness of mind’. This needy one with his earthbound thinking, had been for 38 years in *bondage to the flesh*, so that to move in anything different and new, was a major upheaval. Man does not like to change! The average person would far rather have the effect of change come to him!

All those around him — his ‘partners’ and ‘confirmers’ of their hope — did not challenge him nor exhort him to believe for something greater. They too were waiting for help from outside. By contrast, Jesus spoke into the desire within the man and the distant hope became a present reality. Faith was kindled and the first little effort exerted released the power in Christ’s words to perform the command. It is time for us to rise up, fold up our easy-chairs and walk away from the place of inactivity. We must leave this place of no vision and dependency upon others to walking in the ‘24-7’ reality of hearing His voice within. (‘24-7’ simply means 24 hours a day and seven days a week!)

A SEVENTH DAY HAPPENING

(9) *And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.*

A seventh day healing depicting that which the many-membered man of Ephesians 4 will accomplish in this present fulfilment of the 'seventh day' as laid out in Genesis 1&2. We have just past the sixth day when God brings forth a 'corporate man' who will be enabled to do His will in the seventh day while God rests in what He has accomplished.

(10) *The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.*

The 'unbelieving-believers' who are controlled by law, find it difficult to see anything being done by grace and through mercy. **Grace is not law-FULL** in fact grace is the antidote to the bondage of the law. These five 'grace' portals allowed the true mercy of God to move towards this man who had no natural man to help him. It is a rare thing to find a man who is able to help the needy. Such a man will need to move by the Spirit so that the right things are said with the authority of God, and God's *present truth* will be manifested.

(11) *He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.*

The evidence that you and I have been set free and made whole, is that we shall be walking in the Spirit away from our previous unproductive ways of thinking and doing things. §