

**John 5: 1-9; “Rise, Take Up Your Bed and Walk”, Sermon # 30 in the series –
“That All May Honor the Son”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on April 12th, 2014, in the Morning Worship Service.**

When the Holy Scriptures were written down by the Apostles, and the other men chosen by God, they were designed, according to the mighty working of the Holy Spirit to speak infallibly to the mind and heart of needy people so that they would clearly see that Christ was the only One who can save them from their sins and help them to live a life glorifying to God. The Scriptures were not written merely to inform you of this truth, they were written to convince you of your absolute need of Christ’s powerful working in your heart so that you might understand how you can change to become the person that God desires you to be. The Holy Scriptures show us fallen mankind as they really are; unable to save themselves; unable to change themselves spiritually without grace. This passage of the Holy Scripture shows us that Christ Himself must draw near to your soul to give you spiritual life and to strengthen you to enable you to do what He commands you to do. Once Christ has spoken this word which He knows will save your soul and bring you spiritual healing, He expects you to abide in His Word. He knows that it is His spoken and written Word which will teach you how you might rise, how you might take up your bed, and how you might walk; living according to His truth; having His grace and power at work in your life. In order to become a Christian, then, and grow up to be a strong and useful Christian in the Lord’s sight, you must ask yourself whether you have the answers to the 3 questions which come flowing out to us from this text. 1st – Do I believe that the description of the sick people who lay by the pool, is also a good description of my unsaved spiritual state before conversion to Christ? 2nd – Do I have a desire to be made well? And 3rd – Do I realize my duty to God and to Christ after I have been made well? For those who are taking notes, I have alliterated it for you so that you might remember it better – Description, Desire, and Duty. That is what we are going to think about together for the next few minutes.

1st of all – Do I believe that the description of the sick people who lay by the pool is also a good description of my unsaved spiritual state before conversion to Christ?

(verses 1-5)

This feast that is mentioned was probably the Passover, which included the days of the Unleavened Bread; one of the 3 feasts in the year which all Jewish males were commanded to keep. There was Passover, the feast of the first fruits, and the feast of weeks, or Pentecost. This was the overall general purpose of Christ’s coming up to Jerusalem, to go to this feast as an act of obedience to God’s holy law. But there was a more particular purpose which Christ had, in deliberately coming to the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. And that was to heal a certain man. There was by this Sheep Gate, a pool, which was called Bethesda. And by this pool there were five porches. And in these porches there lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. The reason that they were lying there, waiting like that, was that at a certain time an angel of the Lord went down into the pool and stirred up the water. And after he had stirred it up, the first sick person into the water was healed. Now, this should show us something of the desperateness of the human condition. Here lay a multitude of sick people; blind, lame, and paralyzed, all kinds of sick people. And the reason that they were there in this particular place was that occasionally, very occasionally, at a certain time, an angel came down and gave healing efficacy, healing power, to the waters. But it was not at all times that he did this, this angel. It was only at certain times that God gave him this permission to come down and do this. Why did God ordain these things in this unusual way? This is a question that we should ask ourselves.

I believe that God in ordaining this situation in exactly the way it was, when Jesus approached it, was to give to us as a grand picture of the great compassion that He has towards all those who are suffering, both bodily and spiritually. There is no one who deserves to be saved and healed of their sins, but our God is a God of compassion and mercy. The picture of this multitude of sick people next to the pool is a picture of the world that we live in. It was a picture to those who lived back in those times, and it should speak to us today in the same way. I am convinced that we do not think enough of the fact that almost all physical suffering, disease, sickness, and the consequent paralysis of some parts of the body that it brings, are due to the entrance of sin into the world through Adam's sin. We live in a fallen world. We need to know that and remember it. We need to acknowledge it in order that we too might be compassionate towards our fellow-men, even as our God is, through Christ. We are, all of us, afflicted with sin in our very nature. Adam's sin brought death into world. And often, for many persons, death is gradual and long and slow in its progression. After all, what is aging except the slow progress of death in relation to our body. It is not simply that a few of us are affected by it; all of us are affected by it. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5: 12)

The whole world, as it is viewed by God and Christ, is a hospital of sorts, of the sick and dying. Multitudes of people, all in various stages of decay. And why is this? It is because of Adam's sin. It was his sin that brought physical disease and death into world. It was not God's fault; He was not the author of sin. It was the first man Adam's fault. Every one of those who is physically sick or diseased would like very much for an angel to stir the waters, or for a good doctor to come and prescribe a remedy which would immediately work a cure. A miraculous cure for what ails your loved one or yourself would be sought out immediately if it could be found. That is why these people gathered there. It was because God's angel sometimes came there with healing virtue, to stir the waters, and charge them with the efficacy to heal. This man in our text had been in this condition of being lame for 38 years. And he was not even strong enough to crawl into the water fast enough to receive his cure. This was the place that he knew that he might find a cure, but he could never get himself down into the water fast enough. Let us understand that there is another very significant truth which is pictured for us here by the multitude of these sick people by the pool. Adam's sin has brought a sickness to each of our souls. We are born in sin; we have inherited a fallen, sinful nature from Adam. And we are just like this poor man; we are impotent to save ourselves. And, indeed, we are even in a worse condition than this man. We are blind and cannot see spiritual things. We are deaf and cannot by nature hear the spiritual truths of the Bible, to receive them, without the efficacy of Christ's grace. Christ is the Great Physician. We are lame; we cannot even move our own dead heart to come and be healed of our sin-sickness without being given grace. We are paralyzed; we cannot walk spiritually in the way that we might want to walk in order to keep God's commandments.

But us understand that the name "Bethesda" means "House of mercy". God, our God, is a God of compassion and mercy. As Matthew Henry says: "When Christ came up to Jerusalem he visited not the palaces, but the hospitals, which is an instance of his humility, and condescension, and tender compassion, and an indication of His great design in coming into the world, which was to seek and save the sick and wounded." He walked into this house of 5 porticoes, and gazed out over the mass of humanity who were afflicted and knew their helplessness. He perceived their agony. He knew that each one had come there with the hope that they would be healed. He knew that they had gathered together to commiserate with each other and that they hoped that one of them might be the first into the water after the angel stirred it. Here is a picture which we should take to heart; of what the New Testament Church should be. Here is a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is the cure to every believing sin-sick soul. It is when sinners come to church, looking for a cure for their sin-sickness, that they

might hope to find one. This pool of water, in that day, was the emblem of God's mercy in granting physical healing to all who might come looking for a cure. It is an emblem to us here today of God's willingness to save all those who will look to Him and trust in His Son for their salvation. John Gill says: "Now this place may be an emblem of the means of grace, the ministry of the word, and ordinances: the house of God, where the Gospel is preached, may be called a Bethesda, an house of mercy; since here the free sovereign, rich, and abundant grace and mercy of God, through Christ is proclaimed, as the ground and foundation of a sinner's hope; the mercy of God, as it is displayed in the Covenant of Grace, in the mission of Christ, and redemption by Him, in regeneration, and in the forgiveness of sin, and indeed in the whole of salvation, from first to last, is here held forth for the relief of distressed minds." (end of quote) Let us understand that Jesus Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. It was He who sought this man out, among all the multitude of people who were there that day. This miracle that He was about to do would evidence who He was and what He had come to do for sinners.

The angel coming down into the pool of water is a picture of the Holy Spirit's visitation to the sinner's heart. When the Angel of God's presence comes to a group of people gathered, people who are seeking a cure for their sinful nature and their sin-sick heart, then it is, that the cure is found. Let us understand that Christ knows how to diagnose your personal spiritual condition. He is able to see your need, and He is able to come to your heart with power. He can speak a word and instantly the cure for sin-sickness is found. In the act of regeneration of a sinful heart, He comes in sovereign mercy to a person who may have been sin-sick for more than 38 years perhaps; to a person who thought that they would never be able to turn away from their anger, their pride, their sensuality, their covetousness, their self-righteousness. People who are being led by the Spirit understand that there is a good opportunity to be had for the cure of their soul when they come to church; for there they hear the word preached. They come and listen to the Word of God, and they realize the waters of the Spirit's working in saving power, are evident. This particular man had no one to help him. He was unable to help himself or change his condition one iota. Christ was appointed by God the Father to be the Great Physician of sin-sick souls to him. Our Lord was, with a word, able to instantaneously heal him, and even to save his soul. Christ gave saving grace to him; to this man who sensed his need, and his sin. This man's paralysis had evidently come because of some sin or sins that he had committed in the past, if we will remember verse 14. "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." Let me ask you to consider your own case, even now. Do you believe that the description of these sick people at Bethesda is the description of your sin-sick heart? Have you come to know that unless you find the healing virtue of Christ, you will perish in your sins? The Lord Jesus would have you to see Him as your Great Physician. He is the only One who can change your heart, and take away your sins. He is here present at this time, in this place, to heal the sin-sick soul. But He will have a further question to ask you which we will consider now.

2ndly – Christ would have you ask yourself this question: Do I have a desire to be made well? (verses 6-8)

It says in verse 6 of our text: "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?'" Jesus calmly asked him this because He wanted a sincere answer. Jesus knew that sometimes a person does not believe that things can ever change for them for the better; whether the problem is physical or whether it is spiritual. Well, perhaps you do not realize how sick you really are, or were, before Christ came and spoke the authoritative word to you. We could say, and we might even think that we could say it with confidence: Of course this man wanted to be made well, and we can also be assured that Jesus knew that this man wanted to be made well. But the Lord wanted him to really think and interact with Him over this question. And so he answers Jesus in Verse 7

– “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 is confessing his own inability to do the very thing that he thinks that Jesus is encouraging him to do. He thinks that Jesus is saying to him: “Why don’t you just rise up and get into the water, right after it has been stirred?” But actually Jesus is acknowledging his confession of his inability to be able to do what he truly wanted to do. I hope that you realize that this is the same kind of confession that Jesus is looking for, from all of us here this morning. The Lord Jesus wants you to be brought to the place where you can acknowledge that you cannot keep God’s law perfectly and you cannot live the Christian life by your own power and strength. You must have Him to be saved, you must have Him to help you with whatever you find yourself paralyzed, in regard to your doing it. You cannot find any other human friend to help you to overcome this weakness of ability. But then, you need to realize that there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.

Look at what Jesus does next. He commands this lame man, this man who had been unable to walk for 38 years, to “Rise, take up His bed, and walk.” And immediately he was made well, took up his bed, and walked.” Now, this is a truly amazing thing; that Jesus gives this man a command to do the very thing that it was impossible for him to do. He could not possibly rise up, but he went about to obey it, and the reason that he could do it, was, with the command, Jesus gave him the power to rise, pick up his bed, and walk. Let us understand that this is also the way that we are to do all things in relation to being saved, and in relation to living the Christian life. By nature, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. We cannot do any truly spiritual thing without Christ’s grace, and His power helping us to do what is wise and right. But when Christ sees, and understands that we are really trying to do what is right, He gives the power that we need to do what would have been impossible for us to do before, in obedience to His commands. It is interesting that Christ says to him, “Take up your bed”, for this was the bed that he had lain on all of these years. Perhaps this was how he had earned his living all of these years. He would beg alms, and people seeing his bed that he was lying on, they felt compassion for him, and they gave to him so that he would have something to eat. Sometimes when a person first becomes a Christian, they might find it hard to “pick up the bed” that they have been lying on for so long. The Christian should think the way that this man no doubt thought; my cure has been effected in an instant, and with that blessed change will come many changes away from what I once did. I no longer need to lie on a bed all day. I will be able to live my life walking.

I believe that this was the reason that Christ asked this man if he wanted to be made well. Life would be so different for him, if he really understood what he was being granted. Even so, my listening friends, Christ asks you the question this morning: Do you want to be made well? If you have been made well, so much is changing, and will continue to change during the course of your life as a Christian. Perhaps, before, you thought that you could not do many things which would lead to your becoming a more diligent, more thoughtful, more loving, more caring person. But now with Christ you have the power to do so. Rise and pick up your bed. Don’t rest in your old ideas of what you can and can’t do. If you have believed in Christ, you are no longer the person that you once were. You no longer have to sleep in every morning; now you can get up off your bed, rise up and pray for the salvation of your loved ones and friends and for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom. Once you used to doze and sleep during the sermon, but now, with Christ’s power, you realize that there are things for you there in the message that will transform your life; things which will lead you to pray that you might honor and glorify God in the way that you live. Rise and pick up your bed. You used to think that you could do nothing for other people around you; you would rather lie around and watch television or play computer games. But now you begin, by the power of Christ, to see people that you can visit, or people you can help. Now you will rise up and think of the commands of Christ which you could obey as you

go through the day. You used to think that there were many bad habits that could never change in your life, but now you can, by the power of Christ, rise, take up your bed, and change those bad habits; laziness, thoughtlessness, aimlessness, wasting time with media devices, and etc. Now you find that you can begin to be diligent, and thoughtful and you have meaning and purpose to your life; that in whatever you do, you do all to the glory of God and Christ. You used to wonder how people could read their Bible and pray every day, but now you, too, have the power to do the same. Dear Christian – Will you not rise up off of your bed, and pick it up? The thing that you were bound to, you are no longer bound to; you have been set free; therefore glorify God with you time, your strength, and your resources. Don't just lie there, get up and do something for God.

Now 3rd – Ask yourself this question if you want to be a strong and useful Christian - Do I realize my duty to God and to Christ after I have been made well?

Verse 8 says: “Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’” To walk physically is to take steps with your legs and feet to go somewhere so that you might do something. And similarly, to walk spiritually is to take steps to be obedient to God's Word, by faith in Jesus Christ. The true Christian wants to be obedient to the commands of God's law, just like Jesus was. He sees this as his duty. We are living in days when even some Christians do not like being told that they have duties to perform in the sight of God and men. They think that since Christ fulfilled the law, that they no longer have anything to do with the law or commandment keeping except to “love” other people around them. While it is true that the 10 commandments are summed up with these words, “You shall love the Lord your God with all of your mind and all of your heart and all of your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself, God's expectation of you in this regard is that you learn the particulars of obedience not just the generalities of how you think and feel in your heart toward God and your neighbor. You will never really walk the Christian walk until you learn that you have responsibilities to fulfill, duties to engage in, in regard to each and every one of the 10 commandments which are the rule of life for the believer. This is not legalism; this is walking with Jesus.

Did Jesus keep each and every one of the 10 commandments of God's holy, eternal, and abiding moral law? Yes, He did. And when you were converted, was God's holy law written upon your heart? Yes, it was. Listen to Jeremiah Chapter 31, verse 31 – “Behold the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.” “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, say the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” This is what the New Covenant which was enacted through the obedience and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus accomplishes in the life of each and every true Christian. God puts His law in their minds, and He writes it on their hearts. No legalism here; simply a walk of faith, keeping the commandments of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

How do you go about to keep God's commandments and learn to engage in the regular duties of worship, praise, and loving obedience to God? You don't do it in a legalistic way, thinking that by knowing the commandment that you can keep it to the glory of God in your own strength. You do it by the Spirit, thinking of how Christ Himself did it, and would want you to do it. You are not trying to merit favor with God. That has all been earned and purchased for by Christ's perfect obedience and sacrifice for your sins. You live walking, taking steps of obedience to the commandments of God with Christ's righteousness covering you moment by moment. And you walk upon the path of righteousness by the strength of His grace. He has placed you there; therefore stay on the path of obedience to His commands. Listen to Romans 8: 1 – “There

is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. This is the way that the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in every Christian’s life; by their learning to walk in the Spirit’s power; realizing that He is really there in your heart and mind, leading you and teaching you how to keep the commandments of God in your everyday walk. We do not walk according to the flesh; that is our own fleshly wisdom and fleshly strength. We walk according to the Spirit. So let each of us who would be a Christian or who is a Christian hear the words of our Savior: “Rise, take up your bed, and walk.”