

## Jesus At The Pool of Bethesda

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John 5:1-9

Last week we saw Jesus at the Sea of Galilee. “*After this,*” Jesus walked from Galilee to attend a feast in Jerusalem (v. 1).

As we walk with Jesus through the pages of the Bible, every step He took was a step of mercy, grace, and truth. In today’s text, Jesus’ steps lead to the pool of Bethesda—Bethesda means “house of mercy.” “Bethesda Naval Hospital” is so named.

➡ Visited this pool during a trip to Israel in 1987.

➡ This miracle holds several lessons for us today.

### I. **The WAITING crowd** (vs. 1-3). Picture it—A **pathetic scene**.

A. Sick folk laying around waiting for an angel come stir the waters and hoping to be first to get into the pool to be healed.

1. Impotent – weak (without strength- Rom. 5:8).
2. Blind – Can’t see. Blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4)
3. Halt – lame / crippled (can’t walk)
4. Withered – useless limbs – morally wasted.

B. The condition of this multitude is typical of many today—People hurting and in need of help. They are waiting for some kind of political or religious movement—What they really need is Jesus.

C. Picture of all who need salvation in Christ.

### II. **The WISHFUL chance** (vs. 4).<sup>1</sup> It is a **fantastic scene**.

A. The **DESIRE** of the multitude—These desperate people at the pool were concerned about only **ONE THING!** It wasn’t politics, business, money, or entertainment. It was getting in the water before anyone else. Their eyes were glued on the water to move.

B. The **DISTURBING** of the water— The water is troubled.

C. The **DASH** for the pool—There is a mad rush for the pool— Limping, crawling. Everyone is struggling to get in first.

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<sup>1</sup> Many modern bible versions omit the end of John 5:3 and all of verse 4. But, the event, and the man's words in John 5:7, would make little sense if these verses are eliminated.

- D. The **DISAPPOINTMENT** of one too late— “Aw, rats! Someone beat me again! I never win anything! Maybe next time.”

### III. The **WOEFUL condition** (vs. 5-7).

Sitting on a park bench, looking glum, Linus said to Charlie Brown, "Sometimes it seems like life has passed me by. Do you ever feel that way?"

Charlie looked at Linus and said, "No. Life has knocked me down, and keeps walking all over me."

The lame man in our text may have felt like Charlie Brown—knocked down... walked on... hurt... and defeated.

- He was in this miserable condition for 38 years—Half a life-time. Verse 14 seems to indicate his infirmity was the consequence of some sin he committed when he was younger.
- Sin affects a person's...
  - A. **Physical** condition—Lame/crippled. Weak, and unable to walk.
  - B. **Social** condition—Lonely. No friends...no family...no one to help him. Like David who cried in a cave, "*I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.*" (Ps. 142:4).
  - C. **Emotional** condition—Frustration. When Jesus asked, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" he doesn't answer the question. He only states his frustration. He admits his total inability to reach the pool.
    - When someone reaches the point to admit they can't do anything to save themselves, they are in a position to trust Christ to save them.
  - D. **Spiritual** condition. Hopeless—The condition of a lost man is "*without Christ... having no hope, and without God in the world.*" (Eph. 2:12). But with Christ, there is hope.

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The lame man lying by the pool is a picture of an unsaved man trying to be saved by keeping the law. This lame man could not reach the pool. He may have gotten close, but he always came short of getting in (Rom. 3:23). The pool may have only been

inches away. It didn't matter how close he got if he didn't get in. His condition was hopeless, as any man who tries to be saved by the works of the law.

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#### IV. The **WONDERFUL** cure (vs. 8-9).

➤ Jesus did not pronounce some “word of healing.” He merely commanded the man to do three things:

##### A. **Rise**—Jesus asked him to do what seemed impossible—**“Rise!”**

1. The very Word of Christ to “*rise*” would enable the lame man to stand up. God never tells us to do something without enabling us to do it. When a command is given, the power is also given to carry out the command.
2. Jesus did the same thing when He healed the man with the withered hand (Luke 6:10).
3. When he attempted to rise, he was demonstrating his faith. If he believed, he would arise and walk. If he did not believe, he would have remained in his pitiful condition the rest of his life.

##### B. **Take up your bed**—He would not need it anymore. He was not to make provision for his former state of life. *“Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof”* (Rom. 13:14).

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Don't keep a video or magazine stashed in your bottom drawer just in case you are tempted again. Don't keep a bottle tucked away in the pantry in case you need a drink. Don't keep a pack of cigarettes in the cupboard in case you are have the urge to “light-up” again. Make no provision for failure.”

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##### C. **Walk**— When God saves a man, it will show up in his walk. Seeing this lame man walking after his being a cripple for 38 years would be a testimony to all who knew him.

1. The lame man had a choice to make. He could either obey the word of Christ, or argue that it wouldn't work.

2. The man did everything the Lord said, and he was healed. The first place he walked to was the Temple and testified for Christ (vs. 14-15). Jesus met him there!

- Attending church (Ps. 122:1) and testifying for Christ should be the first priorities in a new Christian's life!

## V. **The WICKED criticism** (vs. 9b-18).

➤ "*On the same day was the Sabbath*" (v. 9). The Bible records seven occasions when Jesus healed on the Sabbath day:

1. This impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9)
2. Casting out an unclean spirit at the synagogue in Capernaum (Luke 4:31-35).
3. Healing Peter's mother-in-law at Capernaum (Luke 4:38-39).
4. Healing a withered hand in the synagogue (Luke 6:6-10).
5. The crooked woman made upright (Luke 13:10-17).
6. The healing of a man with dropsy<sup>2</sup> (Luke 14:1-6).
7. The man born blind healed in Jerusalem (John 9:1-14).

- A. The ridiculous CRITICISM (v. 10). Rather than rejoicing in the man's healing, the Jews were upset he was carrying his bed.

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Jews formulated 39 rules forbidding certain activities on the Sabbath (most are based purely on tradition and not Scripture). They turned what God intended to be a blessing into a burden. Rules like: No weaving two loops... weaving two threads... separating two threads... no tying/untying... no tearing... no writing two letters or erasing two letters...no sewing... etc. Rule #39 forbid transporting an object in the public domain.

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- B. The reasonable COMEBACK (vs. 11). When confronted about carrying his bed, the man answered, "*He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk.*" It was obvious to him that since this Man could make him whole, His Word would also have more authority than his critics! This man waited 38 years, and the Jewish rulers (like the Law) did nothing for him.

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<sup>2</sup> An edema—An unnatural swelling in the body due to excessive water building up in a bodily cavity. Often is it a swelling in the legs and feet. Indicates a problem in the kidneys, heart, or liver.

But Jesus did, therefore, he carried his bed in spite of Jewish traditions!

- C. The reassuring CONFIDENCE (vs. 12-15). Because Jesus shunned publicity at this time, He exited the scene without attracting any attention. But Jesus was not going to abandon him. Jesus FOUND him in the Temple and reassured him.
- v. 15— The man became a witness for the Lord.
- D. The reflection of CHRIST (vs. 16-18).
1. The Jews sought to slay Jesus for violating the Sabbath (v. 16b). In actuality, they were the ones distorting the meaning of Sabbath. The intent of the Sabbath was not inaction, but satisfaction—not refraining from work, but reflecting on a work well done (Gen. 1:31).
  2. Jesus was a reflection of the activity of His Father (v. 17b). God the Father continues to work on the Sabbath—The sun rises; rain falls; crops grow; life is sustained.
  3. This claim, was a claim of Christ's deity, and that is what initiated the Jews to begin planning Christ's death.

**SUMMATION:** Some may ask: Why didn't Christ heal everyone at the pool? That is the wrong question. A better question is—Why did Christ heal anyone at the pool? The question is not—Why does God send people to hell, but why does God go to such lengths to save anyone from hell.

That all men are not blessed by God's compassion does not speak ill of God, but it speaks ill of those who reject God.

If this lame man did not believe Christ's command, he would have remained on his bed until he died. If you are not saved, it is because have not believed on Christ to save you (John 3:18, 36).