

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Healing A Cripple By A Pool (Part Two)

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In the healing of the crippled man at Bethesda (John 5:1-16), the man clearly desires to be healed, but no one would help him down to the pool (verse 7). The Bible's mention of this detail is an intentional rebuke of the heartlessness and meanness of human nature. It was every man for himself.

Despite the man's frustration, he still maintains good manners by acknowledging Jesus as "Sir." This word, the Greek *kurios*, appears over 700 times in the New Testament. Hundreds of times it is translated as "Lord" or "lord," but as "Sir" only about a dozen times. The term shows respect and honor for Christ. In today's society, we see quite a contrast to this example. The opposite attitude is usually present when people address each other, and even when children address parents.

1. By what power is this miracle performed? John 5:8.

Comment: The healing occurs by the Word of God; Christ speaks, and it is done by the power of the Holy Spirit. Although the pool is known for its therapeutic qualities, Jesus does not use it in the healing so there would be no doubt that the power to heal had come through Him. He does, however, require that the man perform a work to accompany his faith: "Rise, take up your bed, and walk."

Jesus actually gives three commands here: rise, take, and walk. He demands that people take action and responsibility—to take a stand with Him. The more we follow Christ, the more we rise in spiritual character. Sin, on the other hand, causes people to decline, degenerate, and descend to the depths of despair and spiritual weakness.

His second command is that the man "take up" his bed. Since the healed man no longer has need of his bedroll, he needed to clear it from the pool area. Taking up the bed illustrates the principle that we should not maintain remnants of our former ways of life. The new man is to clear away the old man's baggage to avoid returning to his past ways. Now that he is healed, he is to live differently. Spiritually, we leave our old man in the watery grave of baptism, putting on the new man and living a changed way of life (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10-14).

Jesus also requires that the man "walk," a testimony of the fullness of His healing power. The man is able to rise up, providing the first visible testimony of his healing to those around the pool. However, he does not just hobble away—he has strength to carry his bed and walk. Being able to walk gives the man opportunity both to show and tell many others of Christ's miracle.

The excellence of His work is seen in all these commands. If a person reacts positively to his contact with Christ, it will manifest itself in his conduct. The most effective witnesses are from those who walk as Christ commands!

2. What part does his obedience play? John 5:9.

Comment: The response of the previously crippled man was immediate obedience. Blessings always come from a rapid, positive response to God's commands. How many people have missed out on blessings because they were too slow to obey? In this case, the sooner the crippled man obeyed, the sooner he realized his healing.

As part of the healing, the helpless man was given the power to obey Christ. The same holds true for any work God gives us to do. We receive the power in mind and body to perform the duty at hand, meaning that, when God is involved, we have no room for excuses for not serving Him (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Hebrews 10:38). The man's complete obedience—following all of Christ's commands—produced the best possible witness and blessing.

3. Why is the healed man permitted to carry his bed on the Sabbath? John 5:10.

Comment: The Jews had perverted the keeping of the Sabbath, commanded in Exodus 20:8-11, which codifies the observance of the Sabbath day as one of God's supreme laws. Nehemiah 13:15 and Jeremiah 17:21 deal specifically with working and doing business on the Sabbath. The crippled man carrying his bed was not condemned under the fourth commandment because works of mercy were acceptable on the Sabbath day.

For example, it is acceptable to rescue animals on the Sabbath. While performing another miracle Christ said to his critics, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:11-12).

The Jewish critics targeted the man's conduct, but in reality, Christ was the ultimate object of their hate. Jesus later tells His disciples, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (John 15:18-19). Wicked people despise right conduct; they will ridicule it and even try to stop it because it is repugnant to them (Proverbs 29:27). Even relatives are often appalled when family members are called into God's church, and they see a change for the better. Human nature does not like to be outdone or shown for what it really is—self-serving.