

Rise, Take Up Your Bed And Walk

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[0 : 0 0] 10 with me in John chapter 5. We're going to study the first 18 verses of this chapter, but I like to read just verse 8 and verse 9. Jesus said to him, Get up, take up your bed and walk. And at once the man was healed. And he took up his bed and walked. You probably remember that John wrote this Gospel as an evangelistic weapon, as a way to lead people to Jesus Christ. He wrote what he taught and what he did to show them that Jesus is the Christ and that whoever believes in him will not be disappointed but have eternal life. And in trying to prove to his readers that Jesus is indeed the Christ, that he is the Savior, sent by God for the salvation of sinners, he tells us things that Jesus did and meeting that Jesus had. So for example in John chapter 3, John teaches his readers about new birth, about being born again, about having the life of God within us through the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus.

In chapter 4, we see how Jesus proves to the Samaritan woman that he is the Christ. And through that conversation both the woman and her village have brought to recognize that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised King, the Savior of sinners. And in chapter 3 and chapter 4, we find as a result of these two conversations saving faith. We know that Nicodemus became a follower of Jesus, became a disciple. And later on he would ask for the body of Jesus to give Jesus burial. We know that the Samaritan believed and through a witness many others believed as well in Christ. Sadly in this chapter we don't have the same response. We don't have saving faith as a response to the same undoing of Christ. Both this man who is healed by Jesus and the Pharisees and the religious leaders refuse to believe in him. They have faith to a measure but not saving faith. In the man who is healed we find faith in miracles. The man believes that Jesus is able to heal him. The man trusts in Christ and received from Christ physical healing. His body is restored because of his faith. And yet we do not find that faith in Christ that saves his soul as well as his body. The religious leaders, they have faith, they have historical faith so it's called. They believe the facts of the Bible. They believe in Moses and the law. They knew the facts of Scripture. They study

Scripture and they try to frame their lives according to the Scripture. And yet when Jesus, who is the law-giver, when Jesus, who is the revelation and the theme and subject of all that Moses said, when he came they did not believe in him. So we have faith in miracles. We have faith in the datas of the Bible but not faith in Christ. And it is my prayer friends that we will be different from these two people and that we would indeed trust Christ not just for our daily bread before eternal life. So let's look at these verses. The first lesson that we learn from the story of this man is a sad reality. At the beginning of chapter 5, John describes something that is very sad and yet very common. He tells us about this pool in Jerusalem and tells us that a multitude of invalid blind, lame and paralyzed were there. A multitude of sick people was there. Not few but many. A multitude. Many and these were people friends from God's people. They were not Samaritans or they were not Babylonians or Egyptians or Romans or Greeks. These were Israelites. These were part of God's people. They were the Old Testament visible church. The covenant belonged to them. The Messiah was promised to them. They had the law, God's revelation and yet so many of them are unwell. Many and among God's people, a multitude of them are sick. Some are blinded, some are blind and some are paralyzed. Now we don't expect that to happen. We know it happens but we don't expect it and we don't like it. The reason why we sang Psalm 73, it is because of this.

Because even Christian people, even the Lord's people has to go through sufferings. It's a common reality for believers, for the church of Jesus to struggle. Illnesses, sickness, do not affect the unbelievers only but Christians as well. And maybe you or someone that you know, a believer that you know is among this multitude of people, that despite their faith in Jesus, are suffering and are unwell. Suffering is common. Be that physical or emotional or psychological or spiritual, suffering is common. It's a sad and yet common reality. It's not necessarily God's judgment or

God's discipline. It's not necessarily the result of sin and yet it is common. We heard about the church in China. They're trying to be faithful to God and because of their faithfulness, not because of their sins, because of their faithfulness, they're persecuted. Jesus told us to expect persecution, to expect hardship in this life. It's not our home and we will struggle in this life.

[7 : 55] Just like men in Jerusalem, maybe not necessarily physically and yet, maybe even yourself today, you are experiencing hardship that life can throw at us. But the suffering are not just common, but sometimes the sufferings are long term. Now there is this man among this multitude, there is a man and the Bible tells us he has been there for 38 years. Maybe as a child he fell and broke his leg and because didn't have the same treatment available today, maybe since that day he has been lame all his life. We don't know what happens. Maybe he was born like that.

Maybe he was paralyzed because he fell. We don't know. All we know that for 38 years a man who belonged to the people of God, a man who is within the covenant of God is sick and for 38 years God does nothing. Did he pray? We don't know. Did he hope for healing? Of course he did. Did he long for God to do something? Of course he did. And yet no one was there to help him. Not even someone from the Lord's people was there to help him and get him to the pool and be healed. 38 years waiting.

I don't know you, I'm very impatient. I'm Italian. I don't know what he means waiting. It's difficult. And if I'm going through a difficult time, one day is one day too long. I want God's deliverance straight away. I don't like to be unwell. I don't like to be sick. I want to be well and I want to be happy. Not just in heaven but in his life as well. And it's so difficult when the Lord in his providence allows trials and tribulations. Even for a short time it's difficult. I can't imagine friends. 38 years being unwell. 38 years. There is a young woman in our congregation. She's a believer and she is a magnet for trials. She is bodily unwell. Her partner that she had before she was converted left her with a son and a massive debt. She's trying to work hard to pay this debt and to offer her son a decent life and yet job is insured, problems, family, a legal case for something happening at work. She's desperate. She's desperate. She's praying for God to help and no help is apparently on its way. She's like the Psalmist in Psalm 73. What's the point? What's the point of trying to be faithful? What's the point of washing my hands in innocence? What's the point of pleasing

God if God doesn't reward my efforts? If God blesses the evil one and we who are God's people are suffering? What's the point for these people? Imagine. What's the point? We are God's people.

Yes, we're not the best people in the world but we are his people. We have promises. We have the law and yet the Romans prosper and we the Jews are enslaved. They are well. They are wealthy. They are healthy and we are here lying sick hoping for an angel to heal us. Trials are common.

[12 : 18] There are a lot in this life. I would like to tell you friends that there is always a reason that I wish I could tell you why you are suffering. Why I'm suffering. Often God doesn't tell us and when he tells us we don't like the answer. Remember chapter 9, John 9, there is a man born blind and Jesus told the disciple it's not because he did any wrong it's just that God might be glorified in him. Do you like that answer? We don't know the purpose for God sending and allowing suffering in our lives. We know there is that all is for our good and yet when we are in that it's so painful.

Don't judge friends, those Christians who in their suffering say things they shouldn't say because you might do the same if you're in that situation. It's easy for us to repeat and verses of the Bible to these people. It's easy for us to say to them God loves and God cares for you. All when all is well with us those words have also no meanings when we are suffering. There is a mystery in suffering. There is something that we don't grasp, we don't understand. For God's reason, for God's wisdom, we don't know, can't understand. We have to surrender to His will and we have to be compassionate towards those who are suffering. There is a sad reality. Secondly, a miracle is accomplished and these are the two verses that we read. Jesus sees this man, he knows about the struggle of this man and Jesus speaks to the man and the man is healed. And this miracle happens because Jesus is compassionate and Jesus saw him. Jesus saw him and this is a wonderful comfort for those of us who are suffering because when we are suffering we wonder where is God. Doesn't he see me? Doesn't he know where I am? And this passage reminds us that Jesus knows. Jesus takes notice of this man and Jesus doesn't pass him by. Jesus sees him and he cares for him. Jesus is not unmoved like we are by the suffering of the people around him. Remember when Jesus saw the leper? Mark tells us that when Jesus saw that leper, when he heard him saying impure, impure, he was moved to compassion.

One way for us to deal with suffering is to ignore it. When we see in the news what's the wrong that is happening in this world and the suffering that people have to struggle with, when we see people around us in our community and well-believed, our way to deal with the suffering is to avoid, to ignore it because it's painful. Jesus is not afraid to draw near to these people. He sees them.

He takes notice of them. And my friend, if you are suffering today, Jesus sees your suffering. He sees you in all your struggles. He hears your prayers. He's aware of your tears. He knows your doubts. He sees you, friends. Maybe the rest of the congregation doesn't see your suffering, doesn't see your pain, but Jesus does. And more than that, he knows because we read that Jesus knew that his man had been there for a long time. He knew. It's not a discovery. Jesus is never ignorant of the suffering around him. He knows. And sometimes we see the wrong. We see the suffering and we go away from that suffering. But Jesus wants to know more. And he knows, friends, how long your trials has been. He knows for how long you've been weeping and sighing and pleading.

He knows. We might not know, but he does. But also, behind this miracle, there is the sovereign will of Christ. It says at the beginning of the chapter that a multitude of people were healed, were unwell, but only one was healed. Maybe more, but the Bible tells about one person.

[18 : 21] And this is a mystery. Jesus had the power to heal all of them. Jesus, in many ways, had the desire to heal all of them. And yet, as far as we can tell, only one among these multitude were healed. What a mystery. What was it that brought Jesus to heal this man?

Not his response, not the faith of this man, because the man failed Jesus. He wasn't better than other sick people. It was just God's sovereign grace. God set his heart on this person. God set his affection and decided to bless this person. Why does God heal only some, even today?

Why not every believer is healed? Why some Christians are delivered from persecution on poverty and misery, and others are not? Why is it that people receive what they ask for, and other people do not? God's sovereign will. And we can extend this to spiritual things.

Why is it that certain people, like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, when they meet with Jesus, are saved? And this man who meets the same Jesus is not saved? Why that miracle, spiritual miracle of new birth and conversion happens in the life of these two and not in the life of this man? He told the leaders that he would give life to whoever he will.

There is a mystery. Not just why there is suffering, why does God allow suffering among his people? But why does He not deliver them all from their suffering? Why does He seem to pick and choose? Why does He bless some in a way and not others in the same way? We have to bow down to His Lordship, to His will. For some people, they need that deliverance.

[21 : 12] Other people need to stay in their suffering. It's a mystery. But also behind this miracle there is the power of Jesus. Not just His compassion, not just His knowledge, not just His sovereign will but also His power. Jesus spoke to this man. He spoke. The man is paralyzed, unable to walk and Jesus speaks to him. And Jesus asked this man to do something that this man couldn't do. If I were to say to someone who is unable to walk, get up and walk, nothing will happen. The guy will stay in bed. But Jesus speaks. And as He speaks, this man has granted the power to walk. And notice that this healing is not gradual. There is no limping. There is no someone helping this man. No need for physiotherapy or for a chiropractic. The man stands up straight away and walks. Immediately there is a full healing, complete healing. This is a powerful work of God. And when you think in spiritual terms of the power of Christ, we don't associate the power of Jesus with salvation. We associate

His love, His grace, but not His power. And yet Paul tells us that it's by the power of God that we are saved. The Gospel is not just God's love. It's the power of God because we were dead, spiritually dead, unable to do any good for our souls to please God. God spoke to us. Like to this man, God spoke to us. He called us. And as He called us to believe, He gave us the grace to believe. And it was a full transformation. We are resurrected.

We are raised from the dead. We have new life. And all because God spoke to us. A miracle has happened in our lives. If you're a believer friend, a miracle has happened in your life.

God has transformed your life. He has taken out your stony heart and given you a heart of flesh. You were spiritually blind, unable to see the truth as it is in Jesus. He opened your eyes and gave you grace to see His grace. You were dead. And now you are alive. A wonderful miracle. People say, you Christian, you don't believe in miracles. Of course we do. Every day God does miracles. Yes, in a sense of healing, but even more spiritual miracles. Every day God is adding to His church, such as should be saved. Thirdly, we find in this story legalistic hearts. The response of the religious leaders to the miracle of Jesus is not worship, is not faith, is objections. And they are angry with Jesus because He has done this miracle on the Sabbath day. So now Jesus, you can't do this. They are angry with the man because the man is carrying his bed, which is probably like a rug, probably a rug and bed. And they're complaining with him, you are breaking the Sabbath day by doing this. And then they complain with Jesus that he has healed this man on the Sabbath day. They love, they love Moses.

And that's okay. Jesus doesn't rebuke them for that. But Jesus rebukes them because they have God's law without the grace of God. The Sabbath day had become for them a stumbling block. Instead of rejoicing that God in His mercy had saved this man on the Sabbath day, they complain. So they love the law, they have the law, but they don't understand the grace of God. They don't show compassion to this man. They show no acknowledgement in the grace of God in the life of this man. They're so taken by the law that they forget grace. And this is legalism, friends. And we often, all of us are guilty of that. We're so taken by the details of the commandments and we forget the grace of God. We're so obsessed by keeping every detail of the commandment that we forget that our life is in Christ and our salvation is from the beginning to the end by grace and not by works. We lose sight of God's grace.

[27 : 14] The law is good. Of course it is good. It is God's law. Therefore it's good. But sometimes the place we give to that law undermines the grace of God. And I fear, friends, especially for us who are conservative Christians, reformed people, responding to maybe a shallow Christianity of modern days, we go to the other extreme and we live as if Jesus had never come. And we put ourselves under the old covenant, like the Hebrews. We put ourselves under the old covenant and we forget that we are in the new covenant. And we make ourselves slaves when we are children of the living God. These religious leaders, they love the law, right

Hissu. And yet they despise the grace of God. A legalist is someone who has the law without the authority of God. So there is no verse in the Bible, no mention in the Old Testament that it was forbidden to heal someone on the Sabbath day. Nowhere in the Bible is forbidden to do good on the Sabbath day. And yet these men in years, in decades, in centuries, added to the law of God. Presets of men, rules of men, men's traditions. And they put these traditions at the same level of the word of God. So they have built a system of rules and regulations and they were treating these rules and regulations like they were from God but they were not. And they were imposing on people something that God had not imposed.

So they had no authority to speak because it wasn't from God, it was from men. So they were trying to impose on Jesus and this man something that didn't come from God and they had no right to impose that on anyone. And for us in Italy, the Roman Catholic Church has imposed on people hundreds of things, penance, public confession, indulgences, all kinds of things, sacraments that God has never mentioned in His Word. Adding a burden on people with no right to do so. And these were religious leaders. They were sent by God and called by God to serve the people, to minister the people. Instead, they were ruling over the people, imposing on these people, not just God's law but the love of men. But also legalism means that you have the law without the law giver. So they speak about Moses, they speak about the Sabbath day and all sounds so orthodox and so right and yet when the one who is the Lord of the Sabbath, when the one who has given the Sabbath to his people comes, what do they do? No thank you, we don't want you. They refuse to come to him. They refuse to believe in him. So they want the commandment but not the one who commanded.

They want the law but not the law giver. As if there is blessing, friends, in that. God has given the law that we might have him. That's the purpose of the law, to lead us to Christ, not to keep us away from him. And if the law, friends, if God's law is keeping you away from Jesus, then you are a legalist because God's law is given to you that you might know Christ, that you might put your trust in him, that you might rely on him.

Finally, there is an inadequate response. The religious leader's response to Christ is rejection, objection. The man who is healed by Jesus, the man who for 38 years has been blamed, his response is also inadequate because he is more concerned with body than soul.

[32 : 20] Jesus heals him from physical sickness and yet he is willing to denounce Jesus to the religious leaders. So he is willing to put his trust in Jesus and get well but not enough to put his trust in Jesus and follow him. This man's concern is with his bodily well-being.

Jesus tells him, see no more and what does he do? Straight away he sins by denouncing Jesus. His response to the kindness of Jesus, to the compassion of Jesus, denouncing him.

There was no need for him to go to the religious leaders and tell them that it was Jesus. There was no need for that. But he does. He denounces Jesus. He has broken the Sabbath day. He deserves to be punished. He is the one guilty, not me. Showing that he is not interested in Christ. He has not surrendered his soul to Christ. All he wanted was healing. And many friends want from Jesus what is good in his life. Many pray Jesus for daily bread, for healing, for comfort. They want him to do something for them. And physical, earthly, temporal but not for his eternal. This man is still in love with the world. This man is still in love with what is here and now and not what is forever undeterred. And I hope that this does not describe you my friend. I hope that you are not like this man concerned with today at the expense of eternity. I hope that you are not neglecting your never-dying soul to satisfy your earthly bodily needs. Nothing wrong friends in doing that as long as you don't sacrifice your soul to obtain them. But also this man responds in an adequate way because he would rather have the approval of man than the approval of God. He denounces

Jesus. He wants to be at peace with the Pharisees, with the religious leaders. He doesn't want to lose his seat in the synagogue. He doesn't want to lose the approval of man. He wants to be on their side and them on his side. And so he's willing to give away Jesus for that. In chapter 9, the man who was born blind, he's willing to lose everything to have Jesus.

He's willing to lose his place in the synagogue. He's willing to be cast out. He's willing to lose even his family probably for the sake of Christ. But this man, he sacrifices Jesus to get the approval of man. What about you? Does this man describe you? Are you like this man willing to get blessing from Jesus and yet unwilling to surrender to him? Are you like this man asking Jesus to give you what you want now and neglecting to ask him what lasts forever? Are you like this man preferring man to God? If this is you and hope it isn't, there is very little hope for you because Christ is all you need. You don't need healing or that's a plus but that's not your greatest need. Your greatest need is not wealth and health and prosperity. Your greatest need is Jesus. My greatest need is Jesus. The greatest need of the people in this community is Jesus because he is the one who is able to save us and give us eternal life. Let's pray. Our God and Heavenly Father we thank you for Jesus for sending him into this world to save us and deliver us from all our sins. We pray that by your grace through the work of the Holy Spirit that each and every one of us would follow him, would believe in him and surrender to him. In Jesus' name we pray.

[37 : 35] Now we bring this meeting to a closure by singing again from Psalm 73. We're seeing the final stanzas of this. We're singing from the Scottish altar. Nevertheless, continually O Lord I am with thee, thou dost me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Psalm 73 to the end. Never, nevertheless, continually O Lord I am with thee, thou dost me hold by my right hand, and still upholdest me. Thou with thy cancer while I live, will be on thy touch thy, unto thy glory afterward. Receive me to abide. The power in the Heaven is mine, but we, O Lord alone, and in the Earth, who my desire, besides thee, there is no one. My flesh and heart, the things I've failed, but God, the fail we never, for all of my heart, God is the strength and portion forever.

Far, Lord, they were, far from thee, forever perisnant, when banthah, who rimmed from the table, thou hast destroyed all. And surely it is good for me that I draw near to God, when God hath us, that all I were, I may declare adorned.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.