

Salvation And The Sabbath

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Well if we could with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John in chapter 5 John chapter 5 and if we just read again from the beginning After this there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool in Aramaic called Bethesda Which has five roofed colonnades in these lay a multitude of invalids blind lame and paralyzed One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time He sent to him Do you want to be healed?

Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be healed? As you know today is the first of November and for many the first of November is all Saints Day It's primarily remembered in the Roman Catholic Church as a day which Celebrates and commemorates all the Saints But according to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church in order to become a saint you first of all have to die You then have to wait about five years or even longer to be freed from purgatory and then enter heaven And then after all that only according to public opinion can those who are still living venerate you to a position of being a saint and And today on the first of November the Roman Catholic Church they celebrate and commemorate all Saints all Saints Day But as you know yesterday, which was the 31st of October that was all Hallows Eve or

Halloween which is the day before all Saints Day And in contrast to all Saints Day which commemorates and celebrates dead Saints Halloween commemorates and celebrates dead sinners But you know for many people Halloween is just about kids dressing up as ghouls and ghosts and having a party But you know for a Christian The 31st of October isn't about Halloween. It's about the Reformation Because on the 31st of October That day marks Reformation Day It was on the 31st of October 1517 that the German reformer Martin Luther He nailed his 95 theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Germany and those 95 theses They were the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation which would spread across Europe And what emerged from Reformation Day was what we have come to know and love as the five

Reformation solas They're five Latin phrases which summarise the truths of scripture in opposition to the erroneous doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church And these five Reformation solas they are sola scriptura scripture alone sola fide faith alone Sola gratia grace alone sola christos Christ alone and sola deo gloria the glory of God alone And these five reformation solas they teach us and they emphasise to us what true biblical Christianity really is But you know in the years prior to the first Reformation Day Martin Luther had this long and personal struggle with the question How can I be made right with God?

How can I experience peace in my heart? How can I have assurance of salvation? Of course Luther he had tried everything he had followed the system of Roman Catholicism to the letter But he still didn't know the simplicity of salvation But that was until Luther discovered what scripture alone taught about salvation What he discovered in Romans 1 verse 17 was that the righteous shall live by faith The righteous shall live by faith and you know those words they transformed Luther's life because Luther came to realise That salvation is not about the sensational and the spectacular It's about silent and simple faith in Jesus Christ Salvation is not about the sensational or the spectacular Salvation is about silent and simple faith in Jesus Christ Therefore my friend a sinner is made a saint

[4 : 50] Not by good works, not by church attendance, not by Bible reading, not by their prayers, not by penance, not by monetary gifts Not by public opinion A sinner is made a saint Simply by grace alone Through faith alone Through faith alone In Christ alone My friend salvation is not about the sensational and the spectacular It's about silent and simple faith in Jesus Christ And you know is that not what we saw last week with the healing of the royal official's son We saw that salvation is not about the sensational and the spectacular It's about silent and simple faith in Jesus Christ And you know that's actually what we're being reminded again this morning As we begin chapter 5 in John's Gospel Because in this chapter we witness a man with a sickness Who came to experience salvation on the Sabbath We see here a man with a sickness who came to experience salvation on the Sabbath

And this morning I'd just like us to consider this passage under two headaches Two simple headaches Salvation and the Sabbath Salvation and the Sabbath So first of all salvation I'm looking again at verse 1 After this there was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool in Aramaic called Bethesda Which has five roofed colonnades In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame and paralysed One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years As well as John the Evangelist he introduces this next section in his Gospel By informing us that Jesus once again went up to Jerusalem To celebrate one of the Jewish feasts We saw back in chapter 2 that Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Passover But Jews they went up to Jerusalem, actually they went up three times a year

They went up to celebrate the feast of Passover, the feast of Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles And when you read John's Gospel Something that you should always take note of is when he mentions that a feast is taking place Of course we would usually just skip over these little notes that John leaves for us But John mentions all these feasts in order to give us context But he also mentions these feasts in order to give us a timeline of his Gospel In fact John mentions the feast of Passover three times in his Gospel So that we'll have a timeline of events that leads us up to the hour When Jesus will offer himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world But you know when John tells us here that there was a feast of the Jews And that Jesus went up to Jerusalem He says this not because it was the feast of Passover

We'll see that Jesus goes to the feast of Passover in chapter 6 And the feast of Passover was held around March, April time And so in this chapter, chapter 5, Jesus is in Jerusalem Not for the feast of Passover but for the feast of Tabernacles Which was held around September, October time And the feast of Tabernacles, it was a feast which commemorated and celebrated the Lord's provision of salvation It was an occasion where the Jews, they celebrated the time when the children of Israel were delivered from slavery and bondage in Egypt And they were led by God's servant Moses through the Red Sea on towards the Promised Land And as you know the Israelites, they were in the wilderness for 40 years journeying towards the Promised Land And they were moving from place to place while living in temporary accommodation

They lived in tents or Tabernacles, which is what the feast of Tabernacles is all about The Jews, they commemorate and celebrate how the Lord provided for the children of Israel in those 40 years of wandering through the wilderness From slavery in Egypt to salvation in the Promised Land But you know what I find fascinating is that 38 out of those 40 years in the wilderness were wasted years And I say that because it took less than a year for the Israelites to travel from slavery in Egypt to the threshold of salvation in the Promised Land But you'll remember that instead of entering the Promised Land by faith, it was there at the Jordan at the Israelites They turned around and they went back and they went back into the wilderness Wasting 38 years in the wilderness living in disobedience and disbelief

[10 : 11] They wasted 38 years in the wilderness And you know when we come to this chapter, John is saying to us, look who Jesus met when he was in Jerusalem Commemorating and celebrating the feast of Tabernacles Look who Jesus met when he was in Jerusalem Remembering what the Israelites did in the wilderness He met an infirm man who had had his infirmity for how long?

38 years And what John is telling us is that those 38 years of infirmity in this man's life They were just like the 38 years that the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness They were 38 wasted years They were 38 wasted years Because like the Israelites, this infirm man He had 38 years of the promise of salvation being held out to him We're told that he sat at the pool in Jerusalem for 38 years And he was there waiting for the right time to be healed He was waiting for the sensational and the spectacular to happen to him He was waiting for an angel to come and trouble the waters And then he was waiting for someone to carry him into the water He was waiting for healing to come to him

And for 38 years, nothing happened But nothing had happened because for 38 years, this is the thing He didn't really want to be healed He didn't really want to be healed Yes, he was brought to the place of healing Yes, he sat in the place where there was an opportunity to be healed He sat in the place where he could be freed from the slavery of his infirmity And experience the promise of salvation But you know, the question which hung over this man for those 38 long and wasted years Was the question, do you really want to be healed?

Do you really want to be healed? In fact, that's the first question Jesus asked this man in verse 6 We're told that when Jesus saw him lying there And knew that he had already been there a long time He said to him, do you want to be healed?

Do you want to be healed? And you know, it might seem like a strange question for Jesus to ask But you know, Jesus was getting right to the heart of this man's problem Which was the problem of his heart And the problem of his heart was that like the Israelites in the wilderness This infirm man had lived in disobedience and disbelief for 38 years My friend, this man's greatest problem It wasn't his inability to walk or his inability to be washed It was his inability to want what he really needed My friend, this man's problem wasn't his inability to walk or his inability to be washed But his inability to want what he really needed That's why Jesus asked him, do you want to be healed?

[13 : 45] You know, there was no doubt that he could be healed and would be healed But the question was, did he want to be healed? Did he want to be healed?

And you know, you might be looking at this passage and thinking to yourself Well, of course he wanted to be healed Everyone wants to be made well Everyone wants to experience help and healing Everyone wants to be made whole Of course this man wanted to be healed But you know, my unconverted friend What John is illustrating to you this morning is a mirror image of what you are like When it comes to the offer of the Gospel Because like the Israelites in the wilderness And like this man in Jerusalem You have been wasting 38 years or more Living in disobedience and disbelief Because you know, for 38 years plus You've been listening to the Gospel But doing nothing with it For 38 years plus you've been living with your infirmity of sin

While the offer of salvation is being held out to you For 38 years plus you've remained in slavery to sin While sitting on the threshold of salvation For 38 years plus you've been waiting For the sensational and the spectacular to happen to you For 38 years plus you've been waiting for the Damascus road experience For 38 years plus you've been waiting to see the bright lights And the voice from heaven to tell you that you're a Christian For 38 years plus you've been so close to salvation And yet so far For 38 years plus my friend you've sat waiting for the right time to come to Christ For 38 years plus you've been waiting for this convenient season in your life To commit your life to Jesus But the truth is my friend for 38 years plus you have wasted

You have wasted opportunity after opportunity After opportunity to embrace Jesus Christ As he is freely offered to you in the Gospel And the question which all of this passage boils down to this morning Is the same question which Jesus asked this man Do you want to be healed?

Do you want to be saved? Do you want to experience salvation? Do you want Jesus in your life? Do you want to become a Christian?

[16 : 34] My friend as you're confronted with the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ Week by week What is it you really want? What is it you really want?

But you know before you answer this question Notice how this man responds to Jesus' question In verse 7 We're told the sick man answered him Sorry I have no one to put me into the pool When the water has stirred up And while I'm going another steps down before me Do you know when Jesus asked this infirm man if he wants to be healed The infirm man responds by giving excuses He gives him excuses as to why he's not healed yet But he doesn't answer the question And you know my unconverted friend the same can be said of you Because for 38 years plus you have been lingering in your lost condition And when you ask the question do you want to be saved?

Or do you want to be healed? Or do you want to commit your life to Jesus Christ? Or do you want to become a Christian? You don't really answer the question do you? You just give excuses as to why you're not saved yet And your excuses are either because of confusion Or other Christians or because of the church But the thing is it's not Christians or the church that are asking you the question this morning It's the Christ And you can never blame the Christ for your lost condition You can't blame him And you know in similar words you might say I've been waiting for the Lord to save me for years Others have been converted before me Others have stepped down before me Others have come to Christ before me But I've been seeking the Lord for years I've been wanting to be saved for years

Yes my friend you want to be saved But is that your utmost desire? Is that what you want more than anything else?

Is that what you're longing for? Is that what you're pleading with the Lord for? Because my friend I can assure you that Until salvation for your soul is what you really want You will go on wasting your life Until salvation for your soul is what you really want You will go on wasting your life And you know my friend my plea to you this morning Is don't waste your life Don't waste your life You know I remember speaking to a woman Who said to me that when she turned 60 It shocked her And what shocked her wasn't her age But what shocked her was that she had reached Such a milestone in her life And she still wasn't a committed Christian Because she thought that she would have become a Christian

[19 : 52] Long before the age of 60 But sadly she had let other things get in the way And she had wasted her life waiting to be saved But not truly wanting to be saved And you know it's when she came to the realisation That she had to stop waiting to be saved And start wanting to be saved That she was saved And you know my unconverted friend That's what you need to do You need to stop waiting to be saved And start wanting to be saved You need to stop waiting for the Lord to save you You need to start wanting for the Lord to save you You know what I love about this passage Is that as Jesus passes by this infirm man Who had wasted all these years of opportunity Waiting for salvation rather than wanting salvation Do you know where Jesus finds him?

He finds him at Bethesda He finds him at the house of grace That's what the word Bethesda means And when Jesus finds this man at the house of Bethesda He saves him not by the sensational and the spectacular He saves him by silent and simple faith In Jesus Christ And you know as an island community We're all familiar with the name Bethesda It's the name of our care home and hospice in Stornoway And as you know Bethesda is a place which Many of our loved ones have benefited from They've benefited from the care and the compassion Of the home and the hospice During the latter moments of their infirmity and illness Because you know as you all know When they enter Bethesda When they enter the Bethesda hospice Many of them are on the threshold of eternity

Of course some of them are ready for eternity And sadly some of them are not But you know what better place to be found On the threshold of eternity Than in the house of grace But my unconverted friend What I want to say to you today Is that your house this morning Is called Bethesda Your house this morning is called a house of grace I don't know if you're on the threshold of eternity No one knows that But I do know That because the Gospel of grace And because the good news of salvation Through Jesus Christ has been freely offered To you today I know for that reason That your house this morning Is called Bethesda Your house this morning is a house of grace And the question which you need to answer And you need to answer it today

Do you want to be healed? Do you want to be saved? Do you want to be a Christian? And if that's your earnest desire then My friend confess your sin And commit your life to Jesus Christ Confess your sin and commit your life to Jesus Christ Because salvation it's not about the spectacular And the sensational It's all about silent and simple faith In Jesus Christ I know that's what we witness in the life of this man He came to experience salvation On the Sabbath Which brings us secondly to consider the Sabbath Salvation and the Sabbath Salvation and the Sabbath Look at verse 6 When Jesus saw him lying there And knew that he had already been there a long time He said to him, do you want to be healed?

The sick man answered him I have no one to put me into the pool When the water has stirred up And while I'm going another steps down before me Jesus said to him, get up, take up your bed and walk And once the man was healed and he took up his bed and walked Now that day was the Sabbath So the Jews said to the man who had been healed It is the Sabbath and it's not lawful for you to take up your bed But he answered them The man who healed me, that man said to me Take up your bed and walk You know, people often worry about what others will think and say If they commit their life to Jesus Christ You know, I worried about what people would think and say When I became a Christian I worried that I would receive a negative reaction From my unconverted friends and family But one thing I didn't ever worry about Was that I would receive a negative reaction from Christians And yet that's what we see with this man

[24 : 52] Because he had finally experienced salvation after 38 long years And you know, the first people he encountered are Pharisees He had met with Jesus, his life had been changed His heart had been transformed He had only just started walking And then he was confronted by the religious police The Jews, they were the religious leaders The scribes and the Pharisees, they were the religious police And their main concern was not salvation from God But strictly following the law of God And the law which this man was sent to have broken Was that he was carrying his mat on the Sabbath Now the law never said anything about carrying a mat on the Sabbath Because the fourth commandment says, remember the Sabbath day To keep it holy Six days shall thou labour and do all thy work But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God In it thou shalt not do any work Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant

Nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle Nor thy stranger that is within thy gates For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth The sea and all that in them is And rested the seventh day wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day And hallowed it And as the fourth commandment emphasises Keeping the Sabbath day is not something that's relevant to Just a past generation in history No, keeping the Sabbath is actually binding upon all mankind Because it's a creation ordinance It's something that God ordained at creation for our benefit In six days the Lord made heaven and earth And the sea and all that in them is And rested the seventh day Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day And hallowed it And in fact Jesus affirmed that the Sabbath He affirmed about the Sabbath that he is the Lord of the Sabbath Because the Sabbath was made for man

And not man for the Sabbath Therefore we should see the Sabbath as a gift Not a grudge We should see it as a delight Not a dread The Sabbath is to be viewed as a benefit Not a bind A blessing Not a burden The Sabbath is to be viewed as a day of rest Not a day of restraint It's to be seen as a day of reflection Not a day of restriction Now sadly the religious police in the first century They had made the Sabbath day a grudge, a bind and a burden They had made the Sabbath a day of restraint and restriction The Sabbath had become about the law And not about the Lord In fact the religious police of the scribes and Pharisees They had implemented 39 additional laws As an appendix to the fourth commandment Of course their initial intention was honourable

Because they wanted to protect and preserve the Sabbath But by implementing these 39 additional laws For their Sabbath keeping It all became a bind and a burden upon the people But you know as Christians We can often be in danger of acting just like the religious police Can't we?

We can be in danger of inventing and implementing laws In order to try and protect and preserve the commandments But you know what often happens Is that these additional laws They don't become a benefit or a blessing They become a burden and a bind And especially in the case of this man who was newly converted You know we can be guilty of inventing and implementing laws About the Sabbath and many other things And we may do it with a good objective But what often happens is that it's not met with a good outcome But you know look how Jesus deals with this new Christian And how he deals with the Sabbath Look in verse 14 We're told that afterward Jesus found this man in the temple and said to him See you are well, sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him

[29 : 25] Jesus later met this new Christian in the temple at the Feast of Tabernacles And Jesus sent to him Go and sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you Now Jesus wasn't saying to this new Christian Go and live a sinless life that nothing bad will happen to you again No Jesus was saying live your life in a God honouring and God glorifying way Live your life in a God honouring and God glorifying way And you know that's what we're commanded to do with every command Not just the fourth commandment We're to live our lives in a God honouring and God glorifying way And we're to ask ourselves in all that we do Am I honouring the Lord in this?

Am I glorifying God by doing this? Am I keeping the commandments? Because as Jesus says if you love me you'll keep my commandments If you love me you'll keep my commandments And so my friend living by the law of God is about loving the Lord Living by the law is about loving the Lord Therefore when it comes to the Sabbath We should view the Sabbath in the way it was intended to be viewed It's to be viewed unseen as a gift Not a grudge, a delight, not a dread It's to be a benefit, not a bind, a blessing, not a burden We should consider the Sabbath day today We should see it as a day of rest Not a day of restraint We should see it as a day of reflection where we can read God's word And meditate on it and consider the things that the Lord has done for us We can consider it as a day of reflection

Not a day of restraint Not a day of restraint You know I'm sure you're familiar with the words of A.W. Pink Who was the author of many Christian books that are still in circulation today You know what's interesting about A.W. Pink is that he was a pastor in the United States And naturally in England for many years But when the Second World War broke out He and his family, they moved here in 1940 They moved to the Isle of Lewis and they lived in Stornoway I think they lived on Lewis Street And you know A.W. Pink, he remained in Stornoway until his death in 1952 In fact he's buried in the San Wiximetry in an unmarked grave But it was A.W. Pink who coined that well-known rhyme about the Sabbath Where he wrote, A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content And health for the toils of the morrow

But a Sabbath profaned, whatever be gained is a certain forerunner of sorrow And you know that's how we should view the Sabbath We should see it as a gift, not a grudge, a delight, not a dread, a benefit, not a bind, a blessing, not a burden Because when it comes to the Sabbath, it's not about the law It's all about the Lord And the Lord is the Lord And the Lord is the Lord And the Lord is the Lord And the Lord is the Lord It's not about the law, it's all about the Lord And the Lord said to us, if you love me, you will keep my commandments We're to be living by the law We're to live by the law because it's all about loving the Lord My friend, the Sabbath is all about looking, listening, loving and living For the Lord Jesus Christ That's what it's all about It's all about salvation and the Sabbath

Salvation and the Sabbath But you know the question I want to leave with you this morning is It's just the question that Jesus asked this man who found salvation on the Sabbath The question, do you want to be healed?

[33 : 40] Do you want salvation on the Sabbath? Do you want to be saved on the Sabbath? Do you want salvation today?

My friend, if you want to be saved today, then I urge you and encourage you and exhort you Go on your knees Go on your knees in your bedroom And earnestly and wholeheartedly ask the Lord to have mercy upon you Confess your sin and commit your life to the Savior And you will experience, like this man, you will experience salvation on the Sabbath Salvation on the Sabbath Well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us Let us pray together Our Heavenly Father, we give thanks for meeting us this morning And for reminding us on this Sabbath day that salvation is freely offered to us in the Gospel We give thanks that Jesus is one who speaks to us

And he asks us, personally and plainly, do you want to be healed? And Lord we know that without Christ we are sin-sick Without Christ we are lingering in a lost state Heading towards a lost eternity But Lord we pray that we would respond in faith and obedience That we would come, confessing our sin and committing our life to the Savior O Lord bless us we pray Bless thy truth to our souls That thou wouldst keep us on mercy's ground until we find thee Go before us for we ask in Jesus' name and for his sake Amen We are going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Sam 92 Sam 92 in the Scottish Salter And we are singing from verse 15 Sam 92

Now Sam 92 is titled as a song or a Sam for the Sabbath day Sam 92 is the Sam that the Jews would sing every Sabbath And they would sing this Sam because it's a Sam that calls us to praise the Lord The Sam opens with the words to render thanks unto the Lord It is a comely thing and to thy name, O thou most high, do you praise, allow to sing Thy loving kindness to show forth and when shines the morning light And to declare thy faithfulness with pleasure every night You know Sam 92 it reminds us that when we spend our Sabbath praising the Lord We will flourish The Sabbath will be a blessing to us That's what he says because he says from verse 12 He says, but like the Palm Tree flourishing shall be the righteous one He shall like to the seed or grow that is in Lebanon Those that within the house of God are planted by his grace

They shall grow up and flourish all in our God's holy place So we are singing Sam 92 from verse 12 down to the verse marked 15 Which is the end of the Sam to God's praise You know Sam 92 it reminds us that when we spend our Sabbath praising the Lord We will flourish The Sabbath will be a blessing to us That's what he says because he says from verse 12 down to the verse marked 15 Which is the end of the Sam to God's holy place

[38 : 06] They shall grow up and flourish all They shall grow up and flourish all in our God's holy place And in old days when others lived May fruits still, fruits shall bring They shall be cut and full of sand And they be nourishing

To show that God's right is the Lord He is our hope to be And He from all our righteousness And He from all our righteousness Is all together free