

=CONVERSIONS=

Lesson 2

The Conversion of the Lame Man of Bethesda

INTRODUCTION: This man was both healed and saved. It seems that his faith was of such a nature that his healing and his salvation were simultaneous miracles. An angel was supposed to have come down into the pool of Bethesda at a certain season to move or “trouble” the water. It was believed that whoever entered the water first after its troubling was made whole of whatever disease he had. Here was a man who had been lame for 38 years. Picture the lame man being carried daily to this pool. No doubt he was taken and laid by the pool day after day, waiting for the troubling of the waters and hoping that perhaps someone would put him in the water first after the angel departed. Time and time again he’d see the waters troubled, but someone who was less ill than he entered the waters first. No doubt he had asked many to help him. He could do nothing for himself. He was waiting for someone to help him. It was to this man that our Lord came in the story in John 5.

- I. IT WAS AT THE TIME OF A FEAST. Read John 5:1a. There were three such times each year when all the Jews longed to go to Jerusalem for the feast and the celebration that accompanied it. This, of course, was a religious celebration. How sad it is that of all the people who came to celebrate a religious festival, none would help this man! It seems that surely some devout person would have helped him into the water, but not one would do so. This is often the case. The people nearest the church are overlooked. People can come to our churches and go away without being helped or saved. God’s people should always be on the lookout for those who need help.
- II. JESUS WENT TO THE FEAST. See John 5:1b. It was the custom of Christ to go to God’s house. Luke 4:16, “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” Our Lord was faithful in His attendance to the synagogue. If Jesus, the Son of God, felt the need to attend the synagogue, how much more should we be faithful to the Lord’s house! (Teacher, stress faithfulness to the Sunday morning service, the Sunday evening service, and the Wednesday evening service. Encourage the pupils to build their lives around the church.)
- III. THE LAME MAN WAS NEAR THE CENTER OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY. In John 5:2a, notice the words, “sheep market.” Actually, this was the “sheep gate” where the lambs for sacrifice were brought. All the people would come here. This was one of the busiest places. (By the way, this pool of Bethesda is still visible.) Though this man was near much religious activity, he was unhelped. How sad it is that we get so wrapped up in church work that we forget to help people! We get so wrapped up in religious exercises that people who need our help and compassion go unnoticed.
- IV. THE PLACE WAS CALLED “A PLACE OF MERCY.” Read John 5:2b. The word “Bethesda” means “house of mercy,” but here was a fellow who had been lame for 38 years and had received no mercy. In other words, the place was to be a house of mercy, but it was not that. How true this is of many churches who are not what they are supposed to be! May God help our church to be a “house of mercy,” and may we be people of mercy, not only having mercy, but showing mercy by extending help to those in need.
- V. THIS MAN COULD DO NOTHING TO HELP HIMSELF. This is a picture of the sinner. There is nothing man can do to save himself. Oh, how the flesh hates to admit this! How the flesh longs to save itself, or have another flesh save it! This, however, is impossible. Salvation is all of the Lord. It is not of works or merit; it is of grace.
- VI. HERE WAS A HARD CASE. In John 5:5, notice that the man had been in this condition for 38 years; yet Jesus helped him. There is no case too hard for God. Let us take hope and courage that God can save the hard cases, too. (Teacher, discuss with the class some of the hard cases that God has reached in our church. Encourage the class with this.)

- VII. GOD USES HUMAN INSTRUMENTS WITH WHICH TO SAVE PEOPLE. Notice John 5:7. Here is one of the saddest statements in all the Bible: “Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool.” This reminds us of Acts 8:30, 31. The Ethiopian eunuch was reading Isaiah 53, and Philip came to his chariot and asked, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” He answered, “How can I, except some man should guide me?” The lame man was not helpless because there was no cure; he was not helpless because of his unwillingness; he was helpless because he had no man to help him! God does the work, but He uses human instruments to make it possible. Before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He first said in John 11:39, “Take ye away the stone.” Jesus raises the dead, but He wants us to roll away the stone. Until we have done what we are supposed to do about winning people, Jesus will not save them. Though we do not save the lost, God has ordained that we have a part in getting them to the Saviour. There are many people who would be saved if some soul winner cared.
- VIII. THE SALVATION AND THE HEALING WERE INSTANTANEOUS. See John 5:8, 9. Notice in verse 9 the word “immediately.” Salvation is always this way. It is in response to our faith.
- IX. THE MAN PROVED HIS SALVATION AND HEALING. In John 5:9b, notice the words, “took up his bed, and walked.” It was obvious to all that something had happened to him. Here is evidence that the world waits to see our proof.
- X. HE MADE A PUBLIC PROFESSION OF HIS FAITH IN CHRIST. Read John 5:15. God wants people to let the world know when they are saved. This is done by making a public profession, by being baptized, and by telling people what the Saviour has done!