

=MIRACLES OF CHRIST=

Lesson 3

The Miracle of the Impotent Man at Bethesda

AIM: to teach my pupils the story of this man who was healed, and to teach the spiritual truths found therein, especially as pertaining to salvation.

POINT OF CONTACT: In an interesting way, tell the story as recorded in John 5:1-15. Tradition says that this particular pool in Jerusalem had an angel who came at a certain season each year and troubled the waters of the pool. The first sick person to step into the water after it was troubled by the angel was supposed to have been healed from his disease. The man that is to be healed in the lesson today is at the edge of the pool with many, many other sick and crippled people, hoping that he can be the first one in the water after the angel troubles the water the next time.

I. THE HELPLESS CONDITION OF THE MAN. This man represents every lost sinner. Let us see his condition and thereby see the condition of every unsaved person.

1. He was in Jerusalem at the feast of the Jews. This was, no doubt, the feast of the Passover. There are others who think it was the feast of Pentecost. At any rate, it was a very special season in the life of God's people. It seems, by human reasoning, that if anything could save the man, it would be the observance of the feasts, traditions, etc. of the Jews. This teaches us that tradition and ordinances cannot save.
2. There is no doubt about this man's belief in God. He certainly proved this. Day after day someone would take him and carry his body to the Pool of Bethesda. Here he would wait, hoping that someday God would heal him. This teaches us that just simple belief in God does not save. A person must believe in the sacrificial atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross and in faith commit his future and eternity to what Jesus did on Calvary.
3. This teaches that baptism does not save. If a person had to carry the man to the side of the pool, why not put the man in the pool if baptism saves? No, the truth is, this man had to have a supernatural work done that neither the feasts of the Jews nor belief in God nor being put in the water could help. You may have some pupils present who have been sprinkled as babies and are trusting that for salvation, or you may have some who feel that because they have been baptized at Pacific Baptist Church they are saved.
4. The man was a hard case. For 38 years he had been in that condition. This does not mean that he was 38 years old necessarily or that necessarily he had stayed by this pool for 38 years. It does mean that he had been in his physical condition for 38 years. Even so, Jesus could save him! Let us not give up on the hard cases, but let us believe that nothing is too hard for God.
5. This man was helpless to save himself. (John 5:7) He could do nothing to save himself. He was so helpless that when the angel did come and trouble the water, someone would have to put him in the pool. He himself could not do it. This shows man's complete inability to save himself. There is nothing man can do such as good deeds, observance of rituals, etc. that can save him. It must be done by God.
6. No other man could help him. What a sad picture! Even though there was a feast going on in Jerusalem and the most religious people in the world were present, there was no one to help this man. He could not save himself, and no other man could save him. This shows the fact that another cannot save us any more than we can save ourselves. It must be done by God.
7. There were others preventing him from being saved or healed. (John 5:7b) Notice the words, "...but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." Someone was keeping him from being saved or healed. Someone was getting in his way. What a sad thing it is when Christians or religious people stand in the way of others being saved! (Ask the class at this point to tell you ways that we can stand in the way of others who need to be saved.)

II. THE HEALING AND THE SALVATION.

1. Only Jesus could do it. (John 5:8, 9) Explain here to the pupils the plan of salvation—how that by nature man is a sinner unable to save or help himself, how that God provided His own Son as our perfect sacrifice and substitute, and how that when we put our faith and trust in Christ, He does all the saving.
2. Notice the word "immediately." (John 5:9) The man was healed instantly. Our salvation is an

instantaneous salvation. We do not take a course on it and learn it over a period of time. We do not take catechism training and gradually become a Christian. We are not born into a Christian home and gradually accept Christ as our Saviour. Salvation is an instantaneous experience with God when a sinner puts his faith in Jesus Christ.

3. Notice the words, "...Rise, take up thy bed, and walk," in verse 8, and the words, "...and took up his bed, and walked..." in verse 9. There was an obvious change in the man. He did not say, "I think I am healed," and then stayed in bed. He got up, took up his bed and walked. Everybody could tell a miracle had taken place. What we need in Christians today is to show the world a changed life and what Jesus Christ can do for the sinner!

III. THE RESULTS OF THE HEALING AND SALVATION.

1. Immediately persecution came. (John 5:10) When a person is saved and it is obvious in his life, he can expect the Devil to fight him immediately. Satan will try to convince him it is not real, that he made an emotional step that he should not have made, that he will be the "talk of the town," and that embarrassment will be his lot continually. In other words, the Devil fights a person as soon as the person gets saved as much as he ever does in the person's life. The Devil realizes he cannot get your soul, but he can certainly get your testimony and influence and life, as well as your rewards.
2. This persecution came from religious people. This is nearly always the way it is. People who are religious, but do not have salvation, cause the most trouble for fundamental believers. Notice, they use the idea of criticizing his leader and making light of Jesus Christ. This is one of the pet ways of Satan. He starts attacking Jesus Christ the minute a person is saved. Religious people start saying that Jesus is okay, but He is not the virgin-born Son of God and not all He says He is.
3. The Devil next attacks by criticism of the leader. He will attack a new convert by saying, "The preacher is just in it for the money," or "The preacher is no good." Let us be on the alert for this kind of an attack.
4. The man testified immediately. (John 5:11, 15) The man did not understand everything, but he did know that he was whole and that Jesus did it! He did not wait to do this; he testified immediately. We call this a public profession of faith. As soon as a person is saved, he should come to church, come forward in the services, and let people know he has received Christ as Saviour. (Perhaps you have some pupils in your class who have never yet made a public profession or been baptized. Lead them to make that profession in the services Sunday. If there are those who have not been baptized, stress to them the importance of being baptized. Also stress the importance of doing both immediately as this man did.)
5. He went to the House of God immediately. (John 5:14) It certainly speaks well of this fellow that Jesus found him in the temple. The temple is really not very far from the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem, and this man immediately went to the temple. As soon as a person is saved, he should align himself with God's people and the House of God. (Stress here the importance of belonging to a church and having membership in a church. There may be some pupils in your class who are saved and baptized, but who have never yet joined the Pacific Baptist Church. Suggest this be done immediately.) Faithfulness to the House of God is vital. This man immediately went to the temple. God's people ought to be faithful in their attendance to His house. Stress this concerning Sunday morning preaching service, Sunday night and Wednesday night services as well as the Sunday school and these Sunday evening Bible classes.
6. Notice the words, "sin no more." (John 5:14b) Even though a Christian cannot live without sin, God's command is that we do not practice sin. We should do our best to live above sin and certainly should live separated, consecrated lives. (Teach the class separation and dedication in their lives.)