

Lessons from the Gospel of John (5): The Need of the Impotent—Life's Enlivening

Bible reading

You may find it helpful to also read the entire case found in John 5:1-47.

John 5:2-3, 7, 25

2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.

3 In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

7 The sick man answered Him, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.

25 Truly, truly, I say to you, An hour is coming, and it is now, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

Introduction

In John chapter 5 we find the case of a paralysed man who was lying sick and impotent for thirty-eight years. There was the healing pool, the holy angel, the holy temple, the holy Scriptures, the feast, and the Sabbath; yet, he gained no benefit. Due to the weakness of his flesh, he was utterly powerless to keep the law and be healed. Even on the day of the feast, he found no joy, and on the Sabbath day, he had no rest. Yet outside of religion, Jesus came with grace not only to heal him but even more to enliven him with the divine life supply.

Bible study reading

Please prayerfully read through the following portions of ministry related to this lesson.

It is impossible for man to keep the law. No one can do it. Just as people cannot walk up to the heavens, neither can they keep the law. Romans 8:3 says that it is impossible to keep the law, because the law is weak through the flesh. All flesh is too weak to keep the law. This is clearly portrayed in the case of the impotent man.

The impotent man had been sick for thirty-eight years. He was unable to move. He was filled with expectation when he saw the waters stirring, but it was impossible for him to get there in time. Because he was impotent, unable to move, he could not receive healing. Likewise, due to our impotence, we cannot keep the law. The law is good, holy, and spiritual. There is no problem with the law; the problem is with us. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 14, section 2)

Suddenly, a little man came into this situation. It was not an archangel, but a little man named Jesus. He had no beauty or attraction, and no one paid attention to Him. He came directly to the sick man. Just as the Father in eternity past foresaw the Samaritan woman and the Son went to find her at Jacob's well, so the Father also foresaw the impotent man, and the Son came to him while he was lying at the pool. He asked him, "Do you want to get well?" That meant, "Would you like to be healed?" The impotent man knew nothing beyond the pool, the water, and the angel who stirred the water. He also knew that he had no hope or ability in himself. So he explained

the situation to the Lord Jesus. Then the Lord Jesus said, "Rise, pick up your bed, and walk." The impotent man heard the enlivening word of the living, life-giving Lord and was healed. We may think that he rose up and walked before he was healed. But this is not true. He was healed before he rose up, took his bed, and walked. Note the sequence in verse 9. "And immediately the man became well, and picked up his bed and walked." "And immediately the man became well" precedes "picked up his bed and walked." He was cured before he rose up. He was cured when he heard the voice of the living Son of God. It was his hearing of the living word of the Lord that quickened him. Formerly the bed carried the impotent man, but now the enlivened man carried the bed. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 14, section 3)

Going deeper

Please read or listen to these materials for an in-depth study of this lesson.

Further reading:

[*Life-study of John*, msg. 14](#)

Radio broadcast link:

Broadcast 20, [*The Need of the Impotent—Life's Enlivening*](#)

Footnotes from Recovery Version of the New Testament:

John 5:7, footnote 2

John 5:25, footnote 1

Romans 8:3, footnotes 1-3

Questions for personal or corporate study:

References in brackets indicate readings or broadcasts that may be helpful in answering the questions.

- How does this case demonstrate the inadequacy of religion's law-keeping and the impossibility of man to keep the law? (*Life-study of John*, msg. 14, sections 2 and 3; Romans 8:3, footnotes 1-3).
- What is the solution to our being dead? Consider how you have experienced the Son of God giving you life.

Next week

The Need of the Hungry—Life's Feeding

This case presents a man lying by a pool for thirty-eight years, hoping to be healed from his sickness but completely unable to do anything about it. On the negative side, this case presents the inadequacy of religion, which causes man to keep the law—something that is impossible for him to do. Positively, Jesus appeared to this man and healed him by giving this man life. Next week we will see that man has a further need. Not only are we weak and impotent, but we also need nourishment, that is, we need to be fed. The Lord Jesus came to us not in a great way but in a small way as food to be enjoyed by us.

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. *Life-study of John*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985. www.ministrybooks.org

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