

## John 5:1-18 – Looking for Healing in all the Wrong Places

When we study scripture we must always guard against reading our personal opinions and bias into the text. Instead we should let the text speak for itself and pull out of the text what it is saying. The first part of chapter 5 trips up a number of people. Many people assume that because the sick man was healed that he believed in Jesus. There is little to support that understanding from the text. There is much in the text to support the assertion that he did not believe. It may seem like I am being too judgmental regarding the man who was sick. It is only because I was like this man. This man represents a lot of people.

### Read John 5:1-18.

Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feasts. John paints a picture for us of a pool in Jerusalem that has 5 porches or roofed colonnades. They were filled with many people in need of healing. If you have ever been to a nursing home or hospital where there were many sick people and some were crying for help, this pool was probably worse. Jesus easily could have avoided this pool but he chose to go there. Is there any significance to John's details about the pool? Knowing that Jesus did not avoid this pool surrounded by sick people, what do we learn about Jesus? (5:1-3)

Jesus saw a man who had been sick for 38 years. Jesus asked this man a simple question. "Do you want to be healed / whole?" How did the sick man answer Jesus? What does the sick man's response tell us about this man? Have you ever known someone who was content in their discontent or happy in their misery? (5:5-7)

It is striking that the sick man never told Jesus that he wanted to be healed. He told Jesus about his own current plan to be healed. Given that the man had been sick for 38 years, how was this man's plan working out for him? He experienced the problem of a works based solution. Someone is always better or faster and you loose out to someone else. Of course his plan was also based on the assumption that there was healing power in the pool. That was a big assumption.

Jesus did not help the man into the pool. Jesus commanded the man to "rise, take up your pallet and walk." Why do you think Jesus chose to heal him this way? Did the man do what Jesus said because a) he believed Jesus, b) he was just doing what he was told, c) he could feel something different about his legs and so he got up, d) other? (5:8-9)

Do you think the sick man was happy that Jesus had healed him?

Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath Day. In chapter 1, when “the Jews” sent priests and Levites to John the Baptist, we later learned that these Jews were Pharisees. The same may be true here. Why did the man get in trouble? What was the focus of the Jews when they learned that this man had been healed? What did the man do to try to get out of trouble? (5:9-11)

Was this man’s actions a violation of God’s Law or was it a violation of human law?

When the Jews asked the man about who told him to take up his pallet / mat, the man did not know Jesus’ name. What does this say about the man? Compare this to the blind man in chapter 9 who could not see Jesus and was sent away from Jesus to wash in a pool and yet he knew Jesus’ name when he was asked about who healed him. (5:12-13)

Jesus found the man in the temple and warned him not to sin any longer so that nothing worse would happen to him. What would be worse than being sick for 38 years? This warning reminds me of God’s warning to Cain in Genesis 4:5-7. How did Cain respond to God’s warning? How did this man respond to Jesus’ warning? What was the result of the man’s actions? (5:14-16)

What did Jesus say to the Jews in defense of his “breaking the Sabbath”? What did Jesus mean by his response? Why did the Jews go from persecuting Jesus to wanting to kill Jesus? We saw that Jesus revealed himself to the Samaritan woman as the Messiah. Did the Jews correctly understand that Jesus was saying that he was equal with God the Father? In the next verses of chapter 5, we will see that Jesus does not back down from this statement. On the contrary, he gives evidence that he is equal with God the Father. (5:16-18)

Here is what we know from the text about the man who was sick. He didn’t ask Jesus for help. He didn’t thank Jesus for healing him. He didn’t even know Jesus’ name until Jesus sought him out later in the temple. When he got caught “breaking the Sabbath”, he tried to blame Jesus. After being warned by Jesus not to sin any longer, he squealed on Jesus which resulted in the Jews persecuting Jesus and then seeking to kill Jesus. Is this how a man of faith acts? I said that I was like this man for a time. This man was looking for healing in all the wrong places. He thought that he could be healed by going into a pool of water at the right time. He relied on himself for healing and did not realize that healing came from Jesus. I thought I could be spiritually whole by following God’s laws. I didn’t know that I could only be spiritually whole by the saving power of Jesus Christ.