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John 5:1-15

“TAKING JESUS’ CURE”

This story strikes a responsive chord with me. It seems so familiar. I seem to see the same thing happening in front of my eyes every week.

Here are a group of people with various needs; the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. All are trying to keep hope alive. And along comes Jesus and offers his “cure”.

And yet, out of that whole crowd of needy people, only one will be helped. The rest will go on, just like they were before. But the rest must continue their lives of frustration and disappointment.

I see it every Sunday, as I try to bring the needy people into contact with Jesus’ person and Jesus’ promises and Jesus’ teaching and Jesus’ power. Some are wonderfully changed while others show no effects.

Evidently, Jesus’ cure does not “take” in some lives. And I wish I could understand what makes the difference. I really would like to know.

I believe that I am dispersing the most potent medicine in the world; The Gospel of Jesus Christ. I have seen it do miracles. I have seen it make men into new creatures (II Cor. 5:13). I have seen it give new meaning to life. I have seen it bring peace and purpose. I have even seen it deliver men from devilish passions, which had been ruining their lives.

I’ve seen it work for so many, but not for all. And I’m puzzled. I’d like to know what makes the difference?

It can’t be said that Jesus takes only the easy cases to cure and leaves the tough ones alone. Not on your life!

Jesus often does best with the most hopeless cases. Here He healed a man who had been a cripple for 38 years.

“But, wait just a minute, preacher. Aren’t we talking about two different things? These people were physically sick, and you’re talking about spiritual needs.

These people were blind and lame and crippled. They had an obvious outward physical problem. But you are talking about people, who need to be saved from their sin sickness and lifted up to find a new and abundant way to live, as children of almighty God. You’re talking about people who need to be made right in their hearts and minds.”

You are correct there. When I’m recommending Jesus to a group like this, I am talking about spiritual needs and that sin sickness, which is called the “sickness unto death.”

Actually, I believe that this was the major “cure” that Jesus was bringing, even back then. I believe that Jesus healed people physically, in order to show that he had power to forgive their sins. He used physical healing as an object lesson that he could cure that deeper sickness of the soul.

Do you remember the story of the paralyzed man, who was brought to Jesus? Jesus said, “Your sins be forgiven.” Then he turned to the doubters and said, “in order to show you that I have power to forgive sin, I now say to this man, ‘get up and walk’” (Matthew 9:1-8).

Do you see? Even in Bible times, physical healing was not Jesus’ major objective. It only illustrated his power to deal with the man’s deepest spiritual needs. (Read Luke 4:18-19.)

In today’s lesson, Jesus said: “Thou art made well; sin no more” (verse 14.) Salvation from sin has always been the major objective that Jesus had in mind.

Besides, the salvation of a person’s eternal soul will bring about the ultimate healing of the body. Our earthly bodies will eventually die, no matter how many times we are healed. But once my soul is saved, I am promised a resurrected body, which will have “no more sickness and no more pain and no more death”.

So, yes,, my major emphasis is also on the healing of the spiritual needs. Why, all around us are the spiritually blind, the spiritually lame, and the spiritually paralyzed.

When a person can’t see and purpose in his life or can’t see any reason for going on, what is he but spiritually blind? When people can’t seem to do what they should do, are they not spiritually paralyzed? And when people can’t seem to drag themselves off of “the way that leads to destruction,” are they not spiritually lame?

The spiritually “blind, the lame, and the paralyzed:” what a picture of people, who are all around us. They too are “impotent”, or powerless to help themselves. And Jesus wants to help them all

But only a certain percentage will be helped. By studying this story, we can discover why some people are helped by Jesus and others are not. We can learn what it would take to be sure that everyone, who is here this morning, goes home with your needs met and that nobody would have to stay in your hopeless plight.

If we want to take Jesus’ cure this morning, there is:

I. A QUESTION WHICH WE MUST ANSWER. Verse 6: “Would you like to get well?” (Living Bible).

This seems like a strange thing to ask a man, who has been crippled for 38 years. It would almost sound sarcastic, if it had not been asked by Jesus. “Would you like to get well?”

Listen, my friend: until you and I can answer this question and mean it, we will never be helped by Jesus’ “cure”. Until a person is sure that he really wants to be saved he won’t be saved! Until a person is shut that he really wants to be changed he won’t be changed! Until a person is sure that he really wants to be delivered from some offensive and destructive habit he will not be delivered! Answering this question may, in fact, be the biggest draw-back and the hardest hurdle to taking Jesus’ “cure”.

Now, you would think that a man, blinded by sin, crippled from doing what he knows he should be doing, caught on an escalator to Hell, would jump at the salvation cure which Jesus offers. But many don’t want any part of it.

Let’s face it: some people prefer a sick, but familiar lifestyle more than the idea of having to make changes in their thinking and their patterns of living. Perhaps, this crippled man also had these mixed emotions. Se Jesus faced him squarely with the issue: “Would you like to get well?”

Perhaps this man secretly feared that, if Jesus healed him, it might affect the way in which he made a living. After all, he had begged for the last 38 years. If he were healed, how could he beg? And what work could he start to do at 38 years of age? He had no trade nor skill, except begging!

It’s the same way, when I ask people if they want to be saved. I offer them God’s sin cure. And they begin to get mixed emotions.

Surely, they would like to be in the family of god and to know that they were on their way to heaven. But still, they are not comfortable with the idea that it may cause them to change some things. They are afraid of how their family may react, or what effect it may have on their job, or how their circle of friends may take it.

Or they may think about some darling sin, which they may have to give up. Although they hate what it does to them, they still love the doing of it.

So today, as Jesus' representative, I still have to confront you with a question to be answered: "Would you like to get well?" Do you really want a better life? Do you really want to be set free?

It is only when you are ready to say "Yes! Yes! I do," that you can take Jesus' "cure."

Oh, won't you say "yes" to Jesus today? What good is that lifestyle, if it leads down a dead-end street? What if those old "friends" do reject you, for comin to Christ? Are they going to help you in the judgment day?

And what darling sin is worth the price of your everlasting soul? "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the entire world and lose his soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (matthew 16:26)

Won't you understand that nothing is as valuable as your everlasting soul? Say to Jesus, "Yes! Yes, I want to be made whole today!"

The second necessary part of taking Jesus' "cure" is:

II. A COMMAND WHICH WE MUST OBEY. Verse 8: "Arise, take up your bed and walk."

Please notice this command has **three parts**:

"ARISE" Don't just sit there. Don't keep waiting any longer. Don't just keep turning it over in your mind. If you want Jesus' cure go for it now! "Now is the hour of salvation; Now is the appointed time."

The only moment, which you have in your grasp, is "now." Yesterday is gone forever. Tomorrow is still beyond your control. You cannot be certain that tomorrow will even come. Now is the time to make your move!

Indeed, what are you waiting you? I can see two things, for which the man in the story may have been waiting:

He may have been **FANTASIZING**, or waiting for some Mystical Experience. He was hoping for an angel to come (vs. 4) and stir the waters. Of course, no one knew if or when this might be. Superstition had it that, at "a certain season" it might happen.

Maybe you are here today waiting for some fantasy or superstition. "When God speaks directly to me, or when I get knocked down by a blinding light (like Paul on the Damascus Road), or when I have some other mystical experience, then I'll be ready to come to Jesus for His cure!"

Friend, you may end up waiting throughout eternity. Just what do you expect God to do? He already sent His own Son from Heaven to Earth, to die for your sin. What more do you expect?

Listen, god never promised voices or blinding lights, or experiences where you get knocked off of your feet. You're talking fantasy... or even possibly Satanic deception! God says "don't wait for mystical experiences. Arise, make a move toward me now!"

The man in the story had also been **DEPENDING** – waiting on somebody else to do something to help him get into the healing waters (verse 7). Friend, when it comes to responding to Jesus, you have to do that yourself. No one else can push you across the line.

I wish that I could. I'll explain and plead and try to make it easier. I'll even come to you, at your home, in order to share the gospel plan. But only you can make that first move.

So stop waiting for someone else to help you. Arise! Arise! Arise! Respond to Jesus' offer now!

The second command which we must obey, if we want to take Jesus' "cure" is to...

TAKE UP YOUR BED. Fold up that sleeping mat – that thing, on which you have spent the last 38 years. Fold up that old page in your life.

Don't even make any provision for falling back into the old ways. Burn your bridges behind you, so you have no place to go except forward.

Do you see? As long as the man left that sick bed lying there, he could fall back into it. Jesus wanted him to fold it up, like a page out of the past, and to move on to a new life.

This is perhaps the biggest secret of why Jesus' cure "takes" in some lives and not in others. Some never break with the past. They just leave the door open to go back into the old life at any time – and those, who leave that door open, find it all too easy to fall back. So fold up the past!

(That is the symbolism of baptism. Baptism declares that the old life is buried and gone, and we have become new. That is why it is so significant. And when you can't even get some new Christians to declare publicly, no wonder they never go any farther.)

I like what Peter Says to the young Christians (in I Peter 4:3 – Living Bible): "You have had enough in the past of the evil things the godless enjoy – sex sin, lust, getting drunk, wild parties, drinking bouts and worship of the idols." Leave these in the past.

"Take up thy bed." Fold up the past ways.

I was taught when you accepted Christ, that you also put away some things: Offensive habits and worldly activities (drinking, smoking, dancing, theater-going, gambling). It was often a pretty narrowly-defined list, and there was a certain amount of hypocrisy and inconsistency, which would show through. But at least people were making an effort to fold up their old bed of sickness, in which they had lain so long.

But please let's not go to the other extreme. Let's not try to just "accept Christ," while we continue to comfortably lounge in our old ways. Let's not even leave our bed in a convenient spot; so that, after the emotion dies down, we can easily fall right back into it.

Larry Flynt, the publisher of Hustler magazine, once claimed that he was "born again." But he continued to publish and profit from his salacious literature. No wonder it didn't "take" in his life nor last very long! And now he makes fun of the whole this!

Jesus says, "take up your bed." Let me Modernize it:

- If you were a gambler, throw away your cards. Don't buy any more lottery chances.
- If you were dirty-minded, cash in your HBO and throw away your copies of "Playboy"
- If you had trouble controlling your desires, stay out of parked cars and dance halls.
- If you liked to gossip, get rid of your phone and resign some of the groups at church, where it is too easy to request prayer for somebody, while you give out all the sordid details.
- If you tended to be self-centered, get a job as a pink lady or visit the nursing home.

Fold up that old way of life; and don't just allow it to lie there to tempt you. Paul says "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust of it" (Romans 13:14)

The third part of the command is to **WALK** Get moving forward in your new life!

You've got a lot to learn; start studying the Bible.

You've got a lot to achieve; start striving for God's plan.

You've got a lot to see; start watching for the Lord's leadership.

"Walk!" Salvation is not the end of a journey. It's just the beginning. And each step grows brighter and brighter. So walk!

"But I'm not sure that I can/ I've been trying to walk straight all my life, but I haven't always been able to pull it off!"

But you tried in your own strength. Now you have Jesus living inside you, to help you. That's the difference! He has promised to be with us always, to the very end (Matthew 28:20)

That is where the faith comes in. The man in the story had never walked for 38 years. Now Jesus said "Walk." Only this time, Jesus was there to help him. That gave him faith to try. Jesus will help you. Believe Him. Put your faith in Him. The power of Jesus is great, my friend, if we will only believe.

A few years back, a movie was made on the life of the late Peter Marshall, a Presbyterian minister who had been Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. During the filming, in Hollywood, an actor had memorized a sermon of this dead preacher, so that he could preach it in one of the scenes.

One of the other players was a character actress, who had long been paralyzed and was forced to use a cane. During the movie version of the church service, she sat in one of the pews, half-way down the aisle.

The actor preached the memorized sermon, word for word and with great feeling. At the closing hymn, this actress got out of her seat, without her cane, and began to walk on unsteady legs toward the front. Every one of the actors and crew were wide-eyed with amazement. They all knew that the actress had been crippled for years. But, because she believed in the power of Jesus, as taught to her by an actor, preaching a memorized sermon of a dead preachers, she was able to walk.

So stunned were the cameramen that they allowed the cameras to run on. And that scene was included in the actual movie! It stands today as a record to the power of Jesus, when a person will simply believe!

My friend, you can walk out of her today, in a newness of life. Salvation is not just forgiveness of the past, but it is power to walk a new walk in the future.

Respond to Christ's command today. If you really want to be made whole, "Arise, fold up your bed, and walk" in newness of life.

III. But don't miss the last part of "taking Jesus' cure." There is also...

A WARNING WHICH WE MUST HEED Verse 14

"Go and sin no more, that nothing worse befall you."

You'd think that 38 years of being crippled would be enough for anybody, wouldn't you? And you'd think that years in sin, without the meaning that Jesus gives to life, would be enough for anyone also.

But, let's not kid ourselves. Sin never loses its attractiveness to our old natures.

Once we come to Jesus, there is a new side to us, which wants to walk with God. But there also is definitely an old side to us, which still wants to do its own thing.

The Bible clearly describes a battle, which rages constantly between the “old man” and the “new man” (Romans 7). In fact, for the rest of our days, we must resist temptation and “fight the good fight of faith,” so that our spiritual side will remain in control.

But how many have retreated, when they should have gone forward? They have gone back into the old ways – defeated, scarcely recognizable as God’s people.

Listen, Carelessness has no place in the Christian life. We are told to “be sober, vigilant, for your enemy, the devil, goes about like a raging lion, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8). We are told to “take heed when you think you stand, lest you fall” (I Corinthians 10:12). We are instructed to constantly crucify “the flesh, with the affections and lusts, which remain in it (Galatians 5:24)

Now I’m not here to debate the theology of “once saved, always saved.” I personally believe that is what God’s Word Teaches. But the simple point is this: we must not presume upon God’s grace. Don’t flirt with disaster. Give temptation a wide berth.

Notice that, when the Bible describes the Christians armor, there is none for the Christian’s back. It is all for the front. We are meant to advance, not to retreat into our old ways.

So keep moving straight ahead. Look neither to the right nor the left.

And never look back on your old ways. “Go and sin no more, that no worse thing befall you.”

Do you wonder why some lives are helped by Jesus, while other remain in their need? The answer is found in these three points:

There is a **question you must answer.** “would you like to be well?” Say yes, to Jesus today.

There is a **command which you must obey.** “Arise” – Wait no longer. “Fold up your past” – turn away from it. And “walk” in newness of life by the power of God.

There is a **warning which you must heed.** “Sin no more” Keep straight ahead. Don’t fall back into the old ways.

Are you ready, today, to receive the full benefit of Jesus’ “cure?”