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“Miracle at the Pool”

[John 5:1-9](#)

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In John 5 there was a “great multitude” of sick, lame, and paralyzed people lying around a pool in Jerusalem hoping for a miracle. One man was there who was an invalid for thirty-eight years. Jesus was directed by the Father to heal that one man among the many who were sick. Why did he only heal that one person? And what must all the others have thought when they were stepped over for their miracles? Pastor Gary shares two perspectives on this story—one from the angle of what ministry is supposed to really look like, and one from the human angle of what it must have felt like to be stepped over for a miracle.

1. [John 5:1-9](#) - *“After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.”*
 - a. Jesus’ encounter with a paralyzed man
 - i. Story is unique to the Gospel of John
 - ii. Jesus was present in Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feasts
 1. Likely Passover, Pentecost, or the Feast of Tabernacles
 - iii. Pool of Bethesda
 1. Described as *“by the Sheep Gate”*

- a. Northeast part of the wall where sheep were brought in for sacrifice
2. Bethesda translates to *Beit Heseid*, meaning “House of Mercy”
3. Undiscovered for centuries
 - a. Scholars dismissed the story
 - i. Subsequently cast doubt on all of the Gospel of John
 - b. German archeologist Conrad Schick discovered the pool in 1888
 - c. Further archeological digs uncovered a pool larger than an Olympic swimming pool up to forty-two feet deep, with five porticos (or porches)
4. A “*great multitude*” of people were around the pool waiting for healing
 - a. While the actual number is not given, other examples of the phrase “great multitude” in Scripture referenced thousands of people
 - i. [Matthew 15](#) – Feeding of the four thousand (likely closer to eight to ten thousand including women and children)
 - ii. [Mark 6](#) – Feeding of the five thousand (likely closer to ten to twelve thousand including women and children)
5. [John 5:4](#) – *“For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.”*
 - a. Some versions of the Bible omit verse four, as it’s not included in every ancient manuscript
 - i. Does not change the meaning of the passage, as it is evident that some miraculous thing happened in the water because people waited great lengths of time to get in
 - b. While it may seem like a strange method of healing to us, God often healed people in peculiar ways throughout Scripture
 - i. [2 Kings 5](#) – Naaman healed of leprosy by dipping in the Jordan River seven times
 - ii. [Numbers 21](#) – Israelites healed of venomous snake bites by looking at a bronze snake on a pole
 - iii. [Isaiah 38](#) – King Hezekiah healed from an infected boil by applying a poultice of figs
 - c. Examples of God’s gracious provision for the sick and the lame, in that day and for a time

- i. Every practice in the Bible is not necessarily to become a pattern
- ii. Instructions for today are evident – i.e., [James 5](#) instructs church elders to pray over the sick and anoint them with oil

6. The man

- a. Not named
- b. Had a debilitating condition for thirty-eight years; couldn't get into the water without help; people were trampling over him to get into the water
- c. [John 5:6](#) – *“When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’”*
 - i. Some people who have been hurt prefer to stay bitter, gossip, or die in their sins rather than be made well
 - ii. God reveals the truth in our hearts
- d. [John 5:7-8](#) – *“The sick man answered Him, ‘Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.”*
 - i. He was immediately healed

2. Two Perspectives

- a. Ministry can't be driven by the power of human need; it must be directed by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - i. You are not responsible for everyone's needs, but rather to lead people to Christ
 - ii. Jesus helped the people to whom the Father directed him
 - 1. [John 5:30a](#) – *“I can of Myself do nothing.”*
 - 2. [John 12:49](#) – *“For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.”*
 - iii. Pastors, counselors, ministry leaders, etc., cannot meet all human needs, as legitimate as the needs may be
 - 1. Their job is to love, teach, shepherd, and direct people to the one who can meet all their needs
 - 2. Leaders must not and cannot take the place of Jesus in people's lives
 - 3. People should not idolize nor have unrealistic expectations of leaders, but rather should pray for them

- b. When I don't understand God's ways, I have to cling to God's worth—that He is good even when times aren't
 - i. Jesus only healed one person at the Pool of Bethesda – the rest he left unhealed
 - ii. We do not always know why God chooses not to heal
 - iii. Do not create an answer for something that does not have an answer
 - 1. Many things will not make sense this side of heaven
 - iv. God can handle our emotions. When we are in moments that do not make sense, cling to God's worth
 - 1. **Psalm 22:1-5** – *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them. They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.”*
 - 2. **1 Corinthians 13:12b** – *“Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”* (1984 NIV)

Discussion Questions

1. Read **John 5:1-9** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Describe the scene at the Pool of Bethesda. (See #1a-iii above)
3. Some Bible versions omit John 5:4. What other information in the passage tells us that something miraculous was happening? (See #1a-iii-5-a above)
4. Are there other examples of “peculiar” healings in the Bible? (See #1a-iii-5-b above)
5. Jesus only chose one man to heal from the “great multitude.” How did Jesus select people to heal? (See #2a-ii above)
6. What does this tell us about how ministry leaders should address the needs in their communities? (See #2a above)
7. How should we apply this to our areas of influence? Discuss a time when you felt the needs around you were greater than your ability to meet them.
8. What must we cling to when we don't understand God's ways? (See #2b above)
9. Have you ever felt “stepped over” by God as you waited for a miracle?

10. Read [Psalm 22:1-5](#) and [1 Corinthians 13:12b](#). What do these verses tell us about God's faithfulness? (See #2b-iv above)

11. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)