

## **WE HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY**

### The Glory of Divine Freedom

### INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, Deb and I drove into the little community of Watrous, Saskatchewan, on the edge of Manitou Lake. Residents insist there's magic in the waters of the lake. Like the Dead Sea, Little Manitou Lake is so dense you can float without effort. Proponents also insist this lake can heal and they cite story of story to support that claim. The local Cree believe the waters can cure diseases such as smallpox. Two hours away, Moose Jaw boasts similar testimonies.

I remember hearing a preacher, preach a message on a miracle Jesus did when he raised someone from the dead. His title was "How to wreck a good funeral!" Imagine Jesus coming to Manitou Springs and tomorrow's headline: "How to wreck Saskatchewan's tourism!"

### TEXT: John 5:1-15 (ESV)

### The Story

While in Galilee, Jesus went to an unnamed feast in Jerusalem. Entering the city, he went to a pool near the "Sheep Gate", a small opening on the north wall, and northeast of the temple, where sacrificial animals were brought in. The name of the pool, "Bethesda," is Aramaic. It means "House of Mercy."<sup>1</sup>

It is there that Jesus sees a multitude of lame, paralyzed and blind people. He spots one man. Jesus' omniscience tells him that this man was: a. paralyzed<sup>2</sup> for 38 years (in other words he became that way even before Jesus was born); and b. we learn that this illness was the result of sin.

This man had been coming to this place because there was a legend that an angel would come and stir the water and the first to get in the pool was healed. Up till now this man couldn't get in the pool fast enough.

Jesus looks at him and asks the most interesting question: "Do you want to be healed?"<sup>3</sup> Now this is not the only strange thing about this story, but this is odd. Why would Jesus ask such a question? The man did respond with the obvious, "No one has helped him." The implication of the man's answer was, "Yes, I want to be healed, but I never get the chance." Jesus then speaks with authority: "*Get up, take up your*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/Pool-of-Bethesda.html>

<sup>2</sup> (Gk. *astheneia*), in light of v. 7, probably means "paralyzed," "lame," or "extremely weak" (the Greek term is the general expression for a "disabled" condition) – ESV Study Bible notes

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Jn 5:6). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

*bed, and walk.”* (John 5:8, ESV). “Jesus’ powerful word heals the man: *Get up! (egeire)* anticipates the powerful voice of the Son of God on the last day (vv. 28–29<sup>4</sup>), even as it exemplifies that powerful voice now (v. 25).”<sup>5</sup>

We learn that the man stands up. “One can only imagine his feelings as he felt the healing power of God flow through his emaciated body. He could have visibly watched the muscles in his legs grow as he lay there. His crippling disease was not just taken away; his muscles were given a strength they had never before possessed, a holistic healing process in seconds.”<sup>6</sup>

Now if that had happened to you, what would you do? How would you respond? We are simply left with this report: “*And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath*” (John 5:9, ESV). This same man soon met some Pharisees who were interested as to who healed him. Another interesting thing about this story was the man did not know. He later learns that it was Jesus when Christ confronted him with the cause of his illness.

### Why Is This Story in the Bible?

Again, we remember that this story is here so that the glory of Christ is evidenced and that the readers believe in Christ and thereby are given eternal life. It seems to be reported by John because it stands in comparison<sup>7</sup> to the healing of the nobleman’s son. Both stories reveal a legitimate health need. In both stories Jesus issues a word of command and healing is instantaneous. But in the first story Jesus responds because of the urgent, passionate plea of a father. In this story there is not such plea. In fact, the man is almost apathetic. The man did not know or recognize Jesus. I think John wants us to see something here.

### Facts from Bethesda

#1. This is not a “**fake**” healing. There is verifiable evidence in this story that the healing was real and confirmed. Not only did the man know he was healed, it was evident to the Pharisees (vv10-11). This was no fake. A man paralyzed for 38 years was instantly healed.

#2. Secondly and perhaps to your surprise and mine: this is not a “**faith**” healing. “The man who was healed is no example of faith. Look at verse 7. His response to Jesus’s question, “Do you want to get

<sup>4</sup> “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.” (John 5:28–29, ESV)

<sup>5</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). [The Gospel according to John](#) (p. 243). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>6</sup> Osborne, G. R. (2018). [John: Verse by Verse](#). (J. Reimer, E. Ritzema, D. Thevenaz, & R. Brant, Eds.) (p. 125). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>7</sup> Lamar Williamson Jr.. [Preaching the Gospel of John: Proclaiming the Living Word](#) (Kindle Locations 899-903). Kindle Edition.

well?” was to complain that he had no one to help him.”<sup>8</sup> Not only that, at the beginning he did not attribute his healing to God. He didn’t even know that it was a man named Jesus that healed him. For all intents of purposes this man might have only believed that he had some good fortune. He had a stroke of good luck.

#3. Thirdly, it was without doubt a “full” healing. He was healed instantly (v9). John uses the Greek word ὕγιής [pronounced: hoog-ee-ace]; and the Greek lexicon says it means sound, whole, restored to health.”<sup>9</sup> It wasn’t partial, nor temporary. His healing was complete.

But there is one other thing that is important to the story:

#4. It was a “free” healing. When I say that it was a “free” healing, I am not speaking of the cost to the man. I am saying that it was freely given. Jesus knew this man was sick. Jesus knew this man’s sickness was caused by sin. Jesus knew that this man was so ill he could not get in the water by himself. Jesus knew this man was discouraged; he felt hopeless. This man was at the “house of mercy” and only mercy could help him.

#### It Is God’s Glory to Show Mercy

Remember, John wants his readers to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus. So, you might be asking, “How does this show God’s glory?” To understand you must turn back with me to the Old Testament book of Exodus, chapter 33. In verse 18 we read a request from Moses: *“Please show me your glory.”* Moses is asking God to show him His glory. What does God do?

*“And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”* (Exodus 33:19, ESV)

The response to Moses’ question was that God said to him, “I will let you see my character. I am good and I am free.” What is one essential thing about God that is consistent with His glory?” Answer: He will be gracious to whom He will be gracious, and He will show mercy on whom He will show mercy.

When Jesus approached the Pool of Bethesda he was faced with a multitude of paralyzed, lame, blind people. He went up to one man and showed grace to whom He wanted to show grace; and He showed mercy to whom He wanted to show mercy. Grace is getting what you don’t deserve; and mercy is not getting what you deserve. Standing there that day at the Pool of Bethesda was the incarnate God Himself. There He stood, infinite in power, totally self-sufficient. He had already shown us that by one word He could heal. It would have been a small thing for him to say that word and every blind, lame,

<sup>8</sup> Carter, Matt. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>9</sup> Strong, J. (1995). [Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon](#). Woodside Bible Fellowship.

paralyzed person at the pool – indeed every person in Palestine, would have been instantly healed. But Jesus, displaying the glory of God, was merciful to whom He wanted to show mercy.

It is impossible to find any reason in the story why Christ would single out this man. In fact, the story seems to emphasize that there was every reason NOT to heal this man. The only explanation is the sovereignty of God in the display of His mercy. The only explanation is because He, Jesus, wanted to.

### Application

The situation at the Pool of Bethesda is a picture of our fallen world. The whole world is lost and without hope. Divine mercy is the sinner's only hope. No one has any goodness. Everyone is spiritually dead. There is no spiritual vitality in anyone. If salvation is to come to any of them, it must be by mercy. And the glory of God is evidenced in His freedom: "I will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."

A Christian's best and most faithful pillow is the mercy of God. It is there we rest our case. It is there we lie down in peace. Because salvation is by mercy (Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:5) we can rest in the reality that God saved us because He chose us; we can remain confident in His mercy, because He saved us according to His own good pleasure; and in keeping with His own righteousness. As a Christian who is shepherded by the Good Shepherd, we have this confidence that *"surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* (Psalm 23:6, ESV)

We deserved justice. But on the Cross of Jesus Christ, the justice of God intended for us we meted out on our Savior and all we got was mercy. "Mercy there was great, and grace was free; pardon there was multiplied to me; there my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary."