**THE POOL OF BETHESDA**

***An Impotent Man of 38 Years***

***John 5:1-18***

Sunday School Lesson 3

*The Miracles of Jesus*

01/27/2019

**Introduction:** Our third miracle is the first one recorded with detail in the book of John that takes place outside of Galilee. After the healing of the nobleman’s son, Jesus returned again to Jerusalem to participate in one of the Jewish feasts. Jesus knew that His return to Jerusalem would be met with opposition. On His first visit during the Passover, Jesus left when He knew that the Pharisees were already beginning to plot against Him. They did not like the fact that He came into the temple with authority, and they were jealous of the miracles that He performed before the people. When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He went by the Pool of Bethesda. This pool was known for its supernatural power. An angel would routinely visit this pool and trouble its waters. After the waters were troubled, the first person who stepped into the water was healed of whatever disease they suffered from. While there were many people gathered around this pool, the Lord singled out one man in particular. This man had been suffering from an infirmity for 38 years. Jesus approached this man and offered him the healing that he so greatly desired. If the story ended at that point, there would not be quite as much to study. Instead, we find that the man was later apprehended by the Jewish leaders. They believed that he had violated the Law of God. As the story unfolds, we see that the man is presented with an important decision regarding how he would handle his newfound health and his relationship with God. Sadly, the man failed in his response. As we look at this miracle, we will study how a man who had just been healed by Jesus could so quickly turn his back on Him.

1. THE IMPOTENT MAN HAD HIS EXCUSES WHY HE HAD NOT BEEN HEALED, BUT IT WAS ULTIMATELY BECAUSE HE KNEW THAT HE DIDN’T DESERVE TO BE HEALED. (JOHN 5:7;14)
2. **Notice the impotent man’s response when Jesus questioned whether he would be made whole (John 5:6-7).** When Jesus approaches this man, He asks him a simple question. Wilt thou be made whole? Now, the impotent man did not know who it was that was asking him this question. He probably thought that it was just an onlooker who was curious as to his mindset. Consider what Jesus was asking him. He wanted to know if the man would be made a whole. There are two questions rolled up into this single question. 1. Did the man think that he would be healed? 2. Did the man desire to be healed? In his answer, the man responds to both of these questions. First, the man did not think that he would be healed. Secondly, he definitely desired to be healed. The man explained to Jesus how he would always come up short in his attempt to reach the pool first. He told Jesus that the reason he failed is because nobody would help him. He wanted Jesus to feel sorry for him. He wanted everybody to feel sorry for him and his condition. Why? He felt sorry for himself. He had given up. He was destined to his bed.
3. **Notice that Jesus revealed the reason for the man’s condition (John 5:14).** When we first see the interaction with the impotent man and Jesus, we might assume that this man had just fallen on bad fortune with his disease. Yet, when Jesus finds him in the temple, He reminds the man that his disease was a result of his sin. While not every sickness can be attributed to an individual sin (Jesus told His disciples this.), this man’s infirmity was a direct result of some previous decision in his life. Do we think that the man knew this to be the case? Yes, absolutely, he knew that his infirmity was a result of his sin. He had to live with that knowledge every day. As he saw others getting healed year after year, he would probably reflect back on his life’s choices. While he did not freely admit this knowledge when Jesus asked him about being healed, it was surely in the back of his mind. He had come to the conclusion that he did not deserve to be healed, but he still outwardly played the victim role. This is what sinners do. We all know that we do not deserve salvation. We know our vile hearts. Sinners sit in the agony of their sin and make excuses for why it can’t be better. Jesus just wants to know: Do they want to be made whole?
4. THE IMPOTENT MAN WAS PRESENTED WITH A CHOICE TO SEE IF HE TRULY WANTED TO LIVE A DIFFERENT LIFE. (JOHN 5:8-9; 13-15)
5. **Notice that Jesus gave the man three commands that indicated what he was supposed to do (John 5:8).** First, the man was told to rise. Jesus did not extend a hand to help the man. If the man truly wanted to be healed, he just needed to get up. The man had an open offer of healing. He just had to want it and take it. Secondly, he was told to take up his bed. There was no reason to leave the bed there. He would not need to return to the pool. There was finality in taking his bed with him. The man might have thought about leaving his bed just in case something else happened, but Jesus did not want him to return there. Finally, He told him to walk. It was time to move away from the place of despair and failure. There was nothing there for the man. It was time for him to start the walk of a new life.
6. **Notice that Jesus intentionally hid Himself from the man first and then returned to him again later (John 5:13-15).** Why didn’t Jesus reveal Himself to the man? The only explanation is that it was a part of His plan. Most of the miracles of healing were an outward picture of the faith that the person had in Christ. Yet, this healing was only a physical healing at this point. The man had not been spiritually saved in that moment. He did not even know that it was Jesus Christ who had healed him. Jesus knew that the man was going to be confronted by the Jewish leaders. He was presenting this man with a choice. Now that this man was rich in health, would he pick Jesus or sinful men? Would he make the selfish decision and deny the Word of Christ, or would he trust in the Lord? It is easy to rely on someone when you are helpless, but what do you do when you have what you need? Jesus gave this warning in talking of the rich and how hard it is for them to be saved. It’s easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle!
7. THE IMPOTENT MAN WAS CONFRONTED BY FORCES OF GOOD AND EVIL, BOTH PROMPTING HIM TO MAKE A DECISION AFFECTING HIS FUTURE. (JOHN 5:10-14)
8. **Notice that the Jewish leaders confronted the man with short-term consequences (John 5:10-12).** The consequences for breaking the Sabbath were severe. In the Old Testament, we find a story about a man who was killed because he gathered sticks on the Sabbath. The Law stated that man was not supposed to work on the Sabbath. The Jews had taken the Law and hyper-intensified it to their own understanding. They would argue over whether picking up a lamp on the Sabbath was considered a violation of the Law. When they saw the man carrying his bed, that was a clear violation of the Law according to them. As they confronted the man, they were prepared to render punishment upon him. The punishment would have most likely either been permanently expelling him from the temple, or they could have potentially tried to stone him. Facing this harsh punishment, the impotent man told the Jews that the man who healed him had told him to take up his bed. When he did not know who the man was, it’s unclear what the Jews were prepared to do for punishment. Most likely, they told him that he would need to find this man or face the punishment for breaking the Sabbath. He now had a choice to make.
9. **Notice that Jesus confronted the man with long-term consequences (John 5:13-14).** The man was required to go to the temple to validate his healing and offer a thanksgiving sacrifice. Jesus knew that the man would be there, and He sought him out. When Jesus found him, He confronted the man. The impotent man now knew that Jesus was the One who had healed him. He also came to the realization that Jesus wanted his healing to be more than just a physical healing. Jesus warns him that the alternative would offer him a far worse problem than his infirmity that he had suffered. While the Jews were presenting him with short-term consequences, Jesus was looking toward the eternal. The man had to decide whether to give into the pressures of the evil of this life, or he could respond to this Heavenly call that he had been given. Jesus does not wait for the man to answer. He leaves him with that decision.
10. THE IMPOTENT MAN ULTIMATELY TRIED TO PLACATE HIS CONSCIENCE BY APPEALING TO BOTH SIDES (JOHN 5:15)
11. **Notice that he acknowledged that Jesus made him whole, but he had to know that the Jews sought to harm Jesus (John 5:15).** After Jesus speaks to the impotent man, the man decides to go and tell the Jewish leaders that the healer was Jesus. There is some debate as to the man’s intentions in going to the Jews and revealing the identity of Christ. Some try to argue that the man was innocent and had only good intentions. They come to this conclusion because the man told the Jews that Jesus had made him whole. Since he only spoke of Jesus in a positive light, people argue that his intentions were to persuade the Jews of the virtue of Jesus. Yet, we do not see the man arguing on Jesus behalf. We only see him identify Jesus as the one responsible. Surely, this man knew what the Jews’ intentions were based on his first conversation with them. It is very likely that his intent was to thread the needle between the two side. He would acknowledge what Jesus did, but he would also make the Jews happy.
12. **Notice that the result was that harm could have been brought to Christ (John 5:16).** While the man’s conscience might have felt cleared that day, he was definitely not innocent. The direct result of his actions was that the Jews persecuted Jesus. When we try to find middle ground between good and evil, we are siding with evil. This man failed in his response. I do not believe that this man ever got saved. In fact, he may very well have fallen back into serious illness. Nonetheless, he was back in the good graces of the in-crowd of that day. He sought rather to have man’s approval than God’s approval, and that will always cost you in the long run.

**Conclusion:** There are many truths that we can draw out of this story. The fact that Jesus approached this man is something to note as a Christian. While there may be times when sinners come in search of a healing, there are many who have fallen into desolation and despair, and they need for us to go and find them. As Christians, we can also observe the results of making the wrong decision. While our eternity is secured, sin can still cripple us. We must be able to look toward the eternal results of decisions and avoid getting caught up in the short-term vision of man.