

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

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Text: John 5:1-9

None of us like to admit it. And yet all of us have found ourselves in the same situation. We come up against something bigger than we are and greater than our resources and we're stumped. The irony is that at some point and time everyone has decided that he or she can save themselves. Haven't we all been determined at some point and time in our lives that we would not ask for help from another -- we would take care of it ourselves? But those with wisdom know that there is a time to stop relying on good intentions and failed resources and turn to the Lord for help.

The man in the story reminds me of someone who has run out of options. He was a man who knew that he needed divine intervention -- and that's just what he received. But we might ask the question, and it would be an excellent question, "Out of all the people at the pool of Bethesda why did Jesus pick this man to heal?" There could be many answers. But one possibility is that He wanted us to see ourselves in this crippled man? I know. The very thought offends us. We do not like to see our own weakness.

■ One writer commented on our resemblance to the paralyzed man, he writes, "Maybe you don't like being described like that. Perhaps you'd rather find yourself in the courage of David or the devotion of Mary. We all would. But before you or I can be like them, we must admit that we are like the paralytic. Invalids out of options. Can't walk. Can't work. Can't care for ourselves. Can't even roll down the bank to the pool to cash in on the angel water." (Lucado, 107)

But if we can look a little deeper, this story brings to mind three questions that we cannot ignore when faced with our inability to help ourselves. Furthermore, our answers to these *questions* will determine the amount of help we receive from the Lord.

I. WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A PLACE OF HOPEFUL DESPERATION (vv. 1-5)?

- A. These people gathered at the pool were *hopeful* that this would be their season.

The pool of Bethesda was located at the northeast corner of the Old City. The pool itself was 360 feet long, 130 feet wide and 75 feet deep. It was overlooked on all four sides by a colonnade of five porches. It was in this setting that Jesus found a great number of "sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. (v.3)

The pool was a gathering place for people who hoped for something better. It was a gathering place for people who had run out of options -- but not hope. They were waiting and hoping for their chance to be whole, to be normal, to be made strong.

The people at the pool of Bethesda felt a sense of hopefulness. But they also felt a sense of desperation.

B. They were *desperate* because only divine intervention could help them.

In the story they were waiting on an angel to stir the water as a sign that healing was possible. They were desperate for a sign. They might have wondered, "Would the angel come down this season as he had before or will he forget? or, "Does God still care enough to send an angel?" How many are waiting on a sign or a time when they can be transformed by the power of God?

What many do not realize is that transformation is possible now. But there is something that we all must face first. Which brings us to our next question.

II. WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH YOUR FAILURES (vv. 6-7)?

A. Jesus brought the man to the point of decision when He asked the question.

■ "Do you want to be made well?" The KJV says, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

The question must have seemed ridiculous. He had been there for 38 years.

For 38 years, it must have seemed that he had tried more than anyone had.
For 38 years he had hurt.
For 38 years he had dreamed of being healed.
For 38 years he had watched others receive what he wanted.
For 38 years he had hoped this would be his season.
For 38 years he had fallen every time he tried to get up.

How could Jesus ask a more hurtful question? Didn't He know? Didn't He understand?

What we must understand is that the problem was not with the man's desire, but with His ability. It was believed that he was crippled or paralyzed. Though some say he probably had cerebral palsy. John said that he had an infirmity. The King James Version refers to him as "impotent." He was without power or feeble. He could think it; but he could not do it! *The man's hopeless attitude brings to mind an important question.*

B. When confronted by your *failures* is the past all you can see?

The question only seemed to add insult to injury because it drew attention to his failures.

"I've been here for 38 years. What do you mean do I want to be made whole?"

"I'm not this way because I want to be this way! I've tried to help myself but it never works out right. I tell myself to get up but I fall down."

Many have spent years being defeated by their past failures. They want to serve God. They want to be filled with joy. They want to be fulfilled. But no matter how hard they work at it they come up short. The frustration over failure can destroy a person. But what can be done?

■ Paul said it this way, "For the good *that I will to do*, I do not do; But the evil *I will not to do*, that I practice." (Romans 7:19) "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me...?" (Romans 7:24) *Italics added*

He had learned through past failures that his human will was not enough. He needed something supernatural to mix with his will.

B. When confronted with your failures are you resigned to make a home among them?

The pool of Bethesda had become his home and failure had become his testimony.

Have you decided that you were never meant to be happy or free or strong? Have you resigned yourself to living by the pool of Bethesda—the place of affliction and heartache?

Perhaps he thought, "there's no use in even talking to you. After all it's not the right season. I don't have the ability to help myself if it was the right season. Besides, there's no one to help me." In the past he had never found the kind of help he needed. But that was before the Master came!

Which brings us to our final question.

III. WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN YOU HEAR THE MASTER'S VOICE (vv. 8-9)?

A. Before we can hear His message we must understand why the Master has come.

The scripture tells us in v.6 that when Jesus saw him He knew that he had been there a long time. What Jesus saw and knew touched Him.

When Jesus saw the man and knew the extent of his condition He was touched by the man's need. He had compassion on him. He wanted to heal him. That became His purpose for being there. It was His reason for wading through the crowd just to get to him. Jesus was touched because he knew the man had no hope.

He was there for one reason. His sole purpose for seeking the man out from among the crowd was to heal him. He knows where you are and He wants to touch you!

■ Hebrews 4:15-16 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses...Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

B. We must listen to what the voice of the Master is asking.

He's not pointing out our failures He's offering the solution. When He asked, "Do you want to be made whole?" *He wasn't questioning the man's desire He was offering to heal him!*

Jesus was asking him, "Do you want to be made whole?"

His response: "I'm unable to help myself."

That's not what He asked.

"I have no one to help me."

That's not what He asked.

"My problem began 38 years ago."

That's not what He asked.

"I've failed every time that I have tried."

That's not what He asked!

He asked, "Do you want to be made whole?"

C. We must realize that what we do will determine what we receive.

Jesus commanded the man to do the very thing that was impossible. If Jesus asks you to do what seems impossible, don't worry, He will supply the power. The man responded immediately because he received the touch immediately. We must take Him at His word and respond immediately. When the Spirit moves, it's our "season." **We must move now!**

CONCLUSION

■ There is a story of a "private who ran after and caught the runaway horse of Alexander the Great. When he brought the animal back to the general, Alexander thanked him by saying, 'Thank you captain.'

With one word the private was promoted. When the general said it, the private believed it. He went to the quartermaster, selected a new uniform, and put it on. He went to the officers' quarters and selected a bunk. He went to the officers' mess and had a meal.

Because the general said it, he believed it." (Lucado, 111)

Why can't we do the same? Too often we allow our problems or our past failures to hold us back from receiving from the Lord when we could have all His blessings. These are important *questions*. But more important is what we do in response to His question.

References

Lucado, Max. (1993). *He Still Moves Stones*. Dallas TX: Word Publishing