

JOHN 5

JESUS, THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

This fifth chapter of John's Gospel opens a distinct section in the narrative of the public ministry of our Lord, and this section continues for the next six chapters. Here we see faith being developed in certain individuals; but unbelief is almost universal, and it deepens into anger and deadly hate. A great conflict opens between Christ and the leaders of the Jews, who finally determine to destroy Him.

The miracle that is recorded in this chapter (verses 1-16) was worked by our Lord in Jerusalem, during the time of one of the annual Jewish feasts. It is said to have been done at the pool of Bethesda, which was near the sheep market. The scene is a striking picture of the suffering, selfishness, and sin of the world; but the healing service and salvation of our Lord is set up in contrast against it. He alone is able to repair the waste of humanity, and He alone is able to save the lost. His ministry is a loving labor of redemption.

While this entire chapter lays out witness after witness to the Person of Christ, one striking feature of the record of this miracle is its account of the development of faith in the man who was healed. Christ asked him a question: "Wouldest thou be made whole?" It seems that this man had lost hope. Even though he surely wished to be cured, he no longer expected to be cured. In the realm of spiritual infirmity, there are many who are like this man; they have no expectation of being healed. They are painfully conscious of their weakness and sins, but they have no hope of recovery. But the Savior's question is more than a tender rebuke; it is also a suggestion of hope. His next words were, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." In a spiritual sense, the word "walk" declares the need of entering immediately upon the experience of the new life which Jesus imparts. But the Savior's warning is also important: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee." It might seem to us that such a caution was needless for a man who had just been healed like this. Surely 38 years of suffering would seem sufficient to keep a person from yielding to sin's influence! But the sad truth is that no amount of suffering on its own, even if it is brought on by a person's sin, will make them truly and permanently hate sin – no matter how much agony it causes. Our only safety lies in believing on the Savior, and submitting to His Word and will.

The man who was healed felt that he could safely obey the command of Christ, in Whom he had trusted for his cure. As he goes toward his home, bearing upon his shoulder the little mat upon which he had been lying, the Jews rebuke him for thus working – and thereby desecrating the Sabbath Day. But he

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Jesus works a cure at the pool of Bethesda – verses 1-9
- ❖ The Jews are displeased because He did it on the Sabbath – verses 10-16
- ❖ He reproves the Jews, and speaks of witnesses concerning Himself – verses 17-47



replies by telling them that the One Who healed him gave him the command which he is obeying. Christ, Who gives us life and spiritual health, is also our Lord; and in obedience to His will, we shall find blessedness and joy. Even when He commands us to do something that is opposed to social custom or the opinions of men, we must be true to Him; for He cannot fail to be the true Lawgiver, since He is the Giver of life.

The Jews, however, saw things differently (verses 17-29). While the man who had been cured argued that since Jesus had power to heal, He must also have the right to command, and could safely be obeyed; the Jews concluded that one who acted contrary to their narrow and man-made interpretations of the Law must be a sinner, and so they began to persecute Jesus. Their opposition, however, gave the occasion for Him to make the most startling claim that had fallen from His lips up to this point. Its full significance, as recorded by the Evangelist, is clearly stated: “My Father worketh even until now, and I work.” Jesus was not merely claiming to imitate the beneficent work of God. Rather, He was asserting that His work was identical with that of God, and that he sustained an absolutely unique relationship with God, Whom He declared to be His Father. No wonder the Jews attempted to kill Him! Either Jesus was a blasphemer and a deceiver, or else He was and is the Son of God! Since the Jews refused to admit the latter of the two options, they had no alternative except to believe the former; and their example is still being followed to this day by all persons who refuse to acknowledge Jesus for Who He really is and claims to be.

Jesus declared the testimony by which such a great claim is supported (verses 30-47); it was not the testimony of man, but of God Himself. Of course, human testimony had also been given by John the Baptizer. However, our Lord states that He has greater witness than the witness of any human being – namely, the witness of His Father, Who was testifying to the Divine Sonship of Jesus through the miracles which He was performing, and also in the writings of the Old Testament Scriptures that had been penned by Moses. People did well and still do well to expect to find life through a knowledge of these Scriptures (verse 39); but this life can only be found as they see Jesus revealed on the pages of those Scriptures, and yield themselves to Him as the real Source and Author of life. When a person’s heart is turned toward God in love and devotion, there is awakened a response to the testimony in the Bible concerning His Son. Faith is a result of that response; and through faith, that person receives the life eternal which the Son alone can impart. Let us not forget that the key to the Scriptures is their testimony concerning Jesus, and faith in Him transmutes that truth into life!

Thank You, Jesus, for coming to us with Your sweet constraining voice, and for calling us to rise from the bed of despair! We also thank You for giving us the energy of faith, to take up our bed and do glad service for the glory of Your name. Amen.