

John 5:9b-15 "How Dare You Obey the Lord"

You'll remember last week that we had looked at a particular miracle of our Lord's which involved a man who had been lame for 38 years. This man would go down to a pool near the Sheep Gate on the walls of Jerusalem and would be asked by Jesus if he wanted to be healed.

JOH 5:7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

And so, this man expected that when the pool was stirred he knew that was his cue to get into the water. In his case he wasn't able to get into the water and so our Lord intercedes on his behalf without this man asking Jesus for a miracle, because as far as this man was concerned Jesus was just another Jew celebrating a Jewish feast there in Jerusalem.

Jesus simply commands the man to get up on his feet and walk and take his mat with him, which brings us to our text.

JOH 5:9-15 "At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." 11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" 12 So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. 14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well."

The portion we left off with last week is actually the end of verse nine which says, "The day on which this took place was a Sabbath..."

This particular statement is actually the hinge on which this entire passage hangs. As important as the miracle is in this man's life it is not the miracle of him being healed from his lameness which is the key point, but the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and the rejection of the Jewish leaders of their Messiah, as they rely on the law instead of grace.

In other words, this is one more example of the hardness of men's hearts, particularly those of the Jews who were responsible to bring to the nation of Israel the biblical teaching which would point out who this Messiah is. Let's look at it.

JOH 5:9-10 "..... The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

Now the first thing we notice is that this took place on a Sabbath. We might be tempted to think that the Sabbath being referred to here is the seventh day Sabbath where all Jews would come together to obey the command originally given to them by God on Mount Sinai.

EXO 20:8-10 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

But what we must remember is that this was not the only Sabbath given to Israel. For example, Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, was a Sabbath, a day of rest for Israel to celebrate atonement for their sins.

LEV 16:29-31 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work -whether native-born or an alien living among you - 30 because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. 31 It is a Sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance."

The Passover was also a Sabbath where no work was to be done and where the Jews were to honor God on that day as they remembered how the Lord brought the nation of Israel out from under the bondage of Egypt.

This is one of the reasons Jesus' disciples hurriedly buried the body of Jesus after they took Him down from the cross. It was not only the end of the Passover Sabbath, it was the beginning of the preparation of the next Sabbath which was the regular Sabbath, or

seventh day Sabbath. There were two Sabbaths the week Jesus was crucified.

In fact, during Israel's history there were several Sabbaths the Lord gave to them. This is why we don't know which Sabbath the Lord healed this man on, but it doesn't make any difference, because according to the Law no work was to be done on any of the Sabbaths.

But, this is really the crux of the matter as far as the Jews were concerned. A man has just been healed from his lameness in which he suffered for 38 years. But do you think the Jewish leaders were excited and celebrating the greatness of God as His mercy has been extended to this man?

No. They wanted to complain about this act and condemn this man for what the miracle led to, him carrying his mat on the Sabbath.

Now in some of your translations instead of mat you have the word pallet. The KJV and NKJV actually uses the word bed. "Take up your Posture-Pedic and walk." Now that would be work.

But the word used here in our text in the Greek suggests a bed which is mobile. And so, it might be made of light materials like wool or straw which is bound together and can be rolled up. It might weigh three or four pounds; hardly the kind of weight we would associate with work if we had to carry it.

But that isn't the point as far as these Jews were concerned. They were going to be strict literalists when it came to the law, leaving no room for mercy, or in this case, no room for obeying a command from the God who gave such laws concerning the observance of Sabbaths.

After all, it was the Lord God who descended on that mountain in the desert when Israel received those commands from the Lord at Mount Sinai. And it is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who now gave a command to this man to take up his mat and walk on a Sabbath.

The Lord wasn't contradicting His law, the Jews were simply abusing those laws as they added their own rules and regulations to what God had delivered. I've shared this before how ridiculous these extra rules became to where the Jews found ways around these man-made rules.

One such rule involved the prohibition of traveling a certain distance from your home on the Sabbath. To get around this they

would take articles from their home and place them at that particular distance, reasoning that that article was part of their home and therefore ensured them that they were not breaking the law.

If you had enough articles in your home and you had the ability to carry them all, you could conceivably travel around the world and still say I haven't traveled any further from my home than what the law says I can travel.

And so what happens is that people become consumed with the law instead of the law giver whose only intention is to bring people into a relationship with Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Of course, we can look at a number of the silly things the Jews may have done in trying to keep, or skirt around the law, but the fact is many people who claim to be Christians do the same things.

When I was a Roman Catholic I was taught that to remain a Roman Catholic in relative good standing you had to come out to Mass at least twice a year; Christmas and Easter. Now, I was brought up to go to Mass as often as possible, especially every Sunday.

As an altar boy I was at Mass at least two to three times a week. But, it never failed, come Christmas and Easter there would be people who would go to church who came out of the woodwork, who had not been all year. You almost needed a ticket to get inside the church doors for all the people who showed up who were trying to fulfill their minimum observance of the law.

But it isn't limited to Catholics. The same is true for those people who never go to any church at any other time except Christmas and Easter, thinking that they should at least come out for those two days, which the Christian world places a great deal of emphasis on, and which they think will keep them in good standing with God.

These people aren't motivated by wanting to please God, but in not disobeying some aspect of law they've placed upon themselves.

And here in Jerusalem these Jews have missed a great opportunity to seek after the Son of God who healed this man.

JOH 5:10 "... and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat."

“Hello, I’ve never been able to carry my mat without help from someone else. The fact that I can carry it at all should give you reason to rejoice with me. Look at me I’m walking.”

"Yeah, we’re excited you can walk. Now slowly place it on the ground and step away from the mat."

But as we come back to our text notice the response of this man who was made whole.

JOH 5:11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

Now, at first glance we might think that this former invalid was trying to pass the blame on to someone else, Jesus in this case. But that’s not what he’s doing here. He first makes the point that this man made me well. In this very statement he is saying that this man has at the very least been sent from God with power and authority.

He stands before these Jewish leaders as one who was lame but who has now been made whole. No one can argue with that. He’s obviously a resident of Jerusalem and these particular Jewish leaders must have known who he was. They knew his former condition.

And so, the point this man is making is that if the man who healed him has been sent from God with power, and as God’s representative he tells me to take my mat and get up and walk, what else could I do but obey him?

And so he isn’t shifting blame, he is lifting up and honoring the one who miraculously healed him.

Unfortunately, these Jews weren’t willing to do the same. In fact, I love the other incident when our Lord healed a man of blindness and the Jewish leaders once more go into their, "you can’t do that on the Sabbath," mode.

It was when Jesus found this blind man and spit on the ground and made some mud from His spit. He put the mud on the man’s eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did and immediately was able to see.

Well, because of all the commotion he finally finds himself in front of the Pharisees who want to know how he was healed.

JOH 9:13-16 "They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. 14 Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. 15 Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." But others asked, "How can a sinner do such miraculous signs?" So they were divided."

Well, it turns out that the Pharisees don't believe the testimony of this man and so they bring in his parents and interrogate them, and because they were afraid of the Pharisees they wouldn't tell them how their son had received his sight. And so, they bring the man back for more questions.

And here's the part I love.

JOH 9:24-27 "A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner." 25 He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" 26 Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?"

That's a great answer. 'Well, you guys are sure interested in every little detail of this man who healed me. It's quite evident to me that you want to be one of His disciples, right?'

JOH 9:28-29 "Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

But the guy who's eyes have been healed isn't done. A man after my own heart. He goes on to say.

JOH 9:30-34 "The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does his will. 32 Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out."

These Pharisees didn't want the truth. The evidence didn't make any difference to them. And they came up with the lame excuse that no one can heal on the Sabbath and call themselves godly.

Well, back to our text. Probably some of these same Jewish leaders who would later ask about the blind man now ask this former lame man who this man was who healed you. And again, keep in mind they didn't want to become one of His disciples. They wanted to find Him and condemn Him.

JOH 5:12-13 "So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?" 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there."

Isn't that just like the Lord? At this point in His ministry He's not looking for any glory. He's not interested in bringing attention to Himself. He only wants to meet this man's need and reach out to Him with the love of God as He brings the man to Himself.

But our Lord isn't finished with him.

JOH 5:14-15 "Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well."

Now this is interesting because of a couple of things in this passage. The first thing we notice is that the man was at the temple. What this suggests is that the man was grateful for his healing and has now gone to the temple to worship God and probably bear testimony to those in the temple courts how he had received his healing.

The other thing this shows us is that Jesus was not through pursuing him. He sought him out the first time to heal him and now He pursues him a second time to exhort him to holiness.

"See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

Some have suggested that this man was lame because of some sin in his past where God struck him down. And often times we will hear Christians today suggest that the reason anyone, including Christians, are sick is because of some sin in their life.

But to make such a blanket statement is not only irresponsible, but theologically incorrect. There is a sense in which we can say that

sickness is the result of sin. It was because of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden that the curse of sin was placed on man and the universe. Part of that curse was certainly the breaking down of the physical body, often times through sickness.

But that is different from saying that in every case there is a one to one correlation between particular sins and sickness. In other words, if I sin I can expect that God will then punish me with some sort of malady.

Or, if I have a malady I then can conclude that it is because God is punishing me because of some sin in my life.

If this were the case we'd all have terminal diseases. Who doesn't sin? Even Christians sin at times. This is not to excuse us when we do sin, but the point is that even the apostle Paul struggled with sin so much so that he called it a war in his members.

We need to be careful in making sweeping statements which suggest that God will get you if you sin. Remember, God's wrath has already been dealt with on the cross as He put our iniquity on His Son.

Our Father isn't out to get us. He loves us. Now that doesn't mean He doesn't discipline us, but to suggest that His discipline must always involve sickness in our lives is just to mischaracterize our heavenly Father.

Can you imagine an earthly father disciplining his children with anthrax or some other disease? But having said that it doesn't mean our Father may not allow disease in our lives. We live in a world which is cursed and no human being can escape the curse in this world.

I have known Christians who have died of horrible diseases. And I can tell you that they loved the Lord. I don't know if any of you were here when a man with a very serious kidney condition came to this church. His name was Scott.

In fact, he had heard me on the radio and called to speak with me. Cheryle got the call and she was willing to help him but he was insistent that the guy he heard on the radio was the guy he wanted to talk to.

Later that day I called him and he was pretty upset and confused. He wanted to know more about what it meant to have a relationship with God. To make a long story short we got to share

the gospel with him and he came to Christ. In fact, Scott was the one who taught me how to use the Internet and helped me set up the web page many of you have used.

If you've been blessed in any way by our web site you can thank Scott for helping to develop it. But Scott was on kidney dialysis two times a week as he waited for a kidney transplant. I remember the day he got the call and rushed to the hospital. He got his kidney and the operation was a success.

That night he was sitting up in bed with one of the members of this church at the time. Both of them were reflecting on what it would be like one day to see the Lord face to face. While they were still talking about the things of the Lord and what Scott would do when he got out of the hospital Scott fell over in bed and was pronounced dead an hour later. It was determined that he had a heart attack.

Here was a guy who just came to the Lord a couple of months earlier and was truly on fire for Christ. And that night in a hospital room he came face to face with Christ as a result of a serious illness.

And yet I know of people in the Christian community who would tell me that Scott died that night because of some sin in his life. No, he died that night because Jesus couldn't wait for him to come home.

But sin is something we still struggle with. And this lame man whom Jesus healed was like all of us in that before we met the Lord we reveled in our sin. Jesus finds him in the temple and gives him a word of warning.

"See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."

When we read this verse in the NIV it could suggest that the man was continuing to sin. After all, Jesus says, stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. A better translation would be found in the NASB which says, "do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you."

Could the man who was lame have received his condition because of sin? Absolutely. His sin could have placed him in a situation where he got hurt. Jumping out of a two story window after being with a woman whose husband just got home could do it. I'm sure

that's not what happened. But, hey, that kind of sin could result in lameness if that were the scenario.

Jesus is simply warning this man that he needs to consider the new life he has in Christ. And he may very well have been a sinner who delighted in his sin. And so, our Lord finds him and in His grace He warns the man that sin is no longer something he is to pursue. Pursuing sin can only produce death and destruction and for a believer that's not something we want characterizing our lives.

I mean we all struggle with sin but we've not been left on our own when it comes to living a life which can honor Christ. This is the reason Jesus has given us His Spirit.

And in the power of the Spirit we can not only glory in the fact that we have been forgiven of the penalty of our sin, but we have also been given the ability to overcome the power of sin as God fills us and uses us to His honor and glory.

The apostle Paul understood this even though he struggled with his old nature like we do. He understood that the new life we have in Christ is a life which is directed by God as we submit to our Lord. He knew that death had been defeated through the resurrection of Christ. And we, like Paul, can live a resurrection life in the power of the Spirit. Paul puts it this way.

1CO 15:55-58 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."