

He Can Overcome Our Hurts

John 5:1-5:15

A. When you look around at the people who attend church with you on Sunday, what do you see? Do you see impressive people, dressed in fine clothes, who have it all together? Or do you see hurting people in need of comfort; troubled people in need of peace; sick people who need healing?

ILL. Marshall Hayden wrote an article a few years ago entitled, "Would Every Non-Hurter Please Stand Up?" He pointed out that people come to church wearing their best clothes & their best smiles. Everybody looks happy, so we assume everything is okay. But he suggests that we need to look beyond the facade & realize that the pews are full of hurting people. He wrote, "Over here is a family with an income of \$550 a week and an outgo of \$1,000. Over there is a family with two children who, according to their dad, are "failures." "You're stupid. You never do anything right," he is constantly telling them. The lady over there just found a tumor that tested positive. The Smith's little girl has a hole in her heart. "Sam & Louise just had a nasty fight. Each is thinking of divorce. Last Monday Jim learned that he was being laid off. Sarah has tried her best to cover the bruises her drunken husband inflicted when he came home Friday night. That teen over there feels like he is on the rack, pulled in both directions. Parents & church pull one way while peers & glands pull the other. "Then there are those of us with lesser hurts, that don't seem so small: an unresponsive spouse, a boring job, a poor grade, a friend or parent who is unresponsive ...on & on the stories go. The lonely, the dying, the discouraged, the exhausted, they're all here."

B. In the face of that, the Word of God has good news! Jesus said, "**Come to me, all you who are weary & burdened, & I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you & learn from me, for I am gentle & humble in heart, & you will find rest for your souls**" [Matthew 11:28-30](#).

This is not to say that He will heal every problem immediately if we just have enough faith. Jesus said clearly that we will have trouble in this world. But He can resolve life's serious problems if we trust in Him. In some cases, He may resolve the problem immediately, even miraculously. In others, He grants the power to endure the difficulty & triumph over it.

The healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, recorded in [John 5:1-15](#), is a dramatic example of Jesus' wondrous power. Here was a man who had been unable to walk for 38 years. He had been a burden to people. He probably had little sense of self-worth. But Jesus had pity on him & healed him. And it's one of the few times the Scripture records Jesus healing someone when He was not asked to do so.

This morning I would like us to see how Jesus motivated this man to become a candidate for healing, because the same prerequisites are necessary for us today.

I. HE IDENTIFIED WHAT HE WANTED

A. First of all, Jesus encouraged the man to identify what he wanted. [Vs. 6](#) says, "[When Jesus saw him lying there & learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, He asked him, `Do you want to get well?'](#)" That sounds like an absurd question. Of course this man wanted to get well! You wouldn't ask a starving man, "Do you want food?" would you?

Actually, it was a very valid question, for there are people who, if given an opportunity for healing, might actually choose to remain sick. Right now they're free of some unpleasant responsibilities, & they get sympathy by complaining about their sickness. They can manipulate people by being sick, or punish themselves if they feel guilty.

[ILL. Dave Reavor, disabled Vietnam veteran, tells of a young man in the 1960s who didn't want to be drafted. So he had all his teeth pulled out to make himself unfit](#)

for military duty. But when he took his physical, he was declared unfit because of flat feet!

So when Jesus asked, "**Do you want to get well?**" He seems to be saying, "You have friends who bring you here, & you've developed friendships with others who come here regularly. If I heal you, your life will do a complete reversal. You'll be expected to get a job & relate to people on a different basis. Are you ready for that change? Do you really want to get well?"

B. That's a question we may need to answer, as well. What do you want? The first step to gaining something is to want it.

ILL. Zig Ziglar says he looked into a mirror one day & realized he needed to lose a lot of weight. He really wanted to get in shape. As an incentive, he put a picture of a thin man on the refrigerator door. There are all kinds of gimmicks offered as motivators to dieting. You can purchase sound tracks that laugh at you & call you "fatso" when you open the refrigerator door! But Ziglar wanted a positive reinforcement, so he put a picture of what he wanted to look like on the refrigerator. That constant reminder was the first step toward a healthier body for him.

ILL. Drs. Minirth & Meyer have written a book about overcoming depression entitled "Happiness Is a Choice." They wrote, "As psychiatrists, we cringe whenever Christian patients use the words, 'I can't' & 'I've tried.' Any good psychiatrist knows that 'I can't' & 'I've tried' are merely lame excuses. We insist that our patients stop saying 'can't' & say 'won't' instead." "They need to see what they are really doing, so we make them face up to it by saying, 'I just won't get along with my wife.' 'My husband & I won't communicate.' 'I won't discipline my kids the way I should.' 'I won't find time to pray.' 'I won't stop gossiping.' When they change their "can'ts" to "won'ts" they stop avoiding the truth & start facing reality."

We need to determine what we really want, & as God's people, learn to say with the apostle Paul, "**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**"
Philippians 4:13.

II. HE QUIT BLAMING OTHER PEOPLE

A. A second prerequisite for this man's healing was to quit blaming others for his problem.

There was a local belief that the waters of Bethesda had healing powers. Some Biblical manuscripts read that "An angel of the Lord came down & stirred up the waters." Earlier manuscripts did not contain that explanation, & many scholars believe the stirring of the water was from an underground spring that would occasionally experience extreme pressure. Whatever caused the disturbance, the people believed that when the waters of Bethesda bubbled up, the first one in the water would be cured.

So when Jesus asked, "**Do you want to get well?**" the man replied, "**Sir, 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**".

He was complaining, "Every time the water bubbles up, no one is here to help me into the pool. It's always the stronger ones who reach the water first. It's a shame those of us who need it the most get the least amount of help. It's been that way for 38 years."

B. It's so easy to blame other people for our problems. That has been man's scapegoat from the beginning.

ILL. When God asked Adam why he disobeyed, Adam explained, "The woman you gave me persuaded me to eat."

ILL. When Moses asked his brother Aaron why he permitted the Israelites to worship a golden calf, Aaron said, "The people pressured me to do something since you were gone so long, Moses. They wanted gods like the Canaanites. I just threw their jewelry into the fire & out came the calf." Blame the people, blame Moses for taking so long, blame the Canaanites, blame the fire even! But don't blame me!

ILL. When Pilate was forced to make a decision about Jesus, he said, "I wash my hands of this matter. Jesus is yours; do with Him as you please. But I'm innocent of this whole matter."

C. People do the same thing today. How often do we hear people say things like, "I'd stop drinking if my wife would quit nagging me!" "I'd work harder, but no one appreciates my effort." "I'd make better grades, but my teacher doesn't like me."

APPL. We have such a difficult time saying, "I'm responsible." We blame heredity, environment, circumstances - everything except ourselves. Yet what the Lord wants is for us to accept responsibility for our own behavior.

Romans 14:12 says, "Each of us will give an account of himself to God." Heredity & environment play a part in influencing us, but we can rise above that if we want to. Some of the world's best people had terrible pasts. Some of the most privileged people wind up being complete failures.

APPL. Maybe it's time to quit blaming mom & dad or an ex-spouse or a relative who abused you in some way, & say with the old spiritual, "It's me, it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. Not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer."

III. HE STRETCHED BEYOND HIMSELF

Jesus also motivated the lame man to stretch beyond himself. Vs. 8 says, "Then Jesus said to him, 'Get up! Pick up your mat & walk. At once the man was cured; he

picked up his mat & walked."

A. Jesus frequently required a dedicated effort on the part of a person requesting healing. Not always, but often, He required a response of faith before He would heal.

ILL. He said to the 10 lepers, "Go show yourself to the priests," & as they went they were healed. He said to the man with a withered hand, "Stretch forth your hand." When the man made the effort, his hand was healed. Jesus put clay on the eyes of a blind man & said, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." When he washed, he could see.

Jesus said to this man, "Pick up your mat & walk." This was not a test of his faith in Jesus because the lame man didn't know who Jesus was. It was a test of his resolve, & of his willingness to make an effort to help himself. Jesus asked the man to attempt the one thing that he hadn't done for 38 years. When the man made the effort, he was healed at once.

B. Notice 4 characteristics about Christ's healing power. If you encounter someone who claims to have healing power today like that of Christ, measure his assertions against these Bible truths.

1. Jesus' healing was instantaneous. It was never a gradual healing that took place later.

2. It was complete. You would expect someone who hadn't walked for 38 years to have wobbly legs or to have to relearn to walk. But he picked up his mat & walked. He was completely cured.

3. Jesus' miracles were undeniable. Skeptics couldn't say, "Nothing miraculous has happened. It's all psychosomatic." His healings were usually very visible & undeniable.

4. It was reliable. Jesus never failed to heal anyone who asked Him.

C. But notice, in order for this man to be healed, he had to stretch beyond himself. If we want to get well, there must be effort.

ILL. One man told about a friend who has been in a wheelchair for 15 years. But his doctors say he could be walking today if he had made more effort in therapy when he was younger. Apparently, he didn't want to walk that much.

ILL. Contrast that with Tony Melendez, who plays the guitar with his toes! Born with no arms, Tony shares with audiences what Jesus Christ means to his life & then skillfully plays the guitar with his bare feet. He's incredible! Can you imagine the tremendous amount of effort, frustration, & determination it took to develop that skill?

D. Do you want to get well? How badly do you want it? Do you want it so intensely that you're willing to work long hours & endure pain? It may mean doing vigorous exercise & following a disciplined program. It may mean swallowing your pride. It may mean getting up earlier to read the Bible or denying a golf game to attend a church function. It may mean that you quit wallowing in self-pity. It may mean saying "No" to pleasure or terminating a tempting relationship.

SUM. If we really want to get well, we must make the effort. [Proverbs 10:4](#) says, "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth."

IV. HE GAVE CREDIT TO JESUS

After he was healed, the man was motivated to give testimony that Jesus had healed him. [Vs's 9-13](#) tell us, "The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, & so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, 'It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.' But he replied, 'The man who made me well said to

me, 'Pick up your mat & walk.' "So they asked him, 'Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up & walk?' The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there."

A. Notice that when Jesus healed He didn't make a big production of it. He didn't put up banners to draw attention to Himself. He would say, "Don't tell anyone about this," or He would slip away into the crowd. God doesn't need a circus to heal. If He chooses to, it's usually without fanfare.

But Jesus came back to reveal himself to this man. He wanted him to have more than just a healthy body. He wanted the former lame man to be healthy spiritually as well.

Vs 14 says, "Later Jesus found him at the temple & said to him, 'See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.'" Notice he was well "again." There had been a time when he could walk. I wonder if there had been some disobedience in his younger years that had caused his lameness? Whatever the cause, Jesus warned him that there was something worse than being physically impaired, & that was spending eternity apart from God.

B. Vs. 15 says, "The man went away & told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well." This seems to be a positive testimony. He's praising Jesus as the one responsible for his healing. When healing of some sort takes place in our lives, we ought to give God the glory. Psalm 72:18 says, "Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel who alone does marvelous deeds."

APPL. When things go right in life, we're inclined to forget God's blessings & take credit ourselves. We say things like, "I worked hard," "I invested well," "I take care of my body; I eat right & exercise," & on & on we go.

ILL. A woodpecker was pecking away at a huge tree. Suddenly a bolt of lightning struck the tree & split it from top to bottom. The woodpecker flew off in a flash.

Minutes later he returned with several other woodpeckers. Pointing to the tree, he said proudly, "There it is. Look at what I did!"

We are so quick to take credit for what God is doing in our lives. But when we submit to Christ's authority & give Him glory, He gives us special power to achieve.

CONCL. Do you see how wonderful Jesus was to this man? He saw the whole man, not just a fragment. He saw his possibilities, not just his handicap. He was concerned about his soul, not just his body. Jesus made him completely whole.

APPL. We are all handicapped by sin. We can't heal ourselves. All the suggested cures of this world are futile. But the blood-stained hands of Jesus reached out to us. "He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, & by His wounds we are healed" [Isaiah 53:5](#).

There is healing power in the touch of Jesus. He is reaching out to you. Do you want to get well?