

FINDING A FRIEND IN TIME LIKE THIS

John 5:1-9

Emmanuel Adeoye

- Joseph was born on Sept. 10, 1819, in Ireland. His parents had financial means enough to afford a wonderful educational opportunity for their son. He was enrolled in Trinity College in Dublin where he graduated with a bachelor's degree.
- In this young man, Ireland had the prospect of a great citizen with high ideals and notable aspirations. He fell in love with a young lady who was eager to spend her life with him. However, on the day before their wedding she fell from her horse, while crossing a bridge over the River Bann and was drowned in the water below. Joseph stood helplessly watching from the other side.

In an effort to overcome his sorrow, he began to wander. By age 25 his travels had taken him to an area near Port Hope, Canada. He became highly regarded by the people of that area. He tutored some of the local children in their schoolwork.

It was there he met a wonderful young lady, Elisa Roche, and again fell in love. They had exciting plans to be married. However, tragedy reared its ugly head once again and she died of pneumonia before they could wed.

On an occasion when Joseph became ill, a friend who was visiting with him discovered a poem near his bed and asked who had written it.

Scriven said, "The Lord and I did it between us." He thought the poem would, perhaps, bring some spiritual comfort to his Mom, who still lived in Ireland. Scriven had not intended that anyone else should see it.

On Aug. 10, 1886, Scriven's body was pulled from a body of water near Bewdly, Ontario. Two monuments have been erected in his honor. Each has the first stanza of

his song engraved on it. Charles Converse, an attorney and composer, wrote the musical setting used today.

What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

The Invalid's Character and the Grace of God

From John's brief account, we begin to get some hints about the invalid's character. Though we will look deeper at some of these in a moment, it's helpful to list them in one place.

1. **Old:** If the life expectancy in those days was maybe 35, and if this man had been afflicted during his childhood, he might have been 40 or 50 by this time -- an old man (5:5).
2. **Dependent.** He probably relies on others to bring him, take him home, and support him (5:7). If he could not take care of himself well, he was probably dirty and smelly too -- a smelly old man.
3. **Complainer.** He complains about how long he's been an invalid. He complains that he does not have anyone to help him into the pool (5:5, 7)
4. **Blamer.** When confronted by the Jews for carrying his pallet on the Sabbath he blames the person who told him to carry it (5:10-13).
5. **Sinner** (5:14), serious enough for Jesus to confront him in the temple.
6. **Ungrateful and disloyal.** When he learns Jesus' name, he reports it to the religious leaders. He "tattles" on Jesus rather than being thankful for his healing and loyal to his healer (5:15).
7. **Unrepentant** (5:14-15). There's no indication that he accepted and acted on Jesus' rebuke about his sin; rather John tells us that he reports Jesus to the authorities.

Why did Jesus choose to heal this man of all those gathered at the Pool of Bethesda that day? I can only conclude that it was the Father's clear direction (see 5:19) and utter grace! Clearly, this man did not deserve what he received -- nor did he seem to appreciate it at any depth.

LESSONS FROM THE SUBJECT

1. TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD
2. FIND A FRIEND AND DO NOT MAKE A FRIEND
3. GOD REMEMBER'S HIS OWN