

ABUNDANT LIVING

John 5:1-15

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I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly” (John 10:10)

An abundant life is a life that is full, free, and forever satisfying, a life that makes one just as happy Tuesday afternoon as it does Sunday morning, a life that gives, forgives, and never gives up.

The Gospel of John is the gospel of life. John has three words that he seems to use above all others: “love,” “light,” and “life.” Fifty times the Greek word for “life,” *zoe*, is found in the Gospel of John. It is written in the Gospel of John,

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” (1:4); “I am the light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness” (8:12); “I am the bread of life” (6:35); “The words that I speak unto you, they are life” (6:63); “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life” (6:68); “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25); “I am the way, the truth (14:6). Therefore, we might say that the Gospel of John is the gospel of life.

A CRIPPLED MAN

John 5:1 says, *“After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.” “Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes” (5:2).*

Bethesda still exists. It is at a much lower level. The city has been built up around it, and the ruins can be seen to this day. A pool was present in that city and there were five colonnaded porches around it.

“In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters]” (5:3).

We see here needy people who were blind, crippled, and had withered limbs. They had stretched out rags and quilts (mats) and were lying on them. Why were they there? They were waiting for the moving of the waters. They believed that at a certain time during the year an angel came down and stirred this water. They further believed that the first person in the water after the stirring would be healed.

Verse 4 is not found in any of the later versions. This is the case because it is generally thought by textual critics that there is not much textual integrity behind

the verse. Only a few of the old manuscripts have the verse. The verse in question says, *“An angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.”*

Christ walked under those colonnaded porches that day. He saw one man who had been crippled for thirty-eight years. Jesus walked over to this man and asked, *“Do you wish to get well?”* That seemed to be an unnecessary question since the man had not walked for thirty-eight years. His very presence at the pool indicated he wished to walk again.

When we think about that question, we recognize that it is not an unnecessary question at all because many people do not wish to improve. If some should suddenly be relieved of their misery, they would not know how to take it. They have learned to enjoy being the object of pity. They have depended upon others for so long to make their living and to handle their problems that if tomorrow they found themselves well, they would be miserable.

RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

Christ said to the man, *“Do you wish to get well?”* That is the first step toward having an abundant life. If you are not a Christian or not a happy Christian, do you want to be made whole? Are you content to go on like you are now—divided, pulling in two directions, sometimes spiritual and sometimes carnal? Or do you want to be made whole?

STOP PLAYING THE BLAME GAME – TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

The crippled man answered Jesus by saying, *“Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me” (5:7).*

“The problem,” he said, *“is not me; the problem is someone else. I have been here for years waiting, and every time the water is troubled, I do not have anybody to put me in the pool.”* How often have we placed the blame for our condition on someone else?

Here is the second step toward having the abundant life. We must recognize that receiving the abundant life begins with us, not someone else. We can always find people who will not help us. It will always be easy to say, *“I do have a problem. I am crippled spiritually, but it is because other people will not help me. If I had not had the kind of father or mother that I had, if I had been born in another place and at another time, if I had gone to a different school . . .”* If, if, if.

Jesus just said to the man, *“Do you want to be made whole, or are you going to spend all of your life this way because no one will put you in the pool?”* If you ever have any

happiness as a Christian, a decision must rise up from inside of you. Paul said, *“Christ lives in me. The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loves me” (Galatians 2:20).*

As long as I look around and worry myself sick because other people are not helping, I will never get help. Jesus immediately said to the man, *“Arise, take up your pallet, and walk” (5:8). His bed was just a cot, a thin sleeping bag kind of cot.* “And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. *“Now it was the Sabbath on that day” (5:9).*

APPRECIATION

The Sabbath always brought the Pharisees out. They came to Jesus and said, *“How is it that You have healed this man on Saturday? It is not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day.”* They said to Jesus, *“How is it that you are working on Saturday by healing this man?”* Jesus answered, *“My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working” (5:17).* He was saying, *“If you have an argument about working on Saturday, you must start with God because He works on Saturday.”* Jesus then told them that His business was life **(5:21, 25).**

When the healed man learned who Jesus was, he went immediately to the enemies of Jesus and told them who it was who had healed him. We do not read of his praising God. We do not read of his exclaiming his faith in the Lord. The story ends, and so far as we know, he had taken no real step toward the Lord. Could it be that he was one of those many people across the centuries who have received God’s blessing and given nothing in return?

Conclusion

I do not know that any of us has a problem as longstanding as the crippled man. For thirty-eight years he had not been able to walk, but He, Christ gave him the opportunity to live the abundant life in Jesus.

Nothing but Christianity will give you the victory. Until a man believes in his heart that Jesus Christ is his Lord and Master, his course through life will be neither safe nor pleasant. Until a man believes in Jesus, his course through life will not be safe or pleasant.

If you do not have the abundant life, the question of our Lord to you is this, *“Do you wish to be well, or would you prefer to stay a cripple all your life?”* Or, to re-phrase the question, *“Will you be born again, or would you prefer to stay in the old man of sin all of your life?”*