

“HELPLESS, HOPELESS, AND FRIENDLESS”

John 5:1-9

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INTRODUCTION

The world is full of superstitious people; the world is full of religious people. Unfortunately, many times the two groups are the same! The Jews in Jerusalem were extremely religious. They believed in the one true God of the OT. But this Judaism of the first century was without a true prophet of God, and it was without the Messiah. Their religion had become “a religion of good works.” When the true Messiah did finally come, they did not recognize Him, for He emphasized the heart and salvation by grace through the power and love of God—not by human good works and observance of human tradition.

In this passage John describes a **third** miracle (sign) of Jesus. Note that this miracle is done totally on Jesus’ terms. No one sought Him, made a request of Him, nor even had true faith in Him. The man healed did not even know who Jesus was! Jesus here evidences God’s divine **power** and His divine **compassion**. The man Jesus healed was **hopeless**—he had been in his condition for 38 years! This man was **helpless**—he could not help himself into the pool for he was paralyzed. The man was also **friendless**—he had no one to help him get into the water; *it was survival of the fittest, every man for himself!*

The saddest part of this whole scenario is that these sick people were all superstitiously waiting “for the luck of the draw.” They believed that an angel periodically stirred the waters of the twin pool and that the first person to get into the pool when that happened would be miraculously healed. **Anyone who knows anything about the God of the Bible knows that this is not how God works.**

Jesus came here on this scene to show us how God really works. He is a God of compassion who **really cares** about us and wants to help us. He is also a God of power who **is able** to help those who are helpless. He doesn’t need an angel to stir the waters; He does not need for someone who is quickest or strongest or has the most assistance to jump into the water first; He does not even need the water!

In what ways right now are you “**helpless, hopeless, and friendless?**” The savior wants to come to your assistance. I think of our church right now as we are in the midst of our renovation and building programs. WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?—I am not; are you?

But, God is our very present **help**; God is our constant **hope**; God is our **Friend** who remains closer than a brother.

I. THE OCCASION (1)—A feast of the Jews

[Likely Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles of AD 28; see Hendrickson’s commentary here. Not likely Purim in March of 27, and Passover of 6:4 follows soon thereafter. Such a scenario leaves far too little time for the great Galilean ministry described in detail in the Synoptic gospels.]

II. THE PLACE (2)

Key descriptions: Jerusalem, Sheep *gate*, pool, Hebrew (Aramaic), Bethesda [cf. Bethsaida, Bethzatha; Morris says Bethsaida would become most popular due to its meaning “house of fish,” but that Bethesda was most likely the original form here due to its presence in the Copper Scroll at Qumran.], and five porticoes [a double pool with a portico down the middle between the pools].

III. THE PERSONS (3, 5)

A. A Multitude of those who were sick

1. The blind
2. The lame
3. The paralyzed (atrophied limbs)

B. The lame or paralyzed man (5)

38 years in his condition—doesn’t say he had been at this pool all 38 years! The point is, his condition had been of such long duration, that it seemed hopeless that he could be cured. It might be that he had even grown accustomed to his malady, and maybe even made a profitable living off of it!

Is it possible that some of us get used to our predicaments, and give up the idea of ever changing, of ever being healed either physically or spiritually?

Can I be trusted to give you a brief lesson in “textual criticism?” [vv. 3b-4]

IV. THE SAVIOR (6-9)

A. His Awareness (6)

1. Saw him lying there—**helpless**
2. Came to know [divinely or by natural means?] that he had been there a long time—**hopeless**.

B. His Question (6b)

“Do you wish to get well?”

Or, have you given up, are you content, are you OK with your condition?

Many a spiritually helpless, hopeless person has no desire to really change!

This man wanted help—but he was **friendless**. He could not get in “beat him to the draw.”

C. His Word of Power (8)

*Three-fold command—**Arise, Take up your bed** [pallet, mattress], **and walk around**.*

Note, this man had only trust in His mere word—this was not saving faith; he did not even know who Jesus was (see vv. 12-13)

D. His Results (9)

1. Instantaneous healing—“made well”

2. Instantaneous strength (picked up his mattress)

3. Continued strength and activity (began walking about).

Note one more important feature about this healing that will come into prominence in next week's sermon—This incident took place on a Sabbath Day.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is the Help of the helpless, the hopeless, and the friendless.

You need to turn to Him today and find all of your needs met in Him. He will change your life—permanently!