# Audio file

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# 1977 – God’s Way of Salvation - Study 8

We move on now to a continuation of our consideration of the gospel; God's power to save mankind from sin. In our last session together, we studied the question of faith, based on the verse in Romans chapter one, which tells us that the gospel is the power of God unto everyone that believeth not to the unbeliever, but to the believer.

Tonight, we wish to explore the matter of faith a little further to understand in very practical terms, how faith is to be exercised, and how it's exercise will bring saving redemptive power to those who exercise it. Let's then just read again in the first chapter of Romans, verses 16 and 17. The scripture which has meant so much to us in this respect. And then we'll move on to a study of a practical working demonstration of faith in the experience of Jesus Christ and the sick of his day.

Romans one, verse 16 and 17. “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. For it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth. to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. that therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written: the just shall live by faith.”

The original reference for that last statement by Paul is found in the book of Habakkuk. It's repeated again in the book of Galatians and again in the book of Hebrews, making these the most quoted words in scripture. They're not the most quoted of script, the most quoted in Scripture, the just shall live by faith.

When Christ was upon this earth, he demonstrated His healing power again and again amongst the sick people of his time. And Christ's exercise of healing power to bring about deliverance and physical sickness is a very clear illustration of His power to bring about spiritual deliverance from spiritual maladies. To assist us then, to understand the way of faith and spiritual things, we'll turn to the 5th chapter of the Gospel of John, to read there the story of the man at the pool of Bethesda.

We’ll begin at verse one and read down to verse 9. “After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem a sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an Angel went down at a certain season into the pool and troubled the water. Whosoever then first, after the troubling of the water, stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity 30 and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said unto him, wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. But while I am coming another steps down before me. Jesus said unto him, rise, take up your bed and walk, and immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked. And the same day was the Sabbath.”

There's a very close comparison between the condition of the sick man and the spiritual condition of those who are still locked in the power of sin. That man was born into this world in God's great plan to carry out the normal activities of human life. His crippled legs and arms, fingers and toes, and various other body muscles, For the purpose of working, earning a living, marrying a wife, having children, building a house and carrying out the normal functions of everyday living. But we find that there is a total absence of these things from this man's life.

Was this because he was too indolent, or lazy to do anything else but to sleep in a bed all day? No, he was not. Because there was nothing that man desired so much as to be up and about and living a normal full life like all other folk around about him. He desired to be a worker, he desired to be a normal person, active and strong and fit. Then why was it that that man did not do what he wished to do? It was because there was in him a disease which was in command of his life. That the disease was his master, and he was the slave.

It was not the desires of his mind, or of his will, that determined what that man would do day by day, it was his inner condition which dictated what he could and could not do day by day. Knowing the observations previously made in this series of studies, we learned that we do what we do because of what we are. we looked at the slave back in the land of Egypt and saw he continued those activities of building up Satan's Kingdom Day by day because of what he was, a slave to the Egyptians.

It should be very easy to see that the condition of the sick man and the absence of normal activities in his life is another illustration of the same problem, namely that we do what we do because of what we are. just as the Egyptian slave, that is the Israelite slave in Egypt, could not cease service to the Egyptians till he became a free man or a changed man. So likewise, the sick man could not have walked unless he was changed, within himself into another person altogether. by another person I mean he had been a sick person must become - what kind of person? a well person. Healed of a disease, freed of that sickness which mastered him day by day.

Now this man had heard of a supposed way of healing. It was supposed that an Angel came down to the pool of Bethesda on odd occasions, quite unannounced and unexpected. Trouble the water, and the legend was that the first person in would be healed of whatever disease he had. Very obviously the theory was never truly tested. The people who had reached the water first were obviously the least sick, the most active, the ones who are able to take a sudden leap into the water, the moment that the water was troubled. and the really sick, who have demonstrated the truth or otherwise of this theory never had a chance of making it into the water before the fit person did.

Now we can rely upon the fact too, of course, that this was not a divinely appointed plan for human deliverance. Because this plan generated nothing but the worst kind of selfishness, as each person struggled with all his might to get down to the pool first. and God's plan of salvation is not a generator of selfish activities. Furthermore, it offered healing to the ones needed it least, and this again, of course, is not God's way.

But as this man, waited there, on the edge of the pool, and as when the water was troubled, he had his friends rush him down, only to fail to reach the water first, to go back and wait and try again, to fail, to go back and wait, and then try again. Obviously, of course, we have a very fine illustration of the Roman 7 experience. where as we read before Paul said the things I want to do, I can't do, and that what I hate to do, I find myself doing. in other words, the point is, that his life was one of sinning and repenting or trying and failing, trying and failing over and over again. So, it was with the man at the pool the Bethesda. Now the point is, of course, there is no salvation in the procedure followed in Romans Chapter 7 and there is no salvation for this man by the procedures offered by the legend that anyone who was placed first in the pool when troubled, would be healed. There was no healing there at all.

Now Christ came to this man at that point of time when his faith in the troubling of the waters was finished. When the Saviour said to this man, wilt thou be made whole? What was his rather dismal response? He said, Sir… I must read the exact words, Here in John the 5th chapter. Verse 7. “I have no man, when the water is troubled to put me into the pool. But while I'm coming, another stepped down before me.”

In short, the man was saying to Jesus Christ, look, don't offer the put me in the pool. I've been on that trip so many times now. I've tried that way again and again and again. And each time I have met with dismal failure. And I'm not going to attempt it that way anymore. That was the confession that this man made to Jesus Christ at this point of time. Now in the 7th chapter of Romans, we find the same confession being made by the apostle Paul, when he says: “Oh, wretched man, that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? In other words, he was saying, I have tried and failed and tried and failed and now I give up seeking salvation by that method. Now this is the point where Christ can bring salvation to us.

It was no accident that Jesus Christ arrived at the sick man’s side at that point in time. There is no chance that the Holy Spirit bringing Christ to that man's side to offer him healing before he had come to the place where he lost all faith in man's way of achieving deliverance from sickness. Only then could Christ be the healing Savior to that perishing man. and likewise, anyone today who is seeking salvation from the power of sin, will find that it is that point of desperation, that point where you finally surrender all hope in human propositions for salvation, that deliverance finally comes. When you cast your helpless self upon the savior, then he reaches out and brings you deliverance from the power of sin which is in.

You now when Christ came to that man, he appeared before him for the first time in that man's experience. No doubt the man had heard about the savior from people, who come and reported the mighty miracles of Jesus Christ. But he'd never met the man before. And you don't really build much faith upon the say so of other people. They build their faith for what they see or what they experience, and they can certainly direct you in the right direction when it comes to building your own faith. But your own faith can only be built by personal contact with the word of God itself. As we read from Romans 10 and verse 17 in our last study period, so then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

Jesus now then seemingly asked this man to believe on him on the very spot, and the amazing thing is that the man did. Now, why do you suppose this man believed on Jesus Christ on the spot? Because that man became conscious, he became totally aware of the fact that within Jesus Christ was the power to do whatever he said was to be done. It was a vision, a perception of that power in Jesus Christ that gave that that man the faith and confidence which placed him back upon his feet once more. Let’s note the words of Jesus Christ in verse 8. Jesus said unto him, rise, take up thy bed and walk.

Now when Christ gave the command, what did that man have to do? Obey it. He was not for him to say, Lord, now look here, I've been 38 solid years, sick and impotent. Look at my wasted limbs.

My in emaciated frame, my weak and powerless muscles. I just can't do it. After 38 years of this kind of experience and existence, I have evidence enough to prove that I cannot possibly rise up and obey your command it. Just can't be done.

Now if the man had said that, then that expression of unbelief would have cut him off from receiving the inflow of Christ’s life and power into his body. I’d like to read now a paragraph in the little book called, Steps to Christ. And the paragraph is on page 50, page 50 in this book, in the chapter is called, Faith and Acceptance. And the paragraph says: “from the Simple Bible account of how Jesus healed the sick, we may learn something about how to believe in him for the forgiveness of sins. Let us turn to the story of the paralytic at Bethesda. The poor sufferer was helpless. He had not used his limbs for 38 years, yet Jesus bade him rise take up your bed and walk. The sick man might have said, Lord, if you will make me whole I will obey thy word, but no, he believed Christ's word. Believed that he was made whole and he made the effort at once. He willed to walk and he did walk. He acted on the word of Christ, and God gave the power, he was made whole.”

A very important point that must not be overlooked by any person, who aims to be a child of God, is that when God in His word, gives to you a specific command, as he gave this man when Christ said to him, rise, take up your bed and walk, that when Christ gives that kind of command to you or to the impotent man back there, what is the only thing you have to worry about? Being able to do it? not at all. Having the strength to do it? That's not your concern. Your concern only is: Christ said do it. So what do you do? You do it. Isn't that the idea?

If he says to do it. Then whose responsibility is it for you to have the strength to do it? And the power to do it? That's His responsibility. Yours is to obey without question. Believing that what Christ says to do is the enabling on his part for you to be able to do it. Now this sick man back there did just that.

Let's suppose that we are spectators of the actual scene, right before us here is the porch on which the impotent man lay. There's the water just beyond, and there are all the people going around the water's edge just tense and ready to plunge in the moment the water begins to be troubled. Over here is Christ and the sick man. And there is Jesus standing over this man, and the man looks up at him from the floor. And the Lord says to him, rise, pick up your bed and walk.

Now the sick man might have said, Lord, I know who you are. Yes, I know just who you are. I've heard about you from people passing by. You're the great healer. You've cleansed lepers. You've given sight to the blind. You even raised the dead from their graves. And I know that you've got the power to heal me, today. And I'm just lying here in expectation of that happy moment when I shall feel a surge of muscular power arriving in my arms, throughout my body, and filling out my legs again so I can stagger to my feet. and the moment I feel that you have done all this, then I will obey your word.

That's what he might have said. And if that man had said that, would he ever have experienced Christ healing power? Never! because faith does not work that way. Faith believes the word of God and believing the word of God, obeys the word of God, and leaves God entirely with the responsibility of providing the power and the strength whereby God's commands are to be executed.

Let's see then what this sick man did. the moment Christ said to him in the word of power: rise, take up your bed and walk. The man absolutely believed in the power in that word. And he said to himself, very well. If Christ, the great healer says to rise and walk, I shall arise and walk.

And his mind commanded every muscle in his body to obey the words of Jesus Christ and believing in Christ power to make it possible.

And the moment he did that, what happened? The power of God flowed, and let me say it again, flowed into his body and changed him inside of himself, from being what he was, a hopeless, impotent cripple into a vigorous strong muscular man. and let’s not miss the point, the power of Jesus Christ literally healed that man of his disease. It literally filled his muscles with strength and power, and that man by the power which was in himself was able to stand up and walk.

In other words, we don't find Christ leaning down and dragging that man to his feet, do we? That man walked by the power which was in himself. Now I stress this point because there are some modern-day theologies which teach that there is no way that we can possibly carry out the commands of God. Such as be therefore perfect or go your way and sin no more. men believe that that we have to lean upon Christ as the man leans upon a crutch, and Christ kind of drags us along by His power.

And we have no righteousness or power in ourselves whatsoever. Let's read on now in the same book, Steps to Christ, moving across to the next page, which is page 51.

And the statement says: “in like manner you are a sinner.” and we mentioned this point, of course, before. But just as that man was physically sick, so we are spiritually sick. Just as he was a slave to disease’s dominating power, so in turn we are slaves to sin’s dominating power.

I read further: “You cannot atone for your past sins; you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy.” Let's just meditate upon this for a moment. Now, of course, everybody understands that they cannot forgive themselves for their past sins. That's beyond their power. We can't provide forgiveness; I think we all realize that. But not so many people realize you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy.

Of course, some people say that's true enough. But there are others who feel that before they present themselves to Jesus Christ, to even receive his forgiving power, they have to demonstrate a changed life. that they have to take themselves in hand, straiten themselves out, clean up their actions, and then come to Jesus Christ as a person fit to be received by him.

The great songwriter who wrote the song: Just as I am, without one plea, of course, recognized the fallacy of that kind of theology. When I was in California, a number of years ago, a man came to me and said to me, after I preached this principal, one, he said, that's the first time I realized that. I'd always believed that I had to straighten my life out, and make myself good, and then come to Jesus Christ. But the word of God says you cannot change your heart and make yourself holy.

Back in the Book of Jeremiah the Lord God said to the Great Prophet, “can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the leopard his spots? And what's the answer? No, they can't.

A black man is a black man forever. A white man, the same. a red man the same. They're that color, as long as they shall live. Can a leopard change himself from a spotted beast to a black or white beast? No, he can't.

Then the Lord says, “then may you also, do good, who are accustomed to do evil.” The word accustomed says to me, a person built for the purpose of doing evil. That’s his custom, that’s his way of life.

Now the facts are that you and I cannot change our own hearts and make ourselves holy. You can no more do it, then you can take a wolf and change them into a lamb, then you can take a thornbush and change it into an apple tree. It cannot be done. And the sooner, of course, that we face that fact, the sooner we are prepared to receive salvation in God's way.

But now comes the next sentence which says that God promises to do all this for you through Christ. God promises to atone for your past sins. God promises to change your heart and make you holy.

Now some folks say that's too much, I can't believe it. But this statement says it and throughout the length and breadth of the Bible it is written again and again. Note that when Christ healed the sick person, he said to them, go and sin a little bit less than you've been sinning in the past.

Is that what Christ said? never, he said, go and sin no more. go and sin no more, lest a worst thing come upon you. Now the only person that can sin no more is the person who is no longer sinful in himself. Therefore, Christ’s statement, go and sin no more, presupposes the fact that the man has been delivered from his inner sinfulness, and changed into an inner righteousness. Remember, the sick man walked by the power that was now in him, and we shall sin no more by the power which is now in us.

This does not mean, of course we have no further need of Jesus Christ. That would be ridiculous to think thar. because every day this new life we have received from him, must be renewed and refreshed, and Christ is the source of that renewal and of that refreshment. As a wife after she's married her husband needs him just as much after she's married to him as before, if not more so. So, we need Jesus Christ just as much after we have been converted as we ever did before that time.

Just pass on now on to page 51, to the next few sentences. We read that God promises to do all this for you through Jesus Christ. You believe that promise, you confess your sins and give yourself to God, you will to serve Him. just as surely as you do this, God will fulfill His word to you. If you believe the promise, believe that you are forgiven and cleansed, God supplies the fact. If you believe it, then what? God supplies the fact. you are made whole, not just reckoned, not just accounted. But actually, made whole, just as Christ gave the paralytic power to walk when the man believed that he was healed, it is so. It is so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.

This is the way in which faith truly works. and it's the only way in which faith works. And man can make no greater mistake than to suppose that they have to get a good feeling, that they have to have some kind of evidence or such thing before they can really believe that they have been saved. Those who wait for physical, visible evidence before they believe will never ever get it.

I remember a story being told me one time about a woman who went to evangelistic meeting and the preacher, preached very strongly about faith and read some of God's great and glorious promises. The woman went home that night, just a glow with the glory of these words from the scriptures. She went to sleep and woke up in the morning feeling very different. She felt as if blackness enclosed her. She felt as if she was anything but a Christian. She felt as if God's word had failed.

So, she rushed off to the preacher again with tears streaming down her eyes and a looked of consternation upon her face, and she said everything's changed this morning. Changed? he said. Don't tell me that. Quick, give me the Bible and picking up the Bible, he opened up to one promise and to nothing, to another, and he said that it hasn't changed.

Romans 6:14 still says, sin shall not have dominion over you. It said that last night, it said that again this morning. And in 2nd Corinthians 5, verse 17, says: if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are pasted away. Behold, all things are become new.

No, the preacher said, nothing has changed, nothing whatsoever. And the woman got the point. She began to realize that she had been paying attention to her feelings and not to the promises in the word of God. And God's word says to you in John the 8th chapter, If the son therefore shall make you free, then what? you shall be free indeed. And the word of God says that sin shall not have dominion over you.

Let's then in simple living faith, come before God and confess that we are sinful in ourselves. Give the sinfulness away to him. Receive His life in its place, and believe it is so because he has promised.

Because God has said I'll take away the Stony heart out of your flesh and I'll give you a heart of flesh, that you may keep my commandments and my status and do them.

Let our faith then lay hold upon the precious promises of God. just like the man at the pool of Bethesda, step out in living faith and walk, not because he didn't feel the power of it, because Christ gave the command, and he obeyed that command.

May God bless you each one to this, is my prayer.