

A summary of John 5:1-16.

- 1. The Lord is very merciful:** Bethesda, in Greek, means *house of mercy*. It was here, at the five porches or colonnades, that many people (a multitude) lay, besieged with ailments and infirmities that rendered them unable to function. God's mercy is so compelling and far-reaching that it can draw people in (typified by the porches) to gather together to be healed. For example, we may look for a job and God may provide a job. This is His mercy. Yet, we may not know Jesus. The infirm man did not know Jesus, even when Jesus healed him. This is God's mercy. Eventually, when Jesus came back to him and revealed Himself, the man knew Him and got saved. This is also God's mercy. Everything is according to His mercy.
- 2. Why did Jesus seek this man (and me)?:** The key is v. 14. The infirm man was in the temple when Jesus found him. This shows that he had a seeking heart. The Lord wants to lead us as sheep into the church life so we can be saved. We grow from lying by the pool (house of mercy), waiting for God's mercy to come to us in some miraculous way, to walking in the temple (the church life) where eventually we can come to know Jesus Himself. This shows us that on the one hand, we need a pure and a seeking heart. On the other hand, God chose us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He seeks us because He chose us. Yet at the same time, we need a seeking heart so He can find us. We need to come to the church life, since God's mercy (Bethesda) is manifested in the church.
- 3. Jesus does not reveal Himself right away:** When Jesus tells the infirm man to pick up his mat and walk, He does not tell him who He is. Why? For example, in a somewhat similar account in the other three gospels, Jesus reveals Himself to the man carried by his friends on a mat as the Son of Man. However, in John 5, Jesus is strangely silent concerning His identity. This may show us His humanity, to take care of our human need first, before revealing Himself to us in order to save us. We also need such a humanity. Sometimes, we need to learn not to necessarily identify ourselves to others as being spiritual or having something of spiritual value to impart to them. Rather, we may simply be with them and take care of their practical needs with the humanity of Jesus. Eventually, they may be attracted to us to the point where they are ready to know Christ and to be saved.
- 4. A frightening realization:** In 5:14 Jesus tells the infirm man (now healed) to sin no more, lest something worse befall him. A similar story occurs in the other three gospels where a man lying on a mat is carried through the roof and brought to Jesus, who heals him. In all three accounts, the people who witness the miracle are astounded or amazed, and glorify God. Yet, amidst such rejoicing and celebration, only Luke (5:26) mentions that the people were filled with fear, that is in the throes of extreme terror. Why? If our sins are forgiven, should not that be a cause for joy and exultation? Why fear? The answer is found in John 5, where Jesus warns that if we continue to sin, we may

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fear worse things to happen to us. "Sin" here is not simply the physical or immoral thoughts or acts, but rather spiritual. In Greek, the denotation is to miss the mark, to misaim. We need to fear, for example, living a routine church life devoid of Christ. We need to fear not growing, remaining static. If I love the Lord this year (2018) the same as last year (2017), I sin (misaim), not physically but spiritually.

5. **Our mat is what makes us comfortable, even the spiritual things that we like to do:** We need to pick up our mat and walk, not lie on it and let it carry us. Sometimes, we like to be weak and paralyzed. It is much easier. We can make excuses for ourselves (I am not that kind of person, I cannot change who I am). When it is time to come to the Lord's day morning meeting, we may find five excuses to paralyze us. That is why Jesus asked the man "Do you want to get well?" Do we? Not always! It is sometimes more convenient to remain paralyzed! The Lord must speak to us again and again.
6. **Do we suffer persecution?:** Jesus was persecuted and His life was in danger (v. 16) because the healed man reported to the Jews. Do we suffer persecution because we follow the way that Jesus took? We do not look for persecution or try to live a suffering life. Rather, we seek to take the way of the cross. Jesus is living in us, and the Triune God is always working (v. 17). If we follow Him, the world will persecute us. For example, if we go out to preach the gospel, some will reject us or mock us. If we suffer no persecution, that is a sign that we are paralyzed, and that we are missing the mark (sinning).
7. **Testify or preach the gospel wisely:** On the one hand, Jesus was persecuted because He was faithful to the Father to live according to the Father's working. On the other hand, in chapter 5, He was persecuted because the infirm man, unwisely perhaps, reported to the Jews what had happened. Therefore, we need to have discernment how to present Christ to our friends or relatives. Some testimonies may turn people away, other testimonies may draw people to Christ. We also need to pay attention to who we are. For example, we may preach the gospel to our parents, but if our grades are poor, that may be a poor testimony without much weight, and may alienate our parents from God.