

Armagh Baptist Church – Sunday 16th August 2009

“Dead men can Live!”

John ch.5:1-30

Introduction

I want you to come with me in your mind's eye tonight to Jerusalem.

Jesus has left Galilee and He is on His way back to Jerusalem.

As we near Jerusalem we see that it is a city spread out over several hills, with valleys all around the outside of its walls.

In these walls there are 12 gates, and we're going up the road that leads to the gate known as 'The Sheep Gate'.

(This is where the sheep market was, for sheep to be bought and sold for sacrifice at the Temple nearby.)

As we enter the Sheep Gate, and turn to one side, just inside the walls, down some flights of stairs we see a pool with arched walkways all around it. This is the Pool of Bethesda with its 5 porches. 'Bethesda' means 'House of Mercy' or 'House of Grace'.

As we go down the steps and come near to the pool-side we see that these porches or walkways are absolutely littered with people – there are bodies everywhere! (v.3). And as we look closer we find that these people all have something wrong with them (v.3):

- There are disabled people,
- There are cripples,
- There are people who are paralyzed,
- There are people with withered up limbs,
- There are people who can't walk,
- There are blind people.

You would almost think it was a hospital ward, and yet there are no doctors or nurses here; no order or cleanliness; no beds or chairs. People are just lying everywhere, with all sorts of illnesses, and they're waiting...

What are they waiting for?

They're waiting patiently for something that only happened about once a year. (Relate v.4). This was a Jewish superstition that had built up around a natural spring which was supposed to have healing waters.

When the waters were troubled, whoever stepped in first would be healed!

What a pitiful sight it must have been, after the waters were stirred up. All of these sick people with all their physical ailments trying to push each other out of the road to get into the water first. That is – all but one man!

There at the back of one of the porches, almost out of sight, was a disabled man – a cripple lying on his mat, unable to move at all – all he could do was lie there – and he'd been that way for 38 years! So 38 times he'd seen the

waters stirred, but he was never able to get in to get healed! He was helpless. He could do nothing to get himself into the water. And he'd no friends to put him in either. What a sorry state he was in! And yet we have here...

1. The Sorry State that Sinners are in Today (v.3)

They might be respectable sinners. They might not have any physical disabilities, but they are still in a sorry state – just like these poor people.

- **Sick** – the disease of sin affecting every area of their lives.
- **Blind** – *'the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who believe not the Gospel'* (2 Cor 4:4).
- **Lame** – their walk is affected – their whole way of life is wrong. They're going their own way, doing their own thing, not going God's way.
- **Paralyzed** – totally helpless! Unable to help themselves, or do anything for their own salvation.

Cf Ephesians 2:1 – *'As for you, you were dead in trespasses and sins...'*

- In our sinful state, we are not just sick, we're spiritually **dead!**
- Dead man can do nothing to help themselves.
- If we are dead in our sins, we can do nothing to save ourselves.

And yet men and women still try to do their best to get right with God:

- Trying to keep the 10 Commandments.
- Going to church just so as they can please God and so earn their right to get into heaven, or so they think.

The truth is it doesn't matter how much you do, or what you do, it will never be good enough to get you into heaven.

- You're dead in your sins (acc to Ephesians 2:1)
- Dead men can't work
- So you'll never be able to work your way into heaven.

- **Waiting** – waiting and hoping that one day God will look kindly on them, weigh up their good points against their bad points, and hopefully the good will outweigh the bad, and God will let them into heaven.

But, why wait and hope, when you can know for certain right now that Heaven will be yours?

This man in v.5 was still waiting for healing from a pool when there was someone talking to him who could heal him instantly!

Jesus singled out this neglected old man, and spoke to him alone!

He asked him: ***'Do you want to be made well?'***

Instead of giving a 'yes' or 'no' answer, the man gave Jesus the reason why he couldn't be healed – because he was still hoping in an empty ritual! (v.7)

Maybe that's you tonight?

Jesus is asking you, '*Do you want to be saved?*' But instead of saying 'yes', you're giving all sorts of reasons why you can't be saved, because you're still trusting in dead empty church going, and you can't honestly see how that can save you, at the end of the day – (if you're really honest!)

Jesus is asking you, 'Do you want to be saved?' (v.6)
Why not answer 'Yes!' this time and see what happens?

2. Jesus told this man to do something that he couldn't possibly do. (v.8)

'Rise, take up your bed, and walk!'

But when Jesus asks us to do something, he also gives us the ability to do it. So in v.9 '*Immediately the man was made well, took up his bed and walked!*'

We're dead in our sins, totally unable to do anything to save ourselves, but Jesus is asking us to do something. He asks us to believe in Him.

- Now dead men can't even believe.
 - o But Jesus is asking us to.
- This man couldn't get up.
 - o But Jesus asked him to.
- And when Jesus asked him to, he also gave him the ability to do it.

Jesus is asking you to trust Him tonight.

So He'll also give you the ability to do so.

So we're dead and helpless in our sin. Totally unable to do anything to save ourselves, but Jesus is asking us to trust Him.

'Do you want to be saved?' That's what Jesus is asking you tonight.

3. The Only Way to be Saved: 'Dead men can live!'

Let me tell you how...

Come with me to v.24:

This is a great verse! And it tells us the way to be saved in a nutshell.

- Going to church won't save you
- Doing your best won't save you
- We can contribute absolutely nothing to our salvation
- We're dead in our sins, we're helpless.
- So how can we be saved?

(v.24) '*He who **hears** my word, and **believes** in him who sent me **has** everlasting life.'*

Let's stop there for a minute:

Even this disabled man could do that:

- He couldn't get to church; he couldn't do anything to save himself,
- But he had **heard** Jesus' words, and he could **believe**.

Remember what I said last week?

'Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.' (Rom 10:17)

You hear God's Word here each week. You hear the Gospel. You hear how to be saved. You **hear**, but the question is have you **heeded** it yet?

You've heard the Good News, but have you believed in the Lord Jesus yet?

*'He that hears my word, and believes in him who sent me **has** everlasting life.'*

Jesus is asking you – 'Do you want to be saved?'

'Then hear my word and believe in me, and you will have everlasting life!'

Two steps to Salvation: Hear and Believe.

Hear, Believe and Have! – *'Has everlasting life!'*

1. It's a Present Possession (present tense) - 'Has.'

It's not something you wait for, like the crippled man was waiting for healing.

It's something you have instantaneously the moment you believe in Jesus.

You can know you have eternal life now!

2. There's a Precious Promise (future tense) –

'and shall not come into judgement / condemnation'

If you're saved, if you believe, you will not face God's judgement.

The believer will never be condemned to hell.

Jesus has taken our punishment on the cross.

We have been judged and found guilty of our sins, but Jesus has taken all our punishment on the cross, therefore there is no more punishment left for us to take. (That's for those who are trusting in Christ's work for us on the cross.)

3. A Past Experience (past tense) – 'we have passed from death to life.'

- We're no longer dead in our sins

- We're alive to God

- We have eternal life

- We have new life in Christ

- God's Holy Spirit is living within us!

- We have already passed from death to life when we trusted in Christ

- So eternal life has already begun for us from that moment on!

It can begin for you too, if only you will hear Jesus' words and believe in him – you will have everlasting life.

That's what our text says – so believe it!

Take God at His Word – believe Him!

You could pass from death to life tonight if you ask Jesus to save you.

N.B. This is Spiritual Resurrection (v.25)

Spiritual new life available to you now – See v.25 *'and now is!'*

This passage talks about both spiritual resurrection & physical resurrection:

v.25 & v.28 are very similar – but with one very important distinction:

v.25 happens now – *'and now is'* – and refers to spiritual resurrection

v.28 happens later – *'the hour is coming'* – refers to physical resurrection.

v.25 happens whenever you hear the Gospel and believe.

You pass from death to life.

From being dead and helpless in your sin to a new life in Christ – eternal life!

v.28 is yet to happen at the end of time.

All who are in the graves (dead men and women)

- Will hear God's voice (v.28)
- Shall come forth – be resurrected (v.29a)
- Either to – The Resurrection of Life
 Or The Resurrection of Damnation (v.29)

So we will all be raised – some to enter into the joys of eternal life (fully) in heaven, others to be condemned to hell forever.

- Following Christ's Judgement (v.27)
- On what basis?
- On that of John 5:24
- If you have believed, you will not be condemned
- If you have not believed, you will be condemned

Remember John 3:36 – I told you that John 3:16 came with a health warning.

But remember also John 3:18 – Jesus didn't come to condemn but to save!

Do you want to be saved?

Then all you have to do is in John 5:24

© Ian Grant 2009

