

DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?

JOHN 5:1-15

WE MUST PERSONALLY SURRENDER OUR LIVES TO CHRIST IN FAITH
IN ORDER TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD.

I. WE ARE ALL SICK AND CRIPPLED (VS 1-4)

All Have Sinned And Separated Ourselves From God And His Love.

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Do You Want To Get Well?

John 5:1-15

If you are just joining us, we have been going through "The Four Spiritual Laws." Law #1 stated, "God **loves** you and offers a wonderful **plan** for your life." Law #2 is, "Man is **sinful** and **separated** from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life." Law #3 went on to explain, "Jesus Christ is God's **only** provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life."

This morning we are going to examine Law #4, "We must individually **receive** Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives."

It seems so simple. God wants us to experience a right relationship with Him. And He offers this relationship to us freely. He asks us simply to receive this abundant life from Him as a gift. The only thing to do when someone offers a gift is to receive it. As I said, it all sounds so simple, but I think that we often have trouble accepting gifts as they are offered.

Let me give you an example. When we were newly-weds, I knew my wife wanted a Seiko watch for Christmas. So me being the romantic, I started shopping immediately, trying to find the perfect type of Seiko watch. I finally found the perfect one, bought it, had it wrapped, and hid way in the back of my bookcase. I was feeling good about myself and all excited to give the gift on Christmas morning. I just couldn't wait until Christmas morning.

Well, Christmas morning finally arrived and the whole family was gathered around the tree and I went to get the present from the back of my bookcase, and proudly handed it to Luing and said, "Merry Christmas honey." She opened up the present, her eyes lit up and she said, "This is just perfect. It's exactly what I wanted." I was feeling pretty good about the whole thing until she put it on. I said, "Hey, that's not the watch I bought." She said, "I know. I found the one you bought, took it back to the store, and exchanged it for the one I wanted. It's perfect."

That's kind of funny when we are talking about human Christmas gifts, but God offers us a Christmas gift that cannot be changed or altered. In order to be in a right relationship with God, we must personally accept His Son Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Notice I said Lord and Savior. The gift comes as it is. If Jesus is not our Lord then He is not our Savior. I think we often misunderstand the message of the Gospel.

The conclusion of "The Four Spiritual Laws" and the main idea of this morning's text is this. **WE MUST PERSONALLY SURRENDER OUR LIVES TO CHRIST IN FAITH IN ORDER TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD.** That is simple, but if we have given a serious attempt to surrender ourselves to Jesus we find it's not so easy.

I. WE ARE ALL SICK AND CRIPPLED (VS 1-4)

All Have Sinned And Separated Ourselves From God And His Love.

In verses 1-4 we are reminded that we are all sick and crippled. Again, let's remind ourselves that **ALL HAVE SINNED AND SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM GOD AND HIS LOVE.** In other words, it would be a very interesting exercise to put ourselves in the place the crippled man finds himself the day he met Jesus.

Jesus was a Jew and He loved the Jewish festivals. Throughout the Gospels we find Jesus making His way towards Jerusalem for the Jewish holidays. During one of these holidays, Jesus was walking around the city and found Himself by the pool called Bethesda. This pool seemed to be built over some natural springs that bubbled up from time to time. The legend had it that when the waters bubbled up, that it was actually angels stirring the water. The first person in the pool during these times received healing. Whether or not the legend was true is irrelevant for our

study this morning. What is important is that disabled people gathered around the pool hoping to be healed.

As we have said repeatedly during this past month, we have a natural bent towards sin. Since Adam and Eve sinned, we were born with an inherited sinful nature that has an attraction towards sin. In fact, every part of our being is infected with this sinful nature. Our intellect, our feeling, our emotions, and our bodies have all been tainted with this sin nature.

And because we are all so naturally drawn towards sin, we have engaged in willful disobedience. We all disobeyed God. We have hurt others by harmful words and actions. Our sin has caused damage that we can never go back and repair. I don't know about you but I cannot read the Bible or listen to a sermon in which God does not point out sin in my life. I don't like it, but my life is a constant battle with sin. That's only the tip of the iceberg.

I'm sure there are many people who would say they struggle with sin but most people are unconcerned about the things of God. This is sin as well. I think that if we were to brutally evaluate our day, we could see that we don't often think about what God is doing in our lives and where He is leading us. I think that even the best of us do our devotions and then don't give God a second thought until we pray before our meals and go to bed at night. But for the most part, our lives are lived independent of God.

Another way we sin in this area is to avoid reading our Bibles. If we are not reading our Bibles, then that demonstrates that we are not concerned about the things of God. How can we be concerned about the things of God if He has recorded them in the Bible for us and we don't read our Bibles?

And the self-righteous proud are not concerned about the things of God because they are unwilling to humble themselves and listen to Him. If we are not at war with sin in our lives then we are not listening to God the Holy Spirit. The point is this. **ALL HAVE SINNED AND SEPARATED OURSELVES FROM GOD AND HIS LOVE.**

II. WHY WOULD WE NOT WANT TO GET WELL? (VS 5-7)

Even Though God Desires Everyone To Be Saved, People Have All Sorts Of Excuses Why They Do Not Respond.

If the case is that like the invalid in this passage, we too are disabled spiritually and need to be healed, as we study through verses 5-7, let's ask ourselves why we would not want to get well? I can't understand this but **EVEN THOUGH GOD DESIRES EVERYONE TO BE SAVED, PEOPLE HAVE ALL SORTS OF EXCUSES WHY THEY DO NOT RESPOND.**

Every time I read this I'm stunned by the question. As Jesus walked by the pool with all the disabled people, He approached one of them. Jesus engaged him in a conversation and found out the man had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus then looked at him and said, "Do you want to get well?" Are you as surprised by that question as I am? I want to respond for the guy, "Of course I want to get well. Do you think I enjoy lying here frustrated day after day, year after year? Why would you even ask me such a stupid question?"

But look at how the guy answered Jesus, "Sir ... I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

I didn't hear a yes in the invalid's reply. Did you? He simply offered an excuse why he couldn't get well. He pointed out the hindrances that prevented him from being healed. He informed Jesus as to the obstacles. He never said yes. Why wouldn't the invalid want to get well? If we were to stop and think about it, there may be several reasons. He may be afraid to get his hopes up and then be disappointed if he wasn't healed. He hasn't worked in 38 years. Could he adapt to work? Could he even find a job? After all, if he were healed, he would have to work. He

would have to rejoin society. He has only known other disabled people. He would now have to interact with everyone. The future may be a little frightening for him to face. At least he knows this misery.

I hate to say this, but over the years in the ministry, I have found many people who are living in misery, who refuse to surrender their lives to God and to be made whole. I'm sad to say that many who sincerely believe they are Christians are probably not. At any rate, I have seen many people living in constant misery and refuse to be healed.

Why would people refuse to surrender their lives to Jesus as Lord and Savior? The first reason seems to be fear. Like the invalid in this morning's text, people who are miserable at least know their misery. They have become accustomed to it. If they were to take personal responsibility to get rid of the misery, they are afraid of the future without the misery. I know it sounds crazy, but it's true. I know many people who are afraid to die, but they're also afraid to live. They are trapped in fear. The antidote to fear is not bravery. The antidote to fear is love. Jesus has reached out in love to us by suffering and dying in our place. Please don't respond in fear and rejection. Respond in love. Open up your heart to Jesus. Let Him come in and direct your life. Don't let fear keep you from receiving God's gift of love. Reaching out to God in love will allow us to receive God's gift of love.

Pride often stands in the way of receiving God's gift of salvation. I know that this sounds even crazier but some people have come to look at their act of receiving Christ as a good work on their part. In other words, since I prayed this prayer, or raised my hand, or walked down the aisle or even been baptized, that this entitles me to the gift of salvation.

If they would have to admit to themselves that they are really no good at all and not deserving of a thing, they would not want to receive salvation. Remember that the Bible is clear that God opposes the proud. If you are a proud person, God will stand up face-to-face and nose-to-nose against you. There is no salvation for the proud. The Bible is clear that Jesus humbled Himself by taking on human flesh, living among us, suffering and being humiliated publicly for our sin and dying the most humiliating death so that we could be saved. Do not let pride stand in the way of your receiving God's gift of salvation. Please also never to forget that we will never be good enough or do enough good to ever be deserving of this gift. Humility allows us to receive God's wonderful gift of salvation.

Apathy is another reason people fail to receive God's gift. This world is currently under the rule of Satan. It is cruel and it tends to beat people down. Relationships are constantly being damaged and broken. After struggling with life so long, like the invalid, many have given up. Think for a moment about the invalid. For 38 years, every time the water was stirred, he would get excited and drag himself to the pool, only to watch someone beat him into the water and be healed. Day after day, week after week, year after year, he watched people being healed while he remained crippled. And then one day Jesus approached him and asked if he would like to get well.

Many people have bought into the lie that worldly things can bring them happiness. People get involved in chasing wealth, power, money, sex, and other things the world says will make them happy. Finally, they give up on being happy. They become apathetic. They just don't care. Please, I don't care what you have tried in the past to make yourself happy, whole, or complete. The Bible is clear that there is only one Gift that can give you the abundant life, and that is Jesus. Don't let apathy keep you from receiving the abundant life that God has for you.

And then there is always out and out rebellion against God. It seems to me that rebellion is a characteristic that is highly valued in our society. We like to pull for the rebels in our movies. People who go against the grain are the people we admire and make heroes out of. When people find out I'm a pastor, they often go on to describe the kind of god they could worship and embrace, they create him, and then worship him. The problem is they almost never describe the God of the Bible. Oftentimes they say they could never embrace and worship the kind of God described in the Bible. I'm not sure they will ever realize the consequences or stupidity of their

thoughts until it's too late, they die, and come face to face with the God of the Bible and hear the horrible words come from his mouth to depart from Him and spend eternity in hell. Please quit rebelling against God and submit to His truth as revealed in the Bible. The Bible applauds submission not rebellion. Do not stay separated from God's gift of eternal life because of your rebellion. Submit and receive God's incredible gift of eternal life.

I have no idea where you are this morning. Please open your heart in love, humility, hope, and submission in order to receive God's gifts of salvation and the abundant life. **EVEN THOUGH GOD DESIRES EVERYONE TO BE SAVED, PEOPLE HAVE ALL SORTS OF EXCUSES WHY THEY DO NOT RESPOND.**

III. CHOOSING TO BE WELL (VS 8-15)

Authentic Faith Is A Lifetime Commitment To Receive And Follow Christ.

From the very beginning of this series, I have been eagerly anticipating this moment. I love to tell the story. I love to preach the Gospel. It is such a great message and I consider a great privilege to tell it. Verses 8-15 describe what choosing to be well entails. In other words **AUTHENTIC FAITH IS A LIFETIME COMMITMENT TO RECEIVE AND FOLLOW CHRIST.** I know that we often mistake what the Bible means when it talks about things like salvation, faith, the Gospel, and other words.

There is no way to be confused about this point when it comes to Jesus' attitude towards our being healed and made whole. Jesus wills it to be so. Just so we get a clear idea of the flow of this passage and the message of the Gospel, let me just focus on the words in this passage. Jesus only speaks three sentences in this whole passage. When He approached the invalid He asked, "Do you want to get well?" At this point in the story, Jesus simply says, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." And later when Jesus found the man at the temple He said, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." I know that I have said this before but I think I need to say it again.

Salvation is a process. We were saved when we surrendered our lives to Christ in faith. We are in the process of being saved. In other words, we are war with the sin in our lives and God gives us the power to defeat this sin. He puts both desire in our hearts to conquer the sin and the ability to defeat it. And then one day, we will be saved. Jesus will be sure to complete the good work He started in us when at last we shall see Him face to face and be like Him. This is the Gospel message. We were created to be in a personal, passionate, and intimate relationship with God forever. That forever includes both now and in eternity. Our sin has separated us from this relationship. Jesus died and rose again so that we could be in relationship with God. God the Holy Spirit indwells us and supervises our growth progress so that we will be prepared to live with Christ in eternity. The Gospel message is that God takes care of all this for us since we cannot do it on our own. When we surrender to Christ in faith, we are guaranteed to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Let me demonstrate this by just quoting one of the most popular verses in the Bible:

"¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16 / NIV). From the moment we receive Jesus in faith, our destiny is eternal life.

The point is this. It is God's passionate desire for every person to come to saving faith in Jesus:

"⁹The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise to return, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to perish, so he is giving more time for everyone to repent" (II Peter 3:9 / NLT).

I think the most graphic picture of God's heart is found in Revelation. If you have not yet given your life to Christ or if you are a Christian who has let worldly concerns push Christ out of your life, please listen to the heart of Jesus in this passage. Jesus said:

"²⁰Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends" (Revelation 3:20 / NLT).

There is no doubt about the will of God. God the Father demonstrated His will for us to be saved by sending His One and Only Son Jesus to us. God the Son demonstrated His love for us by taking on human flesh, suffering and dying for our sin. And God the Holy Spirit demonstrates His love for us by speaking to our hearts and preparing us to receive Him.

God offers the gift of life passionately. But we must respond in faith. In the verse above, it is clear that God does not force us to receive Him. We must submit to Him in faith. We must open the door to our hearts. Here is how the Apostle Paul described it:

"⁹For if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved" (Romans 10:9-10 / NLT).

Jesus told the invalid to pick up his mat and walk. The text says that the man was cured instantly, picked up his mat, and walked. Jesus is approaching us claiming to be the One and Only God of the universe. He is inviting us to be right with Him by willingly submitting to Him in faith. Now we have really misunderstood this concept of confessing Jesus as Lord because we live in the United States. If a person in Paul's day publicly confessed Jesus as Lord, he immediately became an enemy of the state. Roman citizens were required to burn incense to Caesar as lord. Christians cannot have 2 lords.

If Jesus was their Lord then Caesar could not be their lord. If Jews came to acknowledge Jesus as their Lord, they were ostracized by their family and friends. It costs us nothing to publicly confess Jesus as our Lord. An equivalent act would be for a Muslim, living in a Muslim country to all of a sudden come to faith in Jesus and then publicly confess that. He would be arrested and executed. That's what it means to confess Jesus as Lord. It means to totally submit to Jesus as Lord. Here is what faith is. Believing that Jesus rose from the dead means to accept that He is indeed Who He says He is. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus has the power to save because He is God and there is no other. Surrendering our lives to Christ is the beginning of the Christian journey.

We must live in faith because our faith will be tested. I think this next part of the story is kind of cute. Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. Jews were not supposed to do any kind of work at all. Jesus worked on the Sabbath by healing the man. Then it seems that Jesus slipped away. As the man carried his mat home, he was working and the Jewish officials called him on it. They start to press the poor guy, and yet the guy can only say, "This guy came along, told me to pick up my mat and walk, so I did." It seems to me that Jesus often does wonderful things in our lives, and we have no way to explain them.

This is what it means to live in faith. I'm confused as to why we become and act like hypocrites. Even though we may be able to fool others and even ourselves, and even though it appears no one is around, Jesus is always around. Our goal in life is to live for our Lord, our rightful owner, Jesus Christ. Listen to how Paul describes our duty:

"¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers (and sisters), in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 10:9-10 / NIV).

We are to live only for our Lord Jesus Who loved us and gave His life so that we could live. We are to be in the process of becoming more and more like Jesus every day. In our small group

recently, some of the people pointed out that when we read the Gospels, we tend to always put ourselves in the place of people who approach Jesus, surround Jesus, or whom Jesus approaches. However, if we are to be conformed to the image and nature of Jesus, then perhaps we should start to put ourselves in the shoes of Jesus and see how He approaches people and start to imitate the compassion, love, service, and commitment to truth of Jesus. It really was a new concept for me that I want to ponder.

And that brings us to the fact that we must grow in faith. Later Jesus saw the guy in temple and told him to stop sinning. In other words, since Jesus made him whole, and since he now owed his life and salvation to Jesus, Jesus expected him to grow and mature in his faith.

Jesus expects us to grow in our faith. He said:

^{v24} ... If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. ²⁵If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life" (Matthew 16:24-25 / NLT).

Christianity is a lifelong commitment that leads to a life in eternity with Jesus. Look at the last verse in this morning's text. The man went back to tell the Jewish officials that it was Jesus who had healed him.

How will we respond? **AUTHENTIC FAITH IS A LIFETIME COMMITMENT TO RECEIVE AND FOLLOW CHRIST.**

If we are like the average church in the United States, then the chances are that not many of us have an authentic saving faith. Remember, we are saying that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. Does the way we live our lives and conduct ourselves clearly demonstrate that Jesus is Lord of our life? If not we need to worry because if Jesus is not Lord of our lives, then neither is He our Savior. **WE MUST PERSONALLY SURRENDER OUR LIVES TO CHRIST IN FAITH IN ORDER TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD.**

The "Four Spiritual Laws" describe the only legitimate response to God's wonderful offer of salvation: "Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and to make us what He wants us to be.

Just to agree **intellectually** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an **emotional** experience. We receive Jesus Christ by **faith**, as an act of the **will**."

If you want to make a faith commitment to living your life for Jesus alone, then after I pray this prayer, say amen in agreement with it:

"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be" amen.