

SABBATH HEALINGS

“Sabbath Days’ Work”

John 5:1-10

- 1 After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.
- 2 Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.
- 3 In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.
- 4 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 whatsoever disease he had.
- 5 And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.
- 6 When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?
- 7 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 steppeth down before me.
- 8 Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.
- 9 And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.
- 10 The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. KJV

After thirty-eight years of being an invalid, this man is finally healed. Verse 9 informs us that the day this took place was the Sabbath. The first thing this man runs into after being healed is religion. The Jews informed him in no uncertain terms that it was unlawful for him to carry his bedroll on the Sabbath.

John 5:11-16

- 11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"
- 12 So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"
- 13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.
- 14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, "See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."
- 15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.
- 16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. NIV

Following are some notes of interest regarding this incident:

1. The feast this took place during was more than likely Passover.
2. The pool was by the sheep gate, on the north side of the Temple. It was through this gate that the sacrificial sheep were brought and through which the Lamb of God came one Sabbath day to heal this man.

3. Bethesda means “house of mercy.” Jesus went there and found this man and healed him, sinner that he was. This gives us great encouragement and hope. At any moment, Jesus can step into the broken and sick places of our lives and set us free!
4. In verse 15, the man gave witness to his healing. He didn’t know at first that it was Jesus that healed him. But when he found out, he went and told the Jews. The word for told is related to the word for evangelize. Note that the man didn’t go to the Jews and say, “It was Jesus that told me to carry my bed. He’s the man you want.” No, what he said was, “Jesus made me whole.” He gave testimony to the goodness the Lord had done in his life.

Now, we must address this issue of carrying the bed on the Sabbath day. Did the Lord command the man to do what was unlawful on the Sabbath? Absolutely not. One thing that is necessary for us to understand is that each Jewish community took it upon themselves to determine what would be considered work and thus unacceptable on the Sabbath. Over time, these customs were somewhat codified in the Talmud. But even the findings of the Talmud are interpreted differently by different Jewish communities in our day.

The case of the bed mat is very similar to the other scenarios Jesus referred to when He healed people on the Sabbath. Leading an ox to water or getting a sheep out the pit were necessary activities of the Sabbath. What about carrying a bed?

Ex 22:26-27

26 If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset,
27 because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. NIV

*The law does not allow for the keeping of a cloak overnight. The inference here is that the neighbor is poor (the cloak is his only night covering and his destitution is the reason for borrowing) and has no other bed. The Greek word used for bed in this account is **krabbatos**, which means a mattress for the poor. One can imagine that a man who has been ill and unable to walk for thirty-eight years would be poor. To heal the man and not allow him to carry his mat (comparable to the cloak of Exodus 22:26-27) would have been unmerciful. The law allows for mercy and thus neither Jesus nor the man breached the Sabbath day.*

The Lord is merciful. He says, “Take up your mat and walk.” Religion is legalistic. It says, “Hey, you can’t do that on this day. It isn’t right. We don’t care if you are healed or not. It doesn’t give you the right to break our rules!” As a result of this healing, John records that the Jews persecuted Jesus.

*When one follows the Sabbath healings chronologically, a progression of aggression becomes apparent. The aggression began with a **complaint** about picking grain. Complaint moved to **accusation** which resulted in a **conspiracy** against Him. Emotional reactions became **angry** and **indignant** and they **carefully watched Him**. And now, as we approach the end of His earthly ministry here in John 5, open **persecution** finally breaks out.*

As is typical of our Lord, He ups the ante.

John 5:17-19 NIV

17 Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working."

18 For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, **the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing**, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

Verse 19 should be taken as an admonition by every father. Children do what they see their parents doing. Particularly, sons want to be like their fathers. Often, we excuse things in our lives that are unrighteous under the guise of it being an "adult thing." We do it and tell our children that they can't. The reality is, though, that if they aren't doing it, if we don't change, they will be doing it because they have seen us do it.

Jesus did only what He saw the Father doing. The only day that God ever rested was the original Sabbath day (Gen 2:1-3). From that time onward, He has been hard at work at His primary occupation, the redemption of mankind. As Jesus continues His argument in John 5 (and this argument rings all the way through to chapter 9 and then intensifies again) He lays out the acceptable work of the Sabbath day.

Sabbath days' work:

1. Giving life – quickening
2. Executing judgment
3. Completion of His assignment – the testimony of works
4. Receive praise from God.

Giving Life – Quickening

John 5:20-21

20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.

21 For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. NIV

The Father gave the Son the power to give life. The Son thus has the right to give life to whomever He pleases. How do we join the Lord in this work?

John 6:63

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. **The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.** NIV

2 Cor 3:4-9

4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

6 **He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

- 7 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was,
8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?
9 If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! NIV

We can get involved in the life-giving work of the Lord by broadcasting the gospel. The word of God is spirit and it brings life.

Executing Judgment

John 5:22-30

- 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,
23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.
24 "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.
25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.
26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.
27 And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.
28 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice
29 and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.
30 By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me. NIV

[See verse 30 in the Amplified New Testament.]

Because of His finished work, we can enforce one of the major judgments He pronounced.

John 12:31

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. NIV

John 16:7-11

- 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.
8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:
9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me;
10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer;
11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. NIV

Jesus judged the devil at the cross. The devil stands condemned already. It is incumbent upon us to enforce the judgment that Jesus pronounced on the cross. How do we do this? We follow the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

A synopsis of John 16:7-11 could read like this: the world convicted of guilt in regard to sin = I need a savior; righteousness = I need a Lord; judgment = I have been saved, I walk in Lordship, I now am able to exercise His authority over the enemy.

Our authority to judge does not involve the placing of condemnation upon men.

1 Cor 4:3-5

3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God. NIV

The judgment of men's hearts belongs to the Lord alone. But judgments He has pronounced and proclaimed, we can enforce by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 2:14-16

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. NIV

*The mind of Christ instructs us about His judgments. This is done through the Spirit of God. If we are spiritual (that is, walking by the Spirit) we can judge all **things**. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit in regard to judgment will lead us to enforce upon the devil the judgment of the cross!*

1 Cor 6:1-3

1 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! NIV

With regard to this section of Scripture, following is commentary by Adam Clarke who quotes Lightfoot:

“Nor is judging of angels to be understood of the last day; but the apostle speaks of the minister of the Gospel, himself and others, who, by the preaching of the Gospel, through the power of Christ, should spoil the Devils [sic.] of their oracles and their idols, should deprive them of their worship, should drive them out of their seats, and strip them of their dominion.”

Completion of His Assignment – The Testimony of Works

John 5:31-37

- 31 "If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid.
32 There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.
33 "You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.
34 Not that I accept human testimony; but I mention it that you may be saved.
35 John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light.
36 "I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me.
37a And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. NIV

Doing the work (the miracles) which the Father had appointed for Him to do was His calling card. More often than not, He didn't say, "Hey! Look at me!" but instead declared "Look at what the Father has accomplished through me." He declared it to be the very food upon which He subsisted (John 4:34). And His completion of the work brought glory to the Father.

Another translation of the word "finish" is "perfected." Like no other book, the book of Hebrews documents the perfecting of our Savior and His completing and perfecting work. And thus, He is called the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning and ruler of God's creation (see Rev 3:14).

Rev 1:4-6

- 4 John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,
5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,
6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father-to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. NIV

Jesus is the faithful witness. We are to bear witness in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." NIV

The apostles were to wait for the power of the Holy Spirit before they went of to be witnesses in all the earth. To be effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ requires the power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 4:33

With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. NIV

The apostles testified with great power of the resurrection.

Heb 2:3-4

3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will. NIV

God gives testimony through us as He did through Jesus, by signs, miracles, and wonders. He distributes to us gifts of the Holy Spirit. One of these gifts is prophecy.

Rev 19:10

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." NIV

Giving testimony of Jesus is the essence of any true prophecy or prophetic voice.

Acts 20:24

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. NIV

Paramount in the apostle's mind was the completion of his assignment: to testify to the gospel of God's grace. Paul's attitude reflects the truth told in Revelation 12:11.

Rev 12:11

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. NIV

Our testimony is an overcoming testimony because involved in our testimony is the Lord's pronouncement of judgment upon one who has already been thrown down, namely the devil.

Best of all, God's work in us will be completed.

Ps 138:8

The LORD will fulfill [his purpose] for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever-- do not abandon the works of your hands. NIV

This is a prayer to the Lord not to abandon the work He has begun in us and a declaration that He will fulfill His purposes.

Phil 1:6

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. NIV

The day of Christ Jesus is His Sabbath day. The Lord will bring us into completion in that day.

Receive Praise from God

John 5:37-40

37 And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form,

38 nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent.

39 You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life.

These are the Scriptures that testify about me,

40 yet you refuse to come to me to have life. NIV

We can study the Scripture a lifetime. But unless we get Jesus, we don't have life. It is not the pages that impart life. It is the One the pages speak of that gives life!

John 5:41 "I do not accept praise from men, NIV

Jesus did not accept praise from men. He did not allow their lauding words to build a net of flattery around His feet and trip Him up.

Prov 27:21

The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but man is tested by the praise he receives. NIV

We need to learn how to deflect praise to give glory to God. There is nothing that we have or do in life that we do not owe a debt of honor to somebody for. And ultimately, any good thing in us or our lives came from the Father who deserves all of the praise.

John 5:42-44

42 but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.

43 I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him.

44 How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God? NIV

We need to make effort to receive God's approval, God's praise.

John 5:45-47

45 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set.

46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.

47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" NIV

The Greek word translated say in verse 47 is rhema. In essence, Jesus tells us that if we don't believe what Moses wrote (the Pentateuch, the Torah), we are not going to be able to believe what Jesus says (rhema). Understanding this principle is paramount to our faith.

Rom 10:17

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. NIV

Our faith is built by hearing the word (rhema) of Christ. If we read what Moses wrote and believe it, we will begin to understand the rhemas the Lord has for our lives and our hearts as He leads us out to work on His Sabbath day in His Sabbath grain field to pronounce quickening words and judgment on the enemy, to complete the assignments He has given us and receive the honor and the praise that comes from the only God.