

### Crippled For Life?

Allow me to bring two thoughts that will serve as a segue into a message that I believe the Lord has laid upon my heart. First of all, the infirm crippled man that Jesus healed at the pool of Bethesda in John 2 and the palsied of Mark 2 were both commanded by our Lord to arise and take up their bed and walk. Secondly, in the Old Testament, it was accepted that even a leper could be healed. If so, he must go through the protocol of being isolated and then only through fast, hard evidence and inspection by the priest, could he or she be allowed back into society. When Jesus came, He reached out and touched lepers in their unclean state. For instance: *“And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed”* Matthew 8:2, 3). This astounded the public around Him. No incrimination could be brought against Jesus because as a rule, by the time He pulled His hand away, they were completely and totally healed! Oh the difference Jesus makes!

The problem is that many desire to consign people to their former state, not accepting the fact that Jesus has made all the difference in the world.

#### **1. Emotional Cripples**

Consider this scenario: A person is diagnosed as bi-polar. He has a manic episode, help is found and help is given. There is the need for medication and/or therapy. With God’s help, a great degree of normal is found. The psychiatrist tells the wife, now you are going to have to monitor your husband and tell us when he needs to come in or possibly have his medications altered. This is understandable and acceptable. What is not acceptable is that he should now forfeit his obligation to be the head of the home as God designated him to be. With God’s help and intervention, many, if not most, can come back to their place of leadership. There is a problem when we determine that they must remain crippled the rest of their lives.

It is like saying to the one of the men healed in the New Testament, “I know Jesus came by and you are walking, but now face reality; you have not walked all your life. Your bones have not adjusted to carrying your weight and your muscles have atrophied, so this is going to take months and maybe years before we can really say you are healed.” Or perhaps one would say, “I see you are walking, but it just doesn’t happen this suddenly. You must have a walker then we’ll graduate to the crutch.” We might even hear this human logic: “Okay, I accept you are walking, but we cannot allow you to carry your bed. You were crippled all your life. You must take it easy. We’ll just let someone else do your work; you enjoy your walking, but you cannot carry beds.”

Translating this into modernity, we would hear, “Glad you are saved, but you are going to have to grow slowly. After a long waiting period, we will let you walk on your own, but even then with constant oversight and surveillance.” Listen to the words of Jesus encouraging us to be all He has made us to be: *“Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked...”* (John 5:8,9a).

## 2. Moral Cripples

The laws of the leper were still enforced during the days our Lord walked upon the earth. Let’s examine a small portion of the requirement of the leper: *“He is a leprous man; he is unclean; the priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his disease is on his head. And the leper’s clothes shall be rent, and the hair of his head shall hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry, Unclean, unclean! He shall remain unclean as long as the disease is in him; he is unclean; he shall live alone and his dwelling shall be outside the camp”* (Leviticus 13: 44-46).

There are disqualifying deeds, that although they are forgiven, a major qualification cannot be met, such as in the case of a man who desires to be a pastor, but has had a previous marriage, *“A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...”* (I Timothy 3:2). David had an intense desire to build God’s temple, but he records, *“But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood”* (I Chronicles 28:3). This does not negate the marriage of all who have entered into a second marriage; it is just saying God’s command for the man who leads in the local church must have the testimony of a lasting marriage. David was a man of war and God even aided and directed him in many of his battles. The Lord is simply saying, when you come to My house, I want you to find peace, peace with Me and peace in life, therefore the foreman of the job to build My house must not have bloody hands from war. Also in the case of a minister, there appears to be a required waiting period to make sure his devout intentions will be maintained throughout his life. This is called to our attention in I Timothy 5:22, *“Lay hands (referring to ordination of ministers) suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.”*

We have often exemplified Proverbs 31 as descriptive of the ideal virtuous woman, yet when we hear the mention of Bathsheba, anything but the wholesome attributes listed in this chapter come to mind. In truth, the Proverbs 31 lady and Bathsheba are one and the same! The opening of this chapter begins, *“The words of king Lemuel (Solomon’s name his mother called him) the prophecy that his mother taught him.”* (Proverbs 31:1). Bathsheba is the one who taught Solomon, *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies”* (Proverbs 31:10)! There is an old saying that goes, “Once a bird has its wings clipped, he’ll never fly as high again.” Upon hearing that, Spurgeon remarked, “If that is true, none of us would have pinions enough to get us into the air.” We must be careful not to forget that God wants us to move past our past,

for He says, *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12). Isaiah affirmed, *“...Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back”* (Isaiah 38:17c). Sometimes we make the lines of demarcation so strict and the proverbial hoops so high that we find ourselves tempted to put unnecessary restraints on people for service in Christ’s kingdom. I encourage us in Christchurch to make the way available for the prodigal to come home. I love the words of the wise woman of Tokoah, *“For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”* (II Samuel 14:14). God makes a way back to Him and His service. Let us not be guilty of keeping people moral cripples!

### **3. Spiritual Cripples**

Another scenario that describes the attempt to keep people spiritually crippled goes as follows: “Since you fell out of church, now that you’re back you must become a “pew warmer” indefinitely. To use the athletic terms, you have to stay on the bench, not come on the playing field.

I am overwhelmed by the immeasurable and generous mercies of God. Human nature wants to constantly insert works into salvation and sanctification. “Let’s make them earn it!” is the cry. Yet the Bible says, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (I Corinthians 6: 9-11).

There is clear understanding that people who are perpetually unrighteous such as fornicators, idolaters and adulterers are not saved and will not be in heaven. Then in a bombshell statement, Paul dogmatically asserts, *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”* (I Corinthians 6:11). You are not only washed by the blood of Jesus, but you are sanctified, made separate by God’s grace. The word sanctified means to be made separate. The Bible says, *“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”* (II Corinthians 6:17). Notice God says, when you have become separate, I will receive you as capable of serving me. The Bible affirms, *“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”* (II Timothy 2:21). You may ask, what is this verse saying? Simply, if a person is purged from what is ignoble and unclean, if he or she separates themselves from contact with contaminating and corrupting influences, he or she is able to be used by our Master, Jesus and he or she is now prepared for every good work, not just some, but “every” good work. No wonder Paul said, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am...”* (I

Corinthians 15:10a).

You are not crippled for life. God desires and can still use you!

-Pastor Pope-