

Series Title: “*John’s Gospel of Jesus: God in Flesh*”

Today’s Title:

“*Standing and Walking on the Words of Sovereignty*”

Scripture Reading: John 5:1-9

Text: John 5:8

Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.”

Introduction: (Illustrations from Knight, pp.418-419)

A ranch hand applied for work. “I sleep well when the wind blows,” he said to the ranchman. His cryptic words puzzled the ranchman. He employed him, however, as he badly needed help. A few nights later, high winds swept across the prairie. The ranchman arose hastily. He found the windmill properly adjusted to ride out the storm, the gate tied with an extra rope, a tarpaulin tied securely over the strawstack and pegged down tightly. Everything was shipshape. When he reached the bunkhouse, he found the ranch hand sound asleep! Then he understood the meaning of the cryptic words, “I sleep well when the wind blows!”

We, too, can sleep when the winds of adversity blow. We can confidently say: “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

*My times are in Thy hands;
My God, I wish them there;
My life, my friends, my soul I leave
Entirely to Thy care.*

*My times are in Thy hand,
Whatever they may be;
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee.*

My times are in Thy hand,

Jesus, the Crucified!
Those hands my cruel sins had pierced
Are now my guard and guide.

My times are in Thy hand,
I'll always trust in Thee;
And after death, at Thy right hand
I shall forever be.

Premise: *If our times are in His hands, we need to trust Him*

Outline:

- I. Intercepting Superstition**
- II. Inviting Soundness**
- III. Inspecting Sovereignty**

I. INTERCEPTING SUPERSTITION

Note: v.4 the last part of v.3 and all of v.4 do not appear in the majority of Greek texts, which reads:

“...waiting for the moving of the water, for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred the water: whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was healed of whatever disease he had...”

A. Man typically substitutes God's providence with chance

1. an angel becomes the focus of divine intervention
2. at certain unpredictable times, good luck will occur
3. the first person into the pool will be cured
4. the chances of merciful deeds of human assistance are extremely slim

v.7c

“...and while I am going another steps down before me.”

(Illustrations from Nelson, pp.653-654, 650-651, 650)

A wise old Chinese gentleman lived on the troubled Mongolian border. One day his favorite horse, a beautiful white mare, jumped the fence and was seized on the other side by the

enemy. His friends came to comfort him. “We’re so sorry about your horse,” they said. “That’s bad news.”

“How do you know it’s bad news? he asked. “It might be good news.”

A week later, the Chinaman looked out his window to see his mare returning at breakneck speed, and alongside her was a beautiful stallion. He put both horses into the enclosure, and his friends came to admire the new addition. “What a beautiful horse,” they said. “That’s good news.”

“How do you know it’s good news?” replied the man. “It might be bad news.”

The next day, the man’s only son decided to try riding the stallion. It threw him, and he landed painfully, breaking his leg. The friends made another visit, all of them sympathetic, saying, “We’re so sorry about this. It’s such bad news.”

“How do you know it’s bad news?” replied the man. “It might be good news.”

Within a month, a terrible war broke out between China and Mongolia. The Chinese recruiters came through the area, pressing all the young men into the army. All of them perished – except for the Chinaman’s son, who couldn’t go off to war because of his broken leg.

“You see,” said the gentleman, “the things you considered good were actually bad, and the things that seemed to be bad news were actually for our good.”

The English clergyman, Henry Law, wrote this about Jesus Christ’s extended hand of providence:

“He moves the ever-moving wheels of circumstances. No sparrow falls, no leaf decays, but in accordance with His ordering mind. He wills, and things occur. Chance is a figment of a dreaming pillow. It never was. It never can be. Thus to the child of God there is no trifle or unimportant event. Momentous issues often hang on rapid words, on sudden looks, on unintended steps....”

“When Joseph’s brethren thirsted for his blood, who caused the pit to hold no water? Who brought the Ishmaelites to bear him to Egypt? Who gave the sleepless night to Persia’s King? Who brought the aged Simeon, the pious Anna, at the fit moment to the temple? Who led Onesimus to hear Paul’s saving words at Rome?”

The Puritan, Thomas Watson, wrote:

“There is no such thing as blind fate, but there is a Providence that guides and governs the world. ‘The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord (Proverbs 16:33)

Providence is God’s ordering all issues and events of things, after the counsel of His will, to His glory....The wheels of the clock seem to move contrary one to the other, but they help for-ward the motion of the clock, and make the alarm strike; so the providences of God seem to be cross wheels; but for all that they shall carry on the good of the elect.”

B. This social deception was very widespread

v.3 *“In these lay a multitude of invalids....”*

- The name “Bethesda” means “house of mercy”
- This was the location of two pools lying north and south. It was near the Church of St. Anne in the northeast quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate mentioned in the book of Nehemiah.
- These two pools was surrounded by 4 covered colonnades in roughly the shape of a trapezoid. The 5th colonnade separated the two pools.
- One commentator (Carson) says: *“Although the twin pools were fed by the large reservoirs called Solomon’s pools, they may also have been fed by intermittent springs which caused the disturbance. Some ancient witnesses speak of the redness of the water, popularly thought to be medicinal: the spring may have been chalybeate.”* {impregnated with salts of iron}

[Note: Before reading this passage, please set aside all attempts of interpreting specific timing of these events. Also, set aside the exact identification of “the man of lawlessness” [sometimes translated “man of sin”], and “he who now restrains it.” Our primary use of this passage today deals with the phenomenon of deception in vv.9-12]

II. INVITING SOUNDNESS

v.6b “...*Do you want to be healed?*”

A. Sometimes we fail to see how deep our distress is

Notice how often physical illness is compared to spiritual sickness:

c/w Jeremiah 17:9, 14

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?....Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.”

- John Blanchard, *Ultimate Questions*, pp.16-17

Is Sin Serious?

“When disease is diagnosed, it is important to ask the question: ‘Is it serious?’ It is even more important to ask that question about the spiritual disease of sin. Many people will almost cheerfully admit to being sinners, because they have no idea what this means. They treat it as being ‘just human nature’, or they shelter behind the fact that ‘everybody does it’. But those statements dodge the real issue: is sin serious? Here are some of the things the Bible says about you as a sinner.

You are debased. *This does not mean that you are as bad as you can possibly be, nor that you are constantly committing every sin. Nor does it mean that you cannot tell right from wrong, or do things that are pleasant and helpful. But it does mean that sin has invaded every part of your nature and personality – your mind, will, affections, conscience, disposition and imagination. The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. The root of your trouble is not what you do but what you are! You sin because you are a*

sinner.

You are defiled. *The Bible pulls no punches here: For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander,*

page 6

arrogance and folly. Notice that the list includes thoughts, words and actions. This shows that in God's sight all sin is equally serious. Some people limit their idea of sin to things like murder, adultery and robbery, but the Bible makes it clear that we have no right to think of sin in this way. Sin is anything that fails to meet God's perfect standards. Anything we say, think or do that is less than perfect is sin. Now face up to this question: Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?' Can you? If not, you are defiled.

You are defiant. *The Bible teaches that sin is lawlessness, deliberate rebellion against God's authority and law. No civil law forces you to lie, cheat, have impure thoughts, or sin in any other way. You choose to sin. You choose to break God's holy law. You deliberately disobey him and that is serious, because God is a righteous judge who expresses his wrath every day. God can never be 'soft' about sin, and you can be sure that not even one sin will go unpunished. Some small part of God's punishment of sin comes in this life (though we may not recognize it). But the final punishment will be inflicted after death, when on the Day of Judgment each one of us will give an account of himself to God."*

- (Illustration from Knight, p.363)

Man calls it an accident; God calls it an abomination.

Man calls it a blunder; God calls it a blindness.

Man calls it a defect; God calls it a disease.

Man calls it a chance; God calls it a choice.

Man calls it an error; God calls it an enmity.

Man calls it a fascination; God calls it a fatality.

Man calls it an infirmity; God calls it an iniquity.

Man calls it a luxury; God calls it a leprosy.

Man calls it a liberty; God calls it lawlessness.

Man calls it a trifle; God calls it a tragedy.

Man calls it a mistake; God calls it a madness.

Man calls it a weakness; God calls it willfulness.

Man calls it a lifestyle; God calls it a corruption.

B. Sometimes we fail to see the inability to heal ourselves

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon, 2,200 Quot's, pp.186-187)

I have heard of an army, who, being defeated in battle, endeavored to make a good retreat. The soldiers fled to a certain

page 7

river, where they expected to find a bridge across which they could retreat and be in safety. But when they came to the stream, there was heard a shriek of terror – “The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!” All in vain was that cry, for the multitude hurrying on behind pressed upon those that were before and forced them into the river, until the stream was glutted with the bodies of drowned men.

Such must be the fate of the self-righteous. You thought there was a bridge of ceremonies, that baptism, confirmation, and the Lord's Supper made up the solid arches of a bridge of good works and duties. But when you come to die, there shall be heard the cry, “The bridge is broken, the bridge is broken!” It will be in vain for you to turn round then.

- Richard Sibbes (Vol. I, p.160) [b.1577 d.1636]

“...God, when he will humble a man, not need fetch forces from without. If he but let our own hearts loose, we shall have trouble and work enough, though we were as holy as David; God did not only exercise him with a rebellious son out of his own loins, but with rebellious risings out of his own heart. It there were no enemy in the world, nor devil in hell, we carry that within us, that, if it be let loose, will trouble us more than all the world besides. Oh that the proud creature should exalt himself against God, and run into a voluntary course of provoking him, who can not only raise the humors of our bodies against us, but the passions of our minds also to torment us! Therefore it is the best wisdom not to provoke the great God, for ‘are we stronger than he,’ that can raise ourselves against ourselves? and work wonders not only in the great world, but also in the little world, our souls and bodies, when he pleases?

C. Sometimes desire for recognition rejects a needed cure

i.e. Sometimes it seems as though one gets recognition from a very apparent physical malady. If the disorder is removed, then no special attention is given. Public

attention is so desperately longed for that one might be inclined to think, “Do you really want to be healed?”

c/w Matthew 6:16-18

- One commentator (Barnes) has said of the Matthew passage:
page 8

“That is, they do not anoint and wash themselves as usual; they are uncombed, filthy, squalid, and haggard. It is said that they were often in the habit of throwing ashes on their heads and faces; and this, mixing with their tears, served still farther to disfigure their faces. So much pains will men take, and so much suffering will they undergo, and so much that is ridiculous will they assume, to impose on God and men. But they deceive neither. God sees through the flimsy veil. Human eyes can pierce a disguise so thin. Hypocrites overact their part. Not having the genuine principles of piety at heart, they know not what is its proper expression, and hence they appear supremely contemptible and abominable. Never should men exhibit outwardly more than they feel; and never should they attempt to exhibit anything for the mere sake of ostentation. They have their reward. They have all that they desired – the praise of men and the pleasure of ostentation.”

III. INSPECTING SOVEREIGNTY

v.8 *Jesus said to him, ‘Get up, take up your bed, and walk.’*

A. Who is this One called Jesus?

1. He is infinite and eternal
2. He is alone the Creator of all
3. He is all-powerful
4. He is King overall
5. He is God to be worshipped, feared, loved, and served
- from the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689,
Chapter 8, Articles 1, 2, and 3

1. It pleased God, in his eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, his only begotten Son, according to the covenant made between them both, to be the mediator between God and man; the prophet, priest, and king; head and savior of

his church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world; unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified.

page 9

2. The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, of one substance and equal with him, who made the world, who upholdeth and governeth all things he hath made, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowing her, and so was made of a woman, of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David, according to the scriptures; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

3. The Lord Jesus in his human nature thus united to the divine, in the person of the Son, was sanctified and anointed with the Holy Spirit above measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator and surety; which office he took not upon himself, but was thereunto called by his Father; who also put all power and judgment in his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.

B. How difficult is the command?

- Albert Barnes

“Jesus not only restored him to health, but he gave evidence to those around him that this was a real miracle, and that he was really healed. For almost forty years he had been afflicted. He was not even able to walk. Jesus commanded him not only

to walk, but to take up his bed also, and carry that as proof that he was truly made whole. In regard to this we may observe.... That is was a remarkable command. The poor man had long been infirm, and it does not appear that he expected to be heal-

page 10

ed except by being put into the waters. Yet Jesus, when he gives a commandment, can give strength to obey it.”

- Hymn of Curtis' Collect #218

*And didst thou, Jesus condescend,
When veiled in human clay,
To heal the sick, the lame, the blind,
And drive disease away?*

*Didst thou regard the beggar's cry,
And cause the blind to see?
Thou son of David, hear – O, hear –
Have mercy, too, on me.*

*And didst thou pity mortal woe,
And sight and health restore?
O, pity, Lord, and save my soul,
Which needs thy mercy more.*

*Didst thou thy trembling servant raise,
When sinking in the wave?
I perish, Lord; O save my soul;
For thou alone canst save.*

C. What is the purpose for the healing?

c/w John 11:1-4, 38-42, 12:9-11

Conclusion: (Illustration from Knight, p.264)

An agnostic set out to save a drunkard from his enslaving sin, just to prove that it was possible to do so without the aid of religion. He found the task much harder than he had imagined,

for no appeals to his manhood, or arguments about the power of the mind and will had any effect. The drunkard had lost all strength to resist temptation, and his would-be savior found he had to be with him constantly, and even take him by the arm to get him past a tavern. Still the optimistic unbeliever

page 11

persevered, declaring that eventually he would save him without any Christian help. One day a friend met him alone, and asked him how the experiment was going. He replied: "I was doing fairly well when a group of fellows singing at a street corner got hold of him. I don't really know what happened, but somehow they persuaded him to kneel and pray with them. Anyway, he can pass a tavern by himself now."

Jesus said to him, 'Get up, take up your bed, and walk.'

Premise: *If our times are in His hands, we need to trust Him*