

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

The Initial Investigation John 5:10-15

The world is not opposed to religion. The world is opposed to God. And how does God feel about this? The Bible teaches us that the wrath of God is revealed against all those who have rejected Him and suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. Let me read for you **Romans 1:18-20**, "**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (19) because that which is known about God is evident within them; (20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**" God is not indifferent toward those who have rejected Him. His wrath abides upon them. His wrath abides upon them because they have suppressed the truth in unrighteousness.

But how does the world suppress the truth? Let me continue to read for you **Romans 1:21-23**, "**For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (22) Professing to be wise, they became fools, (23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.**" How does the world suppress the truth? The world is so unwilling to give God His rightful place over their lives; they are willing to reject the obvious in order to embrace the absurd. This is clearly communicated in the passage that we just read.

But it was not only Gentile idolaters who suppressed the truth in order to embrace the absurd. Certain religious Jews were guilty of this very same thing as well. And we will be able to see this as we continue our study of **John 5**.

Hopefully you remember that **John 5** introduces to us a new section in our study of the Gospel of John. We have entitled this section "the period of controversy." This section will extend from **John 5:1** to **John 6:7**. In this section we will see the emergence of opposition to the person and work of Christ.

This period of controversy as I shared with you last week begins with a very well known story about a healing that took place near the pool of Bethesda.

In our attempt to examine this story, I have chosen to describe this healing and the events that subsequently follow in **John 5:1-47** in terms of a judicial proceeding. Therefore, the question that we began to answer last week was this: What basic elements of a *judicial* proceeding do we find in **John 5**?

And what was that first element of a judicial proceeding that we began to examine last week? The first element of a judicial proceeding that we find in **John 5** is the *crime* and the initial investigation (**John 5:1-15**). Last week we only considered the crime in **John 5:1-9**.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Let me read this passage for you, **John 5:1-9**. "After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (2) Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. (3) In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; (4) for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.] (5) And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness. (6) When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, 'Do you wish to get well?' (7) The sick man answered Him, 'Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.' (8) Jesus said to him 'Arise, take up your pallet, and walk.' (9) And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day." So, what was the crime? The alleged crime was that a man who was paralyzed had been healed on the Sabbath (John 5:1-9).

So, what did we learn from our examination of this crime and the events that led up to it? We learned that though this man may have initially come to the pool of Bethesda in order to be healed, he had over the 38 years of sickness given up any hope of such a thing happening.

This is why Jesus asked the man, "Do you wish to get well?" Jesus was reminding him of why he first came to the pool.

How can what we learned be applied to our lives? All we have to do is to personalize the question that Christ asked the paralytic, "Do you wish to get well?" By asking this question of ourselves hopefully we will be reminded of why we first came to Christ. Hopefully we will be reminded that when we first came to Christ we came because we wanted to be set free from our sin, not only from the penalty of our sin but also from the power of sin.

Hopefully what was true then is still true today. Even though some of us may have struggled with various sins over the past few years hopefully we will once again humble ourselves before Christ and claim the victory that is ours in Him.

Now we are ready to move on from the crime to the initial investigation in **John 5:10-15**. Let me read this passage for you, **John 5:10-15**. "Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, 'It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.' (11) But he answered them, 'He who made me well was the one who said to me, "Take up your pallet and walk.'" (12) They asked him, 'Who is the man who said to you, "take up your pallet, and walk?'" (13) But he who was healed did not know who it was; for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. (14) Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.' (15) The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well." The initial investigation of the crime was prompted when certain religious Jews encountered the man who had been healed carrying his bed on the Sabbath (John 5:10-15).

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

I would hope that our study this weekend might help us to see how easy it is for anyone to suppress the truth and embrace the absurd if they are not willing to give God His rightful place in their lives, not only idolatrous Gentiles or religious Jews but even professing Christians. And I would hope that we would not only see this but that we would commit ourselves to not let this happen in our own lives.

Let us begin our examination of the initial investigation by looking at how certain religious Jews became aware of crime. Let us read **John 5:10**. **"Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, 'It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.'"** Is this true? Was it not permissible for a Jew to carry their pallet, or in other words their bed, on the Sabbath? Obviously there was a difference of opinion between Jesus and certain Jews, most likely the Pharisees, concerning the answer to this question.

If Jesus had felt that it was not permissible He would never have commanded the paralytic who had been healed to take up his bed and walk. But He did command him to take up his bed and walk. So, clearly there was a difference of opinion between Jesus and these certain Jews about what was permissible and what was not permissible in respect to a person carrying his bed on the Sabbath.

How did this disagreement come about? Jesus and these Jews in John 5:10 understood God's command prohibiting work on the Sabbath differently (Exodus 20:9-11; Deuteronomy 5:13-15).

Let us read the biblical command that led to this disagreement. Let me read for you **Exodus 20:9-11**. **"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. (11) For in six days the Lord made heaven and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."** This is the command that led to the disagreement. God had prohibited work on the Sabbath. But did the work that God prohibit include picking up a bed?

Though the Old Testament demanded that the Jews keep the Sabbath holy by ceasing from all work it does not give us an exhaustive list of everything that might constitute work. Let me ask you this question. Do you know of any passage that precisely tells us in the Old Testament that picking up a bed is a violation of the Sabbath? I believe that the answer to this question is, No! There is no passage of Scripture that specifically tells us that picking up a bed on the Sabbath is prohibited.

But someone might say, "What about **Jeremiah 17:19-21**?" Let me read this passage for you. **"Thus the Lord said to me, 'Go and stand in the public gate, through which the kings of Judah come in and go out, as well as in all the gates of Jerusalem; (20) and say to them, 'Listen to the word of the Lord, kings of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who come in through these gates: (21) Thus says the Lord, 'Take heed for yourselves, and do not carry any load on the Sabbath day or bring anything in through the gates of Jerusalem.''"** Let me ask you a question. What does this passage prohibit? Does it prohibit carrying loads on the Sabbath? Yes, it does prohibit loads from being carried on the Sabbath but it is a specific kind of load that is prohibited from being carried on the Sabbath. What is the very specific kind of load that is prohibited from being carried on the Sabbath in **Jeremiah 17**?

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Jeremiah 17:19-27 specifically restricts Jews from carrying loads through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath. In other words Jews could not carry loads for the purpose of commerce.

Should the prohibition against carrying loads for commercial purposes have been surprising to any faithful Jew? Of course not! It is obvious. How in the world could a faithful Jew say that he was honoring the Sabbath and keeping it holy if he on the Sabbath was loading merchandise onto donkeys for waiting customers outside the city walls or unloading donkeys at his home for waiting customers inside the city walls?

Obviously a faithful Jew, one who was seeking not to work in order to keep the Sabbath day holy, would have intuitively known this. It was obvious. If a Jew wanted to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy he would not have been involved in this kind of activity.

But if Jews were involved in this kind of activity they certainly should have been confronted, which is exactly what God is doing through the prophet Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 17:19-27**. God is confronting those who had violated the Sabbath by engaging in business. Were these faithful Jews? No, they were unfaithful Jews. They were more concerned with turning a profit than honoring God. Their heart was not right before Him. The truth was obvious but they were willing to bury the truth, to suppress the truth because they did not want to give God His rightful place.

But for a man to pick up his pallet after the person who had healed him commanded him to do so is a far cry from a Jew choosing to engage in commerce on the Sabbath. This apparently was obvious to the person who had been healed and it should have been obvious to these Jews who had confronted Him, but they were rejecting the obvious and embracing the absurd. How could they do this? They seemed like such "righteous Jews." Appearance can be deceiving.

These certain Jews in John 5:10 were unwilling to make a distinction between what was condemned and what was not condemned on the Sabbath in order to protect their man made laws. Those who seek to protect their man made laws, while insisting that others practice them, are called legalists.

Why would these legalists do this? Why would these Jews in John 5 do this? They wanted to protect their man made laws because they believed that personal righteousness had everything to do with the outside and not the inside (Matthew 23:25-28). Can people sincerely believe this? I suppose that this is possible, but in the case of these Jews and others like them such as the Pharisees this was not the case at all.

Listen to the words of Christ in **Matthew 23:25-28**, "**Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. (26) You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. (27) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (28) Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.**"

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

For these Pharisees and most likely the Jews that this ex-paralytic encountered in **John 5**, their belief that personal righteousness had everything to do with the outside and not the inside was a matter of convenience. It allowed them to embrace what they wanted to embrace without dealing with the core issues of sin that they tolerated in their hearts.

This is why they were able to reject the obvious and embrace the absurd when they confronted this ex-paralytic for carrying his bed. Were these men that this paralytic encountered in any position to help this paralytic? Absolutely not!

Not only were they not able to help this man in respect to salvation, they were unable to help this man enjoy life on its most basic level. Those who believe that personal righteousness has everything to do with the outside rather than the inside rob people of their joy (Matthew 23:4).

Certainly we see this being worked out here in **John 5**. Here was this man who had just been healed from a disease that he had suffered from for 38 years and now he is walking and carrying his pallet. Most likely praising God for His deliverance. Most likely walking with a noticeable spring in his step. Perhaps he might have even been skipping. And then he heard a voice asking, "Hey, what are you doing with that bed? Don't you know that it is illegal?" Legalists are killjoys!

Hopefully, we are not like these Jews that this paralytic encountered. Hopefully we understand that personal righteousness begins with the inside. How is your inside this weekend? How is your heart? Are you whole-heartedly devoted to Christ? Are you whole-heartedly seeking to live your life for Him? If we do not do this we can very can very much like these Jews in John 5 begin to reject the obvious in order to embrace the absurd.

So many times I have seen Christians behave badly and actually feel justified in their bad behavior. How can this happen. It can start when we forget that the Christian life is all about us living our lives for Christ. It can start when we forget that the Christian life is not a list of do's and do not's. The Christian life is Christ's life. This means that we must continually each and everyday surrender ourselves wholly and completely to Christ's will in every area of our lives. If we do not do this we will never be able to see clearly what God would have us to do.

If we want to truly live our lives in a manner pleasing to Him then we must get our inside right before we can we clearly see how God would have us to live on the outside. In John 5, the Jews failure to do this was the reason why they were not able to make any distinction between Jews engaging in commerce on the Sabbath and the man who was carrying his bedroll after Christ had commanded him to take up his bed and walk. Their lack of attention to spiritual truth as it related to their own spiritual experience is highlighted in response to the testimony of the ex-paralytic.

Let us read **John 5:11**, "**But he (referring to the ex-paralytic) answered them, 'He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Take up your pallet and walk.'"**"

He was obviously conflicted. He knows what they are saying. He knows that they want him to put down his pallet and conform himself to the arbitrary standard of behavior that they and others like them had established but he also remembers what the man who had healed him said.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

So he immediately directs their attention to the person who had told him to pick up his bed and walk. In other words, he immediately directs their attention to the man who through an incredible display of healing power had made him well.

How will they respond to what he has said? Very understandably they turn their attention from the man who is carrying his bed to the person who had healed him. Let us read the next verse. Let me read for you **John 5:12**. "**They asked him, ‘Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your pallet, and walk?’**” Were they trying to find out his identity in order to pursue truth? No! They were not interested in truth they were only interested in protecting their man made laws and punishing those who had broken them. It was all about the outside of the cup being clean but not the inside.

We see this clearly in **John 5:16**. Let me read this verse for you. "**And for this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.**" Therefore, we should see their question not as an honest pursuit of spiritual truth but rather as a criminal investigation. How absurd, but this is what we should have expected. They have no interest in humbling themselves before God. They had a religious system that very much served them and they wanted to keep it just as it was.

Was this man able to help them? Amazingly, he wasn't able to help them. Read **John 5:13**. "**But he who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.**"

Jesus acted very much like the old-time western hero named "the lone ranger." It was almost as if as soon as this paralytic took up his pallet and began to walk, Jesus quietly exited giving the paralytic no opportunity to thank Him or to find out who He was.

Does this end the story? No! Let us continue to read **John 5:14**. "**Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘Behold, you have become well, do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.’**" I would think he was in the temple in order to give thanks to God for his physical healing. But the work that Christ had begun was not complete and it is clear in the case of this man that Christ wanted more for him than just his physical healing.

What did Jesus say to this man after finding him in the temple? He said to him, "**Behold, you have become well, do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.**" What was Jesus doing?

Jesus was attempting to bring this man to the point of true repentance and ultimately to salvation. Jesus was attempting to get this man right on the inside (John 5:14). How did Jesus go about this?

In trying to get this man to repent Jesus reminds him of what he had already suffered because of sin. Let us again read what Jesus said to him. "**Behold, you have become well, do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.**" From this statement it does appear that this man's past sickness had something to do with past sins. Certainly we see in Scriptures from time to time the possibility of this actually happening, but we should not take this too far. Though the Scriptures do indicate to us that people can become sick because of sin, this does not mean that they all people who become sick are sick because of sin.

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

However, in this case it does appear that this man's past sins had caused him to be sick for 38 years.

This is not all that Jesus communicated to this man in order to get him to repent. In trying to get this man to repent Jesus not only reminds him of what he had already suffered but also what he would suffer in eternity if he did not repent. Is repentance a necessary first step in getting our inside right? Obviously Christ thought so!

Did man turn from his sin? Did this man truly repent? Did this man take this initial and necessary first step in getting his inside right? The passage does not tell us.

All that the passage tells us is what we read in John 5:15. The man went away, (It doesn't tell us that he went away rejoicing. It does not say that he went away sorrowing. It simply says that he went away. And what did he do? It says) and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

CONCLUSION

Though this passage does not tell us that he repented I would like to think because Jesus sought him out in the temple that he in fact did. I would also like to think that he not only repented but that he also embraced Jesus by faith as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Is your inside right with God this weekend? Is your heart fully devoted to Christ or are you more concerned with maintaining a religious façade rather than being truly set apart for Christ. Hopefully your answer is yes! If it is not then you could very easily reject that which is obvious to embrace the absurd not only robbing yourself of God's blessing and inflicting yourself with a spiritual blindness that can lead to all kinds of absurdity but also bringing dishonor to God.

If we want to truly live our lives in a manner pleasing to Him then we must get our inside right before we can we clearly see how God would have us to live on the outside.