

Do You Want to Be Made Whole?

by Alan Redpath

The sermon emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and surrendering to God's power and intervention in our lives, rather than trying to hide behind pretenses and camouflage.

Duration: 45:34

Scripture: John 5:5, Romans 7:25

Topics: "Wholeness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by describing the weather and setting the scene. He then directs the audience to open their New Testaments to John chapter 5, focusing on verses 1 to 8. The preacher emphasizes the potential for transformation and miracles in the lives of those who believe in prayer. He highlights the story of Jesus healing a man at the pool of Bethesda, urging the audience to trust in the power of Christ to overcome their struggles. The sermon concludes with a call to action, encouraging listeners to eliminate any avenues for retreat and to fully commit to following Christ.

Transcript

Let's just bow for a word of prayer together. We have heard the voice of God speaking to us in testimony, in song, in reading of the word, and in prayer. Now let us ask that he may continue to speak to every heart, single us out of this great crowd as if we were the only one who really matters.

And may we give to him the response that will bring joy to his heart. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Speak just now some message to meet my need which thou only dost know.

Speak now through thy holy word and make me see some wonderful truth thou hast to show to me. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

This has been a great meeting so far. We've had two tremendous testimonies from young people as to the reality of the living Christ in their lives. We've had some thrilling singing from our wonderful choir and I feel very much that God's hand is upon this meeting tonight.

I've only one thing against it. It's a bit hot. I remember it was on a day like this, a bit warmer perhaps and a bit humid in Chicago that I saw a dog chasing a cat and they were both walking.

Honest, you know how I feel at this point. But while Britain is frozen up with ice and snow, we are rejoicing in the glorious sunshine of an Australian summer. Now I want to talk to you tonight about the passage

which has been so effectively and dramatically read to us.

If you have your New Testament with you, the best thing you could do is to open it because I'm going to stick very close to this portion of the word of God. John chapter 5 and verse 1 to 8. I believe this evening can be an evening of transformation in the lives of hundreds of people here, a night of miracle for many. Will you who believe in prayer really pray that God's word may really get home to our hearts and that you may forget about the preacher and his funny English accent and you may see far beyond him and hear far beyond him to the voice that speaks to your heart which you cannot resist, the voice of God himself.

Now this story in John's gospel is, I imagine, familiar to all of you. It's the story of a New Testament healing pool outside Jerusalem where we're told lay a great multitude of people. Now I want you to be impressed with that fact because the Bible never exaggerates.

It always tells the truth. A great multitude. It's amazing how we are given to exaggeration.

Everything has to be the world's largest or the finest before anybody believes us. After living in the states for a few years where everything is the world's largest, I got into a habit whenever I went to a place to preach of asking the man who met me either at the airport or the station, how many people live in this town? And he would tell me. And then I asked him, rather naughtily, the second question, what's everybody do here? Oh, every time they fell right in the trap, why don't you know that we have the world's largest pot bottling factory or mushroom factory? Something was always the world's largest.

But I thought I'd heard everything when I went one day to a little place out in the sticks in Illinois. When I got to the station, I said to the man who met me, what's the population of this city, as they all call a village? And he said to me, oh, we have 2,340. And what do you do here, I said.

And he looked at me in amazement. He said, do you mean to tell me you don't know that we have the world's largest small business in this town? Well, you see how terrible to be given to exaggeration like that. Now, just be impressed a moment with the fact that here in this pool of Bethesda, there's a great multitude of people.

And it's a very interesting crowd for you will notice that in four respects, they were different. And in one way, they were all alike. Some of them were impotent.

That means they had no power. Some of them were blind. That means they couldn't see.

Some of them were hot. That means they were limping. And some of them were withered.

That means they hadn't grown up. But all of them were waiting, waiting for the moving of the water, waiting for God to do something, waiting for the intervention of God, for him to work a miracle. For as the story tells us at a certain season of the year, an angel came down and moved the water, and whosoever stepped in first was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

Apparently, God has no favorites. It was whosoever was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. What an interesting crowd.

And I'm quite sure that the real trouble among them wasn't a physical one at all. That was merely a symptom. Because in the 14th verse of this chapter, Jesus said to the man whom he singled out for treatment when he met him the following day, go thy way and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee.

Sin no more. The problem wasn't a physical one. It was a spiritual one.

That's not to suggest to you, of course, that suffering in your life is brought on by your personal sin. Suffering has a purpose in the plan of God for all of us, as Mr. Bingham has been showing us in these wonderful Bible studies in the mornings. But it is to say this, that if there was no sin in the world, there would be no suffering.

And here is a great multitude of people with physical symptoms of one root problem, sin. I wonder if I'm far off the mark, if I suggest that here this evening we have a miniature pool of Bethesda. I couldn't call it a great crowd of people.

There's a good crowd. Actually, it may interest you to know there are 1,850 people here, as I've spent time counting them. That's excluding the choir.

Now, don't you all start and count. Take my word for it. 1,850, that's a good lot.

And a spiritual pool of Bethesda is among us here tonight. For listen, among this crowd, some of you are impotent, absolutely without power. When you are faced with a moral choice between right and wrong, knowing what's right, you do wrong.

You don't want to. You hate yourself for doing it. Indeed, many a time you've cried over it, and you've said it won't happen again, but it has, because you're impotent.

Great company of people here tonight without power. A famous predecessor of mine at Charlotte Chapel Edinburgh, Dr. Graham Scroggie, once said that the trouble with the Christian church is that far too many Christians live on the right side of pardon but the wrong side of power. On the right side of forgiveness but the wrong side of fellowship.

On the right side of Calvary but the wrong side of Pentecost. In the Old Testament allegory, picture language, they're out of Egypt, but they haven't got into the land. They're still wandering about in the wilderness.

Powerless people, and the church is full of folks like that. And there were people there in that crowd who were blind. And if I spoke to some of you tonight about the blood of Jesus, about the cross, about the way of salvation through faith and repentance and obedience to the living Lord, it doesn't make sense to you.

It doesn't mean anything to you. You're spiritually blind. Of course you are, because the Bible tells us that the God of this world has blinded the minds of those who don't believe.

Oh, well, you say, if that's done by the devil, then I'm not to blame. Why should I be to blame for it? No, you're not to blame. And God doesn't blame you for it.

But what he does do is blame you for staying like it, because he's provided the answer in the one who is the light of the world. And some people here are spiritually blind. And some of you are halting.

You are limping. Your Christianity isn't a steady walk. It's a limp.

Not satisfactory, nothing victorious about it, nothing radiant about it, nothing real. It's limping badly. And still others of you are just spiritual dwarfs, never grown up, still in a kindergarten.

Though you've professed conversion for years, five, ten years or more, some of you, you haven't grown. Somehow there hasn't been any spiritual progress. Always because there seems to be something in your path that makes progress impossible.

Some besetting sin, some temptation which has troubled you since you were a little child. A man said to me some few years ago this word. He's a minister.

I learned the sin which ruined my ministry when I was seven years of age. Just think of that. Something that had become a little plaything, something to enjoy, something to indulge in, gradually got hold of him until it became a tyrant.

And he was under its mastery. And though a minister of the gospel, he was a spiritual child, a dwarf in a kindergarten. There was a great multitude of people.

Do you find it difficult to find yourself anywhere in that picture? Impotent, blind, hot, withered, but waiting. Oh my, yes. You came to this convention last Thursday and, oh, you prayed that God would do something for you, didn't you? Somehow you feel that you then go back to the same situation, the same circumstances at home, and the same friends.

You then go back and be the same. If God doesn't meet you here, and you've been here Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday, and Sunday, and now it's Monday, and the days are passing on, and it'll soon be over, and you're still waiting, and your heart is heavy, and you're longing for God to do something for you, for him to intervene and display his mighty power in your life and somehow transform it, that you'll never be the same again. Waiting.

1,800 people and more who in their hearts are longing for the Lord to break in and break through this meeting and this convention and reveal himself in hundreds of lives as the one who is mighty to save. A great multitude of people, impotent, blind, hot, withered, waiting. But so often in Scripture, the Holy Spirit directs our attention away from a crowd to a man, and he does that right here.

We stop. We stop looking at a crowd, at a multitude, and we begin centering our thought upon a man. A certain man was there.

My friend, very often in a meeting like this, God does that very thing. You suddenly become conscious that the speaker is on your wavelength, and you really begin to think that he knows all about you, although he doesn't know a thing about you at all. But you, somehow, you're the only person in the crowd that really matters.

And already tonight, maybe through the testimonies that you heard, God has singled you out, and he's got his hand upon you. A certain man was there. And he had an infirmity for 38 years.

What's the matter with him? Well, he had an infirmity. What's that mean? The word is a medical word. It's a word which, literally, in our English language, really means neurasthenia.

Do you know what that is? It would be worth paying \$500 to a doctor in Adelaide to be told that you've got neurasthenia. That sounds terrific. But if I tell you that, basically, though it may take other forms, basically, neurasthenia is a missing connection between your brain and your body, it's not so funny.

You see, you never stop to think about it, really. We don't. But this brain up here is the managing director.

And the brain sends a message down through the nerve system to your foot and says, foot, move to the right a yard. And your foot moves to the right. Or it sends a message to your hand and says, hand, lift yourself up.

And the hand responds. Well, that's wonderful when it works. But supposing it doesn't work.

And supposing the foot sends an SOS back all the way up to the brain and says, sorry, can't move an inch. Or your hand responds by sending a message back, can't be done. That's spiritual.

That's neurasthenia. Do you remember the language of a man writing as a Christian in Romans chapter 7 and verse 25 who said this? With my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. Do you know anything about that? Oh, with my mind I'm going to get up and have a quiet time tomorrow morning and read my Bible and pray half an hour.

But with my body I stay in bed and have an extra half hour sleep. With my mind I say, well, now, I really think I ought to get on the move about missionary training and really get some literature and inquire about it. But my body never takes action.

I never put pen to paper. I don't even inquire. With my mind, you're listening, I covenant that the friendship with that girlfriend which is going all wrong, that we'll clear it up.

But the body refuses to respond. With a mind renewed by the Spirit of God and indwelt by his Holy Spirit, desiring to do God's will with my mind, I serve the law of God, but with my flesh the law of sin. Does that describe you? Has God's Spirit found you out? Is that friendship which started so wonderfully and was so lovely and meant a lot to you, has it just gone to pieces? Has it? And tonight, you know things can't go on like that.

With your mind, you're serving the law of God and you're hating it all, but with your flesh you keep on doing it. A certain man had an infirmity for 38 years. Why? That's a lifetime, a lifetime.

Most of us in this hall haven't lived that long. And for 38 years, the man had been absolutely helpless. I am sure that of all that great crowd at Bethesda, he was the one who'd given up all hope.

He'd stopped praying about it. He stopped thinking that God could do everything for him. In fact, he said so.

Whenever the water's troubled, he said, no sooner do I start moving than somebody else gets in before me. It's hopeless. 38 years.

Listen, I hope you're meaning business with God, all of you, because God knows I am. Answer me this question. No, don't answer me.

Answer the Lord. What's your infirmity? What is it? How long has it been going on? What's your infirmity? Impurity of thought? Secret sin nobody knows anything about but you and God? A foul temper? Dishonesty? Untruthfulness? What's your infirmity? A certain man had an infirmity for 38 years. You find it hard to put yourself in that picture? But we move from the multitude and the man to the master.

And Jesus came on the scene, and when Jesus saw him lie and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, do you know that every word of that is the music of the gospel in a major key? Listen, when Jesus saw him lie and knew. Let me just retrace my steps a minute. When Jesus saw, nobody sees like

Jesus.

He sees perfectly and completely. Just before coming out here, I was paying a eight weeks visit for ministry to missionaries on OMF fields in Thailand and Malaysia. And it was necessary for me to get a visa to get into Thailand.

So that meant having my photograph taken. Now there's nothing I hate more than that. But I haven't lived in Edinburgh, Scotland for nothing for five years.

And I know a shop in Edinburgh. I'll tell you. I'll tell you something.

If you're going one day, ask me. I'll tell you. And it'll give you six passport photos for two and six.

That's very cheap. So I knew where I could go and get a passport photo very cheap. And I went to the shop, you see.

And all you do is you go in a little booth and you pull a curtain and then you drop half a crown, whatever that may be here, into the slot. And you sit still for one minute and then out drop six photographs. And a girl comes along and smears something across the photos so that they won't fade.

And she gives them to you in a little envelope. Well, I got my photograph taken like that in a little envelope. And I took it away with me and went home by bus without opening it.

And I happened to notice that the little envelope said outside it, untouched proof. And I thought, what's that mean? Untouched proof. Well, when I got home, I opened it and I really nearly absolutely flipped.

I looked at it and I said, really? Can it be as bad as that? Surely not. That's not me. And I really got mad for a moment.

And then I remembered something. Do you have, I suppose you do, bless you. In Scotland, we have a living room and in it is a piano.

And on top of the piano, we have various family photographs. Well, we have at home a little family photograph of my wife and myself and two daughters. And there it was on the family photograph.

So I took this unfinished proof in this hand and I held it there. And then I looked at the family photograph. Now the family photograph was done by an expert.

It really was a job. It was something. And I compared the two and I said to myself, well, of course, that photo on the panel, that's really me.

And just at that moment, my wife came into the room. You know how I thank God for our wives. I'm sure you do too.

They halve our sorrows and double our joys and treble our expenses. That's why, that's why they're all so dear to us, of course. But she came into the room at that moment and she knew exactly what I was thinking.

And she looked over my shoulder at this unfinished, untouched proof and she looked at it and she looked at the family and she said, now, my dear, don't you kid yourself, but that is really you. And somehow the balloon exploded. Absolutely, my ego was shattered completely.

That was really me. I don't mind you smiling at my story, but listen, get this, get the application of it. It matters tremendously.

God isn't interested in the kind of person that you want other people to think you are. Nor is he interested in the kind of person that you think you are yourself. God is only concerned about looking at the untouched proof Jesus saw.

And the first step into blessing and victory and reality in your Christian life is to let the Lord come tonight and take a long look at you. And for you to come out from behind your pretense and behind the camouflage and behind the show you're putting on and behind the religion and behind your playing church and just let God look at you. Have you ever done that? And Jesus saw.

Oh, you've always been afraid of that. If God really looked at me, oh, I couldn't bear it. And you try to put him off by praying, by reading a Bible, by going to church, by becoming an endeavourer, by working hard in Christian service and you do everything to forget about what you really are.

Oh, but at this meeting tonight, God is just stripping you right open and he sees. You see, Jesus saw him, what's the next word? Saw him lie. I see you sitting on your chair, upright, listening, I hope, to what I've got to say.

But look, Jesus sees some of you who physically, mentally are wide awake and alert, but spiritually flat on your back, beaten. Jesus saw him lie and he knew, he knew he had been a long time in that case. Oh yes, Jesus knows.

He knew the very first time when the infirmity began, he knew the first symptom, he knew its gradual spread through that man's life until after 38 years, the poor fellow was absolutely under its control and Jesus sees you lie. And he knows, he remembers the first time when perhaps before you were even a teenager, it attacked you and you fought it and it beat you and your little childish heart was tender and broken and you cried and you said, Lord, I don't want that to happen again and it won't happen again, but almost the next day it did. And Jesus knows how long it's been going on, he's known about the sleepless nights, he's known about the tremendous temptation, he's known the battle, he's watched you fall, he's watched you get right deep into sin, he's watched you become involved time and time again and he stood apart.

For as long as you think you can do something about it, he's not going to come in to help you. And you fight and struggle and he knows the whole story. He knows you've been a long time in that case, just let that sink in.

And having seen and having known everything that there is to see and everything that there is to know about this man, what does he do? He goes up to him and he says to him, do you want to be made strong? Do you want to be made whole? Just think of it, this isn't a psychiatrist who doesn't know about you, saying, patting you on the shoulder and saying, try harder, but it's a God who knows everything, everything about all of us, coming up to a man who's absolutely down and out and beaten and says to him, do you want to be made whole? I can imagine that man looking up into the face of our Lord and saying, whoa, don't you come here and ask me that, the thing's impossible. Do you want to be made whole? Say, what does it mean to be made whole? As far as I know, there is only one person who's been completely whole ever walked the face of this earth, and it's the one who asked the question. And Jesus is really asking this man this one thing, do you want to be made like me? Young people, do you realize that

that is the gospel? The gospel isn't decide for Christ, get converted, give your heart to Jesus, get busy in the church, that's not the gospel, that's the outcome of the gospel.

Do you want to know what the gospel is? It's this, do you want God the Holy Spirit to come into your life and so take charge of you that it's absolutely impossible for you to live with your infirmity? And he breaks its power and he transforms you and one day he presents you in heaven in the image of Jesus himself. That's the wonderful, wonderful music of the gospel. It isn't a second blessing, it's not a peculiar holiness teaching, it is the gospel.

And Jesus says to this man, do you want to? Oh, what a master diagnosis, because he goes right below the man's mind and emotion and he goes right to his will and he says, now how far do you want me to go? As I speak to you tonight, I just know that the Spirit of God is asking you the very same thing, how far do you want Jesus to go? Do you want to be made whole? Really whole? As somebody in testimony said tonight, she wanted just a partial obedience and a partial surrender and a partial consecration, but God accepts all or nothing. Do I want to be made whole? There's one person in all the world, I think, I've read more than another, it's a dentist. And I go to a dentist with toothache and I said to a dentist, I'm sorry but I've got a little pain just down here on the left side, would you mind just looking and seeing what's wrong? And he takes a wretched little thing that's got pincers on the end of it and he starts to scrape around and he says to me after he's come out again, he says to me, he says, look here, you've got five teeth need stopping and three need taking out.

Oh he insists on giving me the full treatment. He won't send me back with one tooth filled, he'll take, he'll fill five and take out the rest. Now listen young people, Jesus, Jesus wants you tonight to go in for the full treatment.

He wants to make you whole. He wants to take possession of your life and make it, make it more and more like him and make you whole. And you see, you're listening? Your willingness to be made whole is the price of him dealing with your infirmity.

Have you got that? If you want to be made like Jesus, he must be allowed to break the infirmity. But the question is, and it's a terrible question to face, do we want it? Be honest. Tell me, have you come to love your sin so much that you prefer it to salvation? Isn't that the trouble? At the moment of your being tempted, you really want to fall.

I preach a gospel because I believe the New Testament preaches it, declares it. A gospel which doesn't only deal with the guilt of my past sin and doesn't only give me power for the present, but it takes away the love of sinning. Charles Wesley wrote this wonderful hymn, Jesus, thine all-victorious love, shed in my soul abroad, then shall my heart no longer rove, rooted and fixed in God.

Oh, that in me the sacred fire might now begin to glow, burn up the dross of base desire and make the mountains flow. Oh, thou who at Pentecost didst fall, do thou my sins consume. Come, Holy Ghost, on thee I call, spirit of burning cup.

Do you want God to break in like that? He can. He will, if you want him to. And I can imagine that man looking up into the face of Jesus and saying, Lord, I'd give anything, anything to be made whole.

And I can see in your hearts, I'm sure, that there are many of you tonight saying, oh God, I want what he's talking about. I'd give anything to be made whole. Even now, it's not too late, even though it's gone on for

so long in my life, he can break the power of cancelled sin and set the prisoner free.

His blood, his blood cleanses not only from sin's guilt, from sin's power, and he puts in me a new heart and takes away the love of sinning and makes me love him and love holiness and love the thing that's right. Oh, Lord, you can do that miracle for me. Well, what does Jesus say? Rise.

I can see that man who'd been on his back for 38 years saying, you're kidding. Rise. I can't stand up, I've been on the back 30.

Ah, listen, I didn't say can you, I said you want to. But Lord, I didn't say can you, I said you want to. Yes, I want to, but there's no but.

Do you want to? Well, look, if you want to, oh, listen, young people, if you want to, face the impossibility, face the infirmity, and do the thing that you can't do in the power that a risen Christ can give you at the very moment you're willing. Look at me. No, look beyond me.

Look up to Jesus. Look up to the Savior. Listen, do you want to be made whole? Do you want to be made like Christ? Do you really want it? Well, what's your infirmity? Face it.

Face it. Don't be afraid of it, and look up to him, and trust him for the power to overcome, and step out of this hole in victory through the power of a living Christ, because tonight he's captured your will. Rise, and in a moment the man is on his feet, and then Jesus says to him, take up your bed.

Oh, but sir, master, I can't do that, because, anyway, in 10 minutes I'll be tired. I need some physiotherapy, and I'll have to lie down again. I can't possibly, I can't possibly do without it.

I must have it. Now look here, no nonsense. Rise and take up your bed.

Don't make any provision for going back. You have finished with Bethesda. Oh, this is perhaps the most important thing as I conclude my message.

You know why sometimes we say it hasn't worked? I'll tell you, because we've left a convenient avenue for retreat, just in case this doesn't work, so that we can go along the avenue when nobody's looking. It might be a television set, and a rotten program that I oughtn't to look at. It might be a rotten book that's still in the library, but I've left a line of retreat.

Friend, you go home and scrap the book. You go home and really consider seriously getting rid of a television set which leads you into temptation. And you go home and write to that girl, friend, and tell her we're finished.

Don't make any provision for going back. Come clean. Get rid of your sin.

Be willing to face it, and get rid of it, and scrap it. Rise, take up your bed, and then you'll walk. Do you want to be made whole? Let us pray.

We have a question to ask to answer the Lord Jesus. Do we want full treatment? Do we want him to go all the way with us? Do we want to go all the way with him? Really want it? Well, then, tell him so. Just take a moment in absolute silence to tell the Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole.

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