

At the Pool of Bethesda

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon highlights the contrast between law and grace, and the importance of recognizing Jesus as the source of blessings and humanity's supreme value.

Scripture: Luke 10:25

Topics: "Law And Grace", "Christ's Ministry"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the profound lesson found in John 5:1-15, emphasizing the contrast between law and grace illustrated at the pool of Bethesda. He highlights the inability of man to fulfill the Law's requirements and the misunderstanding between law and grace in the context of the infirm man seeking healing. The sermon explores the significance of recognizing Christ's work and blessings in our lives, even when His presence may go unnoticed, drawing parallels to the unrecognized Christ in the earthly ministry of Jesus and in modern Christendom.

Transcript

(John v:1-15.)

I. The Analysis.

I. This lesson does not fall into divisions, but is one scene, one act. For the spiritual significance of the incident of the lesson see "Heart," &c.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

There is much in this beautiful lesson that presses for the first place in relative importance. Dispensationally, we have, as in the scene by Jacob's Well, law and grace brought into contrast. Perhaps this scene by Bethesda marks even a stronger contrast. Bethesda would have been effectual if only the infirm man could have met the conditions. Alas, the very infirmity which brought him to the pool, kept him from getting down into it.

When the lawyer in Luke x asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus told him to do the Law and he should live; but the Law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," and neither that lawyer nor any other human being save Jesus ever did that for one fraction of a second. The trouble is not with the Law, which is "holy, just and good," but with man who is unholy, unjust and evil. The Law "made nothing perfect" (Heb. vii:19), because

it was "weak through the flesh."

And in many minds law and grace are confused hopelessly just at the point which troubled the infirm man by the pool of Bethesda: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." Galatianized Protestantism teaches that Christ comes to be that missing "man"--that He helps us into the pool. But here He does nothing of the kind. By His own power, He makes the man whole and then sends him away from the pool. Later, meeting him in the temple, He tells him to cease living a sinful life. But this is not the heart of this lesson.

Again, a most striking illustration is here given of the hardening and blinding effects of putting the sense of sacred-ness at the wrong place. With the Jews, as with the Puritans, the Sabbath was the supremely sacred thing; with Jesus Christ, humanity was the supremely sacred thing. All sense of joy in the restoration of the infirm man was swamped by the fear that the Sabbath had been desecrated. It never occurred to them that, in Jesus' phrase, "The Sabbath was made for man"; that man, not institutions, holds the first place in the thought of God. I have known a great evangelist refuse to speak to a crowded meeting, because to reach it he must use a public conveyance on the Lord's Day.

But it seems to me that the deepest thing in this wonderful lesson is in those words of the healed man: "And he that was healed wist not who it was." The unrecognized Christ is in the heart of this lesson. It was the pathetic fact in the earth life of Christ that men were so ready to accept his blessings, so slow to recognize him. It has been the pathetic fact in the history of Christendom. Every distinctive blessing of Christian civilization as distinguished from pagan civilizations, has come directly from Christ, and yet the enormous majority of civilized men to-day do not see that the very things which make life endurable to them are His gifts.

Vastly more pathetic is the fact that to so many of His own who are in the world, He is an unrecognized Christ. Like the Emmaus disciples, we walk with holden eyes, and though He is by our side, we do not know that it is He. Like those disciples, we are puzzled or made sad by His providences, and speak of disappointments of our faith more than of faith's victories.

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