

As They Went

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes that overcoming spiritual stagnation requires active obedience and movement in response to God's call.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Luke 17:11, John 14:15, Galatians 5:16

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches on the theme of stagnation in the Body of Christ, emphasizing the need for action beyond just mental acknowledgment. Using the story of the ten lepers, he illustrates how responding to Jesus' call with our will and body leads to transformation and healing. He highlights the importance of actively obeying God's commands, rather than passively waiting for miraculous changes. The sermon underscores the necessity of aligning our will, actions, and body with God's will to experience His grace and power in our lives.

Transcript

One of the big afflictions in the Body of Christ near and far is stagnation. We usually think of stagnation as a state of mind. But when Jesus deals with our stagnation he addresses two things in us beyond the mind;

- our will, - and our body. Jesus shakes us out of stagnation by calling for a response that has to be made, not merely with the mind, or with the mouth, but with the body. He wants us to do something; in some way to present our bodies as a living, sacrifice to God. We need to rise up, or step forth, or reach out, or fall down. And in the doing of whatever he requires, we come to life. "On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.'

When he saw them he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went they were cleansed." Luke 17:11-14 Notice that the cleansing did not come before they went but as they went. Their going was an act of will manifested in their bodies. It was their way of saying "yes" to Jesus even as he said yes to them. If they had refused to go and show themselves to the priests that would have meant they were saying "no" to their own healing. And that's exactly what many of us are doing.

We say "yes" with our lips but we say "no" with our bodies. Jesus says "go" and we remain sitting. We aren't going to go, until he zaps us. We want the miracle to happen while we're sitting down, but it never will. When the Word of God at the beginning of creation said, "Let there be light," the darkness couldn't

say, "No," it had to obey. - If Jesus says to the storm, "Be still," - if God commands the waters of the Red Sea to part, - they have to obey. Even the demons for all their fury know that when Jesus commands they have no choice.

But when God speaks to a man or woman, that person is free to say, "No." Not once, since the beginning of creation has God ever violated the human will. If there were a button God could press inside you to make you come around to doing exactly what he wants, he'd never press it. If Jesus had stood before those self-righteous Pharisees, and said, "All right, when I count to three you're going to have a good heart," snapped his fingers and sent them on their way in a happy trance, those Pharisees would no longer have been men.

Jesus could have said to Pilate, "Pilate, you are going to release me and you are going to be my disciple from now on," and Pilate could have entered into a hypnotic state that lasted the rest of his life. But what kind of disciple would Pilate have been? He would have been a robot with a devastated mind. Yet many of us are expecting Jesus to do this kind of job on us. We want to be zapped. Woof! And suddenly all our fears are gone. No more temper. No more lust. Not that the power which called forth light out of darkness is unable to work miracles in our hearts, of course he can work miracles in our hearts.

Yes, and in our minds and bodies. But that inrush of life from God will never come to you so long as you sit there like a blob waiting to be struck by divine lightning. - You have to respond to the Voice which calls you from afar. - You have to yield your will to the pull of God's Spirit. - You have to step through the door God opens for you. - You have to walk along the path which is marked by the footprints of Jesus. Don't ever let anyone deceive you into thinking that all you need to do is wait in a sitting position for God to hit you.

You wait for God on your feet, and those feet better be moving. When you see God's glory, fall on your face. But God will soon lift you up with his own hand and he will tell you to go on your way. "But I say walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh....." Galatians 5:16 "If we live in the Spirit let us also walk by the Spirit." Galatians 5:25 (RSV) You sit to eat a meal. You sit to listen to a teaching. You sit to rest. But if the sitting isn't followed by walking with the Lord, you rot.

Your spirit may be seated with Christ in heavenly places, but your flesh-and-blood body is to be presented to God as a living sacrifice which moves, does, acts. Notice as you read the gospels how the vast majority of those pictures of Jesus that are given to us portray him as moving. "On the way to Jerusalem, he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village...." ...action movement. And anyone who wanted to draw near to Jesus had to move too.he was met by ten lepers.

They made sure to be in the place when they would meet Jesus.they stood at a distance (being lepers) and lifted up their voices. Praise God they even put some action into their voices. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. Then one of them when he saw that he was healed turned back" Motion! praising God with a loud voice and fell on his face at Jesus' feet giving him thanks. -With his feet. -With his voice. -With his body.

This man turned himself toward God. - Never mind that he was a Samaritan outside the covenant of Israel, - Never mind that he was the only one who did it, the fact that this man turned his will toward God bodily, brought him into the stream of God's grace. "Rise, go your way, your faith has made you well." The faith that made him well was not a feeling in his heart that gave him chills as he sat and meditated. It was a disposition of his will that expressed itself in bodily motion in God's direction. - He didn't care what the

other lepers did, - he didn't care what bystanders might think, - he only cared about putting himself at the disposal of the One who had shown such mercy to him, body, mind, spirit, voice, eyes, everything.

We often get these tracts which at first glance seem so cleaver: "Religion is Do-- Salvation is Done." Sure it's done! Who can argue about the fact that our salvation is indeed a thing done for us by God. It was all done on the cross. Victory over sin, death, and the devil was done through the blood of the Lamb --- But does this mean we can sit there in idleness until the trumpet blows? The only proof that you have entered into the thing done, is that you start doing. The doing is not to earn our salvation, but that our salvation becomes a reality in our lives.

"Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I command you?" "Not every one who says, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Do this and thou shalt live." "Go and do thou likewise." "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive good or evil according to what he has done in the body." For those reading this who are standing at the door of the Kingdom looking in, the message is that all the essential, difficult things necessary to bring you into relationship with the living God have been done. - Blood has already been shed for your guilt. - Atonement has already been made. - The God-revealing Spirit is closer to you than your face.

Yet, there is something you must do. You must open the door of your heart to God just as God has opened the door of his heart to you. God won't force you to open that door even if, by keeping it closed, you transport yourself right into hell. - You have to confess what's there. - You have to ask the Lord in. Don't sit there waiting for God to strike you with lightning or ram the door open. Get up and move toward the Lord whose arms are stretched out to you, even if it means lifting up your voice or falling on your knees.

Do whatever you need to do to show yourself, and God, that you're opening the door. And then the veil will part and you will begin to see what God has done for you and you will know that you are his child. And for those who are already in the Kingdom yet you know that you're stagnating, the message is that all the essential, difficult things necessary to quicken your mind and make you effective have been done from God's side. There isn't an obstacle in our hearts that can't be dissolved by the blood of the Lamb that's already been shed.

There isn't a blind spot or a dark corner that can't be made as bright as day by God's Spirit. -But for this to happen we have to step into the will of the Lord day-by-day, hour-by-hour. "If you love me you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever." John 14:15-16 In many cases we already know what we have to do. - I have to right that wrong. - I have to ask forgiveness of that sister. - I have to call up that brother. - I have to take money to that family. - I have to turn down that compromise. - I have to break that relationship that has the seed of uncleanness in it. - I have to commit myself to that work or that Body. - I have to pin myself down to God's revealed will.

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 If it should be that there is a believer who really has no idea what step the Lord requires at this point, you can be sure that God will make it clear before the sun goes down again if you will commit yourself to simple child-like doing of the thing he requires. For too long many of us have been sitting disciples instead of walking disciples.

Then we wonder why we have trouble getting guidance. The Lord says to us, "Get up and start walking under this yoke with me, and I will teach you how to walk in the Spirit, how to do the will of God." On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance and lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." When he saw them he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went they were cleansed. The Lord is telling each of us to do something, and in the doing of it we too will receive his life.

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