



BIBLE RADIO PRODUCTIONS

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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A1621 ~ A Cripple Healed at Bethesda.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

Early in the last century, a young woman was playing the piano at a family gathering. Someone decided to play a practical joke on the woman. They pulled the piano stool she was sitting on out from under her and she fell heavily on the floor. The woman's spine was injured and she was never able to walk again. But the woman never let this unfortunate accident stop her from attending church, teaching Sunday School or even doing things like cleaning the floor in the house that she shared with her mother. People helped her and her folding wheelchair wherever she needed to go.

The crippled man in today's Bible Adventure lived in Jesus' time when there were no wheelchairs. He had to be carried from place to place by a team of relatives and friends. Although crippled for 38 years, the man kept his hopes of a cure for his legs alive by spending a lot of time beside the pool at the Temple's Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. This pool was called 'Bethesda', meaning 'compassion' or 'mercy'.

It is recorded in John's Gospel, Chapter 5, that God showed mercy to the sick people lying around the pool. Periodically, an angel came down and stirred up the water. The first person to get into the stirred pool was healed of whatever sickness or health problem they had. The crippled man, however, had no one to help him get into the pool after the angel stirred up the waters. So he always remained near it, crippled and unhealed.

Why would the Lord Jesus ask a man who had suffered for 38 years if he wanted to get well? The crippled man was earnest in his desire to walk and so Jesus healed him. The man obeyed Jesus' instructions to pack up his bedding and carry it away from the pool. He wasn't going to lie there again.

It wasn't long before the healed man was in trouble. There were very strict rules held by the religious leaders about what could and couldn't be done on the Sabbath day. Not only were there big limits on what things could be carried, but the priests had also set a limit on the distance a person could walk. There were just so many rules it was difficult to comply with them all. This made the weekly rest day for focusing on God a real misery.

Some of the religious leaders' rules were very extreme. For example, they taught that if a house caught on fire on the Sabbath, its inhabitants couldn't carry their clothes out of the house and spare them from the flames because that would be bearing a burden. However, they were allowed to put on all the layers of clothing that they could wear and thus remove the clothes by wearing them, which was acceptable. Another teaching was that women were forbidden to look into a mirror on the Sabbath, because they might see a gray hair and pull it out, and that would constitute work.

Sabbath enforcers didn't care that a man who had been crippled for 38 years had been healed. Their focus on rules blinded them to Jesus' miracle. They wanted to know who told the healed man to break one of their rules. But the healed man didn't know the answer. But later, the man spoke with Jesus in the Temple. Jesus warned the man not to sin any more or something worse might happen to him. Yet the man went and told the Jewish authorities who had healed him.

Once again, the Lord Jesus was in confrontation with the Jewish rulers. He was breaking down their man-made laws. He showed the people that the rules needn't be obeyed in the legalistic way that the priests demanded. Jesus instead followed His heavenly Father's example of doing good on a rest day.

'Sabbath' means a God-designated time of rest and ceasing from normal work. The word 'Sabbath', apart from the 7th day, also denoted special days within an appointed feast. It could also refer to the 7th year of a 7-year-cycle or the Jubilee year as the 50th year after a 49-year-cycle.

In Luke's Gospel, Chapter 13, Jesus healed a woman who'd been sick for 18 years. A leader of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had done this and said that people should only come to be cured on the six days of the week when work ought to be done. Jesus reminded the leader that even the law enforcers went to their donkey's or ox's stall, loosened its rope and led it out for a drink on the Sabbath day. Jesus wanted to know why this woman, as a daughter of Abraham, shouldn't be loosened from her sickness on the Sabbath too. The officials who opposed Jesus were put to shame with Jesus' healing of the woman, because the Israelite people rejoiced over all the good things Jesus had done and was doing among them.

In the next chapter of Luke, Jesus was invited to a meal in one of the leading Pharisees' house. A man suffering from fluid retention was there in front of Jesus, hoping to be healed. Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees there at that time if it was lawful and right to cure someone on the Sabbath or not? They remained silent.

They didn't believe it was right but were afraid of the people's revolt if they stopped Jesus from doing so. Jesus thus healed the man and sent him on his way. Jesus then asked the religious leaders present, which of them, if they had a son or a donkey fallen into a well, wouldn't pull it out at once on the Sabbath day. And again, no one answered him because they all knew they would.

Sometimes, people think their health problem is a judgment from God. If they've abused their bodies by not taking good care of themselves, they may need to live with the consequences of reduced health and strength. Others living in sin, including believers, are told in God's Word that God will not necessarily bless them with good health and long life if they persist in choosing to sin. In John's Gospel, Chapter 9, Jesus' own disciples asked Him about a man born blind. "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?" But Jesus told them neither in this case but that God's work of goodness and restoration would be displayed in the healing of this blind man.

Although again it was a Sabbath day, Jesus made mud using His spit and spread it like ointment over the blind man's eyes. Then Jesus sent him to wash in a specific pool in Jerusalem. The man did so and came back seeing. He told the Pharisees how he had received his sight. Some of them told the healed man that Jesus wasn't from God, because He doesn't observe the Sabbath. But others wanted to know how a bad man could do such signs and miracles. As a result, there was a difference of opinion among the people.

The man born blind but who was now cured as well as his parents were intensely questioned about his healing by the Pharisees. The leaders had previously agreed that anyone who acknowledged Jesus to be Christ would be expelled and excluded from the synagogue. And they put the healed man out and banned him from returning. When Jesus heard of this, He found to the man and explained Who He was. Then the man believed on Jesus and worshipped Him. Like this man and even today, any person wanting physical or spiritual healing can also ask the Lord Jesus to be their Saviour.

On another Sabbath day, Jesus and His disciples were walking along beside fields of standing grain. The disciples were hungry and began picking some of the grains. The

Pharisees watched and complained to Jesus that His disciples were doing unlawful things on the Sabbath. This incident is recorded in Mark's Gospel, Chapter 2. Jesus gave them the answer: "The Sabbath was made on account and for the sake of man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man (that's Jesus) is Lord even of the Sabbath." The Sabbath wasn't to be a burden but actually to be a blessing for people.

The Pharisees and rulers made life really difficult for Jesus after His healing of the man crippled for 38 years. Jesus identified Himself as being God's Son and the leaders considered this blasphemy and punishable by death.

In Mark's Gospel, Chapter 2, a paralysed man on his sleeping mat was carried by four friends to see Jesus when He was teaching in a house.

When the men couldn't get the helpless man even close to the door because the large crowd had gathered there, they climbed up the outside stairs and broke open a hole in the roof. The men then lowered the paralysed man down right in front of Jesus and the important other people near Him.

When Jesus saw the faith of the man's friends, He told the paralysed man that his sins were forgiven. The penalties for him sinning and the resulting guilt were removed, with the man now made into right standing with God. Some of the scribes sitting in the house discussed this among themselves and claimed it to be blasphemy. Only God could forgive sins. And who was this Jesus to think that He could too?

Jesus knew what these scribes were debating. So He asked them which was easier to say: “Your sins are forgiven; or, rise, and take up your mat and walk.” They didn’t answer Him. Jesus then told the scribes that they would now know for sure that He, the Son of Man, had the right and authority and the power on earth to forgive sins: Jesus told the paralysed man to rise, pick up his mat and go home. And the man did just that. He rose, picked up his mat and pushed his way through the large crowd. All the people there were amazed at this healing and gave thanks to God.

The scribes and Pharisees had two major complaints against Jesus. One, He never attempted to keep their man-made laws, which to them were the most important thing. And two, Jesus claimed that He was equal with God. His miracles proved this but they were too spiritually blind to see that people are more important to God than man-made traditions and rules. The leaders wanted their traditions kept more than to see a fellow human relieved of his or her suffering. They didn’t acknowledge Jesus’ love and kindness to the helpless. In their spiritual blindness, these leaders had forgotten the more important things to God like justice, love and mercy.

When Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt and prepared them to enter God’s Promised Land, they refused to trust God at the time for the promised victory over the people already living in it. Their unbelief kept them out of God’s rest and so they died in the wilderness.

For the Christian, Jesus is our rest, or Sabbath. We rest in Christ in faith and obedience and His finished work on the cross for our salvation. In Hebrews, Chapter 4, it says: “There is still awaiting a full and complete Sabbath-rest reserved for the true people of God ... Let us therefore be zealous and exert ourselves and strive for ourselves, that no one may fall or perish by the same kind of unbelief and disobedience, into which those in the wilderness fell.”

Take note: throughout history, there've been people who objected to seeing good deeds done for God. They've stirred up trouble against those godly workers. But we must remember that when times seem very tough, God is always in control. There's no need to despair. In Psalm 37, it says: "Trust in the Lord and do good."

This week's verse to remember is Psalm 37, Verse 4: "Delight yourself in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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