

“Arise, Take Up Your Bed and Walk!” – by Rt. Rev. Bradley D. Heinrichs

Lesson 1 – John 5:1-14.

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

5 Now a certain man was there who had a sickness thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made 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 bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath....

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

Lesson 2 – Joshua 7:1-13.

1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass..., for Achan...took of the accursed things; so the anger of Jehovah burned against the sons of Israel.

2 Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai..., and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the land...."

3 And they returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai..., for the people of Ai are few."

4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men;... therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

6 Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of Jehovah until evening, he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads.

7 And Joshua said, "Alas, Lord Jehovih, why have You brought this people over the Jordan at all; to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? Oh, that we had been content, and dwelt on the other side of the Jordan!"

8 "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?..."

10 So Jehovah said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?"

11 "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived...."

12 Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you.

13 "Get up, sanctify the people."

Lesson 3 – Apocalypse Explained 163:7.

The Lord saying to the sick, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk," signifies doctrine, and a life according thereto; "bed" signifies doctrine, and "to walk" life. "The sick man" signifies those that have transgressed and sinned.

Lesson 3 – Apocalypse Explained 248:3.

Nothing is lacking that a person may be reformed if he wishes to be; for all the means of reformation have been given to man in his freedom; but it should be well known that this freedom is from the Lord, and that the Lord effects reformation thereby, provided man, from the freedom that is given to everyone, receives. There must absolutely be reception on the part of man.

Lesson 3 – Apocalypse Explained 616:2.

He who believes that Divine Truths and Goods flow into man apart from such an ability to react or reciprocate, is much deceived, for this would be to let the hands hang down, and to wait for immediate influx.... In brief, action and reaction constitute all conjunction, and in action and mere passiveness there is no conjunction; for when the... active flows into the merely...passive, it passes through and is dissipated, for the passive yields and retires; but when the...active flows into a passive that is also a reactive, then they join together and the two remain conjoined.

“Jesus said to him, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.” (John 5:8-9).

- **Introduction.**

- A. These words spoken by Jesus to the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda are very simple and straight forward. Ultimately the man was healed and later on he made it known Jesus Christ had healed him.
 1. Most of us feel some degree of compassion towards this poor man who lay seemingly helpless by the pool. But one of the key points to the story that is often overlooked is the question that Jesus asked of the paralytic. ***“Do you want to be made well?”***
 2. As we look back on 2024 and all the chaos and misery that seemed to wrap the globe, and we are looking forward to a better 2025 and setting new goals and resolutions for ourselves, we would be wise to think how we would answer that question.
 3. ***“Do you want to be made well?”*** What the Lord was trying to do here was to get to the heart of matter – namely what attitude did the crippled man possess?

- **Background.**

- A. In order to get some idea of his attitude, let’s look at the details of the story.
 - a. ***“Do you want to be made well?”*** This really was the pertinent question. To which the man answered that someone else always beat him into the water. But think about it. In 38 years, this man could not get down to the edge of the pool and flip himself in? Surely, if he really had wanted to be healed he could have found a way to get into the healing waters. Surely in 38 years, one person would have helped him if he had asked.
 - b. So the Lord gave Him a simple directive to heal himself, ***‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’*** Likewise, He told Joshua, to ***‘Get up,’*** from off his face.

- **Taking Up our Beds.**

- a. In order to understand this we need to know what beds and walking in the Word symbolize.
- b. A ***“a bed” signifies doctrine..., for as the body rests in its bed, so does the mind rest in its doctrine.*** (AR 137). Therefore, the bed that the man in this story rested upon, symbolizes doctrine drawn from the truths of the Word that he was to meditate on.
- c. But notice – he was not to just continue lying there, resting upon those truths of doctrine – he was to take up his bed. Truths that are merely reflected upon with no thought as to how they may be applied to life, stay only in the memory for a short period of time and do not produce the necessary changes needed for spiritual healing. **EG.** The Golden Rule heals self-centeredness.
- d. So he was instructed to take up his bed and walk. Walking in the Word symbolizes a life according to the doctrine of truth drawn from the Word. This is the simple reality about the nature of the Lord’s healing truths – they only work if you use them. All the truths you might learn about marriage in the book Conjugal Love will do nothing to improve your marriage unless you use them and live according to them. Natural areas this is true too: **EG.** Weight loss – exercise, dieting. Quitting smoking, etc.
- e. So back to the story of the paralytic. The issue wasn’t whether or not he had the necessary truths to cure himself. He was right next to the healing waters of the pool but he neglected to make use of that water – half-heartedly saying he couldn’t get in. He had his bed – truth of doctrine drawn from the Word but he was just lounging around on it, not living according to it.
- f. So the Lord realized that it was really his attitude, not a lack of truth, that was preventing him from being healed. Often this is the same for us in the New Church, because most times we know the necessary truths, but they don’t seem to change us or heal us. So the Lord asked him to reflect on that basic question: ***“Do you want to be made well?”***

- **Self Pity and Martyrdom.**

- a. Probably all of us can think of someone who fits this description. Wallowing in self-misery, a person who is the classic martyr. They seem to thrive on and almost enjoy the pity they receive from others and seem content to stay in that wretched state rather than trying to move forward with their lives in a positive direction. **EG.** Eeyore.
- b. Now here is where we must stop. Because while it might be easy for us to picture someone else who fits that description, the real point is that on one level the stories in the Word are describing us!
- c. Probably all of us at some point in our lives have been in a similar state of self-pity. Where everything seems to be going wrong, just one bad thing after another, and instead of pulling up our bootstraps and forging ahead – we would rather just throw up our hands in despair and say there is nothing we can do anyway to make things any better.
- d. Often when we do this, we get plenty of attention and pity from others, and we find ourselves enjoying that attention, so we continue to play the martyr and milk it for all it's worth. Think of the sick husband being doted upon by his wife!

- **Hands Hanging Down.**

A. The point of our third lessons was that we can't just let our hands hang down and await a magical influx from the Lord to heal us.

- a. The reason has to do with the precious gift the Lord has given us which is the ability to choose freely according to our reason. (1st law of DP).
- b. This gift gives us the ability to experience life, love, and thought as our own. In the Writings for the New Church this is called the AS OF SELF. **E.G.** Joshua – Get Up!
- c. As our third lesson pointed out, the Lord has given us all the necessary tools we needed to work on our regeneration and consequent salvation. But we must use these tools.
- d. With this gift – the AS OF SELF – comes responsibility. We must take positive action in order for the Lord to work within us. A wonderful passage from TCR makes this point crystal clear: *“A person ought to purify himself from evils and not wait for the Lord to do this without his cooperation. Otherwise, he would be like a servant, going to his master, with his face and clothes befouled with soot or dung, and saying, “Lord, wash me.” Would not his master answer him, “You foolish servant, what are you saying? See, here are water, soap, and a towel; have you not hands of your own and the power to use them? Wash yourself.” And so the Lord God will say, “These means of purification are from Me; and your ability to will and do are also from Me; therefore use these My gifts and endowments as your own, and you will be purified.”* (TCR 436). We must participate in our own cleansing and salvation, we can't remain merely passive. **“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good.”** (Isaiah 1:16-17). The 2nd law of Divine Providence – as we shun evils in the external, the Lord can remove the desire for the evil in our internals.
- e. The Lord, it is true, is the Active force working to reform and regenerate us by means of His Divine Truth, but we must receive that Truth into ourselves and REACT to it. If we are merely passive in our spiritual reformation standing like a statute, then His wonderful truths are not received and lived, and as a result they have no healing power.
- f. So the Lord says that He stand at the door and knocks, and knocks, and knocks... until when? Until the person hears His voice gets up of his lazy-boy recliner and opens the door! Our part in our salvation is a small part – but it is a critical part – we must participate in our own regeneration. As one seventh grader put it – the Lord can only help those who are willing to help themselves. **EG.** Man in flood waiting to be saved – passes on raft, motorboat, & helicopter.
- g. Once we open the door and invite the Lord in, by trying our best to take the truth that we know and live according to it, then the Lord can work wonders in our life.

- **Conclusion.**

A. As you look ahead to 2025 and reflect on what you would like to do better in the year ahead, perhaps like many you can begin to feel down on yourself and in despair about some particular evil you have not been able to rid yourself of. Instead of being overly discouraged, take a moment and remember this story of the paralytic lying by the pool for 38 years, and ask yourself this question: **“Do you want to be made well?”** Wallowing in misery about your tragic plight won’t fix things, but positive action will go much farther in allowing the Lord to work within you. This does not mean that we don’t need outside help from others at times (man in flood with helicopter), and of course we need the Lord at all times, but it means He needs us to keep trying!

- a. Heed his call to take up your bed and walk. Make a concerted effort to live according to the truths you know and see how much positive change the Lord can bring about.
- b. All of us are prone to self-pity. Even the mighty warrior Joshua, when Israel was defeated by the men of Ai, lay down and bemoaned his fate, and the Lord’s words to him were: **“Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face?”** (Joshua 7:10).
- c. The message is clear and consistent throughout Scripture, when we are in times of trial, we must not cave and give up, but pull up our bootstraps and march on one small step at a time, and if we do so we will find that the Lord will pick us up and carry us to victory.
- d. So let us make sure we use that AS OF SELF the Lord has given us, and when He stands at the door and knocks waiting to be received, let’s take that small bit of initiative and open the door so that He can come in and replace our misery with the joy of heaven. And if collectively the people on this planet have the same positive “can do” attitude then the Lord will surely bring healing in 2025, even as he did for the man suffering for 38 years, when he said: **“Arise, take up your bed and walk. And immediately the man was made well.”** Amen

Prayers:

O Lord God our Savior Jesus Christ, inspire us to wash ourselves and make ourselves clean, by putting away the evil our doings from before Your eyes. Give us the strength to cease from doing evil and the wisdom to learn to do good, so the scarlet stains of our sins may become whiter than snow.

O Lord we wish to be made well, stir us up, and motivate us to be cleansed in the healing waters of truth springing forth from Your Word. Amen.

Isaiah 1:16-18 & John 5:4-7

O Lord Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer, do not leave us or forsake us as we strive to rid ourselves of the evils that assail us. Help us to get up from off our faces and remove those evils that cause us misery from our lives. Help us to arise, take up our bed and follow you in a life according to Your commandments. For only by us taking some initiative can we allow you to come in and heal us with the cleansing waters of Your Divine Truth. Amen. Joshua 7:10-13 & John 5:6