

The Work of Grace the Warrant for Obedience

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that the transformative work of Christ's grace is the firm foundation and compelling motivation for a believer's obedient life.

Scripture: John 5:11, Luke 6:35-36, Matthew 28:19, John 3:16, Luke 6:27-28

Topics: "Grace", "Obedience", "Faith"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the story of the man healed at Bethesda to reveal how the work of Christ's grace serves as both the justification and motivation for Christian obedience. Spurgeon emphasizes that even a simple, experiential knowledge of Jesus as Savior is sufficient to compel a life of faithful obedience. He challenges believers to rely on the authority of Christ's work rather than human judgment or criticism. This message encourages Christians to embrace grace as the foundation for their walk with God.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." John 5:11.

(On behalf of the Mansion House Fund for the Hospitals of London).

JUST a few observations upon the narrative itself. It was a feast day and Jesus Christ came up to Jerusalem to find opportunities for doing good among the crowds of His countrymen. I see all the city glad; I hear the voice of rejoicing in every house as they hold high festival and eat the fat and drink the sweet. But where does Jesus keep the feast? How does He spend His holiday? He walks among the poor, whom He loves so well. Behold Him in the hospital! There was one notable Bethesda or house of mercy in Jerusalem—it was a poor provision for the city's abounding sickness, but such as it was, it was greatly prized. There was a pool which every now and then was stirred by an angel's wing and worked an occasional cure. Around it charitable persons had built five porches and there, on the cold stone steps, a number of blind and crippled and withered folk were lying, each one upon his own wretched pallet, waiting for the moving of the waters.

There were the weary children of pain, fainting, while others were feasting. They were racked with pain amid general rejoicing. They were sighing amid universal singing! Our Lord was at home amid this mercy,

for here was room for His tender heart and powerful hands. He feasted His soul by doing good. Let us learn this lesson, dear Friends, that in the times of our brightest joys we should remember the sorrowful and find a still higher joy in doing them good. It well becomes us in proportion as a day is gladsome to ourselves, to make it so to the sick and poor around us. Let us keep the feast by sending portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, for, otherwise, the famishing may bring a curse upon our feasting.

When we are prospered in business, let us set aside a portion for the poor. When we are full of health and strength, let us remember those to whom these privileges are denied and aid those who minister to them. Blessed shall they be who, like the Lord Jesus, visit the sick and care for them. Coming into the hospital, our Lord noticed a certain man whose case was a very sad one. There were many painful cases there, but He singled out this man and it would seem that the reason for His choice was that the poor creature was in the worst plight of all. If misery has a claim on pity, then the greater the sufferer the more is mercy attracted towards him. This poor victim of rheumatism or paralysis had been bound 38 years by his infirmity!

Let us hope there was no worse case on all Bethesda's porches! Thirty-eight years is more than half the appointed period of human life! One year of pain or paralysis has a weary length of torture about it, but think of thirty-eight! We may well pity the man who endures the pangs of rheumatism even for an hour—but how shall we sufficiently pity him who has not been free from it for hard on 40 years? Even if the case were not one of pain, but of paralysis, the inability to work and the consequent poverty of so many years were, by no means, a small evil. Our Lord, then, selects the worst case to be dealt with by His curing hands as a type of what He often does in the kingdom of Grace—and as a lesson of prudence to us—instructing us to give our first aid to those who are first in point of need.

The man whom Jesus healed was by no means an attractive character. Our Savior said to him, when he was healed, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto you," from which it is not an improbable inference that his first infirmity had come upon him by deed of vice or course of excess. In some way or other he had been guilty of that which brought upon his body the suffering which he was enduring. Now, it is considered generally to be a point beyond all dispute that we should help the worthy but should refuse the worthless—that when a man brings a calamity upon himself by wrong doing—we are justified in letting him suffer that he may reap what he has sown.

This cold Pharisaic idea is very congenial to minds which are bent upon saving their coins! It springs up in many hearts, or rather in places where hearts ought to be, and it is generally regarded as if it were a rule of prudence which it would be sinful to dispute—an infallible and universal axiom. Now, I venture to say that our Savior never taught us to confine our alms to the deserving! He would never have bestowed the grand alms of Grace on any one of us if He had carried out that rule! And if you and I had received no more at the hands of God than we deserved, we should not have been in this house of prayer! We cannot afford to cramp our charity into a sort of petty justice and sour our almsgiving into a miniature law court. When a man is suffering let us pity him, however the suffering has come.

When a man had been in misery so long as 38 years, it was time that his infirmity should be more considered than his iniquity and that his present sorrow should be thought upon more than his former folly. So Jesus thought and, therefore, He came to the sinner, not with reproach, but with restoration! He saw his disease rather than his depravity and gave him pity instead of punishment. Our God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil—be you, therefore, merciful as your Father, also, is merciful. Remember how our Lord said, "Pray for them that despitefully use you, that you may be the children of your Father which

is in Heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

Let us imitate Him in this and wherever there is pain and sorrow let it be our joy to relieve it. In addition to the supposition that this man had, at some time, been grossly guilty, it seems pretty clear from the text that he was a poor, shiftless, discouraged, inanimate, stupid sort of person. He had never managed to get into the pool, though others had done so who were as infirm as himself. He had never been able to win a friend or secure a helper, though from the extreme length of his infirmity one would have thought that at some period or another he might have found a man to place him in the pool when the angel gave it the mystic stir.

The Savior's asking him, "Do you want to be made whole?" leads us to think that he had fallen into such a listless, despairing, heart-sick condition that though he was daily at the edge of the pool as a matter of habit, he had not only ceased to hope, but had almost ceased to wish! Our Lord touched the chord which was most likely to respond, namely, his will and desire to be made whole—but the response was a very feeble one. His answer shows what a poor creature he was, for there is not a beam of hope in it, or even of desire—it is a wail, a hopeless dirge, a grievous complaint—"I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool and while I am coming, another steps down before me."

But the utter imbecility and lack of brains of the poor creature is most seen in the fact that like a simpleton he went to Christ's enemies and told them that it was Jesus that had made him whole! I am sure there was no malice in his thus informing our Lord's enemies, for if there had been, he would have said, "It was Jesus who bade me take up my bed," whereas he worded it thus, "It was Jesus which had made him whole." I hardly dare, however, to hope, as some do, that there was much gratitude about this testimony, though, doubtless, the poor soul was grateful. I conceive that his long endurance of pain, acting upon a weak mind, had brought him to an almost imbecile state of mind, so that he spoke without thought.

Our Lord did not, therefore, require much of him. He did not even ask for a distinct acknowledgement of faith from him, but only for that small measure of it which might be implied in his answering the question, "Do you want to be made whole?" This poor man evinced none of the shrewdness of the man born blind who answered the Pharisees so keenly—he was of quite another type and could do no more than state his own case to Jesus. Thank God, even that was enough for our Lord to work with! The Lord Jesus saves people of all sorts. He has among His disciples men of quick and ready wit who can baffle their opponents, but quite as often—

"He takes the fool and makes him know

The wonders of His dying love:

To bring aspiring wisdom low,

And all its pride reprove."

So here He chose this poor simpleton of a creature and worked a great marvel upon him, to the exceeding praise of His condescending Grace. Note well that this man's mind, though there was not much of it, was all engrossed and filled up with the fact that he had been made whole. Jesus, to him, was, "He that made me whole." Of the person of Jesus he knew next to nothing, for he had only seen Him for an instant and then he didn't know that it was Jesus. His one idea of Jesus was, "He that made me whole."

Now, beloved Brothers and Sisters, this was natural in his case and it will be equally natural in our own. Even when the saved ones are more intelligent and of larger mind than this poor paralytic, they must still chiefly think of the Son of God as their Savior—as He that made them whole. If I do not know much about the Lord, yet I do know that He has saved me! I was burdened with guilt and full of woes and could not rest day nor night until He gave me peace. If I cannot tell anything much concerning the glory of His Person, His attributes, His relationships, His offices, or His work, yet I can say, "one thing I know, whereas I was blinded by error, now I see! Whereas I was paralyzed by sin, I am now able to stand upright and walk in His ways."

This poor soul knew the Lord experimentally and that is the best way of knowing Him. Actual contact with Him yields a surer knowledge and a truer knowledge than all the reading in the world. In the kingdom of Christ wonderful facts transpire, such as conversion and finding peace with God—and happy are they to whom these facts are personal experiences! When men are turned from the error of their ways and when their heart finds rest and peace in Christ, great deeds are done by the Lord Jesus. And if you are acquainted with these two things, even though you should be ignorant of a great deal else, be not afraid of exaggerating their importance, but set your mind on them and call Jesus by that name—"He that made me whole."

Think of Him under that aspect and you will have a very valuable and influential idea of Him. You shall see greater things than these, but for the present let these happy and sure facts be much upon your mind, even as his being made whole was upon this man's mind. As for the quibbling Pharisees, you observe that they took no notice of the glorious fact of the man's cure—they willfully ignored what Christ had done and they fell full swoop upon that little insignificant circumstance that it had been done on the Sabbath! And then they spent all their thoughts and emotions upon that side issue. They say nothing of the man's being restored, but they rage because he carried his bed on the Sabbath!

It is much the same with the men of the world in this day. They habitually ignore the fact of conversion. If they do not deny it, they look upon it as being a trifle—a matter not worth caring about. Though they see the harlot made chaste, the thief made honest, the profane made devout, the despairing made joyful and other moral and spiritual changes of the utmost practical value, they forget all this and they attack some peculiar point of doctrine, or mode of speech, or diversity of manner and raise a storm concerning these!

Is it because the facts, themselves, if fairly looked at, would establish what they do not care to believe? The fact that Christianity is doing marvels in the world, such as nothing else ever did, they persistently forget. But that fact is just what you and I must as persistently remember! We must dwell upon what Christ has, by His Holy Spirit, worked within our nature by renewing us in the spirit of our minds. And we must make this work of Grace a fountain of argument which shall establish our faith and justify our conduct. This poor man did so! He did not know much else, but that he had been made whole he did know—and from that fact he justified himself in what he had done.

"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." This is the Truth of God which I want to enlarge upon this morning—first, by saying that the work of Christ furnishes us with a justification for our obedience to His commands—"He that made me whole, the same said unto me"—that is our complete justification for what we do! In the second place, the work of Jesus Christ throws upon us an obligation to do what He bids us—if He that made me whole says to me, "Take up your bed and walk," I am bound to do it and I ought to feel the obligation of His goodness pressing upon me. And, in the third place, it is not only a justification and an obligation, but the deed of Grace becomes a constraint to

obedience—He that said unto me, "rise," and so made me whole, by that same word of power made me take up my bed and walk!

The power which saves us also moves us to obey our Savior. Not with our own might do we fulfill the will of our Lord, but with power which the Healer gives us in the same hour. You see the drift, therefore, of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit lead us into the power of this Truth, for I am persuaded that a sense of the Lord's work within us is a great force and should be excited and applied to the highest ends.

I. First, then, this is our JUSTIFICATION for what we do when we obey Christ. This poor man could not defend the action of taking up his bed and walking, for his enemies were learned in the Law and he was not. You and I could defend it very easily, for it seems to us a very proper thing to do under the circumstances. The weight of his bed was not much more than that of an ordinary great coat, it was a simple rug or mat upon which he was lying—there really was no violation of God's Law of the Sabbath and, therefore, there was nothing to excuse.

But the Rabbis laid down rules of which I will give you but one specimen—"It is unlawful to carry a handkerchief loose in the pocket"—but if you pin it to your pocket or tie it round your waist as a belt, you may carry it anywhere because it becomes a part of your dress. To my unsophisticated mind it would have seemed that the pin increased the ponderous burden and so there was the weight of the pin more than was necessary! This was quite a weighty business according to Rabbinical estimates. The most of the Rabbinical regulations with regard to the Sabbath were absolutely ludicrous, but this poor man was not in a position to say so or even to think so, for, like the rest of his countrymen, he stood in awe of the scribes and doctors.

These learned Pharisees and priests were too much revered for this poor creature to answer them in their own manner, so he did what you and I must always do when we are at all puzzled—he hid behind the Lord Jesus and pleaded, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed." That was quite enough for him and he quoted it as if he felt that it ought to be enough for those who questioned him. Truly it ought to have been so! I may not be able to find in my own knowledge and ability an authority equal to the authority of learned unbelievers, but my personal experience of the power of Grace will stand me in as good a stead as this man's cure was to him. He argued that there must be in the man who made him whole enough authority to match the greatest possible rabbi that ever lived!

Even his poor feeble mind could grasp that and, surely, you and I may do the same—we can defend ourselves behind the breastwork of our Savior's gracious work—and the consequent authority which belongs to Him. There are certain ordinances to which a Christian man is bound to attend, about which the world raises a storm of questions. The world does not take notice that this man was once a drunk and has, through Divine Grace, become sober and so has become a good father, a good husband and a good citizen. It lets that miracle pass by unheeded—but if he is going to be baptized, they at once object to the ordinance!

Or if he is going to join a Christian Church they straightway jeer at him as a Presbyterian, or a Methodist—as if it matters what sort of name they give him—so long as he is a better man than themselves, is redeemed from sin, taught to be upright, chaste and pure in the sight of God. The work of Grace counts for nothing with them, but just the peculiarity of sect, or the peculiarity of religious rite is made a world of. Blind creatures to despise the medicine which heals because of the bottle which contains it, or the label by which it is named! However, our answer is, "He that made us whole," the same gave us a

command and by that command we will abide. We seek no justification but this—that He who worked a miracle of Grace upon us bade us do it.

What if I am about to be baptized as a Believer? The same that said, "Believe," said, "Be baptized." He who gave me salvation, the same said, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Over against all objections we set the Divine authority of Jesus Christ! He by whose blood we are cleansed and by whose Spirit we are renewed is Lord and Lawgiver to us! His precept is our sufficient guarantee. If we go to the Communion Table and revilers say, "What is the use of eating a piece of bread and drinking a drop of wine? Why think so solemnly of so small a matter?" We reply, He that made us whole, the same said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." We renounce what He has not ordained, but we cling to His statutes.

If He had commanded a rite still more trivial, or a ceremony still more open to objection in the eyes of carnal man, we would make no further apology than this—He who has created us anew, given us a hope of Heaven and led us to seek after perfect holiness—He has bid us do it. This is our final reply and although we could find other justifications, they would be superfluous. This stands for our defense—the Savior commands it! The same apology applies to all the doctrines of the Gospel. I say again, ungodly men will not admit, or if they admit it they ignore it, that the Gospel works a marvelous change in men's hearts. If they need proof, we can find them instances by the hundreds and by the thousands of the reclaiming, elevating and purifying power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

The Gospel is daily working spiritual miracles, but this they forget—and they go on to find fault with its peculiar doctrines. Justification by faith they frequently quarrel with. "Well now," they say, "that is a shocking doctrine! If you teach men that they are to be saved by faith, alone, and not by their works, of course they will lead loose lives! If you continually declare that salvation is of Grace, alone, and not of merit, the inevitable result will be that men will sin that Grace may abound." We find a complete answer to this calumny in the fact that Believers in justification by faith and in the Doctrines of Grace are among the best and purest of men—and in fact these Truths work holiness!

But we do not care to argue thus. We prefer to remind our adversaries that He who has caused us to be regenerate men, Himself taught us that whoever believes in Him shall be saved and expressly declared that he that believes in Him has everlasting life. By the mouth of His servant, Paul, He has said that by Grace are men saved through faith and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God! He has also told us that by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified and He has bid us declare that "the just shall live by faith." He who is daily, by His Gospel, turning men from sin to holiness has given this for the sum total of the Gospel we are to preach—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

If this Gospel does not make men better and change their evil natures, you may question it if you like, and we do not wonder that you should—but while it continues its purifying work we shall not blush or stammer when we declare the doctrines which are its essence and life! Our regeneration proves to us our Lord's authority and upon that we are prepared to base our creed. To us the best of evidence is His work within us and in that evidence we place implicit faith. The same applies to all the precepts which the Christian is called upon to obey. For instance, if he is true to his colors, he keeps himself aloof from all the sinful pleasures, practices and policies of the world in which others take delight and, consequently, the ungodly world says that he is peculiar, precise and self-opinionated.

This is the answer for all Christians—"He that made us whole, the same said to us. 'You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Come you out from among them and be you separate, touch not the

unclean thing and I will receive you.'" If you follow the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ you may meet all charges of peculiarity by urging the supremacy of the Savior whose power has made you a new creature! Where His Word is, there is a power to which we bow at once! It is not ours to question our Savior, but to obey Him! We are cleansed by His blood! We are redeemed by His death! We live by His life and, therefore, are not ashamed to take up His Cross and follow Him. This apology ought to suffice even those who oppose us, for if they felt as grateful as we do, they would also obey. They ought, at any rate, to say, "We cannot blame these men for doing as Jesus bids them because He has done so much for them."

Surely the poor man who had been paralyzed 38 years could not be blamed for obeying the command of One who, in a moment, restored him to health and strength! If he became His servant for life, who would censure him? Who would say that he too tamely submitted? Should not such a Benefactor exert a boundless influence over him? What could be more natural and proper?

Now, you unconverted people must excuse us, if we, in obedience to our Lord Jesus, do many things which, to you, seem very peculiar, for though we would not needlessly offend, we cannot please you at the risk of displeasing our Lord. We do not owe so much to you as we owe to Him! We do not owe so much to the whole world as we owe to the Lord Jesus! In fact, truth to tell, we do not feel that we owe anything to the world! The time past suffices us to have worked the will of the Gentiles, for when we are asked the question, "What fruit had you, then, in those things whereof you are now ashamed?" We have to confess that we had no fruit, except the sour grapes which set our teeth on edge. Like the shipmen who put out to sea against Paul's advice, our only gain has been loss and damage!

In serving the world, we found the labor wearisome and the wages death. But as for our Lord Jesus, we owe Him everything and so you must excuse us if we try to follow Him in everything. It seems to us that this is an excuse which you ought to accept from us as covering the whole ground—but if you refuse it we are not at all dismayed, for it quite suffices us, yes, more than suffices us—it makes us glory in what we do! Does Jesus command? Then it is ours to obey! Objectors may say, concerning one of His ordinances, it is unsuitable to the climate, it is indecent, it is needless, it is I do not know what—all this is no concern of ours—if Jesus bade us do it, His command stands for us in the place of reasoning! He who made us whole, gives us sufficient excuse for obedience in that very fact.

"Oh, but it is contrary to what the fathers teach and to what the Church teaches." We care not the snap of our finger for all the fathers and all the churches under Heaven if they go contrary to what our Lord teaches—for they did not make us whole and we are not under obligation to them as we are to Him! The authority of Jesus is supreme because it is from His lips that we received the Word which healed the sickness of our sin. This satisfies our conscience, now, and it will do so amid the solemnities of death! How can we make a mistake if we follow the Words of Jesus in all things? My Brethren, we can plead His precepts as our guarantee at the Last Great Day before the Judge of the quick and the dead! What better plea can we have than this, "You did make us whole and You did bid us do this"?

Such a justification of our conduct will make our death pillow soft and our resurrection bright with joy! Instead of admitting that this is not an ample justification, let us go further, still, in the strength of it! If the world has accounted us

vile for obeying our Lord, let us be still viler! And, inasmuch as He that made us whole said, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," let us endeavor to spread abroad everywhere the savor of His name, consecrating ourselves body, soul and spirit to the extension of His Kingdom! He who

made us whole will yet make the world whole by His own wondrous power! Have we not abundantly shown that our Lord's command is a solid justification of our conduct?

II. And now, secondly, the cure brought forth AN OBLIGATION—"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed, and walk." The argument takes this form—first, if He made me whole, He is Divine, or He could not do this miracle. Or, to say the least, He must be divinely authorized—and if He is Divine, or divinely authorized, I am bound to obey the orders which He issues. Is not that a plain argument which even the poor, simple mind of the paralytic man was able to grasp and wield?

Let us try and feel the force of that argument ourselves. Jesus who has saved us is our God—shall we not obey Him? Since He is clothed with Divine power and majesty, shall we not scrupulously endeavor to know His will and zealously endeavor to carry it out in every point as His Spirit shall enable us? In addition to the Divine Character which the miracle proved and displayed, there was the goodness which shone in the deed of power and touched the poor man's heart. His argument was—"I must do what my great Deliverer bids me. How can you think otherwise? Did He not make me whole? Would you have me, whom He has thus graciously restored, refuse to fulfill His desire? Must I not take up my bed the moment He gives me strength to do it?

"How can I do otherwise? Is this to be the recompense I pay to my good Physician—to refuse to do what He asks of me? Do you not see that I am under an obligation which it would be shameful to deny? He restored these limbs and I am bound to do with them what He orders me do with them. He says, 'walk,' and since these once withered feet have been restored, shall I not walk? He bids me roll up my bed and since I could not have used my hands till just now, His Word gave them life—shall I not use them to roll up my bed at His bidding? These poor shoulders of mine were bent with weakness, but He has made me stand upright! And since He now bids me carry my bed, shall I not throw the rug on my shoulders and bear the easy load which He lays upon me?"

There was no answering such reasoning. Whatever might have been the claim of Jesus upon others, He clearly had an indisputable right to the loyal obedience of one whom He had made perfectly whole! Follow me briefly in this, Brothers and Sisters. If you have been saved by the Grace of God, your salvation has put you under obligation to do what Jesus bids you. Are you redeemed? Then you are not your own—you are bought with a price! Have you been, in consequence of what the Lord has done for you, rescued from Satanic slavery and adopted into the Divine family? Then it clearly follows that because you are sons and daughters, you should be obedient to the Law of the household—for is not this a first element of sonship—that you should reverence the great Father of the family?

The Lord has been pleased to put away your sin. You are forgiven—but does not pardon demand amendment? Shall we go back to the old sins from which we have been cleansed? Shall we live in the iniquities from which we have been washed by the blood of our Lord Jesus? That were horrible to think of! It would be nothing less than devilish for a man to say, "I have been forgiven and, therefore, I will sin again." There is no remission where there is no repentance! The guilt of sin remains on that man in whom the love of sin still remains. Let us practically feel the force of this and follow after purity and righteousness!

Brothers and Sisters upon whom Christ has worked His great work, you have experienced the love of God and, therefore, if God has so loved you, you are bound to love Him in return! If God has so loved you, you must also love your brother. Do not love of God and love of man spring up as a sure consequence of the

love of God shed abroad in the heart? Does not everyone see the necessity which calls for the one love to follow the other? And love is the mother of obedience—thus everything connected with our Lord lays us under obligation to obey Him! There is not a single blessing of the Covenant but what necessarily entails its corresponding duty—and here I scarcely like to say duty—for these blessings of the Covenant make duty to be our privilege and holiness to be our delight!

Therefore, redeemed from sin, we would live no longer in sin! Therefore, made heirs of Heaven, we endeavor to lead the heavenly life so that even while we are below, our conversation may be in Heaven from where we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, He that made you whole has commanded this and that to be done by you! I counsel you to keep the King's Commandments. As Mary said to the waiters at the wedding at Cana, so I say to you—"Whatever He

says unto you, do it." Does He bid you pray, then pray without ceasing! Does He bid you watch as well as pray? Then guard every act, thought and word!

Does He bid you love your Brethren? Then love them with a pure heart! Does He bid you serve them and humble yourself for His sake? Then do so and become the servant of all! Has He said, "Be you holy, for I am holy"? Then aim at this by His Holy Spirit! Has He said, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"? Then strive after perfection, for He that made you whole has a right to direct your ways and it will be both your safety and your happiness to submit yourselves to His commands!

III. Enough, however, upon that. We now call your attention, in the third place, to the text under the sense of CONSTRAINT—"He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up your bed and walk." He made him whole by saying, "Rise, take up your bed." The carrying of the bed was part and parcel of the cure. The first part of the healing word was "rise," but the second was, "take up your bed." Now, it was not an ordinary word which Jesus spoke to that man—a mere word of advice, warning, or command—it was a word full of power like that which created light out of darkness. When the Lord said to the poor man, "Rise," he rose.

A thrill went through him—those stagnant blood vessels felt the life-blood stir and flow—those dormant nerves were awakened to sensations of health! Those withered sinews and muscles braced themselves for energetic action, for Omnipotence had visited the impotent man and restored him. Oh it must have been a wondrous joy to the long enervated, nerveless, powerless frame, to be capable of healthy motion—to be equal to bearing a happy burden! The joyful man rolled up his bed, threw it on his back and marched abroad with the best of them! The bed-carrying was part of the cure and proof of the cure.

The paralytic had not been called upon to deliberate as to whether he should rise or not, but Jesus said, "Rise," and he stood upright! The same word said, "Take up your bed." The bed was up at once and, according, to the last word, "walk," the man walked with delight! It was all done by the power of the one thrilling sentence which tarried not to be questioned, but accomplished the end for which the Lord had sent it. Not unwillingly did the restored man carry his bed, yet he did it of constraint, for the same power which made him whole made him obedient. Before the Divine energy had touched him, he seemed scarcely to have any will at all. The Lord had to hunt to find a will in him, saying, "Do you want to be made whole?"

But now he cheerfully wills obedience to his Benefactor and in the force of the command, he carried out the Lord's behest. I say that his taking up his bed and walking was done by Christ's enabling and done by Christ's constraining— and I pray that you may know by experience what this means. What I want you to feel is this—"I cannot help obeying Christ, for by His Holy Spirit He has spoken me into a life which will

never die and never be vanquished! He has spoken a Word in me which has a continuous force over me and thrills me through and through constantly. I can no more help seeking to obey Christ than this man could help carrying his bed when the Lord, by a Word of power, had bid him do

so."

Brothers and Sisters, look at this and be instructed and warned. Do you feel reluctant, this morning, to enter upon your Lord's service because of conscious weakness? Has the devil tempted you to draw back from obedience because of your unfitness? Do you hesitate? Do you tremble? Surely you need to draw near to the Lord, again, and hear His voice anew! Take your Bibles and let Him speak to you, again, out of the Word and may the same thrill which awoke you out of your death-sleep wake you out of your present lethargy! There is need that the Living Word of God should come home to your inmost soul with that same miraculous power which dwelt in it at first. "Lord, quicken me," is David's prayer, but it suits me every day and I think most of God's people would do well to use it daily.

"Lord, speak life unto me now as You did at first. Speak power, speak spiritual force into me." "The love of Christ constrains us," says the Apostle. This constraint is what we need to feel more and more. We need Divine Life perpetually to bear us forward to acts of obedience! We do not need to destroy willingness, but we would have it quickened into entire subservience to the will of the Lord! Like Noah's ark on dry land, the will keeps its place by its own dead weight— O for a flood of Grace to move, to lift, to bear it up—to carry it away by a mighty current! We would be borne before the love of Christ as a tiny piece of wood is drifted by the Gulf stream, or as one of the specks which dance in the sunbeam would be carried by a rushing wind.

As the impulse which began with Jesus found the poor man passive because utterly unable to be otherwise and then impelled him on to active movements as with a rush of power, so may it always be with us throughout life. May we forever yield to the Divine impulse! To be passive in the Lord's hands is a good desire, but to be what I would call actively passive, to be cheerfully submissive, willing to give up our will—this is a higher spiritual mood! We must live and yet not we, but Christ in us! We must act and yet we must say, He that made me whole bade me do this holy deed and I do it because His power moves me to do it! If I have done well, I lay the honor at His feet. If I hope to do well in the future, it is because I hope for strength from Him to do well, believing that He will work in me by that same power which converted me at the first! Beloved, endeavor to abide under this influence. May the Holy Spirit bring you there!

My last word is a practical lesson. The Church of God on earth at this present time anxiously desires to spread her influence over the world. For Christ's sake we wish to have the Truths of God we preach acknowledged and the precepts which we deliver obeyed. But mark, no Church will ever have power over the masses of this or any other land except in proportion as she does them good. The day has long since passed in which any Church may hope to prevail on the plea of history. "Look at what we were," is a vain appeal—men only care for what we are.

The sect which glorifies itself with the faded laurels of past centuries and is content to be inactive today is very near to its inglorious end. In the race of usefulness, men nowadays care less about the pedigree of the horse and more about the rate at which it can run. The history of a congregation or a sect is of small account compared with the practical good which it is doing. Now, if any Church under Heaven can show that it is making men honest, temperate, pure, moral, holy—that it is seeking out the ignorant and instructing them, that it is seeking out the fallen and reclaiming them, that, in fact, it is turning moral wastes

into gardens and taking the weeds and briars of the wilderness and transforming them into precious fruit-bearing trees—then the world will be ready to hear its claims and consider them.

If a Church cannot prove its usefulness, the source of its moral strength will have gone and, indeed, something worse than this will have happened, for its spiritual strength will have gone, too! A barren church is manifestly without the fruitful Spirit of God. Brothers and Sisters, you may, if you will, dignify your minister by the name of bishop. You may give to your deacons and elders grand official titles. You may call your place of worship a cathedral. You may worship, if you will, with all the grandeur of pompous ceremonies and the adornments of music and incense and the like—but you shall have only the semblance of power over human minds unless you have something more than these!

If you have a Church, no matter by what name it is called, that is devout, that is holy, that is living unto God, that does good in its neighborhood, that, by the lives of its members, spreads holiness and righteousness—in a word, if you have a Church that is really making the world whole in the name of Jesus—you shall, in the long run, find that even the most carnal and thoughtless will say, "The Church which is doing this good is worthy of respect. Therefore let us hear what it has to say." Living usefulness will not screen us from persecution, but it will save us from contempt! A holy Church goes with authority to the world in the name of Jesus Christ, its Lord, and this force, the Holy Spirit uses to bring human hearts into subjection to the Truth of God!

Oh, that the Church of God would believe in Jesus' power to heal sick souls! Remember that this man who was sick for 38 years, had been ill longer than Christ had lived on earth! He had been afflicted seven years before Christ was born! And even so this poor world has been long afflicted. Years before the Pentecost, or the birth of the present visible Church, the poor sinful world lay at the pool and could not move. We must not be hopeless about it, for the Lord will yet cast sin out of it. Let us go, in Jesus Christ's name, and proclaim the everlasting Gospel and say, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," and it shall be done and God shall be glorified and we shall be blessed!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 5:1-23. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 331, 787.

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