

# Breaking the Rules to Expose Legalism

John 5:1-18

By healing a paralytic on the Sabbath, Jesus not only proved his deity but he also confronted the legalism of the religious leaders. *Jesus wants us to be free from false hopes and legalistic rules.*

## **The Third Sign: Jesus healed a paralytic (1-9)**

Sometime after the events of chapter 4, Jesus returns to Jerusalem to celebrate one of the Jewish feasts (1).

In the northeast corner of the city, near the Sheep Gate, were two pools with a covered colonnade or portico on all four sides of the complex, and a fifth colonnade that separated the two pools. The pool was known as Bethesda, which means “house of outpouring” or “house of mercy” (2).

Many disabled people used to lie in these porticoes because of their belief in the healing properties in the water (3).

One man who was present had been an invalid for 38 years (5). The length of the illness showed the seriousness of his condition as well as his sense of hopelessness.

Some people are content to remain in their miserable condition. Jesus apparently only delivered people who wanted his help (6).

What about you?

Do you want to get rid of bitterness?

Do you want victory over an addiction?

Do you want to resolve conflict and heal a broken relationship?

Do you want to be healed?

Are you relying on your own efforts?

The paralytic held to a prevailing superstition that only the first person to enter the water after its stirring would experience healing (7). His response to Jesus not only showed his lack of faith but also his sense of hopelessness. He also demonstrated a poor view of grace, that God operated on a “first come first served” basis.

Rather than preach or correct the man's opinion, Jesus simply gave him a command to get up and walk (8).

The invalid was healed immediately and walked away (9).

By performing the miracle on the Sabbath, Jesus triggered a controversy.

### **The antagonism of the religious leaders (10-18)**

The prevailing Jewish interpretation of the law said it was not legitimate to carry anything from a public place to a private place on the Sabbath (10). This was a capital offense that could result in stoning.

The healed man shifted responsibility for his actions to Jesus (11-13). Rather than expressing gratitude, he probably feared for his life.

Jesus later found the man in the temple (14). He warned the man not to use his healing as an opportunity to participate in sin. While Jesus was willing to heal the man's body from paralysis, he was more concerned about healing his soul from sin.

Rather than glorify Jesus, the healed man reported Jesus to the religious authorities (15). It may indicate he had an ungrateful, hard heart.

Rather than worship Jesus or consider his claims, the religious leaders persecuted Jesus (16). They opposed Jesus, not because of what he did, but when he did it.

Jesus defended himself by stating that he was doing God's work (17). This was a virtual claim to deity.

The Jewish leaders did not miss the force of what Jesus was claiming (18). The religious leaders sought to kill Jesus because he claimed to be God.

What about you?

Are you trying to be good enough for God?

Have you confused legalism with discipline?

Have you allowed religious tradition to keep you from Jesus?

Have you let fear of opposition keep you from praising Jesus?