

The Gospel of John 5:1-9, 14, 21, 25

The Inadequacy of Religion's Law Keeping and the Sufficiency of the Son's Life-Giving

I The Setting:

- A. This story takes place during a religious feast, in the religious center of Judaism, i.e., Jerusalem.
- B. The specific setting is by the sheep gate which signifies the entrance to the sheepfold. (**10:1, cf./with Gal.3:22-25**) The sheepfold is the place where the sheep are kept until the shepherd comes for them and takes them into the green pasture.
- C. There by the gate is a pool, called Bethesda, house of mercy, surrounded by five porticoes, which signify the shelter of the religion of law-keeping, a shelter like that provided by the sheepfold.
- D. At this place there was a multitude of the sick and impotent people, under the shelter of law-keeping. (**Rom.7:7-24**) They sat there waiting for the waters to be stirred up by the angel, the agent through which the law which cannot give life, was given. (**Gal.3:19, 21**) They were unable to lift themselves, by self-effort, into the waters of law-keeping. Here, the Lord appeared.

II The Condition of Sinful Man

- A. A certain man, made impotent by sin (**John 5:5-6, 14, 25**), also was waiting there. The law and religion held out a promise and hope for his restoration, but only if he could fulfill its requirements.
 - 1. This story signifies that when the practice of law-keeping in the Jewish religion became an impossibility because of the impotence of man (**Rom.8:3**), the Son of God came to enliven the dead (**v.25**).
 - 2. The law could not give life (**v. 21**). "While we were yet weak" (**Rom.5:6**), He came to enliven us.
 - a) The means for healing in the religion of law-keeping does not profit the impotent man, because he has no strength to fulfill the law's requirements.
 - b) The law-keeping in religion depends on man's effort, man's doing, man's make-up. Since man is impotent, the law-keeping in religion becomes ineffective.
 - c) With the Lord's enlivening, however, there is no requirement. All the impotent man needed was to hear the Lord's voice and he was enlivened (**v.25**).

III The Inadequacy of Religion vs. God's Son

- A. The case of the impotent man exposes the inadequacy of religion. The Jewish religion was formed according to the Divine Word. It worships the one true God in the correct way. The holy city, the holy temple, the feast, the Sabbath, the angels, Moses, and the Scriptures are all good things of this religion. However, all these right, proper, and even scriptural things could do nothing for this impotent man.
- B. Religion cannot fulfill God's purpose. God had no intention of having a religion. His intention was to give His Son as the answer to every need of mankind. Only His Son can enliven the impotent and be their salvation and life for the fulfillment of God's purpose. His Son, alone, can be everything to them, including their righteousness, holiness, redemption, and glory. He can be their enlivening, their supply, their satisfaction and their fulfillment.