



GOD IS WORKING (Sermon)

Jonathan Kuntaraf
**Director, General Conference Sabbath School and Personal
Ministries**

I. Introduction

“In his defense Jesus said to them, ‘My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working’” (John 5:17).

It is exciting to know that God the Father is working, Jesus, the Son, is working, and, of course, the Holy Spirit is working too. This means that as we work with the Lord, we can expect a successful outcome because God is with us. Therefore, we should not worry about any barriers, obstacles, or challenges in witnessing for the Lord. He has promised that He is working together with us. We know that He will keep His promise.

II. Background of the Text

A. Jesus visited Bethesda.

“Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. 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. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. 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?’ 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.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath” (John 5:1-9).¹

These verses indicate that Jesus was visiting Jerusalem at that time. Many people went to Jerusalem because of the special Jewish feast. Some went to Jerusalem as tourists, to see the celebration of the Jewish feast. Others went because they wished to see the beauty of the Herod’s temple. Jesus went to Jerusalem, however, because He wished like to serve the people. He was ready to go anywhere that his ministry was needed. And this time He went particularly to Bethesda, in Jerusalem because he knew someone there needed His ministry.

There were many people in Bethesda, who expected divine healing to take place for them. The deaf, the crippled, the blind and many others with various diseases were there. They believed that anytime the water of the pool was stirred, the first person to get into the water would be healed.

Jesus went to this place and met someone who had been sick for 38 years. He asked a question of him: “Do you want to get well?” And this person answered, “No one is here to help me.” He definitely wished to be healed, and that was the reason he was at Bethesda. In Jesus, there was hope for healing. Jesus then said, “Rise and walk!” And the cripple was able to rise and walk. There is power in the words of Jesus!

B. Bethesda is a symbol of a church.

Where did the miracle of healing take place? Bethesda! *Beth* means house, and *thesda* means mercy. People went to Bethesda, the house of mercy, expecting physical healing. The church should be a house of mercy. It is in the church that people learn about God's mercy and forgiveness. People come to church for spiritual healing. Unfortunately, however, some do not receive spiritual healing.

People receive various blessings by going to church. Dr. Thomas Oxman, at the University of Texas Medical School, examined the relationship of social support and religion to the mortality of men and women six months after undergoing elective open-heart surgery. Those who neither had participation in church activities nor drew strength from their religion were more than seven times more likely to die six months post-surgery. This shows the immense blessing by going to church when one wants to participate in church activities and draw strength from God's Word.

C. The problem of the crippled man.

Though many people could experience various blessings by going to church, the house of mercy, the crippled man at Bethesda encountered a problem. He had been disabled for 38 years, yet he was not healed. Imagine, he had visited Bethesda, the house of mercy, for many years, but he was not healed. We need to ask the question "Is it possible for some people who have been going to church for five or ten years, yet not be healed spiritually?" Why has healing not taken place?

1. When the man at Bethesda was asked by Jesus, "Do you want to be made well?" he answered, "I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up." He was expecting that other people would help carry him to the pool. We can see the first reason that some people are not healed, because they are expecting others to help them. Some people are too dependent upon others for their spiritual healing. We as a body of Christ need to support one another, however, we should not be dependent upon others to help us in our spiritual healing.

2. *The Desire of Ages* mentions something important about this man's inability for 38 years to be healed. Because so many sought healing, the disorder caused by the stirring of the water sometimes caused the death of those who could not get out of the way. Some people are not healed because of the mistakes of others. The same thing happens in the church. Some people do not experience spiritual healing because of the mistakes or weakness of other people. Their faith was weakened because of the actions of others. Many people are not healed spiritually because they are looking at the weaknesses or problems of others. No wonder we are reminded from time to time that we need only to look upon Jesus.

III. How We Can Be Sure the Lord Is Working With Us

We need to ask the question "How could we make our church a healing church and be a successful instrument in our outreach activities? We believe the Lord is waiting to work together with us. We are His hands, who represent Him in reaching out to others. In looking at Jesus' methods, we can learn to be sure the Lord will work together with us.

A. Knowing each other.

The Bible says in John 5: 6 that Jesus "knew that [the disabled man] already had been in that condition a long time." He knew the condition of the crippled man and He understood and met his needs. The same thing applies to the church. We need to know

each other so that we can minister to one another according to our needs. This is a very important step in our outreach activities. Do we know the people in church? Do we know our neighbors? Do we know our relatives? We need to know the people individually in order to minister to their needs.

B. Accept one another.

When Jesus asked, “Do you want to be made well?” He knew that the person had been disabled for a long time. Yet He accepted him as he was, and He was ready to give him support. People like to be accepted. In fact many people are willing to smoke, to drink, and even to commit suicide to be accepted by other people. Acceptance is vital in the human life. We need the spirit of acceptance in the family, in the church, and in the community. Whatever the financial status, education, gender, ethnicity—we all long to be accepted. When we accept one another, our church will be more successful in our outreach activities.

C. The need of ministering to one another.

When Jesus asked, “Do you want to be made well?” He was willing to minister to this man. He was ready to heal him. The church needs to minister to one another to have a healthy church. The disabled person said, “I have no man to put me into the pool.” This is indeed a sad statement. The church needs to be a place where we can help one another. Two words are used in the Bible to describe the church: *koinonia* and *diakonia*. *Koinonia* means “fellowship”; *diakonia* means “to minister.” Another term, “one another,” expresses good fellowship and good ministry. The Bible includes the term “one another” 75 times in the New Testament. A few examples: “love one another,” “bear one another’s burdens,” “have compassion on one another,” “build up one another,” “comfort one another,” “pray for one another,” “teach one another.” These are characteristic of the New Testament church.

The Lord wants us to support one another and by doing so, we will receive the blessing ourselves. When we let Jesus work in our hearts, we will be more successful in ministering one another.

D. The Word of Jesus.

After seeing the need of this man, Jesus said, “take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.” There is power in the Word of Jesus. The Word of Jesus is powerful to bring healing! We need to spend more time with the Word of God. The Bible tells us about the love of God and how He cares for us, how He wants us to be happy. The Word of God can change people’s lives. Therefore, for any question that arises in our outreach activities, we must try our very best to use Bible verses. There is power in the Word of God.

E. The Presence of Jesus.

The crippled man was at Bethesda for many years, but he was not healed. It was only after Jesus came to Bethesda that the man was healed. The presence of Jesus certainly made the difference! If we would like to have a healing experience and to make our church successful in reaching out to others, we need the presence of Jesus in our lives. We need the presence of Jesus in our families. We need the presence of Jesus in our church.

Only the presence of Jesus will make it possible for the church to grow. Acts 2:47 says, “The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” Only God can save people.

Ellen G. White wrote: “If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one.”ⁱⁱ

IV. Appeal

We live in a sick world, and many people need divine healing. The healing will take place only if the presence of Jesus is felt in the church. We are delighted to know that God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are working together with us. We can expect successful outreach! However, we need to remember the way Jesus worked. We need to know the person, accept the person, minister the person, and use the Word of God. Most importantly, we need to have the presence of Jesus in all our endeavors. For it is only because of the presence of Jesus that will make our outreach successful. Just remember, this is His work.

May the Lord bless each one of us as we reach out to others.

ⁱ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural quotations in this sermon are from the *New King James Version of the Bible*.

ⁱⁱ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 189.