

We resume John's Gospel with the prayer that the LORD will give us an ever-increasing gratitude that will enflame our hearts in love for Christ! Such gratitude is sourced in seeing how much loneliness, rejection and pain Christ was willing to suffer for us as "The Man of Sorrows." We must never forget the high price He paid to redeem us from sin.

Mon/Tues: Read John 1:9-18; John 3:11-18; John 5:1-14; John 5:24-25

Powerless in Sin

Christ suffered for us, *His whole life long*. We witness the *hostility faced by God the Father and the Son* when they came in love to save rebel humanity. Christ came to a world that was sinfully blind, unable to recognize the Savior (1:10) and unwilling to own Christ as one of their own (1:11). It rejected the Father and Son's heavenly testimony (3:11) and proved unable to understand the most basic illustrations of salvation – let alone the great heavenly truths which Christ came to reveal (3:12).

The root cause of this hateful response to such love of God revealed is *the selfish rebellion of mankind since the Fall*.

The common sin of mankind is my making myself in a host of ways the center of the world. That is what the Bible means by sin, and the truth is that deep down in each one of us, at the center of our being, there is a central citadel where self reigns. And every particular sin we care to name derives its seriousness from the fact that it is the expression of this evil root. This horrible voracious thing grips all human life with vice-like power, and displays that power most arrogantly when, in great weariness and despair, we most want deliverance.

Archbishop Temple, *Repentance*, J. Philip, IV Press

The apostle Paul has a great autobiographical passage in his Epistle to the Romans which expresses this tragic predicament. He says: "The good which I want to do, I fail to do; but what I do is the wrong which is against my will; and if what I do is against my will, clearly it is no longer I who do it, but sin lodging in me. I discover this principle, then: that when I want to do the right, it is the wrong for which I reach. In my inmost self I delight in the law of God, but I perceive that there is in my bodily members a different power at work, making me a prisoner of the power of sin. Miserable creature that I am, who is there to rescue me out of this body doomed to death?" (Romans 7: 19-25).

No words could illustrate more graphically the basic inability of the human heart to turn to God. It is certainly not by accident that some of the most characteristic illustrations of human sin and need in the NT appear in the miracles of healing which Christ performed on helpless, impotent people. For example, the story of the paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1 ff) is patently used by Christ as a foundation for His teaching about the life-giving power that resides in the Gospel (John 5:24-25). Just as the man was physically powerless to bring himself to the place of healing – "Sir," he said to Jesus, "I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool" – so it is with all men in the moral and spiritual realm. They cannot bring themselves by themselves, to the place of repentance and deliverance.

James Philip, *Repentance*, IV Press

Meditate and Pray: Let us pray now, conscious of our innate, sinful, bondage to self, and conscious that only Christ can help us, as follows:

Lord Jesus, we demonstrate every day (even as believers) that we are still so hard-hearted and slow to believe all that Christ has done and suffered for us. Have mercy upon us, and do not forsake the work which you began in us. Please begin by defeating Satan, who would stir up the selfish remnants of sin within us, giving our sin-nature the false appearance of being stronger than ever. Please humble us as you did the paralytic in John 5:14, so that we learn to sin no more, lest something worse happen to us.

Most of all, thank you for the power of your saving command in the Gospel. Just as you simply spoke and the man rose and walked, so speak into our lives and paralyzing situations of sin. Please command the sin to go which paralyzes us; please breach all the fortresses of sin which ruin our professions of faith; please cause us the joy of knowing that we have been made whole. Thank you, Lord Jesus, that your commands are your enablings. Through you we now live in the age of grace and hope, when the Reality is coming true in our lives and in our day:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (John 5:24-25 KJV)

Amen!

Weds/Thurs: Read John 2:13-25 & John 5:17-18

Destroyed and Raised Up Again

The hatred of the religious leaders in John 5:17-18 is truly astounding. These leaders recognize that Christ's "sign" in making the paralytic walk, coupled with His claim that His constant work of redeeming and healing is *co-extensive* with God the Father, are more than enough grounds for their persecuting Him as a blaspheming Sabbath-breaker.

But even earlier, at our Lord's first Passover Feast, these leaders challenge Christ's authority to perform His first temple cleansing by demanding a sign (John 2:13-25). Christ's response is to prophesy that they will seek to "destroy the temple of His body," but that in three days He will raise it up.

Oh, the trouble that fell on Christ because of this prophecy. When put on trial the night before His crucifixion at the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, Christ was falsely charged with wanting to destroy the temple in Jerusalem. The two false witnesses cite Jesus' words from John 2:19: "This man said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days'" (Matthew 26:61).

Thus Jesus' words were twisted to give the false impression that Christ wanted to destroy the temple as an act of a violent revolutionary. In reality, Christ's words pointing to His resurrection became a foundational source of strength for the faith of the disciples. According to John 2:21-22, they remembered this prophecy after the Resurrection and, "believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken."

Meditate and Pray: LORD Jesus, you are the Truth. All you say carries the full weight of Divine veracity. Help us, whenever we read your Word, to meet you in all your Divine glory and all your High-Priestly ability to sympathize with us in our trials and temptations. You are the God-Man, and you appear on every page of Scripture. Help us to live on your words, to hear your voice, and to live each day in the power of your Resurrection. Thank you that you indeed fulfilled John 2:19 in raising your body after suffering the scars and consuming fire of the punishment due us, and thank you that we can now by faith live in you. Your Resurrection means our justification! Your Resurrection means our vindication! Your Resurrection means that now we can live a Cross-shaped life and follow you in our sufferings, confident that one day we will lay down this body of death and will be raised in a body of glory. In your Name, Amen.

Fri/Sat/Sun: Read John 5:8-18

Equal with God

The Jewish leaders in John 5 are so violently hostile to our Lord that they don't even acknowledge the wonderful miracle which Christ performed. To them, Christ is only a criminal "who broke the Sabbath." Look at how they pressure the healed man to reveal Christ's identity in John 5:12: "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" In fact, though they must have known it was Jesus who did the healing. Many people from all over Israel were talking about the miracles that they had already seen Jesus accomplish at an earlier feast in Jerusalem (John 4:45), yet they steadfastly refuse to acknowledge Him by name. As they probe the paralytic for an explanation, to them Jesus is only "a man" (John 5:12).

Once they confirm that it was Jesus of Nazareth who performed the healing, they began to persecute Jesus (John 5:16) and sought to kill Him (John 5:18) – not only for Jesus' "allegedly breaking of the Sabbath" (which was a false charge, since Jesus' miracles of mercy did not violate God's Word – only the legalistic traditions of the rabbis) but also because He, a mere man, claimed equality with God the Father in stating, "My Father is working and I work," (John 5:17). Such a claim that His working on the Sabbath was "co-extensive" with the Father's work was rightly understood by these leaders as claim to full Divine equality with the Father. In their eyes, this must be blasphemy.

As an aside, some teach that Jesus held Himself to be merely a religious, human teacher and that claims to His full deity were a fabrication of the early church. If this were true, this would have been the perfect time for Jesus to correct the religious leaders – especially since now they were trying to kill Him because of His claim to being on the same Divine plane as the God of Israel. He could easily have denied that He was God to save His own skin!

No, Jesus does not deny the charge against His claim to be Divine. Rather, in John 5:19-47, He emphasizes this claim – and gives several proofs that show He is God come in the flesh.

Meditate and Pray: Let us give thanks that the Lord Jesus, by His Holy Spirit, clearly taught His disciples and the church that He (and they) would suffer. But rejoice *at how productive* these sufferings for our sakes were.

Sing about the saving power of Christ's suffering and triumphant resurrection, using hymn # 275 from our Trinity hymnal:

1 The strife is o'er, the battle done;
the victory of life is won;
the song of triumph has begun. Alleluia!

2 The pow'rs of death have done their worst;
but Christ their legions hath dispersed;
let shouts of holy joy outburst. Alleluia!

3 The three sad days have quickly sped;
he rises glorious from the dead;
all glory to our risen Head! Alleluia!

4 He closed the yawning gates of hell;
the bars from heav'n's high portals fell;
let hymns of praise his triumphs tell. Alleluia!

5 Lord, by the stripes which wounded thee
from death's dread sting thy servants free,
that we may live and sing to thee. Alleluia!