

Who Gave You the Right?

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[0 : 00] You may be seated. Kids, you are excused to your King's Kids class. And if you would open up your Bibles to John chapter 5, it's on page 1057 of your Pew Bible.

I'll read that in a little bit, but let me just pose a question. Who gave you the right? Have you ever been asked that question?

Have you ever asked that question? Who gave you the right to tell me what I can and can't do with my body? Who gave you the right to say that your beliefs are right and my beliefs are wrong, or your beliefs are better than mine?

Who gave you the right to tell me how to parent my children? Who gave you the right? When we ask someone, who gave you the right?

We are questioning their authority. Authority is the right to impose your will on another and require obedience.

[1 : 11] And biblically speaking, we see authority exercised in two ways throughout the Scriptures. We see authority exercised with wisdom and with health in a way that's God-honoring, that builds people up.

We also see authority that's exercised foolishly, that is hurtful, abusive, self-serving, and does others harm.

We see it all in the Scriptures. For the next three Sundays, we're going to be in John chapter 5. And John chapter 5 is all about the authority of Jesus Christ.

And it is good news. So this morning, we're going to look at John 5, 1 through 18, where Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath. And you may be thinking, how does healing a man on the Sabbath have anything to do with Jesus' authority?

Why does that matter to me? Well, if you've come into the building with any kind of physical ailment in which you are hoping to be healed from, this is for you.

[2 : 23] The authority of Jesus over our bodies is good. What happens with the healing of this man on the Sabbath was actually Jesus taking issue, challenging the authority of the Jewish religious leaders of the day, and they didn't like it.

In fact, they respond in a way that goes something like this. Who gave you the right to heal on the Sabbath? And in fact, in this passage, we'll see that Jesus tells them what gives him the right to heal on the Sabbath and challenge their authority.

So let me read John chapter 5, 1 through 18. Hear the word of God. After this, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool in Aramaic or Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed.

One man was there who had been an invalid for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, Do you want to be healed? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water stirred up, and while I am going, another steps down before me.

[3 : 45] Jesus said to him, Get up, take up your bed, and walk. And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed. But he answered them, The man who healed me, that man said to me, Take up your bed and walk.

They asked him, Who is the man who said to you, Take up your bed and walk? Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

After Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, See, you are well. Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, My Father is working until now, and I am working.

[4 : 45] This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him. Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

May God bless the hearing of his word. So here's how we're going to proceed this morning. I'm just going to get our bearings, and then we're going to look at three scenes. Scene one, healing poolside.

Scene two, holiness police. I'm going to have some helpful noises at that point. Scene three, a heated provocation, and then I'll bring it all together.

What gives Jesus the right to heal on the Sabbath? Let's get our bearings. In verses one through three, we get a sense of this whole situation.

So it's setting up this whole situation. In 5.1, we are told that after this, there was a feast. What's the this? Well, Jesus, remember, was down in Jerusalem.

[5 : 46] He goes up to Galilee, but he goes through Samaria to get to Galilee. Plants the first church of Sychar, remember that? And then he goes to Galilee, and there he heals the son of an official who is on the brink of death.

It's after this, Jesus is like, time to go back to Jerusalem. And he went back for a feast. But what I want you to notice is in chapter 5, verse 9, a very important when.

And it would be this kind of when. It would be dun, dun, dun. Now that day was the Sabbath. It's the Sabbath which Jesus heals.

It is the weekly holy day of the Jews in which they are commanded to rest from their labor. It's Exodus 20, verse 8. It's the fourth of the Ten Commandments.

And just to let you know, it was no accident that Jesus was healing on the Sabbath. Where this takes place, it's in Jerusalem. It's the religious epicenter of Judaism.

[6 : 50] It's where all the major feasts took place. And so you would have this swelling of the city when people would come to observe these feasts. And surrounding the city, there was this wall.

And in the wall, there were multiple gates for people to go in and to come out of. And in close to one of the gates was this pool, the Pool of Bethesda. Archaeology has discovered it.

They found the colonnades and everything. Colonnades are a column or a row of columns. And it was roofed. So the idea is these columns with the roof provided shade for whoever was there to be at the pool of Bethesda.

And that's what's going on here in verse 3. We have a multitude of invalids gathered together at the pool of Bethesda. They are all image bearers, but they have various problems.

Blindness, lameness, paralyzed. And though they're all image bearers, they have something else in common. Do you know what it is? They all wanted to be healed. They're there because they believe that the pool of Bethesda has healing properties.

[8 : 05] Now, for those of you who are very careful in your reading of your Bible, did you notice anything odd between verse 3 and verse 5? There's no verse 4.

What's going on? Can we trust our Bibles? Yes, we can trust our Bibles. Here's what's going on.

Verse 4 was included in a lot of the early manuscripts of this passage, but not the earliest and most reliable.

So most likely, verse 4 is some kind of scribal note describing why people are gathering at this pool. And I've got it for you, so let me read it to you. It says, For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred the water. Whoever stepped in first, well, that person was healed of whatever disease they had.

And so how confident we can be and that that is accurate, you know, I'm not sure. But let's just say there's enough here to say, okay, there's something going on. And there's a competition among all those people who are at the pool of Bethesda to get into the pool first.

[9 : 17] This is a competitive healing. First come, first healed. Now, before you start judging these first century invalids, oh, these poor, uneducated, hurting people.

Let me just remind you. We live in the 21st century among a host of invalids. We have people of all kinds seeking, longing for healing, to be made complete, to experience peace, to be made full.

They may not be waiting for the stirring of the water in the pool of Bethesda, but they're waiting for another kind of stirring. You know what I'm talking about. My wife, Jenny, has rheumatoid arthritis. And for the last three months, we've been hoping and praying for some kind of stirring when it comes to her medication.

So maybe you're hoping for a stirring of medication for what's ailing you. Or maybe you're hoping for a stirring of a new doctor with the hope of a new diagnosis, with the hope of a new treatment. Maybe you're hoping for a stirring that there would be some kind of organ donation. Maybe it's not you, but it's someone you know who needs a new liver or a new heart.

[10:45] And you're just waiting for hope to stir. As we get our bearings here, I just want to make sure that you understand what this multitude of invalids were experiencing at the pool of Bethesda in the first century, we know firsthand in the 21st century.

So now that we've got our bearings, let's move to scene one. Healing poolside. In verse 5, we're introduced to a man who's been paralyzed for 38 years.

We're not told he's paralyzed in this verse, but we learn that later on. And it really begs the question, has this man been going to the pool of Bethesda for 38 years?

Has he been going there hoping to be healed somehow to get into the water first and then walk out?

38 years? Maybe just 30 years. 20 years? 10? 3?

[11:54] 1 year. It's a long time. It's a long time to be going somewhere, wanting to be healed, hoping for something, but not getting it.

Jesus comes on the scene in verse 6. And he has come to the pool of Bethesda, not because he needs healing, but to heal.

Of all these multitudes of invalids, Jesus looks on this man lying there.

And he knows he's been lying there, hoping to be healed for a long time. And just a sidebar. Isn't it good to know that Jesus, who is sitting at the right hand of God, on the throne of grace, he has a direct line of sight on you?

Well, Jesus sees him lying there and he says, do you want to be healed? Now, some people have understood this to be Jesus questioning the man's motives.

[13:04] It would go something like this. If you've been here for so long, but haven't found a way into the pool, I mean, do you really want to be healed?

Is this some kind of hustle? That's how some people would understand what Jesus is saying. And of course, there's definitely people who play the system.

But I don't think that's what Jesus is going after. I think he's going after something else. What is clear is that this paralytic believes his only hope for healing is to be the first in the pool.

He has set his hope for healing in a pool. In the ability to get there. And so when Jesus says, do you want to be healed?

He answers in verse 7, very politely, sir. He's a very polite man. But as we go on, we're going to see some things that are not too flattering about this paralytic. So he says, sir.

[14:11] And he answers him in verse 7. He says, sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water stirred up and while I'm going another steps down before me.

This paralytic has no idea who he's talking to. No idea. We know who he's talking to.

We know that this paralytic is talking to God incarnate. Remember John 1? In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The Word was God. He is God. All things were brought into creation through the Word. Nothing that was created, everything was created by him. This Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we've beheld his glory.

His name is Jesus, and he has made known, revealed in his incarnate body, the unseen God. We know who this is. Sir, that guy does have no clue.

[15:16] What we know is that this is the same God incarnate who just turned this water into wine in Cana.

We know that this is the God incarnate who went to Samaria and told a Samaritan woman all of her most guarded secrets. We know that this is God incarnate who brought an official's son back from the brink of dead with words 22 miles away instantaneously.

We know who this is, but this guy doesn't. He says, there's no one to help me as he speaks to God incarnate. He's going to catch 22.

He needs to be healed of his paralysis, but his paralysis keeps him from being healed. And if you've been around the world, if you've been on this planet long enough, either you or you know someone who's been in a similar catch 22 where what they need, they can't get because of the problem they have.

It's a difficult place to be. One can get helpless in those situations. This guy is thinking that when the water stirs, he just needs to get himself into the water.

[16:42] First come, first healed. In their minds, all of these invalids have bought into the same kind of thinking that somehow their healing is dependent on their ability to get them into the pool first.

You know what that kind of mindset is? This mindset is a mindset that is common to man. It permeates people's thinking. When we think about in terms of getting to heaven, the greatest pool of all, when we think about getting to heaven, many people think it's about what I can do to get myself to heaven and then I'll be healed of everything.

It's a common mindset. I need to work to get God's grace. But the thing is, just as this paralytic's paralysis kept him from getting into the pool, our sinfulness cripples us from getting into heaven. That's the effect of sin in us. We do not have the ability to make ourselves holy. Well, Jesus takes his answer of saying, yeah, there's nobody that put me in, you know, I try to get in, somebody jumps in front of me.

Somehow Jesus takes this as a yes to his question. So Jesus, because he's wearing a tank top, his muscles are blasting, veins popping in his biceps, grabs the invalid, tosses his hair back because there's a slight wind blowing, walks him down into the pool of Bethesda just as it starts to stir.

[18:43] And as he puts him in, this man's eyes go wide. That's not what happens. No, what happens is Jesus speaks.

God incarnate speaks. He says in verse, he says in verse eight, get up, take up your bed and walk. And those words have immediate effect. Immediate effect. Just think about him healing the official son.

Immediate. At once, the paralyzed man is made whole. His paralysis is gone. He takes up his mat. Verse nine, he walks away. He's like, see ya, I'm out of here. Let's go get some Chick-fil-A. Wait, it's a Sabbath. Let's go get some stuff. See what Jesus does is he skips the pool.

[19:57] He is our healing. Now typically, we think of healing as the climax of a story. We think of a healing like this as the focus of a story.

But that's not what's going on here. Because this healing actually raises tension. And here's the noise.

Dun, dun, dun. The rest of verse nine says, now that day was the Sabbath. And we're asking the question, uh-oh.

What does that mean? And what that means is scene three. Holiness police. In verses 10 through 15, the holiness police come on the scene.

Now before I get into this, remember, this passage is about authority. Who gave you the right? Verse 10. The man who's been healed is walking along.

[20:57] I mean, he's stretching his legs. He's like, man, this feels good. And he happens to be carrying his mat. And let's just say he gets pulled over by the holiness police.

Whip, whip. Whip, whoop. Whip, whoop, whoop, whoop. At least two Jews. And it's kind of like, what are they doing?

Are they just kind of like hanging out, waiting for someone to break the Sabbath? It kind of sounds like that. They see him walking with his mat and they go to him. Whip, whoop, whoop.

It's the Sabbath and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed. You are breaking the Sabbath. He gets pulled over. They walk up.

Sir, we couldn't help but notice that you're carrying your mat. Did you know that's a Sabbath day violation? According to the tradition of the elders.

[22:02] The tradition of the elders was a collection of explanations of God's law and how to apply it. And it was developed over a long period of time.

And just to let you know how it worked, how elaborate it was, it's an elaborate scaffolding around God's word. So in regard to Exodus 20 verse 8, the command that you should keep your, keep the Sabbath holy.

the tradition of the elders had 39 categories. Categories of how you could not work on the Sabbath.

Not five. 39. And one of them was carrying something on the Sabbath from one domain to another. So according to the tradition of the elders, these Jews that pulled over the man that was just healed, whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop, whoop, they were well within their rights. The problem was that the tradition of the elders was not God's word.

[23 : 18] It's not God speaking. It is the creation of well-intended men and women. men, but it didn't have the authority of God speaking.

Which means it's not altogether clear that this man was actually breaking the Sabbath. I would say he was not breaking the Sabbath because he wasn't carrying his mat for his employment, for his work.

One could actually say that this man was carrying his mat because Jesus just brought Sabbath to him, giving him fullness of rest with his body.

Peace, goodness. But these Jews, they had elevated the tradition of the elders, the tradition of men on par with the Scriptures, which means they were appealing to a false authority.

they were binding this man's conscience without biblical warrant. And this false authority is oftentimes what's at the heart of legalism.

[24 : 33] When you're insisting on something that God is not insisting on of other people, even yourself. You know what's most striking is that these Jews who pulled over this man make no reference, they have no idea that this man was just healed of being paralyzed for 38 years.

It's no mention. You see, one of the things that legalism does is it makes you focus on little rules and blinds you to God's glories.

You know, we can be just like these Jews, these holiness police. We have a tendency for calling things unlawful, sinful, when in God's eyes they're not.

So for example, drinking alcohol is in and of itself not sinful. Getting drunk is. Eating certain foods. Jesus declared all foods clean.

It might not be wise to eat three bags of twizzlers. Listening to certain music. We can be quick to judgment.

[25 : 58] Where you send your children to school. There can be quickness to judgment, holiness police, when some parents choose to send their kids to public school or home school or private school.

The reality is God calls all parents to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Think about it this way. Think of God's law represented by the Ten Commandments as this God-given granite foundation to live.

granite foundation and what the Jews had done is they had built this elaborate scaffolding system around this granite foundational way of living and they built it around it to explain it, to support it, though it didn't need it.

But you know what happened over time? people started to confuse the scaffolding with the granite. They started thinking that the scaffolding is just as authoritative as the granite.

They're treating the scaffolding like the granite, but it's not. In verse 10, you see, so the Jews said to this man, it is the Sabbath, it's not lawful for you to take up your bed.

[27 : 20] They are making that claim under a false pretense of a false authority. In verse 11, we start seeing more about this man's character.

He says, but he answered them, the man who healed me, that man said to me, take up your bed and walk. The healer made me do it. This brings up another way of dealing with sin. Pass the buck, the blame game. We are inclined to that as well, aren't we? What he's saying, it's not my fault. It's his fault.

He told me to do it. And then in verse 12, what we see, these Jews asked him, who is the man who said to you, take up your bed and walk? Give us a name.

Give him up. Who gave you the right to take up your mat? These Jews were questioning the authority of this healer.

[28 : 25] They considered him having committed a greater wrong for having told this man to take up his mat. In verse 13, again, telling of this man's character, he doesn't know.

Now, the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn as there was a crowd in the place. But, you know, Jesus withdrew, yeah? But don't you think that you would pause for a second after you've been healed of a paralysis for 38 years and just kind of say, by the way, what's your name?

No reference. And apparently, this man gets off with just a warning, because in verse 14, Jesus finds him in the temple, which means Jesus was looking for him, which helps us understand Jesus had something else going on here all along.

Jesus, in verse 14, finds him in the temple and says, see? Hey, look at that. You're walking great. Let me see you take some steps.

And then Jesus says something a little dark. He says, sin no more that nothing worse may happen to you. Let me just explain that.

[29 : 47] Not all physical ailments that we experience are the direct result of our personal sin. Because you get the flu doesn't mean you've just sinned.

And it's God punishing you somehow. Or you get cancer and this is God bringing that back on your head. But there are some physical ailments that are the direct result of sin.

STDs. Alcoholism. But you know what? That's not the real big, that's not the question here. You know what the real question is? What is worse than being paralyzed for 38 years?

Sin no more. Lest something worse may happen to you. What's worse than being paralyzed for 38 years? I'll tell you what's worse than being paralyzed for 38 years.

Being tormented by God's wrath because of your sin for eternity. That's worse. So what Jesus is doing here is he's bringing up a bigger issue for this paralyzed man that just been healed.

[31 : 05] And so the paralyzed man is, yeah please tell me more. How do I deal with my sin problem? No. In verse 15, again this man's character is on display. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

He's healed by Jesus but goes and gives Jesus up. You know guys, you know you asked me about who it was that healed me. Well I just met him in the temple area. It's Jesus.

And they're like, oh yeah, we know who that is. He's on our radar. The holiness police have come on the scene. Now what's going to happen? And we see what happens in scene 3, verses 16 through 18, a heated provocation.

This is where this passage, it reaches its climax. climaxes in a conflict between Jesus and these Jews over the authority to heal on the Sabbath.

This is a passage about authority. Verse 16, we're given a reason why these Jews had begun to persecute Jesus. In verse 16 we read, this is why, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

[32 : 23] They were seeing this as undermining the Jews' authority, like pushing the envelope. They're seeing this as some kind of big no-no threat.

He is challenging. Think about it like this. Jesus has just gone up to the tradition of the elders, put his hands on the scaffolding, and just shook it. This isn't solid.

There's no life here. And apparently there's this dialogue, because in verse 17 we read, but Jesus answered them.

Look what he says. My father's working until now, and I am working? Let me help you understand what he's saying. What Jesus is saying in verse 17 is this.

Who gives me the right to heal on the Sabbath? And then he says, my father has been working on every Sabbath, and I am working on the Sabbath too.

[33 : 34] You know what he's saying? I'm exempt because I'm God, because I'm the Lord of the Sabbath. I'm the giver of the Sabbath.

It's a huge claim of authority. What he's saying is he has the right to do whatever he determines best on the Sabbath because he's the Lord of the Sabbath.

He's the giver of the Sabbath. Just as the father is exempt from working on the Sabbath, so God the son is exempt from working on the Sabbath. God has been on every Sabbath since creation, been holding up the universe, just making sure all the stars are in place and all the galaxies are working just fine.

God the father has been making sure on every Sabbath that all of the inhabitants of the earth, human and non-human, make sure they get water and are fed. God has been working on every Sabbath for all 8 billion people on the planet to make sure they get their next breath.

Of course God is working on the Sabbath. Both God the father and God the son are fully God.

[34 : 53] It's not breaking the Sabbath for the Lord of the Sabbath to heal on the Sabbath, to bring Sabbath fullness to an invalid.

Here's how to think about these miraculous, healings Jesus performs throughout the Gospels. Think about it as advances of the glory to come.

The healings that Jesus performed, the authority had over sickness. It's just a little down payment of what's going to happen when he comes back.

When Jesus comes back, he's going to bring full, final, and forever healing to our bodies.

Full, final, and forever. And the our bodies, the our are those, all those who believe in the name of Jesus Christ. We will be given sinless and pain-free resurrection bodies, and we will exercise them in a sinless and pain-free new creation.

[36 : 14] Are you wanting to be healed? Christian, it's not a question of if, it's a question of when.

and it's coming. In verse 18, we're given another reason. This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

It now just got ramped up from persecuting him to wanting to kill him. Why do they want to kill him? Because in their minds, not only was he breaking the Sabbath, he was claiming to be equal with God, which is blasphemy.

Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy, let's kill him. Tragically, both of their reasons for hating Jesus were wrong.

Jesus wasn't breaking the Sabbath. He was exercising his dominion on the Sabbath. And Jesus wasn't blaspheming because he's God in the flesh, God's son, equal to God.

[37 : 22] And the tragedy of it is he's come to his own, John 1, 9, and his own did not receive him.

That's the tragedy. But all who do receive him, to those who believe in his name, they're given the right to become children of God, they're given eternal life, and they are given this promise, this hope of a full, final, and forever resurrection body.

Because our trust is in, not in a pool in the person of Jesus Christ. Our hope for our healing is Jesus.

Which brings me to the point. The healing pool side provoked the holiness police and resulted in a heated provocation between Jesus and the Jews.

And it's all over authority. Who gave Jesus the right to work on the Sabbath? He's always had the right. Because he is fully and forever God.

He is our hope of healing, not a pool. And he's at work today. So briefly, let me just give you three ways to respond.

[38 : 55] We welcome his authority. His authority is good news, not bad news. In Matthew 28, Jesus is raised from the dead.

He says, all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. authority. That's good news. He's got the whole world in his hands.

That's good news. And so our response is to gladly submit to him. It's to come under his life-giving authority. That is what it means to receive Jesus and believe in his name.

To come under his life-giving authority. He has the right to impose his will upon us because of who he is and we are to welcome it.

When he exercises his will, his authority, it's always wise. It's always healthy. It's always God-honoring and it always results in our good.

[39 : 56] That's the kind of God our God is. Always for our good. When he says to the paralytic sin, so sin no more so that nothing worse may happen to you.

If you're not a Christian in the room, your hope is to submit yourself to the life-giving authority of Jesus so nothing worse may happen to you.

Let's not resist him. Let's welcome him. Second is a warning. Don't be part of the holiness place.

Let's just move on to the third. Are you hoping for healing? For yourself or for someone else?

Our hope is not in a pool. Our ultimate hope is not in a medication or a new treatment or an organ. Our hope is in Jesus.

[41 : 08] And so here's what that means. Here's what we do. When people in our lives are saying, I am hopeless with this physical or mental difficulty, we don't say, man, there's a time coming where everything will be fine.

Buck up! Here's what we do. we say, oh, it's a good thing that Jesus is alive. And so let me pray for you now that Jesus would heal you on the spot right now.

And I'm going to pray this knowing full well that the full final and forever healing is on the way. And if he should not heal you, healing's coming.

We're one day closer. welcome, warning, healing, it's all about hope in Jesus, that's how we respond. Who gives Jesus the right to tell us that we must come to him alone for forgiveness and eternal life?

To tell us to stop our prideful judging, to tell us what to do. What gives Jesus the right? We're going to see this played out in the rest of John 5. life. But what gives him the right is that he has always had the right.

[42 : 30] Because he's fully and forever God. We pray. God, I do pray for the people in the room who've come in here who are in pain physically, mentally, emotionally.

God, would you heal them? Would you bring Sabbath rest to their bodies, to their minds, to their emotions? And if you should choose not to, God, we're not going to blame you.

We're going to hope in you. That knowing that this full, final, and forever healing is one day closer.

In your name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.