

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA (SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC)
APRIL 16/ 29, 2007**

ACTS 9:32-42

ST. JOHN 5:1-15

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

Gospel: *After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had.

And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.

When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.

Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.

And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.

The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed.

He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.

Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk?

And he that was healed wist not Who it was: for Jesus had conveyed Himself away, a multitude being in that place.

Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.

The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole.

...

St. Bede:

One person was healed, not because the benevolence of the almighty Saviour was unable to heal everyone whom He found ailing there, but so that He might teach that there is no place of salvation accessible to anyone outside the unity of the catholic faith.

[*The Orthodox New Testament, The Holy Gospels Volume 1*, Holy Apostles Convent/Dormition Skete, Buena Vista, CO, 2000, St. John, Endnotes, #110, 5:9, p. 496.]

Grace Is Inexhaustible!

Jesus went up to Jerusalem in April on the feast of Pentecost, which commemorates the giving of the Law, the Jews' deliverance from wilderness trials, their entrance into the Promised Land and eating of its first fruits.¹ He went so they would not think He opposed the Law.² God sent His angel to the sheep pool to give the water healing power. Healings occurred through the mediation of the angel much like we are spiritually healed by Holy Baptism when the regular water becomes sanctified through God's invocation and the priest's prayers thus curing our souls' infirmities.³

Unlike at the sheep pool, we live within the New Adam's grace; all of us can be healed, not just one man as in today's Gospel:

No longer does one man receive healing while others remain unhealed; rather, even if the whole world were to assemble, *grace would not run out* (emphasis supplied).

...

it is never spent.⁴

The Paralytic's Patience

We can learn a lot from the Paralytic. Each of his years of infirmity had passed in which the stronger took precedence, those "stronger than he," but he never lost hope. Christ asks him if he wishes to be cured. Well, He knew the answer – Christ knows everything. Naturally, one who is sick wishes for health. He answers the Lord "with great contrition of heart, meekness and

humility, ‘Yea, Lord, I wish to get well, but I have no one who can put me into the water’’. He meant no disrespect, just answered contritely and truthfully.⁵ He simply didn’t know Who had spoken to him. He just knew here was a stranger Who wished him to be made whole.

Rise, Take Up Your Bed and Walk!

The power of the Lord’s command brought forth its requisite response: the Paralytic, strengthened by the Saviour’s word rose immediately and walked! To us, we can understand and apply this passage to our own lives – for all who fail in our spirituality, Christ commands us to follow resolutely the virtuous course. It is not enough to try to cure our “spiritual paralysis” by simply rising. We must do both, *rise and walk*, thus making “progress in the virtues, following the course of virtue”.⁶

The Envious Jews

Christ performed this healing on the Sabbath “to teach men never to be idle, but to do good and to give gifts”.⁷ There is no constraint on a time to do right, to do spiritual good! The envious Jews did not consider the good He had done. They stood on the Law, procedure, custom, the way it’s always been done. All they could think about was the timing of the good. Our Lord withdrew to another place and simply “let His deed be examined on its own and bear witness to the truth”.⁸ The derision of the Jews only succeeded in spreading news of the miracle!

The Paralytic Had Been a Sinner (Like Us)

Jesus tells him in the temple to “sin no more”. From this, we learn that his physical infirmity began earlier, generated by sin. Some bad things (evil) occur this way, from sin; others occur “so that those who suffer may mend their ways, and others are a means of dealing with those who are desperate, as in the case of Pharaoh”.⁹

Divine Trials

God allows pain and affliction, voluntary or involuntary, to come as a trial. We are tested in this way. Don’t refuse to suffer. Our task is to gracefully accept and bear God’s judgment in the form of trials. We must see these as curative, a way for us to heal our prideful selves. Don’t blame the Saviour for our inequities:

Foolish men, however, are ignorant of God’s most wise purpose; when they sin and are punished, they hold either God or other men to blame for *their* (emphasis supplied) sins.¹⁰

Guard Against “Recidivism”

Be careful to reform ourselves from prior sins “lest a worse thing come unto thee”. Once we recognize our sin(s), take urgent measures to correct our behaviour. Don’t fall back into sinful practices. If we do, we will receive a stiffer ‘sentence’ as an “incorrigible offender”.¹¹ Don’t be angry with God. He chastises us for our own good allowing “difficulties and afflictions to correct us”.¹² The Lord is our Chief Physician prescribing sometimes bitter medicines for our spiritual infirmities that are hard to take, but God is good. He is the “Physician of our souls and bodies”.¹³ Listen and heed the Doctor!

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ Hieromonk German Ciuba (tr. from the Slavonic into English; tr. from the original Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, A.D. 1343), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p. 183.

² *id.*, p. 184.

³ *id.*

⁴ *id.*, p. 185.

⁵ *id.*

⁶ *id.*, p. 186.

⁷ *id.*, p. 187.

⁸ *id.*, p. 188.

⁹ *id.*

¹⁰ *id.*, p. 189.

¹¹ *id.*, p. 190.

¹² *id.*, p. 191.

¹³ *id.*, p. 192.