

*Nuggets and Gems from the Bible*

LIFE'S  
ENLIVENING —  
THE NEED  
OF THE  
IMPOTENT

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***Living Stream Ministry***  
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# **LIFE'S ENLIVENING— THE NEED OF THE IMPOTENT**

In this booklet we shall consider the fourth case in the Gospel of John—the need of the impotent ([John 5:1-47](#)). This case exposes the vanity of religion and reveals the sufficiency of Christ as life to enliven us.

## **RELIGION'S LAW-KEEPING AND THE SON'S LIFE-GIVING**

When the Lord Jesus came, He came as the One who was prophesied in the Old Testament. He was the One who came to be salvation, life, righteousness, holiness, redemption, glory, and everything to God's people. But, when He came, God's people, the Jews, were fully occupied with their religion. They had no room in their hearts for this coming One. If you read the four Gospels, you will see that wherever the Lord went and wherever He was, He was opposed by that typical religion formed according to God's Holy Word. Those religionists opposed this living One according to their religion. They thought that they were opposing Christ for God. They

even sentenced this living One to death in their attempt to protect God. According to their realization, when Jesus said that He was the Son of God, He was speaking blasphemy, making Himself equal to God (5:18).

## **THE GOOD THINGS OF THE TYPICAL RELIGION**

The Jewish religion includes at least seven items: the holy city Jerusalem, the holy temple, the holy feast, the holy Sabbath, the angels, Moses, and the Holy Scriptures. When you add these seven items together, they equal Judaism, the Jewish religion. These items are excellent and wonderful things.

Along with these seven items of Judaism, there was also the means of healing, because there was the healing pool of water. The significance of this picture is that the means of healing is always with the typical religion. Judaism is the typical religion which has something that can heal you. The pool in Jerusalem signifies that the means of healing is in that typical religion.

But there is a requirement—you must have strength in order to walk and act. Whenever a chance is given for you to receive the benefits of this religion you must have the strength to be

first and the ability to walk. This case is a sign, showing us that here is a typical religion with many good and holy items which can heal you, but it requires your strength to walk and act. Even though you are second, you will not obtain the benefits of this good religion because you are not first.

## THE PRACTICE OF THE LAW-KEEPING

Let us now consider some aspects of the practice of law-keeping. The sheepgate ([5:2](#)) signifies the entrance to the law-keeping religion's sheepfold ([10:1](#)). The name of the pool, Bethesda, means house of mercy, signifying that the people who practiced law-keeping realized that they needed the mercy of God because they were impotent, weak, and wretched, as portrayed in [Romans 7:7-24](#). The porches, like a sheepfold, signify the law-keeping religion's shelter, and the number five denotes responsibility. The angel who stirred up the water signifies the agent through which the law, which could not give life, was given ([Gal. 3:19, 21](#)). The stirring up of the water to make people well signifies the practice of the law-keeping trying to make people perfect. By considering these aspects, we can see

the situation of law-keeping, which is the major thing in the typical religion.

## THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THE LAW-KEEPING

It is impossible for man to keep the law. No one can do it. Just as people cannot walk up to the heavens, neither can they keep the law. [Romans 8:3](#) says that it is impossible to keep the law, because the law is weak through the flesh. All flesh is too weak to keep the law. This is clearly portrayed in the case of the impotent man.

The impotent man had been sick for thirty eight years. He was unable to move. He was filled with expectation when he saw the waters stirring, but it was impossible for him to get there in time. Because he was impotent, unable to move, he could not receive healing. Likewise, due to our impotence, we cannot keep the law. The law is good, holy, and spiritual. There is no problem with the law; the problem is with us.

Man is not only sick, but also dead. We know from [5:25](#) that, in the eyes of the Lord, the impotent man was a dead person. How can a dead person walk? If he is to walk, he must first be made alive. As long as you cannot make a dead person live, he can do nothing. [Galatians 3:21](#)

says that the law cannot give life. The law only makes demands upon people; it never supplies them with life. Due to the lack of life, man is absolutely unable to keep the law. If you are still religious, still trying to keep the law, let me ask you a question. Are you dead or alive? You must admit that you are dead. Since you are a dead person, how can you keep the law? A dead person can do nothing.

Because of the weakness of the flesh and because of the lack of life, it is impossible for man to keep the law. Although there are an angel, the water, and the stirring of the water, there is no way for you to fulfill the requirement of getting to the water to be healed. This is a clear picture showing us that the impotent and dead people find it impossible to keep the law. There is no hope for man with the law. With respect to the law, we are helpless and hopeless cases.

Today, we have an even better religion—even the best religion. But do you realize that the best religion requires you to do something? It requires you to walk, to act, and to be the first before you can obtain its benefits. Perhaps you have discovered that you are too weak to obtain what your religion has to offer. This indicates that you are where the impotent man was—under the five

porches. We are like the impotent people under the law-keeping shelter.

## THE SICK PEOPLE UNDER THE LAW-KEEPING SHELTER

A multitude of sick people lay in the porches. This signifies that under the law-keeping shelter, in religion's fold, there are many people who are blind, unable to see; lame, unable to walk; and withered, being short of life. They have no joy or peace, only suffering. The impotent man had no joy, even on the joyful day of the feast ([5:1](#)), and he had no rest, even on the Sabbath day ([5:9](#)). The sick people were helpless and hopeless, dead in the eyes of the Lord.

There was the means of healing in the law-keeping religion, but it did not profit the impotent man, because he had no strength to fulfill its requirement. In the eyes of the Lord, he was a dead person in need not only of healing, but also of enlivening. With the Lord's enlivening there is no requirement. As we shall see, the impotent man heard His voice and was enlivened. The significance of this sign is that when the practice of law-keeping in the Jewish religion became an impossibility due to the impotence of man, the Son of God came to enliven the dead. The law

could not give life, but the Son of God gives life to the dead ([5:21](#)). “While we were yet weak” ([Rom. 5:6](#)), He came to enliven us.

## THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SON’S LIFE-GIVING

We have seen that this case on the negative side exposes the inadequacy and vanity of the law-keeping religion. The holy city could not help the impotent man; neither could the holy temple, the Holy Scriptures, nor the holy days. Although it was a feast day, he had no joy, and although it was the Sabbath day, he had no rest. Nothing could help him. He was a hopeless and helpless case. Suddenly, a little man came into this situation. It was not an archangel, but a little man named Jesus. He had no beauty or attraction, and no one paid attention to Him. He came directly to the sick man. Just as the Father in eternity past foresaw the Samaritan woman and the Son went to find her at Jacob’s well ([John 4](#)), so the Father also foresaw the impotent man, and the Son came to him while he was lying at the pool. He asked him, “Do you want to get well?” That meant, “Would you like to be healed?” The impotent man knew nothing beyond the pool, the water, and the angel who stirred the water.

He also knew that he had no hope or ability in himself. So he explained the situation to the Lord Jesus. Then the Lord Jesus said, “Rise, pick up your bed, and walk.” The impotent man heard the enlivening word of the living, life-giving Lord and was healed. We may think that he rose up and walked before he was healed. But this is not true. He was healed before he rose up, took his bed, and walked. Note the sequence in [verse 9](#). “And immediately the man became well, and picked up his bed and walked.” “And immediately the man became well” precedes “picked up his bed and walked.” He was cured before he rose up. He was cured when he heard the voice of the living Son of God. It was his hearing of the living word of the Lord that quickened him. Formerly the bed carried the impotent man, but now the enlivened man carried the bed.

If I had been the impotent man, I probably would have said, “Sir, I can’t make it. I have been relying upon this bed for thirty-eight years. The bed has been carrying me all this time. How can you tell me to pick it up? I can’t do what you say.” We should never argue with the Lord’s word. We should simply say, “Amen,” to whatever He says and do it accordingly. Do not argue or reason. If you reason, you will lose His blessing. How good

it was that the impotent man not only rose up, but also picked up his bed and walked. He was not only healed; he was enlivened. According to [verses 24 and 25](#), this is for him as a dead man to pass out of death into life and live.

We do not need religion's pool with its water and we do not need the angel. When we have Jesus, we do not need anything else. It is Jesus who enlivens. We all have to see this. This is life's enlivening. This is the central point of this case on the positive side.

## LIFE'S ENLIVENING BREAKING RELIGION'S RITUAL

In [5:10-16](#) we see religion's opposition to life. "The Jews then said to the one who was healed, It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to pick up your bed" ([5:10](#)). Life's enlivening breaks religion's ritual. Religion is offended by life and begins its opposition to life from this point. The Sabbath is for man ([Mark 2:27](#)) and should be a rest to man. Religion's law-keeping did not bring rest to the man sick for thirty-eight years, but life's enlivening did it in one second. Yet, the religious people cared only for the ritual of Sabbath-keeping; they had no concern for the sick man's rest. What a life we have! We do not

need any religious things. As long as we have Jesus, all religious things mean nothing. As long as we have Jesus, we have life. Let religion with all its things go. They could not give us life, but Jesus does. Jesus enlivens us. Jesus gives us life. Life brings us joy. Life brings us rest. Life brings us light and everything we need. Praise the Lord!

The real significance of this case is the difference between religion and Christ, which is the difference between the law-keeping of religion and the enlivening of Christ. Religion's law-keeping is good, but we are weak. Religion's law-keeping may be effective, but we cannot meet its requirements. There is no requirement with Christ, for when He comes to us, He speaks His living word so that we can hear His voice. If there is any requirement, it is simply to hear His living word. When we hear His voice, we pass from death into life. The contrast in this case is that religion requires, but Christ's word quickens.

## **RELIGION TRYING TO QUENCH LIFE**

The law-keeping religion could not give life to the impotent man. When Christ enlivened this man with life, that religion persecuted Him, trying to quench life, because He did it on the

Sabbath (5:16). That religion cared for the keeping of its Sabbath at the sacrifice of the impotent man's rest. But Christ cared for the man's rest at the sacrifice of their Sabbath-keeping. This surely offended that religion. In principle, the situation of today's religion is the same. The religious people still care for their religious rituals at the sacrifice of people's life matters. The Lord is still the same, caring at any cost for people's life matters at the sacrifice of all religious rituals. All those who have been enlivened by Christ will be opposed and persecuted by the people who cling to their religious rituals.

## THE SON BEING EQUAL WITH THE FATHER

The religious Jews persecuted Jesus because on their Sabbath He worked to enliven the impotent man. Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working” (5:17). In their religious concept, they were resting in keeping their Sabbath. But they did not know that there was no rest for the Father and the Son as long as the poor sinners were not saved. While they were resting in keeping their Sabbath, the Father and the Son were still working that the sinners might receive life and have rest. This not

only offended the religious Jews, but also caused them to consider that Jesus was blaspheming, because, according to their concept, He “not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” ([5:18](#)). In their consideration, that was a blasphemy to God. Yet, it was this “blaspheming” One who enlivened the impotent man. His enlivening of that man testifies that He is equal with God the Father in giving life to people.

## **BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON WORKING**

Although God’s work in creation was finished ([Gen. 2:1-3](#)), the Father and the Son were still working for redemption and building ([John 5:17, 19-20](#)). The religious Jews kept the Sabbath of creation. They did not know that because of man’s fall the rest of that Sabbath was broken. Neither did they know that the Father and the Son were still working for fallen man’s redemption in order to fulfill God’s original purpose, which is the building of God’s eternal habitation. What God did was the old creation. What the Father and the Son are doing is the new creation through redemption for God’s building. This work includes the Son’s life-giving, which is manifested in this

case. In this matter, the Father and the Son are one. Whatever the Father wants to do in the matter of life-giving, the Son does it accordingly.

## **THE SON OF GOD GIVING LIFE TO THE DEAD**

The Son gives life to the dead. [Verse 21](#) says, “For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He wills.” In [verse 24](#) we see that whoever hears the word of the Son and believes in Him who sent Him has eternal life and has passed out of death into life. [Verse 25](#) says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear shall live.” The dead persons mentioned in this verse are not those who are buried in their graves, but the living dead ones. They are not dead physically, but, according to [Ephesians 2:1-5](#) and [Colossians 2:13](#), are dead in their spirit. In the eyes of the Lord, all of the people living on earth are dead in their spirit. The phrase, “An hour is coming and now is,” refers to the very time when the Lord spoke these words. Many at that time heard His living words and consequently were made alive. Hence, “shall live” in this verse means to be

alive in their spirit. It is not the resurrection in the physical body as is mentioned in John chapter 5 verses 28 and 29. For twenty centuries, from the time that the Lord spoke these words until the present, thousands and thousands of people have heard the living voice of the Son of God and have been enlivened with life. We also have heard the living word of the Lord and have been made alive. We also were the impotent persons under the five porches, for we were blind, lame, and withered. In short, we were dead. Then the Lord came to visit us, and we heard the living word of the gospel that enlivened us and made us alive.

In the matter of life the Son is the same as the Father. “As the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself” (5:26). Both the Father and the Son have life in themselves. So the Son can and does enliven people with life as the Father desires. In life’s enlivening, the Son is truly one with the Father.

## THE SON OF MAN EXECUTING JUDGMENT

The Son of Man will execute judgment over all the unbelieving ones (5:22-23, 27, 30). As the

Son of God ([5:25](#)), the Lord can give life ([5:21](#)), and as the Son of Man, He can execute judgment ([5:27](#)). Since He is a man, He is fully qualified to judge man. [Acts 17:31](#) says that God will judge the world “by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained.” [Romans 2:16](#) says, “God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel by Jesus Christ.” [Second Timothy 4:1](#) says, “Christ Jesus, Who is about to judge the living and the dead.” The Father “gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man” ([5:27](#)). And the Father gave all judgment to the Son “that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father” ([5:22-23](#)). The Son will judge justly according to the Father’s will ([5:30](#)). He is one with the Father in the matter of life’s enlivening. He is also one with Him in the matter of judgment.

## TWO KINDS OF RESURRECTION

Let us read [verses 28 and 29](#). “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: those who have done the good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done the evil to the resurrection of judgment.” All of the physically dead people who have

been buried in graves will be resurrected. Please note the difference between these two verses and [verse 25](#). In [verse 25](#), the dead shall hear His voice, but in [verse 28](#) all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice. Those who are in the tombs are different from those who are dead. [Verse 25](#) refers to the dead living on the earth; [verse 28](#) refers to the dead buried in the earth. Those buried in their graves shall be resurrected at the Lord's second coming.

In addition to the resurrection in the spirit which we saw in [verse 25](#), [verse 29](#) distinguishes two kinds of physical resurrections. The resurrection in our spirit means that our spirit is made alive. This is also regeneration in our spirit. The regeneration in our spirit is a resurrection made by the Lord Jesus with the divine life, which is Himself. In addition to this, there are two kinds of physical resurrections. The “resurrection of life” is the resurrection of the saved believers before the millennium, the thousand years ([Rev. 20:4, 6](#); [1 Cor. 15:23, 52](#); [1 Thes. 4:16](#)). The dead believers will be resurrected to enjoy eternal life at the return of the Lord Jesus. Hence, it is called the resurrection of life. When the Lord Jesus comes back, all His dead believers will be resurrected and

will be taken up with the living believers to the air ([1 Thes. 4:17](#)). Then the overcoming believers will reign as kings with the Lord Jesus for a thousand years. The “resurrection of judgment” refers to the resurrection of the unbelievers after the thousand years ([Rev. 20:5, 12](#)). All the dead unbelievers will be resurrected after the thousand years to be judged at the great white throne ([Rev. 20:11-15](#)). Hence, it is called the resurrection of judgment. We, the believers, will enjoy and participate in the resurrection of life, but the unbelievers will suffer the judgment of eternal perdition at the resurrection of judgment.

## THE SON'S FOURFOLD TESTIMONY

In [5:31-47](#) we see the Son's fourfold testimony: the testimony of John the Baptist ([vv. 32-35](#)); the testimony of the Son's work ([v. 36](#)); the testimony of the Father ([vv. 37-38](#)); and the testimony of the Scriptures ([vv. 39-47](#)). It is possible to have these four witnesses and yet not have Christ Himself. The Jews at one time were joyful over John the Baptist, but they did not realize that he was only the witness of Christ. The testimony of John the Baptist was to direct them to Christ. The Jews also saw the works of Christ, yet they

would not come to Him. They saw His signs, miracles, and wonders, but they would not realize who the Lord was and come to Him. The Father testified concerning the Son, but they did not have His word abiding in them, for they did not believe the Son whom He sent. They even searched the Scriptures that testified of Him, but they failed to come to Him that they might have eternal life.

To “search the Scriptures” may be separated from “come to Me.” The Jewish religionists searched the Scriptures, but were not willing to come to the Lord. These two should be kept together. Since the Scriptures testify concerning the Lord, they should not be separated from Him. We may contact the Scriptures and yet not contact the Lord. Only the Lord can give life. We should never separate the Scriptures from the Lord Himself. Whenever we search the Word, we must come to the Lord Himself. We must make searching the Word and touching the Lord one thing. Whenever we study the Bible, we must open our spirit to the Lord. While our eyes are reading the words and our mind is understanding them, our spirit must be exercised to contact the Lord through the Scriptures. Then we shall not only have the understanding of the black

and white letters in our mentality, but also have the life in our spirit.

All of the signs, manifestations, and gifts are merely witnesses by which we may contact Christ. The problem is that people today have the testimonies, but fail to contact the Lord Himself. It is possible to have the signs, the manifestations, the gifts, and the knowledge of the Scriptures, but not come to contact the Lord Himself. It is only the Lord Himself who will give you life. It is not the signs, the gifts, or even the Scriptures, but it is the Lord Himself who will enliven you and impart life into you. May we all see this and daily come to Him that we might have life.

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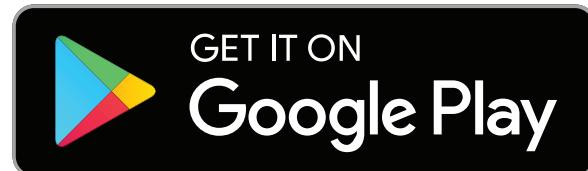
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