

"Sin is bad"

Do you think life is fair?

Do you believe some people have better "luck" than other people?

In our Bible story today we meet a man for whom life has been anything but fair. He's got plenty of luck, all of it bad. Then, he meets a man named Jesus and learns an important lesson about moving forward in life without depending on luck or fairness.

How to Overcome Bad Luck

I don't believe there is some force in the Universe called "luck" that smiles on some people and frowns upon others ... yet, my common sense tells me that some people experience more trouble than others, and others experience tremendous advantage that some have no access to. A prime example of this is everyone in this room, you live in The United States of America. That automatically puts you in the top 1% in the world as far as wealth, opportunity, and freedom.

Still, we can find ourselves feeling down or angry about our life's situation ... so let's look at that.

1. Life is disabling.

John 5:1-15 (NLT)

¹ Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days.

² Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches.

³ Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.

⁴ [some manuscripts: for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]

⁵ One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.

Some disabilities are more easily seen than others. ALL of us are disabled by sin:

Romans 3:23, "All have sinned."

Romans 6:23, "Sin pays its wage ... death."

The effect of sin (our opposition to God, preferring a self-directed life) is disharmony. Sin breaks people. We are broken physically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally. Until sin is "fixed" we remain broken.

2. Life feels like a race that we never win.

⁶ When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, "Would

you like to get well?"

⁷ "I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me."

You gotta' feel for this guy. There is a healing pool, and those who get there first when it bubbles find relief. The wicked irony is that HIS disablement (lame) prevents him even dreaming of getting better. Catch 22 ... he can't walk into the water that will help him walk.

He's stuck. Literally. What's worse, he's there watching everyone else get better. Life isn't very good for him and hasn't been for 38 years.

3. Choose a better way to win.

⁸ Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!"

⁹ Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath,

¹⁰ so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, "You can't work on the Sabbath! The law doesn't allow you to carry that sleeping mat!"

¹¹ But he replied, "The man who healed me told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

¹² "Who said such a thing as that?" they demanded.

¹³ The man didn't know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.

Religion hadn't helped this man. The rules of the Sabbath, the endless "do's and don'ts" he'd heard all his life had no effect. He needed a missing relationship ... a connection with God that religion can sometimes obscure. Just so happened that God Himself (Jesus) walks by and notices him. Tells him to get up and get out of here.

Jesus calls us away from "stuck."

4. Participate in an aggressive rehabilitation program.

¹⁴ But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, "Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you."

¹⁵ Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.

When Jesus sees the man again He tells him how to avoid life's disabling influence ... by getting to the root of his (and OUR) problem: sin.

Jesus is looking ahead, not backward. He's not blaming the man for being human. He's helping him to overcome the cause for life's deepest hurts, hang-ups, and habits.

Jesus' claim here: "Sin is bad." Do you agree with that? We love to put blame for our troubles everywhere ... forget playing the blame game ... instead decided from this point forward to do your best to stop sinning.

MAIN POINT: Since sin is bad, don't sin.

Too simple? Too easy? Too obvious? Sportscasters love to over-analyze stuff when the simple, easy, obvious truth remains:

- Football: block and tackle.
- Basketball: Move your feet.
- Golf: Keep your head down.
- Soccer: Dribble and pass.
- Volleyball: Bump, pass, spike.

Until a person makes a fundamental decision about sin (that it's bad) he'll find life is full of bad luck, trouble, and hurt.

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, help me to think like you about sin. Help me to see that sin is my enemy and that it's disabling me. Free me from my bent to sin by Your grace. Steer me another way. In Jesus' name, amen."