

STOP WHINING-START WINNING

Part Three

“Victims and Volunteers”

Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; 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.] And a certain man was there, who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you."

John 5:2-9, 14 NASB

I. Introduction: The “Blame Game”

A. Ever Since Eden

1. One of the worst signs of the sin nature is the tendency to BLAME someone else or something else when things go wrong.

Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

Genesis 3:12 NKJV

2. When we play the “blame game” we see ourselves as victims and excuse ourselves from personal responsibility.

3. The “victim mentality” marinates American culture today...

- A tobacco company was ordered by the court to pay *2.5 billion dollars* to a woman who had lung cancer because of smoking their cigarettes. She'd been smoking for 30 years.
- A woman received a *three million dollar settlement* from McDonald's for serving her coffee in a drive-through which she said was too hot. It seems she had placed the coffee cup between her thighs as she drove off, squeezing the cup and causing the contents to scald her.
- A NYC man sued Wendy's, McDonald's and Burger King because he'd gotten so fat from eating their food.

- Another man sued the local power company because he was seriously shocked when climbing a safety fence at the power station while drunk.
- Inmates at a state penitentiary sued the state of Ohio because their religious sensibilities were victimized when they were served turkey on Thanksgiving Day

4. Ever since Adam, a sure sign of sin has always been a refusal to take personal responsibility for our situation, blaming others instead.

- Why are you a drug addict?
- Why are you depressed?
- Why are you losing your home?
- Why do you have such a stupid haircut?

5. We've become a culture of "victims."

victim=one acted upon apart from their will and adversely affected by an outside force, agent, or circumstance

6. There ARE victims. But many who see themselves as victims are really volunteers.

A woman once asked Dr. Phil for advice on how to deal with her husband who'd been seriously abusing her physically for seven years. She said she felt like such a victim. Dr. Phil said, "You are not a victim...you are a volunteer. When the beatings started, you were a victim. But now you've become a volunteer because you have chosen to remain in the situation!"

volunteer=one who chooses from one's own will, choice, or consent

7. A victim is unwilling, but a volunteer has made a choice.

8. God's FIRST CALL to a fallen man was to take responsibility for his own choices!

"Where are you?"
 "Who told you you were naked?"
 "What have *you done*?"
 Genesis 3:9, 11, 13

9. If the FIRST SIGN of the fall was the "victim mentality", the FIRST SIGN of salvation ought to be assuming PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY for our condition!

II. A Prophetic Picture of the Church (John 5)

A. Seven Symbols of the Church at Bethesda

1. It was located “near Jerusalem.”
2. It was “by the sheep gate.”
3. There was a “pool” in the center.

Matthew Henry, in his commentary, notes that this pool was fed by the springs of Siloam, which literally means “sent.”

4. Beth-esda means “House of Mercy” in Hebrew.
5. There were “five porches” or “coverings” of the place. (See Ephesians 4:11-13)
6. It was a gathering place for sufferers and seekers.
7. It was a place where God’s supernatural power moved occasionally.

Question: As Jesus waked into this “church” full of suffering, why did He only heal one man???

B. The Heart of the Issue

1. Look at the exchange between Jesus and the man.
2. Jesus picked out this one man...
 - a. 38 years a cripple...the worst situation
 - b. In a condition of paralysis (not able to progress)
3. What is the issue? “Will you be made whole?”
 - a. Jesus doesn’t PREACH
 - b. Jesus doesn’t rebuke and CORRECT

He says, “Are you WILLING???”

- c. Jesus is locating the problem in the man’s WILL!
4. Notice the Man’s Response: He doesn’t say “Yes”, he doesn’t say “No”...He says...

“I have NO MAN to help me....”

5. He missed the point! Jesus asked if he was willing; but the man located the problem in OTHERS...it was SOMEONE ELSE’S FAULT.
6. There it is!!! Do you see it? It’s the “Blame Game” played in the church.
 - Husbands blame wives, wives blame husbands
 - Children blame parents
 - Employees blame bosses
7. The man was saying, “I’m here in this condition because nobody is helping me!”

**The man says, “I’m a VICTIM!”
Jesus is saying, “You’re a VOLUNTEER!”**

8. This is a basic area of disagreement Jesus has with many in His church. It’s YOUR fault that you’re not growing, learning, thriving, winning.

III. Jesus’ Three-Fold Solution

A. Rise

1. Lift your thinking.
2. Change your mind.
3. Get your mentality off of Victim and onto Victory

B. Pick Up Your Pallet

1. This pallet was like a mattress, but spiritually, it speaks of the bed of excuses he’d been using to justify his case.
2. The “bed” had become his IDENTITY...No one knew him without the bed!
3. He’d been a “victim” so long, nobody knew him any other way!

C. Walk

1. The Christian life is a “walk”: not a run, a sprint, a dance or a jerk.
2. Walking means “leaning” in the direction you want to go
3. Walking is “controlled falling”...putting one foot in front of the other.

After 38 years, he could have positioned himself to ROLL into the pool!

IV. Conclusions:

- The 1st step toward God is always the acceptance of personal responsibility!
- Get the roles right: Don’t be the victim OR the volunteer...be a victor (winner)
- Jesus was a VOLUNTEER becoming a VICTIM, SO you could become a VICTOR!

Final Point

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you."

Question: What “sins” could a crippled man who lived in the church for 38 years have been committing? The only logical answer is, “a victim mentality.