

# THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

## DOING THE WORKS OF GOD

**(Temperance)**  
Golden Text — I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10:10

### THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

Approach to the Lesson  
In the realm of fiction, sequels are notoriously anticlimactic. A great novel, which captures the popular imagination encourages the author to write a sequel, telling the further adventures of his characters. But usually the inspiration (no reference to Biblical inspiration!) which marked the first volume is wanting, and by comparison the second is dull.

Our lesson is a story with a sequel. But here the sequel is even more important than the story. Indeed, the story is told for the sake of the sequel. This whole division of John's Gospel (2:1 to 12:50) traces the development of the opposition of the Jewish leaders to Jesus and His ministry. That is why we entitled it, in last week's Approach to the Lesson, "The Light in conflict with the darkness."

While, then, the story of the healing of the impotent man by the Pool of Bethesda has a value of its own, its chief importance lies in the fact that it was the occasion for the defining of the controversy. When Jesus drove the merchants and money-changers from the Temple (John 2:12-21) they could only gnash their

teeth and hope for revenge. After all, Jesus had tradition on His side on that occasion! But when He not only healed on the Sabbath Day but encouraged the man healed to break the Sabbath by carrying a bundle, that made Him a double-dyed Sabbath breaker! And when His "defense" consisted of a claim to equality with God, that was ground for a charge of blasphemy in the highest degree.

So the sequel is of vast consequence, because it brings Calvary a long step nearer. All this indicates that we must look beyond the stories of the Bible to the part they play in the big, wonderful story of Redemption. That is what makes the Bible stories so meaningful.

Verse 5 — "A certain man which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." It does not say that he had been at the pool thirty-eight years, but that he had been ailing that time.

Verse 6 — "Wilt thou be made whole?" The Lord is not unmindful of our long-sufferings. "Wilt thou" does not mean merely, "Do you wish?" It is an appeal to the man's will.

Verse 7 — "Sir, I have no man . . . while I am coming, another steppeth down before me." How reminiscent of Psalm 124:1. The provision of grace is not like this — just for the first arrival — but it is for all who will come.

Verse 8 — "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." The challenged will was now put to exercise by three brief, clear commands. The "bed" was a pallet that could be rolled up and carried.

Verse 9 — "The man . . . took up his bed, and walked . . . the sabbath." Strength to obey came with the will to obey. No convalescence here.

Verse 10 — "It is the sabbath day: it is not unlawful for thee to carry thy bed." That is, it was not in keeping with the traditional interpretation of the Law. Compare Mark 14:16. Why the difference?

Verse 11 — "He that made me whole . . . said . . . Take up thy bed . . ." In the light of what follows we can only think that the man's motive in mentioning the One who healed him was to shift the blame of Sabbath-breaking on someone else.

Verse 12 — "What man is that which said . . . Take up thy bed . . ." Probably the Jewish leaders suspected who it was, and subsequent events suggest that they arranged with the man to report to them if he identified the healer.

Verse 13 — "Jesus had conveyed himself away . . ." It was a purposeful losing of Himself in the crowd to avoid display.

other conservative textual critics. Whether part of the original or a later insertion, it explains the presence of all these sick people.

Verse 14 — "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." The suggestion here is that the man's ailment had been brought on by his own sin. This warning, then, was both gracious and appropriate.

Verse 15 — "The man . . . told the Jews that it was Jesus . . ." Here the man's true character appears — willing to bring the condemnation of the Jews upon his benefactor. Either that, or he was unspeakably stupid in failing to see what the Jews were after.

Verse 16 — "The Jews . . . sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day." They now had a definite charge against Jesus, and were set to invoke the ancient law which made Sabbath-breaking a capital crime (Num. 15:32-36).

Verse 17 — "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." As the work which Jesus did was in co-operation with the Father, the Jews would have to reckon with the Father in finding fault with Him.

Verse 18 — "The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he . . . said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." The Jews better understood our Lord's claim than many of our day. And Jesus did not suggest that they were misinterpreting His claim, although it meant His very life.

The Heart of the Lesson  
Jesus, who commissioned His disciples to be "fishers of men" (Mark 1:17), was Himself the master of the craft. Here we see Him at work.

First, He went where the fish were. There could be no better fishing ground than the pool of Bethesda, where the sick and the lame and the infirm were congregated. Too many of our church evangelistic efforts are like building a pool in one's back yard and expecting fish to jump into it to be caught. I know fishermen who are willing to travel hundreds of miles to a particular lake, because the fish are there. We need to contact sinners where they are.

Second, Jesus went directly to the neediest man in all the cloisters of the pool, a poor helpless fellow who had been ailing for thirty-eight years.

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## Farmer's Voice Opposition to Tractor Licensing

It took clerk and treasurer William G. Manning over an hour to read to the County Council Thursday afternoon the correspondence and reports piled up since the December session.

The Ontario Forestry Association in a long communication set forth its aims and objects in furthering the cause of conservation, and asked for a grant "towards the work." The North and South Ontario W.I. asked for the usual grants from council.

The Ontario Agricultural Council set forth its work on behalf of Canada's basic industry, farming and asked for a grant of \$50,000.

The proposal to license farmer's tractors using the Queen's highways met with strong opposition in a letter from the South Ontario Federation of Agriculture. It was set forth that in the Council's view tractors do not travel ten miles a year on the highways, also that a farmer should be able to haul his produce to market in any vehicle he chooses. It was suggested that the licensing of drivers might help, but not tractors. It was claimed also that the average farmer with a tractor would not use the highway six times a year, also that to license them might step up their use, particularly by the younger set to travel to shows and what have you.

To change the figure, the Great Physician was not afraid of a hard case. There is no case beyond His practice. Are we absolutely sure of the sufficiency of Christ, so that we confidently invite the great sinners, the abandoned sinners, the hopeless sinners to come to Him? By all means seek the children, not yet hardened in sin, and with a whole life to offer. But remember that Jesus receives big sinners, old sinners, and makes them whole.

Third, see our Lord's method with this man. He made a frontal attack on the citadel of the man's soul — his will: "Wilt thou be made whole?" He was not just asking whether the man had a desire to be well, but whether he had the will to be well. Frequently a doctor is frustrated in his efforts by the patient's lack of will to recover. In the spiritual realm, no man is saved contrary to his own will, nor even passively without his will. A man must will to be saved. He must say "I will," to the Saviour.

After the will, become inert by years of frustration, had been aroused to action, our Lord called upon the lame man to act in faith. "Rise, take up thy bed and walk." All three commands were impossible, apart from an surge of new strength. In this case Jesus did not even take the man by the hand to encourage his effort. It was purely an act of faith, and the strength came to reward it with immediate ability to stand, walk and carry his bed.

Will, and faith: that is the order. Whether it be an impotent sinner or an ailing saint, there must be first the will to be whole, and the faith to go forth in His strength.

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Office over Canadian Bank of Commerce.  
Telephone 167w. Stouffville

**E. S. BARKER,**  
L.D.S., D.D.S.  
Honor Graduate of University of Toronto  
Office over Harold's Grill  
Phone 274w Stouffville

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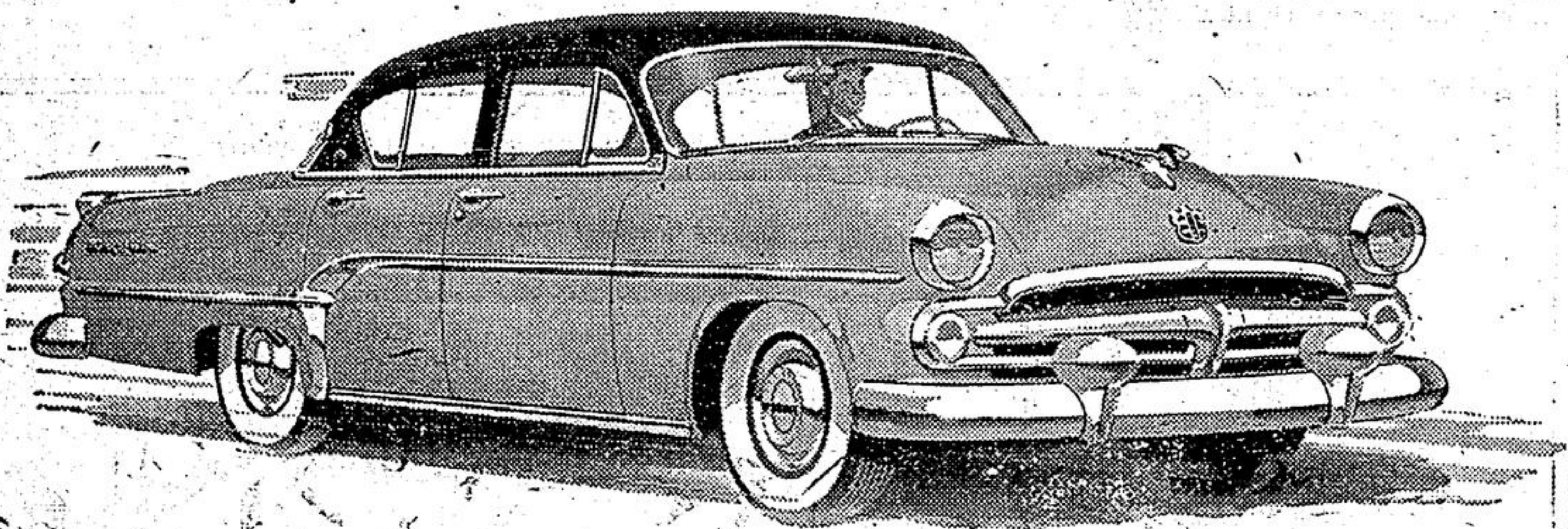
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