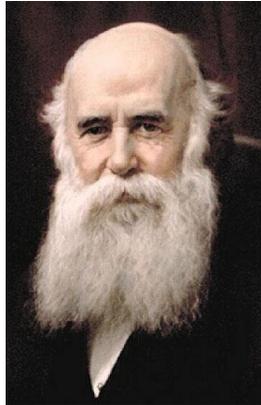


The Five Porches of Bethesda

by

John Alexander Dowie



(In the audio reading on [Youtube](#) of this sermon, you will see that I omitted certain portions that had no direct bearing on healing. This sermon was given between 1890 and 1904.)

I shall speak this afternoon concerning five beautiful lessons of Bethesda. The Apostle John is singular in that none of the miracles mentioned in Matthew, Mark and Luke, are mentioned in his Gospel except the Feeding of the Five Thousand and the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ. John casts around his incidents, certain very far-reaching and spiritual thoughts, and puts them in beautifully single sentences.

Jesus has come up to Jerusalem to attend the feast. As He reaches the city He comes on the Pool of Bethesda and looks into the pool. There are five porches around that pool. He passes through the porches, and at last comes to a poor man, sick for thirty-eight years, who has been pushed away from the sacred spring. The man is lying there miserable and weary and we can imagine his cry: “O Jehovah Raphi! Jehovah my Healer! Hast Thou come to earth? Is it true that Thou hast come to save us? Oh Jehovah Raphi! Hast Thou come to open the eyes of the blind, to give hearing to the deaf, and to make the lame man walk? Oh Christ of God! Hast Thou no hope for me?”

He pauses as he hears the Voice. “Wilt thou be made whole?” And he looks up into the face of a Man Who is looking down at him, asking that strange question, “Wilt thou be made whole?”

Now you can imagine a man in this condition, who had been carried there for over thirty years, turning around and saying: “What is the use of asking me

such a question? My mother carried me here to this pool when I was a baby, my father brought me here when he could. The hands of those who loved me best are mouldering in the grave, and I have only a few friends to carry me here now. But others push me back and when the water is moved I cannot always get down to the pool. But I still hope. I have been 38 years sick. Of course I am willing to be made whole. What is the use of asking me such a question?"

That's what a man today would probably have answered. "Why of course I am willing." But he doesn't talk like that. The Man that is speaking to him has said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and there goes right down into his heart a strange sensation, his whole being vibrates like a harp when every string is touched by a master hand. That voice is unlike anything he has ever heard. "Wilt thou be made whole?" Gently he explains that he has no man to help put him into the pool, but that others when he is coming, step down before him. Then he waits with his eyes fixed on the Man Who has so strangely appealed to his will. He gets ready, for the very next moment he hears the Voice of Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life, of Him Who is the Lord of lords and King of kings say, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk!" And in a moment there comes into his body with that word, power; and he rises, takes up that bed, rolls it up and walks home, set free from the bonds of Satan who has bound him for 38 years.

As the Fountain of Bethesda had five porches, so there are five aspects to faith that I shall now present to you. The first is----

Perceptive Faith or Seeing Jesus

The first thing in connection with faith is to see. When you see Christ, you will perceive that He has power and is willing to heal the sick, that He is the Perfect Saviour, and there is none beside Him; that He is the Healer, and there is none beside Him; that He is the Cleanser and there is none beside Him.

Do you see Christ? What part does He take in your life? Oh, you say, "I see the church, I see its service, I see its forms, I see its communion, I see more services, I hear more songs and I sing psalms." You can have all these things and never see Jesus.

If Christ Came to Chicago

William Stead came to this city, and he wrote a book about it. He called it, "If Christ Came to Chicago." Poor Mr. Stead, he didn't find Christ in Chicago. He

went to the City Hall and talked with Mr. Hopkins and the Common Council, and he couldn't find Christ there. He went down to the saloons and he scoured the slums and the gambling houses and the dens of infamy, and he couldn't find Christ there. So poor Mr. Stead went back to London and wrote a book, entitled: "If Christ Came to Chicago." As I read it I heard men talk about what would happen if Christ came to Chicago. I wondered how men could talk so, for I knew that Christ was in Chicago, because it is written, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." When Mr. Stead was here, I saw Christ in Zion Tabernacle, and the poor and the sick and the sinful were saved, and yet many people are talking as if Christ were not in Chicago and never had been. Oh, Christ is in Chicago, but does He walk with you? Does He talk with you? Is He your friend? Does He help you in business?

We walk by faith and not by sight; but it is a faith that leads to sight and to feeling and to conscious realization of His presence and power.

Receptive Faith---Receiving Jesus

While there are many who see Him yet they do not receive Him. Why? Because when Christ comes into a house, the devil has to get out, and when Christ comes into your spirit, the devil has to get out of your spirit. If you are going to receive Jesus Christ by faith, then you must understand the terms on which He will come. He will come on conditions that you will do what He tells you, even in your eating and drinking. Then you won't drink whiskey, you won't drink beer, you won't drink brandy or gin, or any of the LIQUID FIRE AND DISTILLED DAMNATION that is made and sold under "Ordinance" in this city, and that men drink to their damnation here and hereafter; the champagne, which is a sham at night and a pain in the morning. (Laughter and applause.) You won't drink poisons for they defile.

Then if Christ controls your body, and is received into it, you won't use the dirty stinking nicotine poison called tobacco, the filthy plugs that men chew, and which makes them unmitigated stinkpots. They call themselves Christians and say they have received Jesus. Well, if they have received Jesus, He has come into an exceedingly dirty house. I don't believe you will get Him to stay inside your whiskey house, inside your beer house, inside your tobacco house. You sow whiskey and you reap delirium tremens. You sow tobacco and you reap cancer. I tell you if you receive Christ, He will require you to be clean---clean in spirit, clean in soul, clean in body. God demands it, conscience demands it.

I heard a recently professed Christian man who said: "I don't like to go and hear Dowie preach because I do like a smoke and he does go after a fellow so." I only say to that man this:

When you go home, take your plug, take your cigar, take your tobacco in every form and put it all down on the table in your parlor. Bring in your wife and children, sing a hymn, and then when you have everything ready, read an appropriate portion of the Scripture, if you can find it. Then with cigars and plugs and all in your hand, kneel down, and with your hands on the cigars and tobacco, say: "I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast given me such a good thing as tobacco. And now Lord, I want to smoke it for Thy glory, and to snuff and chew for Thy glory. And as it is such a good thing for me to do, Dear Lord, help my wife to learn to smoke and chew, let the little ones be able to chew and smoke, and especially my dear and only son, so that we may all enjoy the good things Thou hast given us." (Laughter and applause.) Oh, you hypocrite, you won't do that! You would have to offer such a prayer to your father, the devil, in the name of Beelzebub or Nicotine, or Bacchus, or some other devil that Satan loves. You can't pray to God in heaven for your tobacco, and you have to pray over things or Jesus won't stay. Be clean ye that are vessels of the Lord.

Retentive Faith or Holding Fast to Jesus

Now you take another step. It is the hold-fast faith that professing Christians so manifestly lack for the most part. I tell you many a young man has been laughed out of his faith in God; many a young man has been laughed out of abstinence from liquor, and tobacco, many a young man has been laughed out of his purity into vice. Yes, you merry and witty young fellow, you have laughed your companion into a drunkard's grave, but listen, let me ask you, devil's panderer that you are, can you laugh him out of it? You that have laughed a man into infidelity and laughed him away from the church of God, and laughed him into the saloon, and the harlot's arms, and the gambling hell, you can't laugh him out of it! You that have laughed maidens into nameless depth of ruin, can you laugh them out of it?

Oh, what a dreadful thing to think that some here today may be guilty of having put a stumbling block in the way of those who have seen Jesus, and driven them away down to the depths of hell. You women who lure your lovers or your husbands from the house of God, to take you to a theater and to a dance, many of you have already paid for it. He found another there, he found a harlot there, and

he left you, after you lured him from his father's God, to the undoing of yourself and many others.

It is steadfast faith that men want. It is the holding fast to the truth and purity and righteousness, the holding fast to the Word of God, the holding fast to Jesus. Take heed; be not leaky vessels. Sometimes much is lost because there are little holes in the vessel and the water runs out of the little holes. I have seen people take a bucket to the well and fill it with water and come back and put it on the shelf to stay there overnight, and then they go to it, when the night has gone on a piece, they find no water there. Why? There was a little hole or two in the bottom and it all went out; and there are a great many holes in the faith of some of you Christians, and all the blessing you get on Sunday trickles out through those little holes on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and when next Sunday comes, you haven't a drop of blessing left in you. You have let it run out by foolish jesting, by playing cards, by going to theaters, by going to balls, by reading novels, by doing underhanded things, instead of finding joy in the service of Jesus, and in communion with God, and in reading His Word, and in leading a clean and holy life. You have forgotten your vows, your blessing has leaked out because you did not hold fast to it. So when a time of great trial comes, your faith is gone.

Action Faith---Working For Jesus

Now I ask you to take the next step which I call active faith---working for Jesus. You say that you are an average Christian. Well, what is that? "Well, I get shaved every Sunday morning, and put on my best clothes and go to church." Well, what more? "I join in a little in the singing. I like music very much, and I sit back and listen to the choir." Well, what else? "I pay for the singers and the preacher of course. We have a smart up-to-date parson. Oh, he does preach wonderfully! He never hurts anybody; he never calls anybody names as you do; he says we are mighty good people, and pats us on the back, and he is a smart fellow. Yes, siree, I am no saint. I am an average Christian."

Well, my friend, you are very candid, and I will be the same. I will tell you what you are. You are a sham and a fraud. If all your Christianity lies in helping to pay a quartet and a minister to read and say nice things for you, and then go back to the stock exchange and your various other pursuits to act in the same ungodly way as before, you are a sham and a liar, and it is my duty as God's minister to tell you so.

Another says, "I am a Christian." What kind of a Christian are you? "Whenever there is a revival, I take my bible and hymnbook, and I go and join in, and I enjoy it very much." A nice sort of Christian you are. What are you doing for God in your daily life, in your workshop, in your city? What are you doing for the sick, the suffering, the poor? What are you doing for the heathen in Chicago, as well as in Africa; what are you doing in Christ's Name for humanity? You miserable lazy wretch! Get up and work.

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. There are many Christians who are Christians in theory only, and they are worldlings in practice.

Go to the bees. See that hive? Why, it is full of workers. What are they doing? They are going out and bringing back every opening flower, wax and honey. Here they are making the cells and storing the honey in others. It is a wonderful sight. The church of God is, or should be, a hive of busy bees for Jesus. Are you making honey?

Look at the beehive again. See down there at the bottom of this hive. Watch them; these are a lot of drones, big, fat, wingless lazy drones that buzz and buzz all the time, and do nothing else, except steal. Whenever the little bees come and store some honey, then up come the drones, and they put down their suckers, and suck out all the honey, and then they go down again with their zing-zong, buzz-buzz and wait for James and John and Peter to bring in some more honey. At last these three little working bees, whom I call James and John and Peter, say, "Something is the matter; all the honey is going out as fast as we can bring it in; we will go and see the queen." They go and see the queen and she investigates and finds that the hive is being over-run with lazy drones. She sends out her soldier bees and they go down and drag out the drones by the neck. The drones, in great surprise, ask, what is the matter, and they are told that they are going to be put to death, because they eat all the honey and don't make any. "Oh, but we appreciate your labor so much, James, John and Peter," whined the drones, "and we have enjoyed the honey so much." "Come out you wretches," and they take them out, sting them to death, bury them without hope, and there are none to mourn them.

And this is going to be the way with a good many professing Christians. You drones! You never fight the devil, you never call things by their right names, you are very sweet, and very nice, and very calm, and very proper. You work for Jesus? Let me tell you what work is. It is working for Jesus from morn until night, and night until morn., except the hours of sleep. It is finding intense joy in working for the extension of the Kingdom of God. You can always find a way to serve

Christ. You can work for Him everywhere. You can train little hearts for Christ. You can teach little feet to walk in God's ways of wisdom, love, and peace. You can pray, you can help. You can live for Christ every hour of the day. Get active faith and go out to work for Jesus.

Resting Fatih

Now comes the last step, passive faith---resting in Jesus. When you get so you can rest in Jesus, you can step into the Fountain. There is no faith so mighty as passive faith, for strength comes to him that rests in God alone. When I pray, I never excite myself for a moment. I get excited about sin and disease and death and hell and the devil's own work, and I strike for God with the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. But of all the lessons that God has taught me, I think none is as sweet as this, that when I pray, and step down into that Fountain with the sick and the suffering, then I rest. I rest in God. You with whom I prayed for healing know how brief my prayer is. You know how still we are. The teaching is over, the pleading is over, the decision is over, and the Fountain is open. In quiet faith we step down and into the Fountain, in the Name of the Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with the will of God our Heavenly Father; and we go beneath that cleansing stream, and we are well again.

When I finished my address on this subject one day, seven years ago in San Jose, California, a little lady in the back of the room, with infinite pain upon her face, and supported partly by a friend, and partly by her crutches, came forward to the platform. She looked up into my face and said, "I have come. Oh, I have suffered so long and so much. I want to step into that Fountain. I want to be healed. I belong to Christ and I will rest in Him now."

I said, "Very well," and I prayed just a few words. The crutches that had been her support for years were laid down, and the lady straightened herself up and walked right away without pain, saying, "I have been in the fountain." She walked a number of blocks to the house from which she had been carried that day.

Oh, what multitudes I have seen enter Bethesda, God's House of Mercy, not merely for salvation, but for healing, and is not that Fountain open to you? Oh, I am glad it is flowing freely! It is more than a Fountain, it is a River, the River of Life, and in the midst of it, and on either side of it, is the Tree of Life, "bearing twelve manner of fruits," and the "Leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." The River is the Holy Spirit, Christ is the Tree of Life, and the leaves of

theTree are His words, for it is written, “He sendeth His word and healeth them.”
Is is for you. Come now!



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