# Just a Thought

## Only One

What would you think of someone who could enter a hospital, heal every patient, yet restore only one and leave?

Would you call him unkind? Unfair? Would you say that having such power obligated him to use it for everyone?

Before answering, consider Bethesda.

Beneath its five porches lay a multitude of people with afflictions. Among them was a man who had been infirm for thirty-eight years. Jesus saw him, knew his condition, and asked whether he wanted to be made whole.

The man explained his difficulty reaching the pool. Jesus gave him something greater than assistance getting into the water.

“Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.”

Immediately, he was made whole.
*John 5:1–9*

John records this one healing amid widespread suffering. He does not give us an inventory of everything Jesus did that day. But the encounter brings a searching question before us: was Jesus obligated to heal everyone?

The need extended beyond those porches. People suffered throughout Jerusalem and far beyond its walls. If the ability to heal creates an obligation to heal everyone, that obligation could have no geographical boundary.

Yet need alone does not establish a debt.

Jesus did not owe this man healing. His restoration was mercy, freely and deliberately given. Neither the man’s initiative nor his understanding secured it. He did not even know who had healed him.
*John 5:13*

This encounter also belongs within Scripture’s declaration that God works all things according to the counsel of His will. The healing accomplished in time what God had eternally purposed. It was no accident, and the suffering that remained was no defeat of His sovereignty. We are not told every reason for His action, but an unanswered question is not evidence of injustice.
*Ephesians 1:11*

Now consider redemption.

Physical healing and salvation are not identical. We should not make this man’s restored body proof of a redeemed heart. Nevertheless, the event challenges an assumption we may also bring to salvation: that divine goodness requires God to bestow the same mercy upon everyone.

Scripture describes salvation as grace—a gift received by sinners, not payment owed to deserving people. If God owed redemption to us, it would be a debt rather than undeserved mercy.
*Ephesians 2:1–9*

Paul addresses the question directly: is there unrighteousness with God? His answer is emphatic: “God forbid.” He then recalls God’s declaration, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.”
*Romans 9:14–16*

This healing alone does not explain whom God chooses to save or how He brings them to salvation. But it helps us understand why choosing to show mercy to one person does not wrong another: a freely given gift to one does not become a debt owed to everyone.

Those whom God redeems cannot claim superiority. They have received what they could never demand. Those whom He judges are judged for sin; mercy shown to another does not make that judgment unjust.

The question finally becomes personal.

When we consider our salvation, do we imagine that God recognized something that entitled us to His favor? Or do we bow before the One whose mercy reached us in our helplessness?

At Bethesda, a man stood because Jesus spoke.

The redeemed stand before God because He has shown them grace.

There is no room for boasting.

There is every reason for gratitude.

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