



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

¹⁷One day He was teaching^a; and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem^b; and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing^c. ¹⁸And *some* men *were* carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him^d. ¹⁹But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles^e with his stretcher, into the middle *of the crowd*, in front of Jesus. ²⁰Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you^f.” ²¹The scribes and the

^a 5:17 **One day He was teaching.** This was not on the Sabbath. This was a “small group” gathering in a home—likely Peter’s house—during the week. Jesus was in the midst of some sort of exposition.

^b 5:17 **there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem.** This picture would intimidate most of us. Jesus was being evaluated by the men who were considered authoritative in Israel. This would be like looking up from your work and seeing a group of those considered the top of your field present for the sole purpose of critiquing your work.

Remember that Jesus welcomed this. He had sent the cleansed leper to the priests in Jerusalem to send a message. Maybe this gathering was a response to that message.

^c 5:17 **the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing.** This was a time for Jesus to show His power. This statement implies that there were times when that power was not present. Mark 6:5 makes a statement about the time Jesus was in Nazareth and “He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.” Being subject to the decrees of His Father, Jesus even limited the use of His omnipotence.

^d 5:18 ***some* men *were* carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him.** The imperfect tense illustrates what was happening here. The men did not want their friend simply in the house. They wanted Him to be seen by the Good Doctor. They did not yet have a detailed plan to get their friend to Jesus and “were trying” a number of options. Jesus noticed their perseverance.

^e 5:19 **not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles.** This was likely not tiling as we picture tiling. More than simply lifting a 2 x 4 piece of insulated ceiling tile away, these men actually strategized and dug (as Mark 2:4 implies) through the packed roof clay just above Jesus. There surely would have been roofing material falling on the heads of Jesus and the religious dignitaries crowded around Him as the four dug and then began to lower their friend into the room.

^f 5:20 **Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”** Notice that Jesus did not see the faith of the paralyzed man. He saw the faith of the friends. He certainly had the capacity to see hearts, but this faith was not seen by Jesus alone. This is what James meant when he said, “show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works” (James 2:18). The faith of these men worked. They spent themselves for their friend. But Jesus did not forgive or heal them.

Consider James 5:14-16 where prayer for physical illness and confession and forgiveness of sins are connected:

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone^a?”²² But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts^b?²³ Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk^c?²⁴’ But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home^d.”²⁵ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God^e.²⁶ They were all struck with astonishment and *began glorifying God*^f; and they were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen remarkable things today^g.”^h

^a 5:21 “**Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?**”

Criticize the leaders if you want, but they were making a correct observation. You can only forgive someone who has sinned against you. Jesus had just met this fellow. The only way this man could have sinned against Jesus is if Jesus were God.

^b 5:22 **Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts?”** This should have been disturbing for the religious leaders. He saw what they were thinking. Remember after the great catch of fish that Peter became aware that the hidden depths of his heart were visible to Jesus (see also Psalm 139:4; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25). The probing word of God often disturbs us before it sets us free.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Hebrews 4:12-13

^c 5:23 **Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?** Jesus was not simply speaking of pronouncing these words. He was speaking of having the authority to speak these words.

How would you have answered the question? What if you could only choose one or the other for yourself or for someone you love? From a human viewpoint physical healing seems more dramatic than forgiveness. It brings immediate relief. You can’t see forgiveness even though it does bring relief and carries eternal benefits. From God’s perspective physical illness resulted from original sin—the ultimate reason we need forgiveness and suffer the pains of the curse.

^d 5:24 **so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”** The power of Jesus to forgive sins is no more visible than wind, faith or the Holy Spirit. You cannot see them but you can see what they do. So Jesus showed His power to forgive by demonstrating His power to heal.

^e 5:25 **Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.** The healing was as instant as the forgiveness and there was no question where he got either one. God was glorified.

^f 5:26 **They were all struck with astonishment and *began glorifying God*.** It was not only the paralytic who praised God for His work. There is no reason to believe that the religious leaders did not also participate in the praise.

^g 5:26 **they were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen remarkable things today.”** The word translated “remarkable” is used only here in the New Testament. It is where we get our word “paradox.” The prejudices of the religious leaders were being contradicted by the presence and power of Jesus to pronounce forgiveness and effect miracles.

^h 5:17-26 This text reveals God’s perspective and man’s. The presence of Jesus, like the preaching of the Bible, brings you to see things more clearly and make accurate judgments. Here are some questions to ask yourself before you form your conclusions:

1. Make sure you properly judge the needs of the people around you. We tend to be short-sighted about needs and the solutions we offer. Men saw a paralyzed man. Jesus saw a sinner needing forgiveness.

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2. Make sure you properly judge the motives of the people around you. Most of our angry judgments are rendered without the whole story. We rush to judgments that God Himself has not made. Men saw four fellows vandalizing Peter's roof and an interruption of the Rabbi's sermon. Jesus saw faith.
 3. Make sure you properly judge yourself. Seeing yourself next to Jesus and a world of sinners gives you good perspective on Who the Judge is and who deserves judgment. Men saw their own prejudiced theological views. Jesus saw their hearts.

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