

Forgiving and healing of a paralytic - Luke 5:17-26; Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12

5:16 But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

5:17 One day He was teaching; 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; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.

5:18 And 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.

5:19 But 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 with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus.

“In order to understand the action these verses describe, it is necessary to visualize the layout of a typical Palestinian peasant’s home. It was usually a small, one-room structure with a flat roof. Access to the roof was by means of an outside stairway. The roof itself was usually made of wooden beams with thatch and compacted earth in order to shed the rain. Sometimes tiles were placed between the beams and the thatch and earth laid over them” (Wessel, 632).

The four men had brought their friend to the house, but seeing the crowds they realized that there was no way to enter the door. They then climbed up the stairway to the roof where they began to remove the dirt and thatch, and pull up enough tiles for the paralytic to fit through. After opening a hole they lowered him between the beams of the ceiling into the house.

5:20 Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

5:21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

Jesus can see inward faith, but it is most likely the outward display of faith that is in view. The men had demonstrated remarkable persistence in getting to Jesus.

The story assumes a connection between sin and sickness. In a Jewish context, sickness was thought to be a direct result of sin. In John 9:1-2, when Jesus and His disciples saw a man who was blind from birth, His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus’ reply corrects their Jewish thinking: "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (Jn. 9:3). Jesus’ answer shows that there is not always a direct cause and effect relationship between a sickness and a sin. However, in a broader sense, suffering, sickness, and death are related to sin; they exist as a consequence of man’s original rebellion against God. If man hadn’t sinned, sickness and death wouldn’t be in the world. Therefore, in Luke 5, Jesus uses the effect of sin (the man’s paralysis) as a stepping stone to draw attention to the paralytic’s deepest need – forgiveness of sin. To be made whole the man needed to be healed spiritually and physically.

The teachers of the law began to mutter among themselves over Jesus' words. They knew that every sin is ultimately a sin against God and only God can forgive sin. Although John the Baptist had been preaching a baptism of repentance and forgiveness of sin, he didn't claim to be the one forgiving people; rather, he preached repentance *so that* their sins would be forgiven. From the Pharisees' perspective when Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven," He was exercising the prerogatives that belonged to God alone; if He were a mere man this would be blasphemous. This unspoken objection pinpoints what Luke's point really is; namely, Jesus acts with the power and authority of God to heal and forgive. The Pharisees were exactly right in that they knew that only God could forgive sin; but they were exactly wrong in that they didn't know who Jesus was.

5:22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"

5:23 "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"

5:24 "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."

Jesus, "knew what they were thinking" (Lk. 5:22) and responded to them by asking, "Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?" (Matt. 9:5).

On the surface it is easier to say, "your sins are forgiven" for that is something that cannot be seen, and therefore, cannot be verified. Miracles were more difficult, because they were verifiable acts of God's power. However, from the perspective of ultimate reality, forgiveness of sin was the more difficult of the two; OT prophets healed; God alone can forgive sins.

In verse 24, Jesus gives the reason why He said, "your sins are forgiven;" it was "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."

Jesus' sentence begins with "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." It ends with the act of healing. Thus, He both forgave sin and demonstrated that He had the authority to do so by showing that God would work through Him. Apart from the healing, there would be no way of knowing if Jesus could forgive sins or not. However, by performing the lesser task, (healing) Jesus demonstrated the authority He had; the healing validated His claim that God's favor rested upon Him (which wouldn't be the case if He was a blasphemer).

So the religious leaders are left with this question: if Jesus blasphemed God in pronouncing forgiveness, where did He get the power to heal? (cf. Jn. 9:31). The challengers are "impaled on the horns of a hypothetical dilemma" (Liefeld, 881). If God validated Jesus through healing, then Jesus' words must also true.

5:25 Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.

5:26 They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

The cure took its effect immediately. The man stood up and everyone, including Jesus' accusers, saw it. There was no time for atrophied muscles to strengthen, no rehab to learn how to walk; he just picked up his mat and walked off.

Luke tells us that the man was glorifying God (present tense verb in Greek indicating a continuous action).

NOTE: The Title "Son of Man"

Jesus claims to have authority because He is the Son of Man.

It is significant that "Son of Man" refers only to Jesus in the NT and comes almost exclusively from His lips (in 81 of the 84 occurrences, Jesus uses the title of Himself; Sproul, *Renewing Your Mind*, 84, Morris, 172; see Acts 7:25, Heb. 2:6, and Jn. 12:34 for others using the title of Christ). Thus, it is Jesus' use of the word that determines its meaning.

In the *NT*, Jesus used the word in primarily three ways:

- 1) On occasion He used it as a self-designation simply meaning "I" (Matt. 16:13).
- 2) He used it of the heavenly Son of Man who comes in glory.
- 3) He used it of the Son of Man who suffers to bring salvation.

In *the Gospel of Luke* "Son of Man" occurs 25 times, always from the mouth of Jesus.

- 11 times it occurs in apocalyptic contexts (9:26; 11:30; 12:8, 40; 17:24, 26, 30; 18:8; 21:27, 36; 22:69)
- 9 times it refers to Jesus' earthly ministry (7:34; 9:58; 12:10; 17:22; 19:10; 22:22, 48). This includes His authority to forgive sins (5:24) and supersede the Sabbath (6:5).
- 5 times it refers to Jesus' suffering (6:22; 9:22, 44; 18:31; 22:69).

In each of these three contexts, "Son of Man" refers either to a divine attribute or to the fulfillment of a divinely ordained purpose (Edwards, 168).

- The "Son of Man" is also often linked to Messiah's future role in judgement and the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 16:27-28; 24:27, 30-31, 36-44; Lk. 18:8). This has led many to think that the title is related to Daniel 7:13, 14 (Rev. 1:13), which is a vision of judgement in which the Son of Man is divinely invested with universal authority and given the Kingdom of God by the Ancient of Days (Morris, NIC, John, 172-173; Carson, *The Gospel*

According to John, 164; Marshall, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary I*, 537; Sproul, *Renewing Your Mind*, 84-85 and others).

- Although the Son of Man would judge mankind and usher in the Kingdom, He would also be rejected; this was something that the disciples could not understand (Mk. 8:31-33; 9:31-32; 10:32-34). Thus, Jesus gave the title "Son of Man" a richer meaning than that found in Daniel alone by connecting it to prophecies that revealed that Messiah was also a suffering servant (Isa. 42:1-53:12) (Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, 63).
- "Son of David" is another title applied to Christ and in some ways is similar to Son of Man. Both speak of kingship, dominion and power. But David was an earthly king; the Son of Man was a heavenly being who is both Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8) and has power to forgive sins (Lk. 5:24). (Sproul, *Renewing Your Mind*, 86).

Reasons why Jesus probably adopted the term:

- 1) It was a rare expression without nationalistic associations. That is, Jesus could use it without fear of being misunderstood. Titles like King of the Jews, or Messiah, while appropriate, would carry with them preconceived political ideas, as well. The ambiguous term, "Son of Man," could be filled with whatever content Jesus gave it. The public would read into it as much as they understood about Jesus and no more (Carson, Morris, Marshall).
- 2) It had overtones of divinity (some say more so than humanity due to the contexts it is found in).
- 3) It had overtones of humanity, taking upon Himself human weaknesses.

Thus, in conclusion, the title "Son of Man," as used by Jesus, reveals Jesus' conception of Himself. It refers to His heavenly origin and possession of heavenly glory. At the same time, it points to the lowliness and suffering He would experience as man. It also recalls the imagery in Dan. 7:13-14 where the Son of Man is revealed in glory, will take part in judgement, and will be enthroned as King and Lord over the Kingdom of God.

Call of Matthew (Levi) - Luke 5:27-28, Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:13-14

5:27 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me."

5:28 And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

Levi (who was also called Matthew) was a tax gatherer who probably sat at a collector's booth on the border between the territories of Philip and Herod Antipas. This was a common place to collect both customs and excise taxes (Carson, *Matthew*, 223). Tax collectors were hated by everyone and viewed as robbers by the Jews. They collected monies from their own countrymen to give to pagan Rome who subjugated and oppressed the Jewish people and occupied the Holy Land. Tax gatherers were also

entitled to collect what they saw as reasonable to cover their own expenses, so it's no surprise that they were also often corrupt.

Matthew's account of his own call is written humbly (Matt. 9:9-17), but Luke makes it clear that he "left everything" to follow Jesus. This was a significant act, for tax gatherers were normally wealthy. Matthew must have been the richest of the disciples. "We must not miss the quiet heroism in this. If following Jesus had not worked out for the fishermen, they could have returned to their trade without difficulty. But when Levi walked out of his job he was through. . . His following of Jesus was a final commitment" (Morris, 131).

Jesus begins to gather His "team" by picking uneducated fishermen and corrupt tax gatherers – neither of whom had a high reputation among the populace; however, Jesus isn't concerned about popular opinion.

Banquet at Matthew's (Levi's) house - Luke 5:29-32; Matthew 9:10-13; Mark 2:15-17

5:29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.

5:30 The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?"

5:31 And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.

5:32 "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Matthew 9: 12-13 says:

12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Levi was quick to use his wealth to evangelize his friends. Luke 5:29 says that he "held a great banquet for Jesus at his house." His guests were people he had commonly associated with – tax gatherers and sinners.

The Pharisees were most likely not invited to the banquet, but probably observed it from outside the house. Eating with sinners meant defilement, and the sharing of a meal meant friendship and acceptance. The leaders, therefore, complained to the disciples (5:30) for they could not fathom how someone who was religious could do such things. "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" they asked. On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:11b-13)

Commenting on the parallel account in Matthew 8, Carson says, “These verses again connect Jesus’ healing ministry with His healing of sinners (see notes on Matthew 8:17). The sick need a doctor (Matt. 8:12), and Jesus healed them; likewise the sinful need mercy, forgiveness, and restoration, and Jesus healed them (Matt. 8:13). The Pharisees were not so healthy as they thought (see Matt. 7:1-5); more important, they did not understand the purpose of Jesus’ mission. Expecting a Messiah who would crush the sinner and support the righteous, they had little place for one who accepted and transformed the sinner and dismissed the ‘righteous’ as hypocrites” (Carson, 225).

There is no suggestion that Jesus went to sinners because they accepted and welcomed Him. He went to sinners because they were sinners, just as a doctor goes to the sick because they are sick (Carson, 225).

According to Matthew 8, the Pharisees who prided themselves in the knowledge of the scripture needed to “go and learn” what the scripture actually meant. Jesus quoted Hosea 6:6; “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” In Hosea, God had rebuked the people for keeping the temple ritual without keeping Him at the center of their worship. More than outward action, God wanted mercy (which had a close meaning to covenant love). Therefore, Jesus was not just rebuking the Pharisees by telling them that they should have more compassion on sinners and less concern about ceremonial purity; rather, He was telling them that their attitudes were no different than apostate Israel. They only kept the shell of worship, but had nothing acceptable to God on the inside.

The fact that Jesus had come to save sinners, not the righteous, is a vision of Jesus’ mission as He saw it. This is not insinuating that there were some people who were righteous who did not need salvation; rather, it is replacing the incorrect notion that Jesus came to destroy sinners with the proper one (that Jesus came to save sinners).