



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Jesus Reveals His Authority (Luke 5:17-26)

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Who is Jesus? This was the question on the minds of those who came into contact with Him during the days of His ministry, and this is the question we should seek to answer for ourselves. As one gets to know Jesus through the word of God, it becomes clear; he is the one who reveals himself to us. If we listen to His word, we will not be left wondering who Jesus claims to be. He will not leave us in ambiguity, but he will force us to decide whether we will respond to his claims by faith. This is the way to Jesus; this is the way to true life and salvation. However, rejection of him and his claims lead us away from him, and down the path of countless consequences.

Luke 5:17-26 - (17) On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. (18) And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, (19) but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. (20) And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." (21) And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (22) When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? (23) Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? (24) But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." (25) And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. (26) And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

JESUS' REPUTATION GROWS

Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there - In the previous study, Jesus commanded the healed leper to show himself to the priest, thus proving his cleansing. This command was given in obedience to the law; however this also brought the attention of the religious establishment to the ministry of Jesus. In our text, we find Jesus teaching in a house surrounded by Pharisees and teachers of the law. This is the first mention of the Pharisees in the Gospel of Luke. The Pharisees appear in the Gospels as defenders of the traditions of the elders, in which the Law of Moses received many refinements, and hence, were defenders of strict Jewish orthodoxy over and against Jesus. While the teachers of the law or scribes were not required to be a Pharisee, most were, in fact, Pharisees and leaders in this sect.

Every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem - The Pharisees and teachers of the law had travelled some distance to hear the teachings of this new miracle worker. The Gospel writer is communicating the growing sphere of influence of Jesus' ministry. This is not a localized phenomenon, but the word of Jesus has spread from Galilee to Judea and as far as Jerusalem. In this context, Jesus finds himself surrounded by religious leaders who were scrutinizing his every word. Not only were the religious leaders of the day drawn to Jesus, but the paralytic and his friend were seeking an audience with Him, as well. We see the convergence of two groups, those who saw their need for Jesus, and those who put themselves over Him.

APPLICATION:

How we come to Jesus can make a significant difference in seeing Him as he claims to be. The religious leaders of His day were devoted and committed to the teachings of the elders. Being confident in their standing and their beliefs, they were unable to hear the words that came from God through Jesus. They came to Jesus as judges that give approval. In contrast, those who carried their sinful crippled friend approached Jesus differently. They saw his need, it was not a take it or leave it proposition for them. They had heard of the one who heals and their friend's only hope was to come before him. Are we like the Pharisees or the paralytic's friends? When we put parameters on how Jesus will work and who he will use, our hearts begin to resemble that of the Pharisees, instead of the friends' of the paralytic.

FAITH THAT IS SEEN

When he saw their faith - What a sight, in the midst of Jesus' teaching dust begins to fall from the ceiling, then more and more. Finally, a tile from the roof is removed, and sunlight begins to stream through the opening. All eyes are now on the ceiling as more and more tiles are removed until finally a man begins to be lowered through the roof. Those below scatter so that there is room for a man on a bed to land without incident.

The audacity of these men, they were willing to disrupt this meeting and damage another's house. While we may dismiss their actions because the ceiling may be repaired easily, this much can be said. This action caught Jesus' attention and without a recorded word from the paralytic or his friends he responds and pronounces the forgiveness of sins to the paralytic. Why were they willing to do such an outlandish thing? It is because they believed Jesus could heal their friend and no obstacle would stand in their way. Their action put their faith upon display to such an extent that Jesus and all those who were in that room saw what they believed. Paul quotes

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Habakkuk 2:4 when he writes, "the righteous shall live by faith." It is a belief in the gospel message that saves us and allows us to live a righteous life that begins now and continues on through eternity.

APPLICATION:

What is our faith based upon? How thoroughly are we convinced of the gospel and the truths of the Scripture? Our belief prompts our actions; one only does what one believes. This is where the Word of God plays such a vital role in our lives. What are the biblical truths that fill our minds? Or are our minds filled with the words of the world, which so permeate our culture that we allow them to go unchallenged in our thoughts? For example, do we deserve a break today? Do we deserve a break from godliness, from serving others, or from honoring Christ sacrificially? If the world is what fills our thoughts, is it any wonder that we have a difficult time reflecting the love of Christ when we are dismissed, belittled and discouraged by the world.

THE QUESTIONING OF JESUS

Perceiving their thoughts - What is the basis for the Pharisee's questioning heart? Is it not because they understood the implication of Jesus' statement? Jesus would not settle to be a miracle worker in their eyes, or a good teacher who tickled the ears of His audience. He makes clear who he is claiming to be. He reveals his authority by announcing the forgiveness of sin based on his command. Since only God can forgive sins, the Pharisees balk at Jesus' declaration. They judge him to be a blasphemer. Jesus does not shrink back from this challenge because this is an attack upon God himself, and this Jesus will not let stand.

APPLICATION:

Who is Jesus? He is who he reveals himself to be, and we must come to terms with that reality. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The Pharisee has a framework in which Jesus would be forced to conform, if not he would be disregarded. Numbers 23:19 says, "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind." Jesus will not change for us, no matter how much we may thunder against him. He is not at all concerned with the Pharisees rejection of him. He is single-minded; he is resolute and sees things from a spiritual perspective. He knows the truth and speaks, not for his own vindication, but to bring man under the authority of His word. Man is left with two choices when confronted with Jesus; man can either submit to Jesus which leads to salvation, or reject him which brings judgment. Jesus reveals himself to be God in flesh and forces each person to decide how we will respond to this truth.

JESUS FORGIVE SINS

Which is easier to say - Jesus uses the thoughts of the religious leaders as a springboard to confront their heretical view. In essence, the creature judges the creator and declares him, not God. This may be mind-blowing except for the fact, that the same thing can be said about us. In addressing the charge of blasphemy Jesus juxtaposes, which statement was easier to say, either "Your sins are forgiven" or "Rise pick up your mat and walk." Strictly speaking neither was easier than the other, for each one requires the application of divine power. While validating the forgiving of sins may be regarded as more difficult, it would be impossible to claim to heal a person without producing tangible evidence. If Jesus has the power from God to heal the paralytic, then what he says carries with it the weight of a divine declaration. In declaring this man's sin forgiven, Jesus equates himself with God.

The Son of Man - Again we find Jesus purposeful in the manner of his speech. He chooses to reveal his authority to forgive sin and ties it to this title, Son of Man, which carries with it a freight train of theology. The traditional figure of the Son of Man is seen in Daniel 9:7ff. He is one who has the right to act as heavenly judge and ruler and as such, a figure with implicit power to forgive.¹ Also, a theme of eschatological judgment runs through the teachings about the Son of Man. Jesus takes the title "the Son of Man" to make clear the authority he is claiming. None of this would have been missed by the Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Jesus not only declares his ability to forgive sin, but also his authority to judge those who would reject him.

APPLICATION:

What is the emphasis of this passage? One must be struck by the fact that the paralytic does not become the thrust of Jesus statement to the Pharisees. In fact, the man sins were forgiven, yet he did not walk until later on in this account. Jesus' focus was on the religious leaders and their incorrect view of his authority. It was of utmost importance that they understood who he was claiming to be. Jesus claimed he was the Son of Man spoken of in Dan 9:7, and the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins, not merely when acting as heavenly judge, but also here and now on earth. Our theological understanding of Jesus is not an inconsequential matter, but it provides us with the foundation needed to live on the basis of a correct biblical worldview. Or simply stated, this foundation is needed to live by faith

1 – I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke : A Commentary on the Greek Text, The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Exeter [Eng.: Paternoster Press, 1978). 210.