

Luke 5:17-26
October 21, 2018

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What is the longest time you have ever been bedridden? [Let people engage]

Q: Think about someone who is paralyzed from the neck down. What do you think it would be like to live as a paralytic? [Ex: Characterized by dependency, humiliation, confinement, boredom, loneliness, frustration, and despair]

We can only imagine what a paralytic's life would be like who was stuck living life horizontally. Think about it: In Jesus's day, there were no skilled nursing facilities to care for the physical needs 24/7; there were no physical therapists to help with range of motion exercises just to keep the body moving at some level; no medical breakthroughs; no miracle drug; no neurosurgeons, no electric wheelchairs with specialized technology that allows someone to use their chin to navigate where they want to go, etc. Life as a paralytic was reduced to living on a 3'x6' portable mat.

Transition: Living life physically paralyzed has plenty of challenges. But there are many people around us who are spiritually paralyzed by sin. Their souls are crippled. Today's lesson is a beautiful picture of four men who were friends to a paralytic. These men demonstrate great faith! And we can learn from them today. I think **all of us can reach people with crippled souls by exercising our faith in the ways these friends did.** Let's study their mindset; their heart for the paralytic; their belief system about Jesus; the actions they took. Let's begin.

BOOK (NIV 1984):

V.17:

- One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.

V.18:

- Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.

V.19:

- When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

V.20:

- When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

V.21:

- The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

V.22:

- Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?”

V.23:

- Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?

V.24:

- But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

V.25:

- Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

V.26

- Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Process Observations/Questions:

X-REF Mark 2:1-12

Q V.17: Let’s set the scene. Who are the characters? [Jesus, a big crowd, the Pharisees, and teachers of the law]

Q: What is Jesus doing? [Teaching]

Q: What town are we in? [Capernaum (probably Peter’s house)]

Q: Where did the religious leaders come from? [every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem]

Q: Why do you think so many religious leaders decided to show up and hear Jesus teach? [Let people engage. Most likely to listen critically to the claims of Jesus. It was their responsibility to prevent false prophets from leading the people astray.]

Q: Luke inserts an observation about the Lord. What do you see? [The power of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick.]

Q: That’s interesting. Do you think Luke was saying that Jesus’s power was intermittent, but for this occasion, His power was intact? [No!!]

Q: Then why did he make a statement of the obvious? [Luke maintained a theological emphasis of the Spirit’s coming upon Jesus.]

Q V.18: The word is out that Jesus has been healing the sick. So who shows up at the house while Jesus is teaching? [Four men (according to Mark’s gospel) with a paralytic on a mat]

Q V.19: What hindrance did these four men encounter? [They couldn’t find a way to lay the paralytic before Jesus because of the crowd.]

Q: They could have said, “Let’s try to catch Jesus another time.” But they didn’t. What did they do? [They went up on the roof and lowered the paralytic on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.]

Observation: Can you picture that?! They didn’t know ahead of time that they were going to use the roof as their entry point. If they did, they would have brought their tools. Instead, they basically tore up a roof, interrupted a home bible study, inconvenienced a crowd of people. The homeowner (possibly Peter) may have been wondering about whether his homeowner’s insurance would cover this. He looks up and sees forty fingers removing enough tiles to meet the dimensions of a 3’x6’ mat at a minimum. Dirt and dust are dropping into the living room. What is going on here?!

Q: Let’s pause for minute. How would you describe these four men? [Let people engage. Ex: Persistent, creative, determined – nothing was going to stop them, filled with faith in Jesus]

Q: How would describe their heart for the paralytic? [Loving, compassionate, caring]

Q V.20: As soon as the paralytic is laid before Jesus, how does Jesus respond? [“Friend, your sins are forgiven.”]

Q: Let’s first look at this response from Jesus’s vantage point. What did He observe first before he declared forgiveness for the paralytic? [He SAW their faith.]

Q: I’m struck by the word “saw” their faith. Why was Jesus impressed with these men? [Because these men may have believed that Jesus could heal the paralytic, but their faith was expressed in ACTION. This action was no ordinary effort. Jesus SAW their faith. Faith without works is dead.]

Q: When Luke reports that Jesus saw “their” faith, who do you think he’s referencing? [Four men AND the paralytic]

Q: I think there are some important spiritual truths we need to highlight here. What spiritual truths do you see?

- Faith is a verb. It’s expressed through actions, not just “belief.”
- Faith in Jesus precedes forgiveness of sins.
- Many people will never come to Jesus unless somebody brings them to Him. [The Bible doesn’t say anywhere that sinners are to come to church to find forgiveness through Christ. Rather, the Bible is clear that the church (us) are to go where the sinners are. It’s being “fishers of men.”]
- Sometimes we think that our greatest needs are for healing, or relationships, or financial security, etc. But our greatest need is Jesus, who freely forgives us when we ask.

Transition (V.21-22): Now let’s look at Jesus’s response from the vantage of the religious leaders. V.21 tells us that Jesus “heard” what they were thinking. They were asking “Who is this

fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” And Jesus decides to expose their thinking and give them a pop quiz question.

Q V.23: What’s the question? [Which is easier; to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, “Get up and walk?”]

Q: Now if you were one of the Pharisees, how would you have answered the question and why?
[A: It’s easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven.” **Why?** *Because nobody could prove whether or not his sins were really forgiven!*]

Q V.24: What does Jesus do next? [He proves that He is God in the flesh with an “object lesson!” He states, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...” He said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” By saying this, **Jesus demonstrated His deity and His compassion for needy people.**]

Observation: This is the first recorded use of the title Son of Man in Luke’s Gospel, where it is found 23 times. If you are wondering whether the religious leaders and the crowd were familiar with this title, the answer is YES, they were. It was used of the Prophet Ezekiel over eighty times, and Daniel applied it to the Messiah (Dan. 7:13, 18). So, the Jewish people caught the messianic character of this title.

Q: What’s the result? [The paralytic **immediately** stood up, picked up his mat and went home **praising God.**]

Q: What did the crowd do? [Everyone was amazed and **gave praise to God.**]

LOOK:

Many people will never come to Jesus unless somebody brings them. We need to go to where the spiritually crippled are with a heart of love and compassion for the lost. From a practical standpoint, do you know anyone who is bedridden? Anyone in a skilled nursing facility who rarely gets a visit? Anyone who is lonely? We can pray with them. We can bring devotional materials to them. Bring things to them that they enjoy. Let’s **exercise** our faith to bring people to Christ.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Vol. 1, pp. 185–187). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

From Guilt to Forgiveness (Luke 5:17–26)

Jesus returned to Capernaum, possibly to Peter's house, and the crowd gathered to see Him heal and to hear Him teach. But a new element was added: some of the official religious leaders from Jerusalem were present to investigate what He was doing. They had every right to do this since it was the responsibility of the elders to prevent false prophets from leading the people astray (Deut. 13; 18:15–22). They had interrogated John the Baptist (John 1:19–34) and now they would examine Jesus of Nazareth.

Since this is the first time the scribes and Pharisees are mentioned in Luke's Gospel, it would be good for us to get acquainted with them. The word *Pharisee* comes from a Hebrew word that means "to divide, to separate." The scribes and Pharisees probably developed out of the ministry of Ezra, the priest, who taught the Jewish people to obey the Law of Moses and be separate from the heathen nations around them (Ezra 9–10; Neh. 8–9). The great desire of the scribes and Pharisees was to understand and magnify God's Law and apply it in their daily lives.

However, the movement soon became quite legalistic and its leaders laid so many burdens on the people that it was impossible to "serve the Lord with gladness" (Ps. 100:2). Furthermore, many of the Pharisees were hypocrites and did not practice what they preached (see Matt. 15:1–20; 23:1–36). In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), Jesus exposed the shallowness of pharisaical religion. He explained that true righteousness is a matter of the heart and not external religious practices alone.

The scribes and Pharisees picked a good time to attend one of our Lord's meetings, because God's power was present in a special way and Jesus would heal a man with palsy. If leprosy illustrates the corruption and defilement of sin, then palsy is a picture of the paralysis that sin produces in a life. But Jesus would do more than heal the man; He would also forgive his sins and teach the crowd a lesson in forgiveness.

The paralytic was unable to come to Jesus himself, but he was fortunate enough to have four friends who were able to get him to Jesus. These four men are examples of how friends ought to minister to one another and help needy sinners come to the Savior.

To begin with, they had faith that Jesus would heal him (Luke 5:20); and it is faith that God honors. Their love for the man united them in their efforts so that nothing discouraged them, not even the crowd at the door. (How tragic it is when spectators stand in the way of people who want to meet Jesus. Zaccheus would have this problem. See Luke 19:3.) When they could not get in at the door, they went on the roof, removed the tiling, and lowered the man on his mat right in front of the Lord!

Jesus could have simply healed the man and sent him home, but instead, He used the opportunity to teach a lesson about sin and forgiveness. Certainly, it was easier to say to the man, "Your sins be forgiven!" than it was to say, "Rise up and walk!" Why? *Because nobody could prove whether or not his sins really were forgiven! Jesus took the harder approach and healed the man's body, something everybody in the house could witness.*

Was the man's affliction the result of his sin? We do not know, but it is probable (see John 5:1–14). The healing of his body was an outward evidence of the spiritual healing within. Jesus

astounded the religious leaders by claiming to have authority both to heal the body and to forgive sins. The people had already acknowledged His authority to teach and to cast out demons (Luke 4:32, 36), but now He claimed authority to forgive sins as well. The scribes and Pharisees could not deny the miracle of healing, but they considered His claim to forgive sins nothing less than blasphemy, for only God can forgive sins. For making that kind of statement, **Jesus** could be stoned, because He was claiming to be God.

In Luke 5:24, we have the first recorded use of the title Son of man in Luke's Gospel, where it is found twenty-three times. Our Lord's listeners were familiar with this title. It was used of the Prophet Ezekiel over eighty times, and Daniel applied it to the Messiah (Dan. 7:13, 18). "Son of man" was our Lord's favorite name for Himself; this title is found at least eighty-two times in the Gospel record. Occasionally He used the title "Son of God" (Matt. 27:43; Luke 22:70; John 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4), but "Son of man" was used more. Certainly, the Jewish people caught the messianic character of this title, but it also identified Him with the people He came to save (Luke 19:10). Like Ezekiel, the Old Testament "son of man," Jesus "sat where they sat" (Ezek. 3:15).

The healing was immediate, and the people glorified God. But even more than receiving healing, the man experienced forgiveness and the start of a whole new life. **Our** Lord's miracles not only demonstrated His deity and His compassion for needy people, but they also revealed important spiritual lessons about salvation. They were "object lessons" to teach spiritually blind people what God could do for them if only they would believe in His Son.

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 216-217)

b. Jesus' healing and forgiveness of a paralytic (5:17–26) (Matt. 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12).

5:17–26. The healing and forgiving of a paralyzed man was further evidence of Jesus' authority and power to make others ceremonially clean. Luke noted that a number of religious officials were present at the occasion, including some from **Jerusalem** who perhaps were the most influential. Luke did not portray this healing as happening immediately after the preceding event he had recorded. It is evident that he placed the two accounts side by side as a development in his argument.

The statement, **the power** (*dynamis*, "spiritual ability") **of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick**, is unique to Luke (cf. Matt. 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12). Luke used *dynamis* on several occasions to describe Jesus' healing (cf. Luke 4:36; 6:19; 8:46). A large number of people now accompanied Jesus everywhere because of His works of healing. Thus, a group of **men** who were **carrying a paralytic** had to take him to **the roof** of the house, remove some **tiles**, and let him down **in front of Jesus**. **Jesus** linked **faith** with the miracle (5:20), which was also the case in 7:9; 8:25, 48, 50; 17:19; and 18:42. Presumably the faith of which **Jesus** spoke (i.e., **their** faith) also included the paralyzed man (5:20).

Surprisingly Jesus did not immediately heal the man's body; instead, He first forgave his **sins**. This is extremely important for the argument of this section, for Luke's point was that Jesus had the authority to call disciples, including people (such as Levi) who were not thought of as being righteous (vv. 27–39). The religious leaders immediately began to think that Jesus' words were **blasphemy** for they rightly associated forgiveness with **God** (cf. 7:49). Jesus pointed out that the religious leaders were absolutely right. His subsequent healing of the man was incontrovertible

proof that He did have the **authority ... to forgive sins** and therefore should be accepted as God. Anyone could *say*, “**Your sins are forgiven.**” In that sense it was **easier** than saying, “**Get up and walk,**” for if He did not have the power to heal, all would know it **immediately**. The result of the forgiveness and the healing was that **everyone was amazed** (lit., “received amazement”) and was full of **awe** (*phobou*, “reverential fear,”) realizing that they had seen remarkable **things** (*paradoxa*, “things out of the ordinary”).

Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1522). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

5:17 This verse was probably not intended to suggest that Jesus’ healing power was intermittent. Luke nowhere stated that the power of Jesus to heal was at any time absent from Him. Luke’s point here seems to have been to focus on Jesus’ dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit (4:18).

5:19 Houses with tile roofs were uncommon, though not unknown, in first-century Palestine. It is not clear, however, if Luke was actually referring to a roof of baked clay tiles or to something else. The Greek word here translated “tiles” (*keramoi*) can mean “clay,” and Luke may have been merely referring to the common mud-clay roof, which seemed to be the case in Mk 2:4. Alternatively, Luke’s word choice may be an accommodation to his audience’s normal experience of Greco-Roman architecture, which included roof tiles, and only meant to express the idea that the men dug through the roof.

5:24 For more on Jesus’ self-designation as the Son of Man, see note on Mk 2:10, 28.

Stein, R. H. (1992). *Luke* (Vol. 24, pp. 168–172). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Context

In 5:17–6:11 we have five controversy stories that contrast the people’s enthusiastic reaction toward Jesus here and earlier (4:31–5:15) with the negative reaction of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The culmination of these controversy stories is found in 6:7, 11. The source for these four accounts is Mark 2:1–3:6, but the setting is enlarged by Luke from Capernaum (Mark 2:1) to “every village of Galilee and ... Judea and Jerusalem” (Luke 5:17) in order to explain the presence of the Pharisees and scribes who had come to see Jesus.

Hitherto Jesus had been portrayed as healing (4:38–39, 40–41; 5:12–16), exorcizing (4:31–37), and performing a nature miracle (5:4–9), but now in this and the next account attention is focused upon Jesus’ divine prerogative to forgive sins. Luke heightened this aspect of Jesus’ authority by his addition of the word “alone” (5:21). The divine ability to forgive sins is again portrayed in 7:36–50. The reader has been prepared for the present account by Jesus’ paradigmatic sermon in 4:18 that includes Jesus’ mission “to proclaim freedom for the prisoners” (see comments on 4:18).

As the early church proclaimed and lived out the implications of these incidents from Jesus’ life, various controversies arose between the early church and its antagonists.

Comments

5:17 Pharisees. Whereas Mark noted later (cf. Mark 2:6) the presence of teachers of the law (who were primarily Pharisaic in orientation), Luke referred to them at the beginning of the account. This is the first mention of this group in his Gospel. The Pharisees were the most influential of the three major Jewish sects (the other two being the Sadducees and the Essenes). We first read of them in the second century B.C. (see Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.10.5–6 [13.288–98]). In contrast to the Sadducees, the Pharisees believed in the resurrection, the existence of angels and demons (20:27; Acts 23:6–9), predestination as well as free will, and the validity of both the written and the oral law. Politically they were more conservative than the Sadducees, but religiously they were more liberal due to their acceptance of the oral law.

And teachers of the law. This term (*nomodidaskaloi*) occurs only here in the Gospels and may be a synonym for “teachers of the law” (*grammateis*) in Luke 5:21. Although one could be a “teacher of the law” or scribe and not a Pharisee, most scribes were in fact Pharisees and leaders in this sect.

From every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. Whereas Mark (2:1) mentioned Capernaum as the specific scene (cf. also Matt 9:1 with 4:13), Luke, who already had mentioned Jesus’ activity in that city in Luke 4:23, 31, enlarged the scene by designating the areas from which the Pharisees and teachers of the law came. Judea and Jerusalem were used here in the narrow, more restricted sense (see comments on 1:5). Luke may have referred to Judea and Jerusalem at this point to alert his readers that what happened here in the controversy stories foreshadowed what would happen later in Jerusalem.

And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. This comment clearly reveals Luke’s theological emphasis of the Spirit’s coming upon Jesus (cf. 3:21–22; 4:1, 14, 18–21, 36). It prepares the reader for the miracle of healing that is to follow. The term “Lord” here refers to God/YHWH as in 1:6, 9, 11, 15, 16. The Spirit and “power” are intimately connected in Luke (see comments on 1:17). Power is associated with healing in 4:36; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; Acts 3:12; 4:7.

5:18 Luke omitted Mark’s description of the crowded house and doorway that necessitated lowering the man through the roof. He may have assumed that his readers, like modern readers who read the present account in light of the Markan account, were familiar enough with the story (cf. 1:4) to supply this detail. Or Luke may have thought it sufficient simply to tell about a large crowd in 5:17, 19.

5:19 Lowered him on his mat through the tiles. Luke here “contextualized” the tradition for Theophilus and provided a thought-for-thought translation, whereas Mark in his description (cf. Mark 2:4) provided a word-for-word translation. Both conveyed accurately what they wanted to say, i.e., that the paralytic was lowered into Jesus’ presence through the roof. Mark, however, portrayed a typical Galilean home with a mud-thatch roof that must be dug through, whereas Luke portrayed a home such as that in which Theophilus lived, which had a tile roof.

5:20 When Jesus saw their faith. This included the faith both of the paralytic and his companions. This faith in the original setting would have been a faith in Jesus as one come from God who could heal. For Luke and his readers this would have involved a greater understanding of who Jesus is and would have involved faith in him as the risen Lord. The faith of the paralytic and the men was manifested by their “works,” i.e., their removal of the tiles to lower the paralytic. A favorite expression of Luke was “your faith has ‘saved’ you” (cf. 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42). For the tie between faith and miracles, cf. 7:9, 50; 8:25, 40, 50; 17:5, 6, 19; 18:42.

Friend, your sins are forgiven. This is not to be understood as a “divine passive” or circumlocution for “God forgives you.” This is evident from the following verses (esp. 5:24) where Jesus’ words are understood to be an implicit claim of equality with God (5:21; 7:49; cf. John 5:18; 10:33), i.e., Jesus himself is understood as having forgiven the man his sins. The Greek perfect tense of “are forgiven” emphasizes the abiding state of this forgiveness.

5:21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law. The word translated “teachers of the law” is not the one so translated in Luke 5:17. Probably this word (*grammateis*) would better be translated here as “scribes” to show the difference. The pairing of the scribes and Pharisees is also found in 5:30; 6:7; 11:53; 15:2 (cf. Acts 23:9). We find, in addition, a strong criticism of the Pharisees in Luke 7:30; 11:39–44; 12:1; and 16:14.

Who is this fellow? This unspoken thought, reported by the “omniscient” Gospel writer, is the key to understanding this passage. This crucial question will be answered in the following verses. Jesus is the Son of Man who possesses the divine prerogative to forgive sin and the divine power to heal. Luke’s wording of this and the next phrase emphasizes the Christological nature of this question more than Mark 2:7 does. Compare Luke 7:49; 8:25; and 9:9 (cf. also 4:36) for this same question.

Who speaks blasphemy? This is a frequent charge leveled against Jesus (cf. Mark 14:64; John 5:18; 10:33, 36). There are no OT analogies to Jesus’ actions here. Traditional Protestant practice has, on the basis of this passage, made a clear distinction between a pastor’s “pronouncement” of God’s forgiveness of sins and the direct forgiving of sins by the pastor/priest. The latter is not acknowledged. Consequently, passages such as Matt 16:19; 18:18; and John 20:23 are interpreted in light of this.

Who can forgive sins but God alone? Luke by his addition of “alone” indicates that Jesus’ actions put him on a par with God! Luke believed that God alone can forgive sins just as the scribes and Pharisees did. But Luke also believed that Jesus can forgive sins. The Christological implications are not stated but are clear.

5:22 Jesus knew what they were thinking. Jesus’ awareness of the scribes’ thoughts need not imply a “divine omniscience,” particularly since none of the Evangelists made anything of it. However, in Luke 7:36–50 such knowledge serves to show that Jesus is indeed a prophet, and this probably is the sense here. Compare 2:35; 6:8; 9:47; 24:38.

5:23 Which is easier? To make sense of this counter question and the next verses we must distinguish between what is easier to say and what is easier to do. It is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven” than, “Get up and walk” because the legitimacy of the former cannot be disproven whereas the latter can if no healing takes place. However, since God alone can forgive sins and since numerous people, both in and out of the Bible, have performed healings, the former is more difficult to do. Luke understood that if God granted Jesus power to work this miracle, then God himself supported Jesus’ claim that he can forgive sins.

5:24 Traditionally 5:24a and 5:24c are interpreted as said by Jesus to the Pharisees and 5:24b as directed by the Evangelist to the reader. The fact that elsewhere the title Son of Man appears almost exclusively on the lips of Jesus argues against it as an editorial comment here. In its present location Luke (and Mark) certainly did not think of this as an editorial comment, for he was not addressing his reader, Theophilus, in 5:24a but only in 5:24b. Usually such editorial comments addressed to the readers are clearly delineated (cf. Mark 13:14; John 19:35; 20:30–31).

Son of Man. In verses where this title is used it is not an additional comment by the Evangelist, so it is unlikely that its appearance here is editorial in nature. By introducing “Son of Man” without explanation, Luke indicated that this title was known to his readers. That the Son of Man refers to

Jesus in our passage is clear. Whether it was a circumlocution for “I” or a specific title in the original context is debated. Nevertheless, for all four Gospel writers it was clearly understood as a title. And as a title the setting given to it indicates that the Evangelist interpreted this title in light of the reference to “one like a son of man” in Dan 7:13–14. Of the sixty-nine times this title is found in the Gospels, it is always found on the lips of Jesus or in Luke 24:7 and John 12:34 in reference to Jesus’ earlier use of the title as a self-designation. Such usage argues strongly in favor of its authenticity.

Has authority on earth to forgive sins. Luke referred earlier to Jesus’ authority and power to heal and exorcize (Luke 4:14, 32, 36), but here that authority was extended to the divine prerogative of forgiving sins.

Get up, take ... and go home. This is paralleled by “stood up ... took ... and went home” in the next verse.

5:25 Immediately he stood up. Luke, by adding “immediately” to his description of the healing, sought to emphasize the instantaneous nature of Jesus’ healing. See comments on 18:43. Thus Jesus’ claim to be able to forgive sins was immediately verified.

In front of them. This stresses the certainty and proof of the healing.

And went home praising God. The term “praise” can also mean *to glorify*. Only Luke had this further description of the paralytic’s activity, for Luke wanted to tell his readers that this is the proper response of those who experience God’s grace.

5:26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. Luke reiterated that **praise** is the proper response to this manifestation of God’s grace.

They were filled with awe. “Awe” or fear is a common response to witnessing God’s power.

We have seen remarkable things today. This indicates that the “today” of 4:21 means *since the events of 3:1f.* and refers to the present period of salvation history in which God’s kingdom has now come.

The Lukan Message

Although we find several Lukan emphases in this passage, the main emphasis is clearly Christological. Whereas Jesus’ authority and power to heal and exorcize demons have already been shown, now Luke revealed Jesus’ unique authority to forgive sins (5:21; cf. 7:48–49). Jesus’ ability to forgive sins is verified by the healing miracle in 5:24–25. This miracle, performed by the Lord’s power (5:17), is divine proof that Jesus indeed has power to forgive sins. The implication of this ability to forgive sins is raised by the question, “Who can forgive sins but God?” which Luke intensified by adding the term “alone.” If no human being can forgive sins, if God alone can forgive sins, and if Jesus is able to forgive sins, what does this imply? It would be wrong at this point to read into Luke’s mind a complete Trinitarian formulation of Jesus’ deity such as found in the later creeds of Nicea (325) or Chalcedon (451). Nevertheless, Luke certainly saw Jesus as possessing an exclusive “divine right” in this area. Jesus, the Son of Man, can forgive sins. As in 7:49; 8:25; and 9:9, Luke wanted his readers to reflect on the question, “Who is this” who possesses such authority? In this same respect the use of the title Son of Man in this passage indicates that Jesus possessed another divine prerogative, that of passing judgment upon the world. Clearly Luke had a high Christology.

There is soteriological teaching in this passage that fits well the Lukan emphasis elsewhere. One aspect involves the importance of the forgiveness of sins which we find in 5:23–24. The importance of forgiveness has been shown also in Jesus’ first sermon in 4:18. Along with this we also find an emphasis in the account on the need for faith (5:20). Faith is one way in which the

required human response to God leading to forgiveness/salvation can be described. In the next account the required response will be described as repentance (5:32). These are not different ways by which salvation is achieved but rather different ways the one necessary response of repentance-faith can be expressed. Whereas each emphasizes a different aspect of that basic response, both must be understood as assuming the other response as well.

Several other Lukan themes that are also present in this passage can be mentioned. One is the Spirit's role in Jesus' ministry. Luke introduced the account with his editorial comment that "the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick" (5:17). The Spirit's role in the present period of salvation history is emphasized in the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, in Jesus' baptism and temptation, in his first sermon, and now in his ministry. Another theme alluded to in our text is the present realization of God's kingdom in Jesus' ministry. The ministry of Jesus is the "today" realization of God's promises. The kingdom of God has come. "Today" in Jesus' ministry (and for Luke's readers in the gospel proclamation), God is visiting his people in fulfillment of the Scriptures. Still another emphasis is the need to glorify God (5:25). Negatively, the presence of the Pharisees and teachers of the law and their hostility here and in the following accounts (5:27–6:11) serve to foreshadow the opposition that would ultimately lead to Jesus' crucifixion.