

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

The Roof Lowered Paralytic

By

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Luke 5:17-26 17One 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. 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. 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 with his stretcher, into the middle of *the crowd*, in front of Jesus. ²⁰Seeing their faith, He said, "**Friend, your sins are forgiven you.**" ²¹The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" ²²But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "**Why are you reasoning in your hearts?**" ²³"Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?" 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." ²⁵Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. ²⁶They were all struck with astonishment and *began* glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Jesus' public ministry had begun and he begins choosing his apostles. In this fifth chapter we learn that Peter, James and John had been converted at the Lake of Gennesaret after they had fished all night and taken nothing and then were told by Jesus to let down their nets again for a catch. When they did so they enclosed such an enormous shoal of fish that their nets were about to break and the weight of the catch began to sink their boats. This miracle so impressed them with the mighty power of Jesus that they repented of their sins and were transformed to be his apostles and evangelists.

Next we learn in verse 12 that a leper sought Jesus for healing and received it. He was told to tell no one but to go and show himself to the priest and to make an offering for his cleansing according to the direction of Moses in the Law and for a testimony to them.

This news about him spread and people began flocking to Jesus to hear him preach and to be healed of their sicknesses.

I would like to spend time in this message on the case of the paralytic and his friends. This episode is recorded in three gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. If you read all three accounts you get the greatest detail about what happened. It seems that the word of his teaching and miracles had circulated so that people were flocking to the man Jesus. Jesus had gone to Peter's house and many people sought to see him there. They were so jammed in that there was no more room in the house and there was a crowd outside as well. We learn that four men were carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher. None of these men, including the paralyzed man, are named in any of the gospel accounts. All we know is that they demonstrate by their actions that they had a determined desire to help to get their friend to Jesus for

healing. Quite obviously they were convinced that Jesus could heal their friend if only they could get him close enough to him so that he could touch him or speak to him the words of healing.

They had faith to believe that he could do the same for their friend that he had done for the leper. They were not of the mind of the centurion or the Cannanite mother who sought healing for their patient from a distance. Their faith believed in a personal appeal to Jesus. But their faith was very lively just the same for they were persuaded that if they could but get their patient into the presence of the Lord that a cure could be effected.

However they faced a formidable obstacle. The press of the crowd within and at the door was such that there seemed to be no way to get their paralyzed friend into Peter's house. So they looked the situation over and decided that the only way to get to Jesus was from the roof.

Now there probably was an outside stairway up to the roof of the house. They must have had to do a balancing act to climb the stairs with their paralyzed friend on a stretcher but they thought that if they could manage to get up there they could then remove some of the tiles of the roof and lower him down into the house. This was their chosen strategy.

Can you picture the scene in your mind? They get him up there and then have to start removing some of the tiles to make a hole in the roof large enough to lower him down inside. Those below must have heard the scraping and felt some dust fall down from above. Suddenly there is a flood of light in the house and they see these strange antics of men using ropes and a stretcher to lower a helpless man into the room from above.

Jesus was impressed. ²⁰**Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."**

Now this is a startling statement. No one has said anything about this man's sin. But this is the word of Jesus to this paralyzed man. His word speaks volumes to us. It tells us that sin is the fountain of all sickness. That forgiveness precedes healing. Before healing can occur this man needs forgiveness for his sin. And this is the case of every man born of woman.

When sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden it brought along the source of all sickness. Jesus put his finger on this man's problem and in doing so he put his finger on every man's problem. We all have a sin problem. Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins. "Forgiveness is man's deepest need and God's highest achievement." - Horace Bushnell

Notice that he addresses the paralyzed man as friend. We can draw from this that when Christ forgives a person he considers that person his friend. We all need forgiveness and we all need reconciliation to God. In this episode we learn that Jesus Christ is the forgiver of sins. But as he spoke those words of forgiveness there were those who questioned his right to forgive sins. There were scribes and Pharisees who heard him say this who reasoned in their hearts about his putting himself in the position of God himself for they thought, **"Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"**

The scripture says, **Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³"Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 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."**

We see in this passage that Jesus is able to discern their thoughts. He is the omniscient One who can read our minds and our thoughts just as easily as he did those critical scribes and Pharisees.

Christ has the power to forgive sins and now he gives sure and certain evidence of his right to forgive sins. The words spoken regarding the forgiveness of sin were without immediate physical evidence since forgiveness is a matter of the soul experiencing freedom from guilt. You can't see

forgiveness since it is a spiritual matter. The people who heard him speak that word of forgiveness were unable to verify that forgiveness had taken place, but the instantaneous healing of this man who had been brought down into their midst on a stretcher being told to get up, and pick up the stretcher that had been used to lower him down into the room was certainly a visible evidence that the Word spoken by Christ was indeed with authority and power. So what happened? ²⁵**Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. ²⁶They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."**

What application can we make to ourselves from this incident? For one thing we can recognize that the insistent and determined faith of the four stretcher-bearers as well as the paralyzed man pleased the Lord and obtained his approval. How insistent and determined are you in seeking the Lord? Can you identify with these men?

Secondly, faith in the person of Jesus Christ is the only proper and right way to seek God. Jesus said, ⁴⁰**"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."** John 6:40

Faith is a gift of God. ⁸**For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.** Eph. 2:8-10

There were men present on that occasion that did not manifest faith. The scribes and Pharisees were unbelieving and hostile. Perhaps some of them did have a change of heart when they saw this miracle of healing confirming the word of forgiveness of sins he spoke for the scripture does say that they all were struck with astonishment and began glorifying God.

We do not know if that impression was a lasting thing with all of them. It true to say that the Holy Spirit can touch men so that they feel impressed to trust in Christ but who do not go on to discipleship and a life of faith. You could be here today and experience the presence of God and be impressed that this was indeed a miraculous healing but go on as you have always done, unchanged, unconverted, unsaved. People can hear the gospel and read the Bible accounts about Jesus Christ and be astonished too as were all of those present on that day but still remain in unconverted to a life of faith.

Some may think that the Bible is untrustworthy. Or some may imagine that Jesus is a fictitious person, even though it is hard to dismiss a person as fictitious who inspired men to follow him who suffered death as martyrs for his name and that millions upon millions more for two millenniums have believed in him and consecrated their lives to him. Or they may say he was a good man who was self deceived.

C. S. Lewis argued it famously by saying; *Jesus is either a liar or lunatic, or the Lord. It is not our choice to view him as just a good man or great prophet. He claimed to be able to forgive sins. Now in this he was a liar, a willful deceiver, or the most horrible devil of Hell for intentionally claiming an untruth and leading people astray. If he could not forgive sins he was a liar. Or else, a lunatic, on the level of one who claimed to be a poached egg. If Jesus said he could forgive sins because of an overactive ego and in reality could not, he was deranged, a maniacal deviant. Was He a lunatic? None of the rest of his behavior indicates lunacy. So he was neither liar nor lunatic and could only be the Lord. But he certainly was not merely a good man. You also must ultimately see him as blasphemous or Co-Forgiver. No in-between.*

The Pharisees did not believe he could forgive sins and thus accused him of blasphemy. So Jesus was either right or wrong about being able to forgive sins. Could he? Can he today? How you answer that is all-important. Consider this, if Jesus is not the forgiver of your sins who is? Who can forgive you?

Sin is a reality in every person's life. One cannot be rid of his guilt in the sight of a holy God unless God himself has forgiven him. Something has to be done by God himself in order for him to justify himself in forgiving sin in anyone. His holiness cannot justify a guilty sinner and allow him into his presence unless sin has first been cleansed. But God provided a way of salvation in the person of his only begotten Son. Jesus came into this world on a mission of salvation. The Father sent the Son. But the Son came voluntarily to accomplish the will of the Father.

The Bible says this, ¹²"**And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.**" Acts 4:12

What a wonderful gift Jesus brings to sinners -- the forgiveness of God. Once a person is forgiven he is enabled to forgive those who have hurt or offended him. Indeed we are commanded to reciprocate in kind to other sinners the forgiveness we ourselves have received by extending forgiveness to them. Indeed, forgiveness received and then extended to others is a sure evidence of our own forgiveness. On the other hand, withholding forgiveness from those who have offended or hurt us is a mark of either our continued alienation from God or at the very least a sign of being out of fellowship with God. Every Christian will face the test of verifying their own forgiveness by showing forgiveness to others. I would dare to say that it is impossible to live in this sinful world and not be confronted with the necessity of extending forgiveness to other people who have offended or hurt us in some way.

The story is told in Spain of a father and his teenage son who had a relationship that had become strained. So the son ran away from home. His father, however, began a journey in search of his rebellious son. Finally, in Madrid, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in the newspaper. The ad read: "Dear Paco, meet me in front of the newspaper office at noon. All is forgiven. I love you. Your father."

The next day at noon in front of the newspaper office 800 "Pacos" showed up. They were all seeking forgiveness and love from their fathers.

Years after her concentration camp experiences in Nazi Germany, Corrie ten Boom met face-to-face one of the most cruel and heartless German guards that she had ever contacted. He had humiliated and degraded her and her sister. He had jeered and visually raped them as they stood in the delousing shower. Now he stood before her with hand outstretched and said, "Will you forgive me?" She writes: "I stood there with coldness clutching at my heart, but I know that the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. I prayed, Jesus, help me! Woodenly, mechanically I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me and I experienced an incredible thing. The current started in my shoulder, raced down into my arms and sprang into our clutched hands. Then this warm reconciliation seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you, brother,' I cried with my whole heart. For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard, the former prisoner. I have never known the love of God so intensely as I did in that moment!" To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you. --James S. Hewett, Illustrations Unlimited (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988) p. 218.

Have you been forgiven? Have you experienced the forgiveness that the Paralyzed man experienced? Do you desire God's forgiveness today? You can have it. His offer of mercy and forgiveness is to all who turn to him and trust in him. Come to him. Believe in him. Repent of your sins and ask him to forgive you. Do it right now. And as you do that also forgive those who have hurt you. Be

free from guilt and all the hurts of your life. Be forgiven by Christ and grant that same forgiveness you have received to all who need your forgiveness.

Closing Hymn #523 “My Hope Is in the lord”

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