

## “Jesus Demonstrates His Authority to Forgive Sin”

Luke 5:12-26

**Read Luke 5:12-14...** Jesus is going about Galilee, preaching, teaching and healing. Today we find Him in an unnamed city, where a man with leprosy approaches Jesus and asks to be healed.

This most likely got the people's attention, because leprosy was one of the most feared diseases of the ancient world, as there was no cure. According to the World Health Organization, over 200,000 people worldwide are infected with leprosy today (most of them in Africa and Asia); but today leprosy is treatable and most people lead a normal life during and after treatment.

Note: Leprosy attacks the skin, peripheral nerves (especially around the wrists, elbows, knees), and mucus membrane. It forms lesions on the skin, and can disfigure the face by collapsing the nose and causing folding of the skin (causing a lionlike appearance of the face). Leprosy does not eat away the flesh; but instead, due to the loss of feeling (especially the hands and feet), lepers wear away or injure their extremities, even their face, without knowing it. God cursed certain evil men in the OT with leprosy (Ghazi, 2Kings 5:25-27; Uzziah, Chronicles 26:16-23), and therefore a person with leprosy was considered cursed by God. Leprosy was first recorded c. 500 B.C., named Hansen's disease c. 1800's, after a Norwegian scientist who discovered the bacteria responsible for the disease.

Any person with leprosy was forbidden to be among non-infected people; and according to God's Word (**Leviticus 13:1-14:57**) there were very strict regulations and expectations to be followed by lepers, e.g., they would have to cry "Unclean! Unclean!" wherever they went, so no one would be exposed to the disease (by touch or breath).

Leprosy is somewhat like sin, in that it infects and contaminates the whole person and was, until the 1800's, incurable.

The leper came to Jesus (**Luke 5:12**), "covered with [full of] leprosy." It wasn't normal for the leper to approach Jesus; but he bowed down, calling Him Lord and saying, "if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Jesus responded to the man's faith, reaching out and touching Him saying, "be cleansed," and immediately the leprosy left the man and he was healed. Jesus tells him not to tell anyone about this, but to go to the priest, in order that his healing could be confirmed according to the law.

The leper could be admitted back into society by doing what was commanded by Moses (**Leviticus 14:1-20**): A priest would examine the man to verify the leprosy was gone, then the man would shave, bathe, wash his clothes, and offer multiple animal sacrifices, along with an offering of grain and oil. This process took eight days, and it was (**Luke 5:14**) a testimony that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

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**Read Luke 5:15-16...** Word was spreading rapidly about Jesus, and the crowds were coming to find Him (**Mark 1:45**), “But he [*the healed leper*], instead of going to the priest as he was instructed, began telling people about the healing, and the news spread to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.”

Jesus slips away from the crowds to have intimate time with God; evidently, He often went off to find a quiet place to talk with the Father.

**Matthew 14:23**, “After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.”

**Mark 1:35**, “In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left *the house*, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.”

**Luke 6:12**, “It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.”

**Read Luke 5:17...** Some Pharisees and teachers of the law had come to check out what Jesus was doing, and they were sitting and listening to Him, as He taught.

Note: In the 1st century, scribes and Pharisees were two mostly distinct groups, although some scribes were also Pharisees. Scribes had knowledge of the law and could draft legal documents (contracts for marriage, divorce, loans, inheritance, mortgages, the sale of land, and the like). Every village had at least one scribe. Pharisees were members of a party that believed in resurrection and in following legal traditions that were ascribed not to the Bible but to “the traditions of the fathers.” Like the scribes, they were also well-known legal experts: hence the partial overlap of membership of the two groups. It appears from subsequent rabbinic traditions, however, that most Pharisees were small landowners and traders, not professional scribes.

Jesus is going to perform a miraculous healing (**Luke 5:17**) it says, “the power of the Lord was upon Him,” (**Luke 6:19**), “The people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all,” (**Luke 8:46**), Jesus said, “Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.”

**Read Luke 5:18-24...** Jesus is now proclaiming the good news in a crowded room, when four men (cf. **Mark 2:3-4**) carry in a paralytic, but can't get to Jesus through the crowd, so they go up the outside stairway to the roof, dig through the thatch and earth, remove the roof tiles, then lower the man through the exposed beams to the room below (as dirt, no doubt, showered all those underneath).

**Luke 5:19** says, Jesus “saw their faith,” and said to the paralytic, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” It probably seemed clear to most everyone that the man's biggest need was to be able to walk.

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The paralytic and his friends believed Jesus could heal him. And so Jesus exposes the condition of the man's heart which can't be seen, and forgives his sins. This man has just been saved, receiving forgiveness for sin, but he still can't walk.

See again **Luke 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?’”

**Isaiah 43:25**, “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake, and I will not remember your sins.”

**Isaiah 44:22**, “I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you.”

**Jeremiah 31:34**, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

The Pharisees who witnessed this were thinking in their wicked hearts that Jesus was blaspheming, for only God can forgive sins. These religious leaders, for the first time in the Biblical record, directly oppose Jesus, as they would many times.

**See John 8:51-59...** The Jews respond to Jesus statement, “if anyone keeps My word, he will never taste death,” saying, “Are you greater than Abraham, than the prophets, all who died... Who do you think you are?”

Jesus says (**verse 56**), “Abraham rejoiced to see the day of My coming,” they respond, “You are not yet 50 years old, and you have seen Abraham?” There is no way Jesus was alive when Abraham lived, and Abraham is definitely dead, how could Jesus possibly see him (see **Matthew 22:32**, pp Exodus 3:6), “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

When Jesus says (**John 8:58**), “I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!” This is a direct claim to deity, to equality with God, for this is the sacred name for God, the “I AM” title God gave Himself in **Exodus 3:14**, “God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” This is also expressed in **Revelation 1:8**, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty,” i.e., “I AM, I always have been and I always will be, because, I AM GOD.”

The Jews responded to Jesus' statement (**John 8:59**), “At this, they picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus hid Himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.”

These religious leaders know Jesus is saying He is equal with God the Father, so they pick up stones to kill Him (**Leviticus 24:16**), “anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him.”

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Jesus claimed to be God, because He was God, He could not not captured or put to death at this time, or any other time, until God allowed them to do so (cf. **John 7:30; 8:20; 10:39; 13:1**), “because His time had not yet come.”

No one could take Jesus by force (**John 10:17-18**), “I lay down My life - only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

**Read John 10:30-33...** Jesus plainly and publicly states His equality with God the Father. This angers the Jews and they pick up rocks to stone Him; saying to Him, it is because He has blasphemed against God.

**Read John 10:39...** The Jews reject Jesus as the Messiah, instead they try to arrest Him and bring Him before the Sanhedrin, but He continually escapes them.

Jesus had strongly warned the Jews (**John 8:24**), “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be, the Messiah], you will indeed die in your sins.” But the Jews vehemently opposed Him and were not willing to consider the truth (**John 14:6**), “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

**Back to Luke 5:22-24...** It was easy to say “your sins are forgiven,” for who could verify as to whether or not it had happened? But to say, “Get up and walk,” that could indeed be seen and the healing could be witnessed by all.

Healing and forgiving are impossible for mankind, but easy for God, and Jesus is God! By healing the paralytic, Jesus was verifying His claim to grant forgiveness for sin; for just as healing had taken place, so also had forgiveness.

The emphasis in this narrative is not on healing this man’s crippled body, but on forgiving this man’s sin and healing his crippled spirit.

**Read Luke 5:25-26...** It says the people “were all struck with astonishment [Matthew 9:8, awestruck, displaying reverence] and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’”

**Hebrews 1:1-2**, “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

**Hebrews 9:26-28**, “He [Jesus Christ, God’s Son] has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.”

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**Hebrews 10:10**, “We have been sanctified [made holy] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

**Hebrews 1:3**, “When He [*Christ*] had made purification of sins [*paid in full our debt for sin, taking our punishment, satisfying God’s righteous penalty*], He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

**Hebrews 10:12**, “He [God the Son], having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.” **16-18**, God says, “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days: I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them, ‘And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.”

The presence of God was among men: Jesus was God (**Acts 4:12**), “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,” (**Romans 10:13**), for “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord [for the forgiveness of sin] will be saved.”

Jesus Christ came to save sinners! He became the one time sacrifice, for all time, for all sin, for all people who believe in Him alone for the forgiveness of sin (**1John 5:11-13**), “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

The question you have to answer is this: Do you believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of you sins (past, present, future) on earth, and for eternal life with Him in heaven?

Pastor Mike  
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