

SALVATION HAS ARRIVED AND THE BATTLE IS BREWING
Luke 5:12-26

INTRODUCTION

Illustration – Every older major university in America used to have a Department of Divinity. Now, they all have a Department of Religion. What’s the difference you ask??
→ **Divinity** is the study of God. → **Religion** is the study of man.

When we take our eyes off the Bible you see, God becomes the projection of our own best thoughts.

READ Luke 5:12-26

Proposition: 2 Healing Narratives:

- I. A Leper
- II. A Paralytic

So That: Luke’s Gospel begins to take a turn. We have heard the account of John the Forerunner and we have seen Christ teach the Word of God. Now Luke → salvation and opposition so that we continue to grow in our understanding of the real Jesus and His ministry.

1st Healing, ...

- I. A Leper **5:12-16**

Point – Leprosy = Picture of sin in the Old Testament and the New Testament → cleansing. This is one of only two instances of healing of leprosy in the NT (other – **17:12-19**)

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- A. The **Request** of a **Contaminated Man** **12**

Proof – “^{12a}And it came about that while He was in one of

the cities, behold, *there was a man full of leprosy;*”

Leprosy is a loathsome and progressively disfiguring disease. It is one of the most dreaded diseases in the world. It attacks the nerves and decreases the sensitivity to pain - lose sense of feeling. You can't hide it. Those with leprosy suffer with missing fingers, nose, and feet. Under the Law, a leper is ritually unclean and excluded from society → **Lev 13:45-46**

Loathsome disease with massive social stigma; hopeless

- **Josephus** – “Lepers were treated as living dead men, corpses.”
- They were barred from all walled cities in Israel including Jerusalem.
- If a leper came to a synagogue in a smaller town, he would be refused entry and sent to a small holding room until they could deal with him later.
- One rabbi said, he “wouldn't eat an egg purchased on a street where a leper had walked.”

Think about this man's horrible pitiful existence. Besides the physical ravages of the disease, he was an outcast in the most extreme sense.

- No sitting at the city gate in the warm evenings.
- No standing at the village well talking with people.
- No attending marriages nor funerals.

Illustration – I have friends who were a missionary couple with a primitive island group of people with lepers. The wife shared she was talking to one of the lepers who had become a Christian and as they were talking the lady pulled out a bone from her ankle.

“**man full of leprosy**” – covered with leprosy → very advanced stage leprosy

This leprous man is sick, estranged from all that is humane and good.

But ... he comes to Jesus with the right heart! ☺ He comes with a heart of:

- 1) **Boldness**
- 2) **Humility**
- 3) **Urgency**
- 4) **Faith**

1) This man comes to Jesus with **boldness**.

Point – He is consumed with his need for cleansing.

Proof – “**in one of the cities**” → It takes **boldness** for the leper to come inside a city and approach anyone at all, let alone this great Teacher/Master he has been hearing about!

→ He is not concerned with the opinion of others.

2) This man comes to Jesus with **humility**.

“^{12b}**and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face**”

- Reminder we are only cleansed lepers, the best of us.

3) This man comes to Jesus with **urgency**.

Point – He understands his desperate situation.

Proof – “^{12c}**and implored Him,**” – *ask urgently, beg, plead*

- “Please! Help me!”

The Law is powerless to help him → In the same way, from a spiritual standpoint, the law is powerless to help us

4) This man comes to Jesus in **faith**.

“^{12d}**saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’”**

He does not say, “if You are able” ... he says “**if You are willing**”. The leper has no doubt about the ability of Jesus to heal him.

Notice also, he doesn’t say, “You can heal me.”

→ He says, “You can **make me clean**”

He understands the physical devastation of his disease. And he understands the spiritual pollution of his disease.

B. The **Response** of a **Compassionate Messiah**

Point – Our Lord was strong in body. This man was being eaten away by his disease. Our Lord is full of the love of God, and the kindness of God, and the tenderness of God.

→ Jesus sees this groaning leper with his face in the dust.
→ He hears him begging and He is moved with compassion.

Proof – “¹³**And He stretched out His hand, and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing; be cleansed.’ And immediately the leprosy left him.**”

- rather than just speaking
- Jesus establishes an immediate connection.
- This is not a tap. This is a grip. The original word can mean to grab, to hold onto. This is a grip, not a tap.

Mark adds He was, “moved with compassion” (**Mark 1:41**)

- Luke is more concise than Mark when they describe identical incidents.
- In general, Doctor Luke focuses more on the power and will of Jesus and less on the emotions of Jesus.

Back in the Old Testament, there were the unclean, the clean, the holy things.

- Most unclean things were not unclean permanently.
- There were procedures to make something unclean clean.
- The holy could be profaned and become common.
- The unclean was never to come in contact with the holy.

Do you see what God is communicating about His holiness?
Do you see the magnitude of the leper coming up to Jesus?

Jesus is God Who comes from heaven to earth.
He is LORD Who lays hold of frail flesh.
He is Savior Who seeks out the sheep that was lost, ...

“**I am willing**” – There are two different original Greek words meaning “to will” or “desire”

- One (*boulomai*) describes a desire that comes more from reason.
- The one here (*thelo*) describes a desire that comes more from emotion.

“**be cleansed**” – grammatically, this is aorist imperative → “At once!” → instant, complete

This is all done in the flicker of an eye. One second this man is full of leprosy, covered in oozing ulcers and sores, nubs for fingers and ulcerated stubs for feet. No ears, two holes where his nose had been → a miserable horrible spectacle.

The next moment ... he is free from disease ☺.

- We have already seen demons flee at **voice** of Jesus.
- Here, leprosy flees at the **voice** (and **touch**) of Jesus!

Question? Does Jesus violate the Law by touching a leper?

Lev 5:3 – “if he touches human uncleanness ... he will be guilty”

Some seek to answer by saying Jesus wrote the Law so He is not bound to it. But this does violence to the clear teaching of Scripture that He satisfied all aspects of the Law on our behalf.

But the text says he touched the leper ... right?

It says “He touched him.” I don’t believe Jesus touched a leper. I believe He touched a cleansed man.

The nanosecond He touches, he is instantly clean. The instant the molecules of His skin touch the molecules of the leper, he is cleansed!

Jesus’ cleanness is more contagious than the leper’s corruption

→ more powerful, infinitely so

C. The **Requirement** of a **Commanding Messiah**

Point – He is Savior and **Lord!**

- Jesus shifts from tender mercy to strong command

Proof – “^{14a}**And He ordered him to tell no one,**” – a directive from an authoritative source - *command, a strict order*

Two factors at work here:

→ protection of ministry and preservation of Law

- 1) Jesus is concerned the man will feed the miracle-worker mystique of the crowds and
- 2) He wants the man to obey the Law of God
→ only **a priest** can declare this man clean.

Proof – “^{14b}**But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**”

- 1) Jesus will violate the tradition of man (with wisdom and purpose)
- 2) Jesus follows and fulfills the Law of God

He wants this man to give a testimony in the right way. He must observe the requirements of the Law regarding someone who is cleansed of leprosy (**Lev 14:2,11**)

The priests should verify this man’s cleansing and announce the arrival of Messiah. God has brought salvation, cleansing, and deliverance to the nation!

D. The **Rebellion** of a **Cleansed Man**

“¹⁵**But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear *Him* and to be healed of their sicknesses.**”

“**were gathering**” – grammatically - imperfect tense – a continual stream (as before)

“¹⁶**But He Himself would *often* slip away to the wilderness and pray.**”

- We begin to see Jesus in the wilderness more and more
- both “**slip away**” and “**pray**” are in the imperfect tense
→ a pattern which began in **4:42**

2 forces are beginning to weigh down His ministry in Galilee

- 1) Popularity of the masses
- 2) Hatred of the leaders

Point – The man disobeyed ... **Mark 1:45a** tells us – “But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around,”

In his excitement, his reverence is replaced with rebellion. No doubt that he has a thankful heart... but ... he disobeys.

Consequences?

Mark 1:45b – “to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.”

- Jesus begins to avoid the cities to let the excitement die down
- He begins to teach less in the synagogues and more in the wilderness

Application – Good intentions do not cover disobedience!

The Word from God is binding on the believer. The ends do not justify the means!

2nd Healing, ...

II. A Paralytic

5:17-26

Point – → Authority over demons, disease, leprosy. There is something even greater is here! → Authority over sin!

The Old Testament Law provides for the ritual external cleansing of a leper, but there is no internal cleansing in the Old Covenant.

- There is forgiveness of sin only in the New Covenant!
- Salvation has arrived and the battle is brewing!

Jesus forgiving sin → **5:20** – “**Friend, your sins are forgiven you.**”
and the conflict with the religious leaders → **5:17-6:11**

Proof – “^{17a}**And it came about one day that He was teaching**”

Mark 2:1 – “when He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.”

Back to home base several days after healing the leper
→ Jesus’ return generates excitement – His fame is building

“The **teaching** of Jesus is not like the Pharisees and Scribes who tried to breathe life into dusty old tomes with their creative ability.” (Alistair Begg)

Point – The outline of this healing narrative (Paralytic):

- A. A **Battle** is **Brewing**
- B. A **Gauntlet** is **Thrown**
- C. A **Victory** is **Won**

A. A **Battle** is **Brewing** **5:17**

Point – **Matt 11:12** – “from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force”

Proof – “^{17b}**and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there,*”**

This is the first presence of **Pharisees** and **scribes** (v. 21) in Luke. Josephus says there were about 6000 Pharisees and that they were very influential.

“^{17c}who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem;”

- Like a reconnaissance team
- Jesus’ preaching tour sparks them to investigate this troublemaker

“^{17d}and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing.” – *kenosis* → miracles done by the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit – 3:22

B. A Gauntlet is Thrown 5:18-23

Proof – “¹⁸And behold, *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.* ¹⁹And 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, right in the center, in front of Jesus.”

It was extremely difficult to be paralyzed in ancient times
→ no wheelchairs! → no physical therapists!
→ way more social stigma than now

Mark 2:3-4 – “four men ...they removed the roof above Him ... dug an opening” Outside staircase leading to a flat roof made of dirt and clay. Dirt starts to rain down on those below, including Jesus.

They exercise every bit of ingenuity and initiative men made in the image of God, driven by love for their friend, are able to muster.
--

They show stubborn determination to bring their friend to Christ despite the obstacles. They will not be denied! They will find a way!

Application – A desperate man does not care what others think. A desperate man does not care what others say. He will go where others won't. He won't let anything stop him

The anchor of this passage, Jesus deals with the greatest need first.

“²⁰**And seeing their faith, He said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’”**

- visible evidence of faith, a living faith
- the **faith** of the guys with the ropes and the faith of the guy with the problem.
- An active faith that works!

He is paralyzed on the inside as he is paralyzed on the outside. He doesn't just need physical healing, he needs forgiveness!

“**your sins are forgiven**” – leave behind, forsake, dissolve, disband, neglect; let go, dismiss → **released, delivered, forgiven**

- the grammar shouts forgiveness
- it is first in the clause for emphasis
- literally - “forgiven are your sins”

Illustration – This forgiveness is not like the forgiveness of a 5 year old boy in the playground. The little Gandhi in the playground forgives because he knows he has to do so. He says, “I forgive you for hitting me.” And he knows this means I can't hit you back ... now 😊

Application– Rather, the forgiveness of God as far as the East is so great is the expanse of God's remembrance of our sins.

The Gospel brings opposition. The Gospel brings conflict and hostility. There is a brewing **battle** with Satan and demons. There is a brewing **battle** with hypocritical religious leaders

“²¹**And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this *man* who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?’”**

Their theology is sound here –

Illustration – for those of you under 25, a broken clock (analog clock) is right twice a day even though it doesn't work.

→ Only God can forgive sins

Isa 43:25 – “I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”

- **Healing by man** has precedence (doctors, etc.)
- **miraculous healing** has precedence (prophets)
- **forgiveness of sin** is always the domain of God
- no mere prophet could forgive sin

→ Jesus is either a blasphemer or God.

These men should be **rejoicing** → instead **grumbling** in their hearts. They think they are righteous, but they have sick hearts.

They had taken the Word of God and turned it into a monstrosity. Their religious expressions were marked by superficiality, technicality, formality, legality, and hypocrisy.

The progression of the escalation of the conflict:

- Grumbling in their wicked hearts **5:21**
- Grumbling out loud **5:30**
- Complaining to the disciples **6:2**
- Watching in order to accuse **6:7**
- Plotting how they might destroy Him **6:11**

Jesus knows their grumbling and takes the battle right to them.

“²²**But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts?’**”

→ **Matthew** – “why are you thinking evil in your hearts?”

→ Omniscience or wisdom?? → **Wisdom**, I believe.

aware – *epiginosko* – experiential knowledge

Jesus answers the unspoken challenge in their hearts with a spoken challenge ... with a visible gauntlet

“²³**Which is easier, to say, “Your sins have been forgiven you,” or to say, “Rise and walk”?**”

The answer is easy ... both are easy to say. *Anyone* can say either. → Jesus’ point is which is easier to do???

Point – Man can’t **do** either. God can **do** both. So that all will know the **invisible Truth**, He gives **visible proof**.

C. A Victory is Won 5:24-26

Point – Remember, the man is still on his back. He is a different man. You just can’t see it.

Proof – “^{24a}**But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,’--”**

“**The Son of Man**” – this is the first appearance of this title in the synoptic narrative – this is the name Jesus uses of Himself most often – **Dan 7:13**

- blends the humility with the glory
- used only by Jesus of Himself in the gospels.
- Only New Testament usage by another referring to Christ is Stephen in **Acts 7:56**

“**the Son of Man has authority on earth**” – God’s authority in heaven to forgive sins is present on earth

v. 17 – “**power**” – δύναμις – power → miracles

v. 24 – “**authority**” – ἐξουσία – authoritative power → salvation

“**in order that**” – purpose statement → I will **show you the external** so that you **know the internal**. When you see the visible miracle, you should believe the invisible pardon.

Notice the dash in the text, "--" Jesus doesn't finish His sentence with words. He finishes His sentence with action.
→ He turns His attention to the paralytic

“^{24b}He said to the paralytic—‘I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home.’”

- this former paralytic becomes a standing witness to Jesus' authority to forgive sins

No strong requirement like Jesus gave the leper, no warnings against speaking out. There is no Old Testament leper cleansing law to be followed first. → Capernaum already understands the supernatural nature of His ministry

“²⁵And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God.”

“**at once**” – immediate healing (instant, complete)

On the way there, the stretcher carried him.
On the way back, he carries the stretcher 😊

The best part is NOT that he goes home walking.
The best part is he goes home cleansed and forgiven!

“²⁶And they were all seized with astonishment and *began* glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’”

This is not saying that they now have saving faith. It does not mean they experience a change of heart and mind. But they are awestruck by what they have seen.

CONCLUSION

Illustration – Leprosy is a perfect representation for the wretched destruction of sin. The greatest paralyzing agent is unforgiven guilt.

A man is not a leper because he has horrible ulcers and sores on his body, he has horrible ulcers and sores because he is a leper!

→ In the same way → **a man is not a sinner because he sins; a man sins because he is a sinner** – from the inside out

We are all, every one of us, sinner in the same sinking ship, with everybody else.

→ Sin spoils us, spreads in us, and separates us.

How bad is the sickness? There is not one organ left undiseased. Every cell is dying.

Isa 1:5-6 – “Where will you be stricken again, *as* you continue in *your* rebellion? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. ⁶From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, *only* bruises, welts, and raw wounds,”

Sin has touched every part of us:

our eyes – we are blind to the glory of God in His creation;

our ears – we are deaf to His voice when He speaks to us in His word;

our mouths – are full of curses and bitterness;

our minds – are perverted, our imaginations are twisted,

our affections – love that which is mean and degenerate.

our bodies themselves will finally contract an illness with no cure.

→ We are all going to die. We are all born lepers because of sin.

Jesus' cleanness is more contagious than the **leper's corruption**

The same is true for our spiritual cleansing.

We are instantly and permanently cleansed at the point of conversion/regeneration!

Application – Friend, coming to Jesus is not giving Jesus a try. It understands we have no place else to go. Nothing else matters.

Application – Friend, all it takes is one touch of saving grace to make you **whole**, to make you **clean**, to make you **new**, to make you **well**.

Application – When you are born again, you....

- have new eyes, new ears, new heart, new hands
- are a new creature, new heart, new inner man
- *are converted, transformed, and regenerated*
- have life where there was no life before
- are healed of blindness and healed of deafness
- are delivered from: fear of death and slavery to sin