

03-25-2018

Message: Christ Is the One God Who Has Authority to Forgive Sins

Text: Luke 5:17-26

- A. Today was the last Exploring Christian Essentials and Church Membership class for this current cycle. We begin each class with a quote from the late Dutch Reformed theologian, Louis Berkof ...

Theology would be utterly impossible without a self-revelation of God.

- B. Then we immediately disabuse ourselves from the notion that theology is only for scholars in ivory seminary towers, because the word “theology” means “the study of God.” The study of God is to be the favorite subject of all humanity. Though it is not for most, it must become the favorite desire of every believer to know God and make Him known.

Theos = God.

Logia = the study of (a subject or discipline)

- C. In Luke 5:17-26 we see Jesus giving people a self-revelation of Himself as God. We see this today because He has inspired Luke to record this self-revelation so that every generation, including ours today, might receive and respond to Jesus as the God who has authority to forgive our sins, for all have sinned.
- D. Pray that the Lord would open our eyes and our hearts to see and receive what He is now revealing about Himself.

I. 5:17 The authority of Jesus is greater than all religious/political leaders.

Luke 5:17 One day **He was teaching**; and **there were 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.

- A. Mark 2:1 tells us that this incident took place in Capernaum, which Matthew 9:1 tells us became Jesus’s “own city.” Luke 4 tells us the people of His home town, Nazareth tried to kill him.
- B. Jesus’s notoriety had grown to the point that Jewish religious leaders from all over the land had come to Capernaum to evaluate who this Jesus was. This incident introduces another major theme/motif in Luke-Acts, the opposition or trial motif.
1. If Christianity is not a different religion from Old Testament Judaism, but it’s progressive fulfillment of the promises made to the patriarchs and through Moses and the prophets, then why was Jewish leadership so opposed to it? A succession of confrontations and trials in Luke-Acts shows Christ and His apostles to be the innocent ones. The conflict was due to the hardened, unbelieving hearts of many in the Jewish leadership.

Theophilus, to whom Luke addressed Luke and Acts, is provided for justification for tolerating Christianity under the Roman policy of “one race, one religion.

2. Here we have one teacher, Jesus, versus a host of religious authorities, but the power of God was with Jesus, affirming His authority.

II. 5:18-20 A demonstration of justifying, saving faith in Jesus.

Luke 5:18 And *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.¹⁹ But 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.²⁰

Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

- A. Mark 2:3 tells us it was 4 men that carried a paralyzed man on a mat to the house where Jesus was preaching the word. The crowd was so large they couldn't even get near the front door.

Mark 2:2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.³ And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men.

- B. They did not let the crowd deter them. They went hard after Jesus, going as far as carrying the paralytic up to the flat roof, removing a portion and letting him down before Jesus in the middle of the crowd.

- C. Jesus saw what they did as an expression of faith in Him. Faith goes hard after Jesus, and does not let the “crowd” (what everyone else might say, think, do) deter it. Unlike the demons who believed who Jesus was, their's was justifying faith, saving faith, risking all, stopping at nothing to entrust their need to Him. Jesus reveals the nature of their faith to us, by His response.

Luke 5:20 Seeing **their faith**, He said, "Friend, **your sins are forgiven you.**"

Acts 10:43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that **through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.**"

Acts 13:38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that **through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,**³⁹ **and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things,** from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

III. 5:21,22 An evil, unbelieving heart rejects Jesus's divine authority to forgive sins.

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?**"²² But Jesus, aware of

their reasonings, answered and said to them, "**Why are you reasoning in your hearts?**"

Matthew 9:4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "**Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?**"

- A. Jesus regards the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees as evil for rejecting Jesus's authority to forgive sins. In responding to their unspoken thoughts, Jesus is revealing His identity as the God who knows the innermost thoughts of all hearts, an identity they are rejecting.

Proverbs 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon *lie open* before the LORD, **how much more the hearts of men!**

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but **all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.**

- B. The Jewish religious leaders were correct to assert that only God has the authority to forgive sins.

1. God is the only one who defines sin.

1 John 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and **sin is lawlessness.**

2. That is because God is the only (ultimate) lawgiver and judge who will either save or destroy us.

James 4:12 **There is only one Lawgiver and Judge**, the One who is able to save and to destroy;

3. Therefore, while we might sin against another person, God is the one who is ultimately offended.

2 Samuel 12:9 "Why have you despised the word of the LORD by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the sons of Ammon. ... ¹³ Then David said to Nathan, "**I have sinned against the LORD.**"

Psalms 51:4 **Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight**

4. Therefore, since we ultimately sin against God, it is ultimately up to God to forgive sins. It is His exclusive right to forgive sins. No other being has the right and authority to proclaim as forgiven those God does not forgive, or to condemn those God does forgive. (Psalm 130:4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.)

IV. 5:23-25 Christ has authority to forgive sins, because He Himself is God.

Luke 5:23 "Which is easier (eukopoteron = easier labor), 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."²⁵ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.

- A. Which is the harder thing to do - forgive the paralytic's sins or heal his paralysis? Jesus has just done the far more difficult miracle, something only God can do - forgive sins.
- B. So he asks a question of the skeptical, hostile religious leaders.
1. Most commentators interpret Jesus's question as meaning it is easier to say something that cannot be visually verified than to say something that can be visually confirmed. Perhaps this is correct.
 2. But I personally wonder if the majority view reflects a Western view of how Jesus is using language rather than an ancient Hebrew usage. The ancient Hebrew language is more verbal in force. E.g., when the Lord speaks in Hebrew about "hearing," this includes "obeying," not just comprehending. When Jesus speaks about "saying" a command or making a profession, He seems to include "doing/accomplishing/performing" what is commanded, or acting on what is professed. E.g., ... Psalm 81:11 "But My people **did not listen** to My voice, and Israel **did not obey** Me.

Revelation 2:7 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

Luke 6:46 "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?

3. If this minority view is correct, then Jesus is exposing the flaw in the hearts and thinking of the scribes and Pharisees. They lack eyes of faith. It is as if Jesus is saying, "I've just done the harder thing that you said only God can do, and you don't believe. So if I do the easier thing you will believe? What does this say about the eyes of your hearts?" Jesus made a somewhat similar criticism of Thomas when he would not believe the apostolic witness to Christ's resurrection until he could see and touch Jesus.

John 20:29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed."

- C. Jesus heals the paralytic's body by the power of God, by which God confirms Jesus's authority to heal the paralytic's separation from God due to his sins. God confirms the words of Jesus by giving Jesus divine power to confirm His words.
1. Jesus, once risen and reigning at the Father's right hand, would confirm the witness of His

apostles by giving them His power to perform signs and miracles by the Holy Spirit. E.g., as Luke describes Paul and Barnabas speaking the gospel of Christ to the Gentile cities ...

Acts 14:3 Therefore they spent a long time *there* speaking boldly *with reliance* upon **the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands.**

2. The Lord's question to us today is ...

Hebrews 2:3-4 **how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?** After **it was at the first spoken through the Lord,** it was confirmed to us by those who heard, **God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit** according to His own will.

V. 5:25,26 Contrasting responses to Christ.

Luke 5:25 Immediately **he got up** before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, **and went home glorifying God.**

A. The healed paralytic responded with continued faith in Jesus, obeying His command to get up, carry the mat that once carried him, and go home. He did so glorifying God. A faith that produces obedience and worship is the faith by which we receive from Christ the forgiveness of our sins. Such faith is not exercised for a moment in life (when we first believe), but as a way of life. We continue to ask and trust Jesus to forgive and cleanse us of the sins that still so easily entangle us, and we continue to worship and glorify Him for granting us such undeserved kindness and grace.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hebrews 12:1 ... **let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,² fixing our eyes on Jesus,** the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, **so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

B. We will see continued opposition from the scribes and Pharisees. While all were amazed and attributed Jesus's miracle to God, many in Capernaum would fail to respond with the wholehearted faith of the paralytic and his friends. Jesus would later speak of Capernaum's condemnation for its failure of faith.

Luke 5:26 **They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God;** and

they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Luke 10:15 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!

Matthew 11:23 "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.²⁴ "Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in *the* day of judgment, than for you."

- C. Mere marveling at Jesus's miracles and attributing them to the power of God by itself does not describe the faith by which Jesus forgives our sins. When the Scriptures call us to confess Jesus as Lord for our salvation, we must understand that in ancient Hebrew usage, confession is not mere lip service, but involves treating Jesus and the Lord, the God we confess Him to be, entrusting all that we are, to all that He is.
- D. Remember, only God can forgive our sins. When God raised Jesus to His right hand, He gave Jesus the name that is above every name, that every knee would bow and every tongue would confess that Jesus Messiah is Lord (Yahweh - the name above every name). Therefore, Jesus has authority to forgive our sins, because He is our Lord God. As Luke records in Acts 4:12 ...

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."