

FBC POWELL, 4-30-17 PM NOTES

“The Sinner’s Greatest Need”

Luke 5:12-26

# 14 in Series, “The Gospel According to Luke”

I. Leprosy and the Savior (vv. 12-16)

**Leviticus 13:46** “He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp.”

**Leviticus 13:45** “The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’”

**Numbers 12:10a** “But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow.”

**2 Kings 5:27** “Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever.”

**2 Chronicles 26:16-19** “But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Then Azariah the priest entered after him and with him eighty priests of the Lord, valiant men. They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, ‘It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God.’ But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense.”

**Luke 15:2a** “Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners.’”

**2 Corinthians 5:21** “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

**Isaiah 1:18b** “...though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”

**Mark 1:45** “But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, 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. However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.”

“We have in this wonderful history a lively emblem of Christ’s power to heal our souls. What are we all but lepers spiritually in the sight of God? Sin is the deadly sickness by which we are all affected. It has eaten into our constitution. It has infected all our faculties. Heart, conscience, mind, and will, all are diseased by sin. From the soul of our foot to the crown of our head, there is no soundness about us, but wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores (Isaiah 1:6). Such is the state in which we are born. Such is the state in which we naturally live. We are in one sense dead long before we are laid in the grave. Our bodies may be healthy and active, but our souls are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Who shall deliver us from this body of death? Let us thank God that Jesus Christ can. He is that divine physician, who can make old things pass away and all things become new. In Him is life. He can wash us thoroughly from all the defilement of sin in His own blood. He can quicken us and revive us by His own Spirit. He can cleanse our hearts, open the eyes of our understandings, renew our wills, and make us whole. Let this sink down deeply into our hearts. There is medicine to heal our sickness. If we are lost, it is not because we cannot be saved. However corrupt our hearts, and however wicked our past lives, there is hope for us in the Gospel. There is no case of spiritual leprosy too hard for Christ.”

—Dr. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

## II. Paralysis and the Savior (vv. 17-26)

### A. The Amazing Context (vv. 17-19)

**Luke 5:17b (HCSB)** “And the Lord’s power to heal was in Him.”

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**Romans 3:23** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

## **First Baptist Church Powell 04 30 1017 PM** **Chapter 14: The Sinner’s Greatest Need**

### **Luke 5:12-26**

At first glance it seems that these two accounts are not connected, but in reality, they are. What do this leper and this paralyzed man have in common, other than that they were both healed by Jesus? At the heart of this passage is the truth that Jesus came, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would be glorified by the forgiveness of sinners. Both stories in this passage are about forgiveness of sin. Who can fix what we have messed up with our sin? Jesus can! Only Jesus can! Every human being, every descendent of Adam is under condemnation because of their sin. Only Jesus can (as Charles Wesley wrote in 1739), “... break the power of canceled sin and set the prisoner free.” Only Jesus’ “blood can make the foulest clean...” We will never appreciate that truth until we see our desperate need as these two

men in this passage saw it. In this message, we will see that leprosy and paralysis both represent sin and its consequences. In Jesus' healing of both men we see that Jesus not only has power and authority over sickness, but also over sin.

## **I. Leprosy and the Savior (vv. 12-16)**

In the Scriptures, leprosy is a type, or picture, of sin. Leprosy was without a doubt the most dreaded disease of Jesus' day. Those with leprosy were said to have a "living death." William Barclay (who is horrible in some areas of theology, but an expert on life and customs in New Testament times) describes leprosy this way: "

It might begin with little nodules, which go on to ulcerate. The ulcers develop a foul discharge; the eyebrows fall out; the eyes become staring; the vocal cords become ulcerated, the voice becomes hoarse, and the breath wheezes. The hands and feet always ulcerate. Slowly the sufferer becomes a mass of ulcerated growths... [Sometimes] leprosy might begin with the loss of all sensation in some part of the body; the nerve trunks are affected; the muscles waste away; the tendons contract until the hands are like claws. There follows ulcerations of the hands and feet. Then comes the progressive loss of fingers and toes, until in the end a whole hand or a whole foot may drop off.

Barclay goes on to say, "No other disease reduces a human being for so many years to so hideous a wreck." [William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, Volume One*, pages 293-295]

It is likely that leprosy in New Testament times was different than today. The most common kind of leprosy today is called "Hansen's disease." It involves the inability to feel anything. Also, what is called "leprosy" today is not highly contagious.

As bad as the physical suffering of leprosy was, perhaps worse was the isolation and stigma attached to it. Some people treated lepers with such disgust that they threw stones at them. The Jewish historian, Josephus tells us that lepers were treated, "as if they were in effect dead men." The leper was completely banished from human society for two primary reasons. First, it was thought that all leprosy was God's judgment on the one who had it. Second, all leprosy was thought to be highly contagious. The Old Testament law said in Leviticus 13:46: "He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall live alone. His dwelling shall be outside the camp." When the leper traveled and could possibly come into contact with others, the law said in Leviticus 13:45: "The leprous person who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, 'Unclean, unclean.'"

It is easy to see how leprosy in the Bible is a picture, a type, an illustration of sin. At least three times in the Scripture, leprosy was given to a person as a consequence of sin. Moses' sister Miriam was given leprosy for her rebellion. Numbers 12:10a: "But when the cloud had withdrawn from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, as white as snow." Gehazi, Elisha's servant, because of his greed and dishonesty, was given leprosy in 2 Kings 5:27: "Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." Judah's King Uzziah became puffed up over his successes and, though he wasn't a Levite, he usurped the work of the priests when he went into the temple to offer sacrifices. As God's judgment, he was given leprosy. 2 Chronicles 26:16-19:

But when he became strong, his heart was so proud that he acted corruptly, and he was unfaithful to the Lord his God, for he entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. Then Azariah, the priest, entered after him and with him eighty priests of the Lord, valiant men. They opposed Uzziah the king and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful and will have no honor from the Lord God." But Uzziah, with a censer in his hand for burning incense, was enraged; and while he was enraged with the priests, the leprosy

broke out on his forehead before the priests in the house of the Lord, beside the altar of incense.

Leprosy pictures the working of sin in a life – the separation and the deadness sin causes. Leprosy, like sin, cannot be willed away or self-treated. Like leprosy, sin affects the whole person; it is loathsome corrupting, alienating, and is incurable by man.

In Luke 5:12-16, we see a beautiful picture of the gospel. As we read this account we notice that the leper came to Jesus, which was forbidden. He had confidence that Jesus would receive him. One of the criticisms of Jesus is seen in Luke 15:2a: “Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners.’” Aren’t you glad that He does? Notice that this leper also came in humility and total surrender that was evidenced by his falling on his face in Luke 5:12. Even so when a sinner comes to Jesus there must be humility and surrender to Christ the Lord. This leper knew that Jesus was His only hope. Man could do nothing about his condition. Even so a sinner must come to Christ Jesus with a poverty of spirit that sees Jesus as his only hope for forgiveness. Notice also that this leper didn’t just want to be healed; he wanted to be made clean (v 12). “Clean” meant to be ceremonially clean so that he could be in right relationship with God. When we are broken and repentant over sin, we desire not just to have our condemnation taken away, but to be clean and in right relationship with God so that we might walk in a love relationship with Him.

No one was allowed to touch a leper because in touching him you would take on his uncleanness. Look at verse 13a: “And He [Jesus] stretched out His hand and touched him [the leper] ...” When Jesus touched the leper, He took the leper’s defilement and conveyed to the leper His power that resulted in his healing. What an illustration of the gospel! 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Don’t take lightly Verse 13b, “And immediately the leprosy left him.” Here was this hideous looking man with ulcers covering his body, possibly missing toes and fingers, wrapped with bandages and now he is completely healed! How unlike many of the so called “healers” today! In the same way, when we respond to the Gospel and look in faith to Christ alone to save, the leprosy of sin is washed away and as Isaiah said in Isaiah 1:18b: “...though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.”

The first result of faith is obedience. Still being under the Mosaic Law, Jesus told the former leper in verse 14 to obey the Law by going to the priest and submit the ritual that certified that he was indeed healed from the leprosy. Jesus is referring to Leviticus 14:1-32. It was a rather lengthy ceremony that took eight days to complete and have the healing certified by the priest.

It is interesting from Mark’s account of this encounter we see that the leper did not obey the command Jesus gave him about telling no one. Mark 1:45: “But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, 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.” This was the likely reason that Jesus told him not to tell others. It was so that Jesus would not be followed as just a miracle worker. Here is something ironic: *Jesus told this former leper to keep quiet and he told everybody; He told us to tell everybody and we keep quiet.*

In the New Testament, only Jesus had the authority and power to miraculously heal leprosy. In the same way, only Jesus can deliver us from the curse and the bondage of sin. One of my favorite Bible commentators is Dr. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900). He said it so much better than I ever could. Referring to the passage we are looking at, he said,

We have in this wonderful history a lively emblem of Christ’s power to heal our souls. What are we all but lepers spiritually in the sight of God? Sin is the deadly sickness by which we are all affected. It has eaten into our constitution. It has infected all our faculties. Heart, conscience, mind, and will, all are diseased by sin. From the soul of our foot to the crown of our head, there is no soundness about us, but wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores (Isaiah 1:6). Such is the state in which we are born. Such is the state in which we naturally live. We are in one sense dead long before we are laid in the grave.

Our bodies may be healthy and active, but our souls are by nature dead in trespasses and sins. Who shall deliver us from this body of death? Let us thank God that Jesus Christ can. He is that divine physician, who can make old things pass away and all things become new. In Him is life. He can wash us thoroughly from all the defilement of sin in His own blood. He can quicken us and revive us by His own Spirit. He can cleanse our hearts, open the eyes of our understandings, renew our wills, and make us whole. Let this sink down deeply into our hearts. There is medicine to heal our sickness. If we are lost, it is not because we cannot be saved. However corrupt our hearts, and however wicked our past lives, there is hope for us in the Gospel. There is no case of spiritual leprosy too hard for Christ.

[J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Part 2*, pages 136-137]

There is an interesting parenthesis in the midst of this passage that deals with forgiveness of sinners. It is verse 16. Jesus was God in flesh, but remember that when He took on human flesh, He emptied Himself of the arbitrary use of the attributes of deity. In other words, He did what He did in the power of the Father. He needed to pray. Even with all the demands on Him, Jesus often took time to get away and pray to the Father. Oh, how much more important for us are those times of prayer with the Father.

## **II. Paralysis and the Savior (vv. 17-26)**

This second account in Luke 5 simply reinforces what was taught in the account of the man with leprosy. Here we meet a man who was paralyzed. While his bodily problem was different, his spiritual problem was the same – he needed forgiveness.

### **A. The Amazing Context (vv. 17-19)**

After referencing Jesus getting away to pray, Luke takes us immediately to another encounter as Jesus was teaching in Capernaum. What does that last part of verse 17 mean, "...the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing"? It is a little clearer in the HCSB. "And the Lord's power to heal was in Him." Again, let me remind you that Jesus did what He did in the Father's power. He submitted Himself to the Father's will and did what He did in the Father's power. In other words, the Father had given Him the power to heal. Just as it was with the leper in verses 12-14, the healing Jesus carried out in this passage had a much more important message than just to heal a paralytic.

Here is the scene. Jesus is in a building of some kind, perhaps a synagogue or some other meeting place. The room is packed. A part of the audience was made up of scribes (experts in the law) and Pharisees, who for the most part hated Jesus. One Bible scholar described the Pharisees as "men in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled." They were the legalists who came up with over 600 rules to keep in keeping the Ten Commandments. It was likely that they were checking up on Jesus because they suspected that He was a false teacher.

While Jesus was teaching, some men arrived who were carrying a paralyzed man on some type of stretcher. The text doesn't tell us why he was paralyzed. Perhaps it was a spinal injury or a birth defect – we don't know. The men carrying the bed/stretcher were trying to get their friend to Jesus so that He could heal this paralyzed man. Their original plan proved to be impossible. The building was too crowded. These men were persistent and resourceful. They had a "plan B." Many buildings had outside steps to get to the top of the building. These men got their paralyzed friend on the roof. Larger buildings, as this one was, had roofs of mud mixed with straw covered with tile. After moving some of the tiles, they started digging through the roof. When a hole was large enough, they tied ropes on the stretcher and lowered it down to where Jesus was speaking. Wow, those were good friends! Their commitment was to get their friend to Jesus whatever the cost. I long for us to have that kind of tenacity to get our friends to Jesus for salvation.

### **B. The Authoritative Claim (v. 20)**

Notice that it was "their" faith. That is what powerful evangelism involves. We, in faith that God is at work and is giving us the words to say, bring the lost before Jesus as we share the Gospel. As they turn to

Christ, their sins are forgiven. Notice also that these friends were very creative in bringing their friend to Christ. Even so, we may at times have to be creative in evangelism – not weird or “gimmicky,” but creative.

Look at the claim Jesus made. He didn't say, “rise and walk”; He said “your sins are forgiven you.” Jesus addressed an issue infinitely more important than the man's paralysis. He addressed his sin. Recognizing the man's faith, Jesus in His authority pronounced his forgiveness.

### **C. The Accusatory Confrontation (vv. 21-24)**

These pompous Scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of speaking blasphemies. To the Jews, blasphemy was a direct insult aimed at the person of God. Their accusation was based on the fact that only God can forgive sins. Actually they were right about that! Where they were wrong is that they did not believe that Jesus was God! He was and is!

In verse 23, Jesus asked a great question. The answer to that question is that to say to the paralytic “your sins are forgiven” would be easier to say because there was no way to prove or disprove that it had happened. On the other hand, to say that the paralytic was healed would be easy to prove; his walking would prove his healing. In verse 24 Jesus presents evidence of His authority to forgive sins by showing His authority over the paralysis. The “acid test” as to whether Jesus could negate the power and penalty of sin was to heal this man of his paralysis. His healing evidenced the power to forgive.

### **D. The Astonishing Consequences (vv. 25-26)**

There was the immediate, complete healing of this paralyzed man. There was no gradual improvement, no partial healing – he was totally and completely healed, instantaneously in response to Jesus' command. The crowd was stuck with astonishment and gave glory to God. There was also a sense of fearful awe – which is appropriate in the presence of God.

## **Conclusion**

Since there is a universal problem with sin, there is a universal need for a Savior who paid the price of forgiveness for all who would come to Him. Have you been forgiven? Some may say, “I'm not that bad.” Not that bad compared to what? Compared to others, that may be a true statement, but God doesn't compare us to others. We are compared to God's standard which is perfection and the result is Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We all need forgiveness. It is found only in Jesus.