

The Faith Healer

Luke 5:17-26

1. Introduction.

- a. Short review of why Luke is writing his Gospel. (See first sermon in the Luke series. It will be helpful for understanding Acts as well).
 - i. He writes as a formidable historian for the purpose of giving a reliable record of historical events.
 - ii. It is unembellished and free of personal commentary – something important for objective history.
- b. There is an interesting theme in Luke. He regularly shows Jesus pulling away for a time of secluded prayer before a critical moment in His ministry.
 - i. (E.g., Luke 4:1-13; 6:12; 9:28; 22:39-46, etc.).
 - ii. We see this in 5:16, which indicate vss. 17-26 to be a critical moment in Luke's Gospel. The critical moment is it will be the first time Jesus encounters what will be His great enemy in the Gospels—the Pharisees.
- c. Brief overview of the Pharisees.
 - i. There were four sects within Judaism:
 1. *Sadducees* – religious liberals. They were the politicians.
 2. *Essenes* – monk-like sect that exiled themselves into the desert to separate themselves from the religious institution (e.g., John the Baptist).
 3. *Zealots* – nationalists. They wanted to take back Israel from Rome.
 4. *Pharisees (Parash)* – fundamentalists. Held fastidiously to the Law and Tradition. They separated themselves unto the Law.

- ii. God never formally established the Pharisees in the Old Testament. They were a group of serious minded men who formed under the leadership of Ezra.
 - 1. They wanted the people to remain faithful to God’s Law, so as never to be exiled again under the discipline of the Lord for idolatry. They were noble in their desire.
 - 2. By the time of Christ, however, they were rank legalists, hating grace.
2. Jesus heals the paralytic (17-26).
- a. The Setting (17-20).
 - i. Jesus is simply teaching, as was his habit. Among Him are Pharisees and Teachers of the Law (i.e., Scribes) from every village to hear Jesus. Luke records that “the power of the Lord” was upon Him to heal. This is a reference to the Spirit.
 - ii. A paralytic is brought to Jesus by four friends (c.f., Mk. 2:3).
 - 1. His condition is severe. He cannot move himself, but is dependent on others to carry him.
 - 2. He is also described as being brought on a stretcher/bed. This is a term that speaks of a relatively permanent resting spot. It is not a roll-up stretcher. Again, it speaks to the severity of his condition.
 - 3. This paralytic would have long lost the hope of natural recovery by this point. We are not told how became this way, but it was a permanent condition.
 - iii. As the paralytic is brought to Jesus, he is blocked by the crowd (18). No one moves. The friends bring him to the roof via a set of exterior steps. They remove the roof and lower him with a contraption they presumably had to make (19).
 - iv. At this point, Jesus does something very unexpected. Instead of immediately healing the paralytic, He tells him his sins are forgiven (20).
 - 1. This is unexpected because Jesus has said nothing about sin up to this point.

2. Further, he intentionally says this knowing that He is among many religious leaders.
3. Jesus' reason for forgiving is that He saw their faith (plural).

b. The Skepticism (21-23).

- i. Jesus sees the Pharisees reaction. It is an inward reaction—"reasoning in their hearts." He knew their theology demanded they regard His statement as blasphemous (21-22).
- ii. Jesus poses a question (23).
 1. It is a question designed to trap them.
 - a. They can't deny a negative (i.e., forgiving sin).
 - b. They can't deny the positive (i.e., healing the paralytic).
 2. It provokes the Pharisees because they do not want to be shown to be unknowing in public.

c. The Salvation (24-26).

- i. Jesus' healing functions to prove His authority to forgive sins.
- ii. The man is forgiven, but also healed, which symbolically depicts the salvation of God.

3. Conclusion.

- a. This is an account that is included by Luke to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ and has come for the purpose of forgiving sin. It is the simple, yet profound point of the story.
- b. There are three groups of people in this account:
 - i. The Pharisees, who hate Jesus; the crowd, who are the religious neutral, but will eventually reject Jesus; and the paralytic, who understands his condition, yet comes in faith.
 - ii. We all find ourselves somewhere in this story. Which are you?