

Through the Roof (Luke 5:17-26)

1. The Unhindered Devotion of Faith (v. 17-20)

- Though Luke omits the location of this miracle, Mark informs the reader that it occurs in Capernaum (Mk. 2:1) shortly after the disciples “left everything” and followed Him (Lk. 5:11).
- Jesus is teaching in an unidentified person’s home, where He was joined by Pharisees and scribes (teachers of the Law) for the first time mentioned in Luke’s account.
- Pharisees:
 - The name means “separate” or “separate ones” and was formed in several stages as the Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity. The goal was to preserve the Law of God (Mosaic Law), submit to the oral interpretation handed down by tradition (from Ezra forward), be free from all foreign influences, and fix their hope on the coming Messiah, who would be an earthly ruler delivering them from their pagan (Roman) oppressors.
- Scribes (teachers of the law):
 - They are often mentioned with Pharisees and were delegated to teach the Law, develop it, and use it in connection with the Sanhedrin in various local courts. They were also heavily involved in the sacred writings and relied on outward pietism and external formalism.
- While Luke informs us that people carried this paralytic (v.18), Mark is more specific: four men carried this man on a stretcher (Mk. 2:3).
- These four men could not get to Jesus because of the “crowd” (v.19).
- Houses in Palestine in the first century were typically one story with one or two rooms. Stairs were located outside the house since the roof was often more suitable for entertainment and hospitality, as it was flat instead of angled.
- These four men removed the “tiles” on the roof (construction of wood, layers of mud, and cross-sectional panels) and “lowered” this paralyzed man before Jesus.
- Jesus saw “their” faith (v.20). Who is included in “their” faith?
 - A natural reading of the text implies to whom Jesus refers as “their” faith: the four men and the paralyzed man.

Vicarious Intercession: a faith that prays, labors, weeps, and persists for the sake of others to win God’s blessing on them. This faith is not transferable to the one without faith, nor is it salvific. It is a faith that is rewarded as it perseveres and is often marked by a travailing of the soul.

- Abraham interceded for Sodom (Gen. 18:22-33), the centurion for his servant (Lk. 7:1-10), the widow for her son (Lk. 7:11-17), Jairus for his daughter (Lk. 8:40-41, 49-56), the father for his boy with an unclean spirit (Lk. 9:37-43), and a demon-oppressed daughter by her Canaanite mother (Matt. 15:21-28).
- In every case, healing was wrought by the faith and perseverance of the ones interceding on behalf of their loved ones.

These men acted on behalf of the paralyzed man, as the man could not come to Jesus alone. He had an inability. As a paralytic, he would have been a poor, destitute beggar. Jesus praises “their” faith.

2. The Unquestionable Demonstration of Deity (v.21-25)

- The Pharisees and scribes are sitting (v.17), which is ironic because they were the ones who would often be teaching. Teachers sat when they taught. Are they sitting in judgment? Why are they at the house? (4:40, 42; 5:15).
- Jesus speaks of “their” faith but addresses the sins of the paralytic: “Man (friend), your sins are (now) forgiven.”
 - Jesus identifies the root problem of the paralytic’s debilitation: his sins. While there are life circumstances where cases of physical suffering are not the result of sin (Jn. 9:3), in this man’s case, it appears to be evident.
- This man is suffering from the incapacitating effects of his sins.
- This paralyzed man “believed” Jesus and was forgiven of his sins.
- As Jesus pronounces the forgiveness of the paralytic’s sins, the Pharisees and scribes thought, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” The Pharisees and scribes make a provocative observation. Yes, only God can forgive sins.
- Luke demonstrates Jesus’ omniscience as God (4:23) as He perceives their thoughts.
- Jesus’ response is brilliant: “Which is easier? Your sins are forgiven or rise and walk?”
 - The first miracle demonstrates Jesus’ authority to forgive sins, as only God can forgive, for every sin is against God.
 - Man can only forgive sins that are against himself, not others.
 - God can forgive sins against Him. While this paralytic did not sin against Jesus’ humanity, he did sin against God. In proclaiming the forgiveness of this man’s sins, Jesus is claiming to be God.
 - The second miracle demonstrates Jesus’ power to heal.
- Jesus’ claim of deity is blasphemy under Old Testament Law (Lev. 24:16) unless He can demonstrate the claim of forgiveness.
 - He validates His deity by summoning this man to rise, get up, and walk. Jesus demonstrates that He has the power to heal and the authority to forgive as God. Present, before their very eyes, is God incarnate.

Jesus is performing more than an object lesson for the Pharisees and scribes. The irony is that the paralyzed man is forgiven, healed, and walking. The Pharisees and scribes are “sitting” in judgment and suspicion. They are the paralyzed ones in their spiritual deadness. Jesus did not utter blasphemy. They are the blasphemous ones!

3. The Unquenchable Glorification of God (v.25-26)

- The man immediately stood up (4:38; 5:13), took his mat, and went home.
- The man came to Jesus with his back on a bed. Now, he departs from Jesus with his bed on his back.
- The man, forgiven of his sin and healed of his paralysis, left glorifying God (v.25).
- Those who witnessed the miracle never saw anything like this and were amazed (v.26).
- The paralyzed man departed from Jesus: he came in a stretcher of sin, debilitated, and now is free, rejoicing that his sins have been forgiven and healed by God.
- Jesus has demonstrated as the servant of Yahweh, His Spirit-empowered power and authority: to liberate demon-possessed men (4:31-35, 41), to heal illnesses (4:38-40), over creation (5:1-7), in calling disciples effectually (5:8-11), in cleansing lepers (5:12-17), to forgive sins (5:17-26) as God-incarnate.