

Message #20

Luke 5:12-26

In June of 1912, a minister from Ontario, whose name was Pastor J. J. Ross, published a pamphlet in which he denounced the teachings of Charles Russell, who was the founder of Jehovah's Witness. When Russell got hold of the pamphlet he decided to sue Pastor Ross for defamation of character.

Pastor J. J. Ross claimed that Russell was not a Biblical scholar or a true Biblical theologian, even though Russell was claiming he was. I have actually read the transcript of some of the trial. When the case got to court, the attorney for Pastor Ross put Charles Russell on the stand. He was cross-examined for about five hours.

One of the claims that Russell made was that he was a Greek and Hebrew scholar and that many of his teachings were derived from his deep understanding of the Greek language. The attorney handed Russell on the stand a copy of the Westcott and Hort Greek New Testament and he opened it to page 447 and asked Russell to quote the Greek letters of the Greek alphabet. Russell could not do it. Then the attorney asked him if he knew Hebrew and Russell said he did. So the attorney turned to a verse in Genesis 1 and asked him to translate it into Hebrew. Russell admitted he did not know Hebrew. The attorney then proceeded to show he had never even taken one course of systematic theology and he had never been ordained by any body of living men. He had never graduated from any school and yet this man was claiming he was the only man who had a proper understanding of the Bible and could truly interpret it. Further, his wife, who divorced him, testified of the fact that he was a liar and a fraud with money. When the judge saw that Russell was in fact a fraud, in March 1913, he threw the libel case out of court.

It is easy to make claims about spiritual things, but it is quite another to back them up with real facts. When Jesus Christ was on earth, He made some remarkable claims about Himself.

- 1) He claimed that He and His Father were One (John 10:30).
- 2) He claimed that He was the only way to God (John 14:6).
- 3) He claimed that He could take away heavy burdens and guilt (Matt. 11:28).
- 4) He claimed He would someday come back and reign over the whole world (Matt. 25:31).
- 5) He claimed that He could forgive sin (Luke 5:24).

Of all of His claims, this last one is the most unique. **He claims that He has the power to forgive all sin.** Now it is one thing to say it, it is another thing to prove it. In order to prove that He was who He claimed to be and to prove that He could forgive sin, He did physical miracles.

JESUS CHRIST MIRACULOUSLY HEALED ALL TYPES OF SICKNESSES TO PROVE HE CAN FORGIVE ALL TYPES OF SIN.

It is clear from this very text that the people who truly needed to grasp this were the religious leaders (**5:14, 17**). He wanted them to clearly understand that He was the only Person with the power to forgive sin. In this text there are two major miracles performed by Jesus Christ that clearly demonstrate He does have the power to forgive sin.

MIRACLE #1 – Jesus Christ heals the man who was a leper. 5:12-15

Leprosy was a dreaded disease in the first century. J. Dwight Pentecost describes it: It “began with little specks on the eyelids and on the palms of the hand and gradually spread over different parts of the body, bleaching the hair white wherever it showed itself, crusting the affected parts with shining scales, and causing swellings and sores. From the skin, it slowly ate its way through the tissues, to the bones and joints and even to the marrow, rotting the whole body gradually piece by piece. The lungs, organs of speech and hearing, and the eyes were attacked in turn till at least, consumption of dropsy brought welcome death” (*The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, p. 149).

A leper was a particular disgrace to the Jewish religious world. He was considered to be a hopeless sinner, whom God was punishing for some moral sin. The Pharisees taught people to avoid lepers, and urged them to always stay at least six feet away from them. Not so much because they were worried about catching the disease, but getting too close to sinful contamination. Some of the religious leaders were even known to throw stones at lepers. David Garland said in his commentary that a leper was nothing more than a “walking corpse” (*Luke*, p. 239). This was true spiritually and physically.

Isn't it interesting who Jesus Christ selects too, the lowly leper. There was no sin too disgraceful or unforgivable for Him to forgive. If He would heal a leper, He could heal anyone.

According to **verse 12**, while Jesus was in one of the Galilean cities, there was a man “covered with leprosy.” This was something Dr. Luke pinpoints. Now the disease has different levels and this man was covered with it or literally in Greek he was “full” of leprosy. The severity of the disease shows the “magnitude of the miracle” (*Ibid*, p. 238).

When this lowly leper saw Jesus, he knew who He was and he fell on his face before Him and identified Him as “Lord” and he said, “if you are willing, you can make me clean.” No one brought the leper to Christ, like others who were sick; he had to bring himself.

Dr. C. I. Scofield made an interesting observation about physical healing when he says that a Christian should always recognize that Jesus Christ has the power to heal if He is willing and in situations of sickness we should pray “if you are willing.” The ultimate decision of whether or not He will heal is His (*Scofield Study Bible*, NASV, p. 1412).

This leper is not making some arrogant name it and claim it demand. He knows Jesus Christ is the Lord and if He is willing, He can heal him.

Verse 13 is a beautiful picture of amazing grace. Jesus Christ stretched out His hand and touched this leper and healed him and said, “I am willing.” Notice Jesus does not call out to His Father, the man identified Jesus as “Lord” and the Lord said, “I am the Lord and I am willing; be cleansed.” **What this shows us is that the worst possible sinner, the most degraded person in society may be touched and healed by Jesus Christ.**

After touching the Leper and healing Him, Jesus Christ gave him two orders:

Order #1 - He ordered the leper to tell no one. **5:14a**

Now this certainly goes against the grain of today's self-proclaimed faith healers. They take out newspaper ads and go on radio and television to promote their phony healing services and then they take their offering to enhance their luxurious lifestyle.

Now Jesus ordered the man to keep silent, which seems strange because He is establishing the fact that He is God and can forgive sin. You would think He would want that point shouted from the roof tops. But I think the next order helps explain it.

Order #2 - He ordered the leper to show himself to the priest. **5:14b**

Jesus wants him to keep silent until he goes to the priest and the priest officially declares him to be clean.

Now this request is in perfect conformity to the O.T. law of God, which Christ would nail to the cross (Col. 2:14). The Mosaic law of leper cleansing is found in Leviticus 14. In that law the O.T. priest was required to examine the person to make sure that the leprosy was truly gone (Lev. 14:3). He was then to offer a sacrifice in behalf of the Leper, which clearly pictured the forgiveness and cleansing of sin (Lev. 14:4-5). The priest would then sprinkle the leper with blood and water and pronounce him to be clean (Lev. 14:6-7).

The leaders in Christ's day were not accustomed to this. What they were accustomed to doing was condemning lepers and not forgiving lepers or cleansing lepers. By virtue of the fact that Christ sent this leper to the priest, it was a clear and visible statement that He did have the power and authority to forgive sin. By going to the priest first, Jesus is perfectly fulfilling the law of God.

However, what we learn from **verse 15** is that news about this spread. Masses of people were tracking Jesus Christ. One of the most powerful arguments for the power of Jesus Christ to forgive sin is a changed life. You cannot argue with that. A changed life baffles the self-righteous, Pharisee crowd because the truth is they have never experienced that power in their own life.

MIRACLE #2 – Jesus Christ heals the man who was lame. **5:16-26**

Many people do not understand the pressure of being in constant demand of people, but Christ did and in **verse 16** we learn that Jesus would often slip away into the wilderness to pray. Luke often brings this point out about Jesus Christ (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 11:1; 23:46). He was not just interested in being before crowds becoming famous, but He enjoyed the isolation of private times alone in the wilderness with His Father.

According to **verse 17**, one day Jesus was teaching and there were some Pharisees and Law teachers there listening to Him teach. They had come from various cities. **This is the first mention we get in Luke of the Pharisees.** These Pharisees were the proud, legalistic, religious separatists and leaders who would become the arch enemies of Jesus Christ and the cross that offers grace to sinners.

They were one of four main religious power groups in the religious world. There were the Pharisees, the Scribes, the Sadducees and the Priests. Josephus claims there were the Pharisees, the Essenes, the Sadducees and the Zealots.

Now the Pharisees were non priests and lay separatists who were known for making up man-made traditions and rules about things not addressed directly in Scripture. The teachers of the law were the Scribes who carefully studied the O.T. law and they would make rulings based on the O.T. law and religious traditional viewpoints.

Now Jesus' reputation was spreading and these religious leaders were sitting and listening to Jesus Christ teach. They were from all over Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. They did not like the attention Christ was getting and they were out to stop it.

According to **verses 18-19**, people were jammed into a house and some men wanted Christ to heal a paralyzed man, but they could not get him into the house because the crowd was so large. So what these men did was go to the top of the house, remove a couple of stone tiles and lowered the man down from the roof right into the middle of where Jesus was teaching. They dropped this man right down in front of Jesus Christ.

A typical Mediterranean house had two stories with the roof serving as a second story balcony or room. The roof was typically about six feet above the ground and was flat. So they went up on the roof and then dangled their friend down in front of Jesus.

Verse 20 says that "seeing their faith," Jesus said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." There are two points of observation we want to make:

Point #1 - Faith may be seen by Jesus Christ. **5:20a**

Jesus Christ is able to see the faith of a person. He is able to see who believes in Him and who doesn't. The thing that Christ saw was that they so had faith in Him that they wanted to be close to Him.

Point #2 - Sins may be forgiven by Jesus Christ. **5:20b**

Notice very carefully that there is a difference between spiritual healing and physical healing. These are two distinct issues.

Now the men brought this man to Jesus to be physically healed, but what Christ first does is judicially heal him from his sins.

According to **verse 21**, when Jesus said that, the Pharisees and Scribes came to two conclusions that are absolutely right.

(Conclusion #1) - Only God may forgive sin.

Psalm 103:3 says that only God, Jehovah can pardon iniquities.

(Conclusion #2) - Any man, who is not God, who claims he can forgive sin, is blasphemous.

Take some priest or pope who claims that he can forgive sin, it is blasphemy. Those people who confess in some confessional booth to a priest are involved in something blasphemous. No human can forgive sin. That is crazy theology.

According to **verses 22-23**, Jesus knew what they were thinking, so He asked them two questions:

Question #1 - The question pertaining to their heart. **5:22b**

Jesus asks, “why are you reasoning in your heart?” I think this means a couple of things. First, why aren’t you asking Me or admitting to Me your struggle? Don’t you know I can look directly into your heart and mind? Second, why are you questioning Me and My authority? Jesus Christ knows what is in our heart and He sees even the “secret” sin (Romans 2:16).

Question #2 - The question pertaining to the words. **5:23**

Jesus says which is easier to say, “your sins have been forgiven you” or to “get up and walk”? Well the easiest thing to say is your sins are forgiven because it requires no proof that it is true.

Which is easier to say, “I lived a godly life last week” or “I read 30 chapters of the Bible”? The easiest thing to say is I lived a godly life because it requires no proof. If you say I read 30 chapters of the Bible and someone says well what chapters did you read, then that requires evidence.

Saying to a paralyzed man your sins are forgiven is much easier than saying get up and walk. Saying your sins are forgiven requires nothing visible, but saying rise up and walk requires something visible.

Now notice what Jesus says in **verse 24**. **The reason why Jesus is going to do this miracle is so that people will realize He does have the power and authority to forgive sin.** This healing of this physical problem proves He can heal the spiritual problem of sin.

Jesus said to the man “get up and pick up your stretcher and go home.”

Verse 25 says immediately the paralyzed man got up from the stretcher, picked it up and went home glorifying God.

He could glorify God for two reasons; 1) He had been healed from his sins and 2) He had been healed from his sickness.

Now the response of the crowd is recorded in **verse 26**:

Response #1 - They were astonished.

Response #2 - They were glorifying God.

Response #3 - They were filled with fear.

Response #4 - They had seen something remarkable that day.

But notice what they do not say—Lord, would you forgive me of my sins? Lord, would you please save me? You would think everyone in the area would ask Jesus Christ to forgive them of their sin. But they did not do that. Participating in religious stuff is not the same as dealing with your own sin and if you don't deal with your own sin, you will perish.

This passage clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is not horrified by the worst of sinners and He will save and forgive the worst of sinners. Believe in Him and your sin contamination will be gone and you will be clean.