

***“THE FORGIVING AUTHORITY OF THE SON OF MAN”***  
***LUKE 5:17-26***

Into every life a little rain must fall. Death and taxes are a certainty for every person. Trouble is all around us. And everyone has trouble, trials, problems, and difficulties. Even in a land of prosperity. Of course some of them are unique to living in a prosperous place — we call them **first world problems**:

- It's boiling hot outside but freezing in the air-conditioned office
- My personal trainer took the week off so I have to workout alone
- My Brie is too hard
- The earphones get tangled up in your bag
- You see someone else wearing the same outfit as you
- Remote control batteries running out; the fire alarm battery begins chirping at 2:00 am
- Stepping on something wet while wearing socks
- Getting suntan lotion in your eyes while reading outdoors in the sunshine
- A neighbour using the same Laura Ashley wallpaper

Of course we know there are **greater problems** — more month than money, catastrophic weather, terminal illnesses, decades-long broken relationships, death and grief. Some of you are walking through those. But there is an even greater problem than all these; it is a problem every person has. And Jesus is authoritative to address that problem.

Beginning in chapter 4, Luke not only begins telling the story of Jesus' ministry, but he begins unfolding the authority of Jesus. Luke wants his readers to see the greatness of Christ as the eternal Son of Man, and to worship Him. So in Jesus' message to His hometown (Nazareth) He claimed to be authoritative to fulfill the Messianic promise of Isaiah to liberate those who are in bondage (4:18-19). When He was rejected by the Nazareans, He began His Galilean ministry to further manifest His authority — He is King (and a good King). Throughout His Galilean ministry in Luke 4-6, we observe multiple examples of the truth that...

***AS THE SON OF MAN, JESUS IS AUTHORITATIVE...***

He is the Son of Man. And there is nothing over which He is not authoritative. As a reminder, we have seen His authority as a **teacher**, over the spiritual realm and **demons**, over **illness**, to compel **men to follow Him**, and to **cleanse men** both physically and spiritually. In the parallel story to the cleansing of the leper, Jesus demonstrates His authority **to forgive people of their sin**. Worship **the Son of Man** because of His authority to forgive sin —

1. The **CURIOSITY** About the Son of Man (vv. 17-19)
2. The **CLAIM** of the Son of Man (v. 20)
3. The **CONFRONTATION** Against the Son of Man (v. 21)
4. The **CORRECTION** by the Son of Man (vv. 22-24)
5. The **CONFIRMATION** of the Son of Man (vv. 25-26)

## 1. The **CURIOSITY** About the Son of Man (vv. 17-19)

- Like the previous miracle, much of this story is left “anonymous” — we don’t know the place where Jesus was teaching (in Galilee, likely Capernaum), the day (**one day**, a few days after the leper; Mk. 2:1), or the names of any of the participants (in fact, the man and his friends don’t even speak).
- What is important about the story is that **Pharisees and teachers of the law** were gathered.
  - ✓ They obviously didn’t know that a miracle would occur; they were beginning their query of Jesus.
    - **Pharisees** (“separated ones”) were largely laypeople (non-priests) who were interested in the application of Scripture to the Jews; they used legalism to attempt to keep the nation faithful to the Mosaic Law — they used tradition and strict adherence to minute details of the Law.
    - The **teachers of the law** were also called **scribes** (“lawyers”); these were usually also Pharisees though they were “professional scholars” who were particularly knowledgeable about the Law. They often gave rulings on interpretative questions about the Law.
  - ✓ These men who hadn’t been overly interested in Jesus for most of His first year of ministry were suddenly curious (though earlier in Jn. 4:1-4, they were already jealous of Him). Certainly they were intrigued because of the healing of the leper (v. 14 — would they believe the testimony about Jesus from the leper’s healing?)
  - ✓ Anod notice not only how quickly they responded (a few days, Mk. 2:1), but from how far they came — throughout **Galilee, Judea** and as far away as **Jerusalem** (about 75 miles). The local “country” teachers showed up as well as the national leaders of Judaism. Christ was drawing attention.
  - ✓ This is the first appearance in Luke of religious leaders who would examine Christ. But not the last. And this is the first of a series of confrontations between Christ and the leaders, all of which culminate in a declaration of His authority/wisdom —
    - *The healing of the lame man* (5:17-26; “the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” 5:24)
    - *The calling of Levi* (Matthew) to be His disciple (5:27-39; “it is not those who are well who need a physician...I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” 5:31-32)
    - *The disciples plucked grain from the fields on a Sabbath* (6:1-5; “The Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath,” 6:5)
    - *The healing on the Sabbath* of the man with the withered hand (6:6-11; “Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath...?” 6:9)
  - ✓ Luke makes one brief reference to Jesus in contrast to these leaders; the authority of Judaism in that day was arriving to do battle with Jesus — and **the power of the Lord was present for Him...** That is probably equivalent to “filled with the Spirit” (4:1, 4, 18). All the authorities were against Him, but YHWH, the sovereign God was with Him (and in Him). This was no contest for Christ.
  - ✓ It is also a reflection of His dependence on God for His strength (4:42; 5:16), which is reminder to us.

Do we live dependently on prayer and fellowship with the Father?

- In **verse 18**, the lame man is introduced (though he is not the main character in the story; Christ is).
  - ✓ He was **paralyzed**. We don't know how he was paralyzed or for how long. But he was injured.
  - ✓ And he was helpless; he was dependent on these men to carry him where he wanted to go.
  - ✓ He did have an advantage over the leper in that he wasn't ostracized and considered unclean.
  - ✓ But he was stigmatized — others looked down on him because of his condition; the accepted implication in that day would have been that his lameness was because of some sin:
    - **Job 4:7-9**...; **John 9:1-2** — “if someone is suffering physically, it must be because of sin...”
    - Contemporary faith healers, and many more also have this presupposition.
    - In contrast, we know from Job that he suffered because of God's wisdom to demonstrate why men worship Him; and the blind man suffered so that God might demonstrate His glory in Him.
  - ✓ Perhaps because of the stigma of his lameness or simply **because of the crowd** (**v. 19**) and the **smallness of the house**, the men couldn't get the lame man through the crowd.
  - ✓ In their determination, they **went on the roof** — the roofs were typically low (6+ feet) and were treated as additional living space and there would be stairs on the outside wall to the roof.
    - Getting on the roof, which was flat, they proceeded to dig (Mk. 2:1); the roof was probably clay and thatch on top of wooden beams; that clay was also referred to as **tiles** (v. 19); when they removed enough of the roof they lowered him down in front of Jesus.
    - They used great effort to get him to Jesus; he *was going to see Jesus* face-to-face.
    - As you imagine the scene, every eye had to be riveted on Jesus: the men peering through the ceiling, the man on the stretcher, the crowd pressing on Jesus. He is the center of the story.
  - ✓ *So there is the man, in front of Jesus.* There is drama. Everyone watching — “Will you help this man?”

## 2. The **CLAIM** of the Son of Man (v. 20)

- While Jesus doesn't say anything immediately, Luke helps us understand why He said what He did:
  - ✓ He **saw their faith** — i.e., the faith of all five men (the lame man certainly would have asked for help)
  - ✓ Neither the man nor his friends appear to talk — neither Matthew nor Mark record any words from them either. That doesn't mean they didn't speak or make a request; but it does mean anything they said was considered unimportant or insignificant by the gospel writers.
  - ✓ What is significant is what they did. They acted in *persistent* faith — “Jesus *will* meet his need.”
  - ✓ How much faith did they have? That is, was their faith in Him as a healer? As the prophetic Messiah who came to earth? As God incarnate to forgive sin? Luke doesn't tell us — other than they had faith.
    - He does not mean for us to know the exact nature of their faith. He means us to see **faith** in Christ.
    - And, it seems that he means us to see their act of faith in contrast with the first declaration of rejection by the religious leaders (**v. 21**). The uneducated common men had faith in Christ; the educated religious leaders rejected Him.

- It's not quantity or intensity of faith that saves; it is faith in the right object — Jesus Christ.  
Weak faith in the right object still saves.
- Jesus responds to the drama and makes an exceedingly bold claim — ***friend, your sins are forgiven you.***
- *This is the key to the story.* Consider first that he addresses the man's ***sin***.
  - ✓ The obvious thing about the man is that he is *lame*. It certainly could be that he was suffering from his sin (though there is no indication from Luke to indicate he was being judged).
  - ✓ But even if his lameness was not because he was a sinner, *he was still a sinner*. And what was most important was that he needed healing — not just from lameness but *from sin*. So Jesus forgives Him.
  - ✓ Notice that Jesus says ***your sins*** (plural); He is not addressing the man's sin nature (which is also forgiven) but addressing the particular sins that the man has done that have condemned him.
    - There are a variety of words for sin; the most basic (as here) is "to miss the mark" — because we reject the morality and truth of God. We don't want to do what He demands. So we don't.
    - The person without Christ is attracted to sin — he wants to do it, and he doesn't want God. And that was this man. He was a sinner by nature and out of that nature he sinned.
    - What sin also means is that there is genuine culpability. We are *guilty*. We are wrong. And we have incurred an infinite debt against God because of that sin; we are wholly incapable to repay.
    - Cf. **Mt. 18:23-27** — this man (and we) have no small amount of sin; it's extensive and unpayable.

It's one thing to be in debt and to be on a debt-retirement program, whereby we pay off what we owe a little bit at a time. But the indebtedness that we have with respect to obedience to God is impossible for us to pay back on any installment plan. Why? To answer that question, we must understand the true nature of the obligation God imposes on His creatures. How righteous are we required to be? How moral are we called to be? God demands perfect obedience, sinless perfection.

This is the crux of the problem. If I am responsible to be perfect, and I sin once, what must I do to be perfect? How much interest must I pay in addition to the principal in order to make up for the blemish? What do I have to do to become perfect after I have once been imperfect? Simply put, it is impossible. [Sproul, *Truth of Cross*]

- ✓ And that massive debt of sin, Jesus says is ***forgiven***.
  - To forgive means to remove, dismiss, take away... And the form of the word Luke uses means "it has been taken away and it continues to be removed (by someone else)." God has worked.
  - The sins are sent away from the sinner so completely that they shall never be found again — to the bottom of the sea (Micah 7:10), no longer remembered against us (Is. 43:25), nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14), and removed from the sinner as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12).
  - Of forgiveness, it has been said, "In the Bible no sweeter word meets the sinner's eye." [Lenski]
  - This word occurs 127x in the gospels; it's central to Jesus' ministry. Forgiveness will be a repeated theme throughout Luke's gospel (**5:32**; **7:34**, 36-50; **7:48**; 15:3-7; **19:10**).
  - Already we are seeing the prophecy of **1:77-79** beginning to come true.

- Sin is mankind's greatest need and problem — and forgiveness is God's greatest gift.
  - ✓ Friend, I may not know your story today, but I do know this — you, like me and everyone else that walked into this room today, are a sinner. And you are a worse sinner than anyone knows.
  - ✓ There are sins you have committed that bring you particular shame, regret, grief, pain, and unintended consequences. Some sins have hardened you so you don't even recognize them as sin.
  - ✓ All of your sins have rendered you guilty before God. You are culpable for sin and responsible to pay the debt of your sin (and you can't pay the debt).
  - ✓ Like this man, have faith in Jesus. Believe that He is willing and able to forgive your sin.
  - ✓ And He will forgive you. He has that authority and that's what He came to do (v. 24).
  - ✓ And if you are a Christian and have been forgiven already, hear this — *you have been forgiven*. Those past sins that nag against your conscience? They are gone. Those griefs? They are gone. Those shameful acts? They are gone. Removed. Obliterated. *There is no debt*. Christ paid it. Rest in the truthfulness of your forgiveness (and walk worthy of that forgiveness, Eph. 4:1).

### 3. The **CONFRONTATION** Against the Son of Man (v. 21)

- Does Jesus really have the ability to forgive sin? That was the question of the religious teachers (v. 21).
- They began **reasoning** (evidently among themselves, since Jesus knew, but apparently didn't overhear the conversation, v. 23). The reasoning was with the intent of accusing and critiquing him rather than rejoicing over the forgiveness and salvation of this sinner.
  - ✓ Their accusation is that Jesus was **speaking blasphemies** — mocking, reviling, being proud before God (Lev. 24:10-11). Anyone guilty of blasphemy was to be stoned (Lev. 24:14-16).
  - ✓ Their first criticism of Jesus will be the ultimate conclusion that led them to crucify Him (Mt. 26:55).
  - ✓ They came to the conclusion because they said **who can forgive sins but God alone?**
    - That part of the statement is fully true — only God forgives. They were right.
    - Their error (and was an eternally tragic error) was that they did not see Jesus as God. They saw Him only as a man, so they could not conceive that He had the ability to forgive sin.
    - They would make this mistake again (7:48-50).
- But He is not *just* a man — He is God, He is the Son of Man, the hypostatic union of God and man. And that is His point in the healing. He is asserting His divine authority over their lives.

### 4. The **CORRECTION** by the Son of Man (vv. 22-24)

- Jesus knows that they are thinking, **reasoning**, and discussion (v. 22). He knows their hearts (2:35b).
- So He corrects them by confronting them (they confronted Him; He confronts them: **why are you...** v. 22)
  - ✓ The confrontation continues in the question of v. 23 — **which is easier to say...**?

- ✓ The key to understanding this question is the phrase **to say**. It's easier to say "You are forgiven" because there is no empirical test; if you say "Get up and walk" you immediately know if it's a fraud.
- ✓ (Obviously it is infinitely harder to forgive sin, but that wasn't Jesus question.)
- Before they can answer, Jesus makes a declaration — ***So that you may know...***
  - ✓ He is verifying that He is the ***Son of Man*** — the goal of the miracle is not healing a man and helping one person with personal need; the goal is to reveal that He is the authoritative ***Son of Man***.
    - This title was used over 100x in the OT.
      - ... It was sometimes used of mankind in general (e.g., Num. 23:19; Ps. 8:4).
      - ... It was also used of the OT prophet (e.g., Ezk. 2:1ff... over 90x)
      - ... And it was used of the Messianic King who was given authority by God (**Dan. 7:13-14**)
    - Jesus uses this term of Himself and it appears 23x in Luke; this is the first time Luke uses it.
  - ✓ The Pharisees asked the question, ***Who is this...*** (v. 21). And Jesus answers, "I am ***the Son of Man.***"
  - ✓ He is claiming ***authority***. And not just authority in the coming Kingdom, but authority ***on earth*** (now).
- This is bold! But like the question about forgiveness (v. 23), He can and will authenticate it.
  - ✓ ***I say to you...*** = That also is an authoritative statement. It's a command from ***the Son of Man***, who has been granted authority by the Ancient of Days.
  - ✓ The man's friends let him through the roof in faith; now he must exhibit even more faith by obeying.
  - ✓ The command is three-fold — ***get up*** (testing faith), ***pick up*** (testing "short-term" obedience), and ***go home*** (testing "long-term" obedience).
  - ✓ (And notice that Jesus gives the command verbally without touching him, contra v. 13). His words were enough to compel the man (just like at creation).
  - ✓ The miracle corrects the ungodly accusation of the Pharisees; Jesus *does* have authority to forgive.

## 5. The **CONFIRMATION** of the Son of Man (vv. 25-26)

- Well. What happened? Who is this man? Is He a fraud? Or is He the Son of Man?
  - ✓ And ***immediately*** (complete healing and full restoration — no rehab)...all three commands are fulfilled (v. 24). Luke also adds the note ***what he had been lying on*** — the mat had been his resting place, but no longer! Instead of the mat carrying him, he carried the mat!
  - ✓ Additionally, as he left for ***home*** he was ***glorifying God*** — telling all who would hear.
  - ✓ Joy is the natural response to the grace and provision of God (**2:20**; 13:13; 17:15; **18:43**; **23:47**).
  - ✓ Are you looking for joy in your circumstances? Do you praise and thank (even in your trouble)? Do you recognize the provision of God and give thanks for the gifts He gives? (Keep a list and review it)
- The crowd also responded (v. 26) with four responses —
  - ✓ They were ***astonished, glorifying, fearful***, and ***seeing remarkable*** things.

- ✓ The word **remarkable** was used of an unusual or unexpected recovery from illness. Like today, it was used of an athlete to mean “wonderful,” “admirable.”
  - ✓ What is most important though is what they don’t realize that they said — “we have seen remarkable things **today**.” They are using it in the typical way (a 24-hour day). But Luke also uses the word **today** to refer to the time of salvation, the advent of the work of God in the world (2:11; 19:9; 23:43). They saw the miracle that happened “that day,” but seemed oblivious to the advent of salvation and the Messianic Son of Man “today.”
- In story after story in these opening chapters of Christ’s ministry, Christ is claiming and Luke is presenting Jesus as the Son of Man — the *authoritative* Son of Man. Look to Him. In your problems, whether they are “first world” or “eternal world” problems, Christ is your solution. He will comfort you, provide for you, save you, and then take you home to be with Him eternally.
  - He is authoritatively sovereign over demons, illness, people, uncleanness, and sin. He is over nations and kings. He is over storms and winds. He is authoritatively ruling this world. And it is all going according to His plan. Keep looking to Him, keep trusting Him, keep asking Him. He will help.
  - And when you sin, flee to Him for forgiveness. He will make you clean and He will give you a new way to live.

**BENEDICTION:** Reminder about Gideons and Jude 24-25