

## Luke 5:12-32 Two Healings & Levi's Calling

Luke 5 shows Jesus healing two people, sandwiched between the calling of two disciples. The two callings reveal Jesus' strong demand and amazing offer. The two healings reveal who Jesus is, the One who is calling His disciples to follow. Will you dare to follow a person who makes a total demand on your life, even if it means forsaking everything to follow Him? It depends on WHO it is who is making the demand. The healings reveal not only Jesus' power to heal, but also Jesus' character, His holiness.

### A. Healing Miracle 1 - Leper (5:12-16)

1. The leper's faith – 'Leprosy' had no cure, so the only way to deal with it was 'isolation' from society. 'Full of leprosy' meant 'stage 4 leprosy', a medical term of Dr Luke.
  - a. The Damaging effects of leprosy were :-
    - Physical – patients lose all 'feelings.' E.g. open sores, lesions, deformities, fingers, toes, nose drop off. It is a slow, dehumanising death.
    - Emotional – leper has to shout 'unclean' when he comes close to people', so deep 'shame' is associated with this disease, leaving deep psychological scars.
    - Social – Lepers are not allowed inside city (Lev 13:46), resulting in a life of rejection, loneliness and isolation. Nobody would have touched this man for years!
  - b. Faith of the leper: (1) He came to Jesus in the midst of the crowd. Either it was audacity of faith, or he just didn't care anymore. (2) "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." He questioned Jesus' will, not His ability.
2. Jesus' response to the leper's faith
  - a. Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying "I am willing. Be cleansed." This 'unnecessary act' would have made Jesus ceremonially unclean. It was not sin, but a costly contact! (c.f. Num 5:1-4). Jesus had both the 'power to heal' and the 'willing heart of compassion'.
  - b. What is Jesus' secret identity? '*The Holy One of God.*' Note the demons' knowledge (Lk 4:34, 41) and Peter's revelation (Lk 5:8). *How does the Holy One of God act toward an unclean, quarantined, disregarded outcast that nobody wants to get close to?* He reaches out and touches the unclean one to cleanse him. What a powerful 'touch' it must have been to the leper! The result was immediate and complete healing.
  - c. What is the New Testament 'holiness'? Sometimes we have 'lepers' hidden in plain sight, including in marriage and family. We 'isolate' or 'quarantine' someone until he is 'clean enough' to engage to my acceptable standard.
  - d. After healing him, Jesus told him not to tell others, but to show himself to a priest and make an offering for his cleansing as a testimony to them. (1) Jesus kept the law perfectly; and (2) followed the correct procedure of settling the former leper back into the society. It is always good to medically check and verify our healings also.
  - e. After this Jesus again withdrew into wilderness to pray (v.16). Jesus had perfect balance between public ministry and inner spiritual life!

### B. Healing Miracle 2 – Paralytic (5:17-26)

1. The healing of the paralysed man was another impossible case. (v.17-19)
  - a. This fascinating story is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. Mark locates it in Capernaum. By now Jesus has built quite a reputation, and the Pharisees and the teachers came from Galilee locally, and Judea and Jerusalem, from the religious centre. In Jesus' days Pharisees only numbered around 6,000 (Josephus, Antiquities 17.42), but they were very influential. They were unofficial religious leaders who spearheaded the opposition to Jesus.
  - b. The paralytic could only go to places when he could get four men to carry him. The four men were determined to get him to Jesus as the 'power of the Lord was present to heal', but couldn't get through the crowd.
  - c. Suddenly they had a brilliant idea! They thought outside the box. Houses in the Middle East usually had flat tiled roof with staircase outside of the house. They went up to the roof and made a big hole in the roof and lowered the man on his stretcher. Can you imagine the reaction of the house owner?
2. Jesus' authority to forgive (v.20-25) – When Jesus 'saw their faith' He pronounced 'forgiveness' to the paralytic: "Man, your sins are forgiven you." This raises a number of questions that demanded answers!
  - a. What is the nature of their 'faith' that Jesus saw? Was it like the leper's audacity to approach Jesus?
  - b. Whose faith did Jesus see? 'Of the four men and the paralytic?' 'Your personal faith' can impact those you care for. Jesus recognised 'their' faith! This is an encouragement for praying parents. Do not give up! Jesus responds

to your persevering prayer of faith! (C.f. 'faith for others' 7:9ff; 1 Cor 7:14)

- c. Why did Jesus pronounce forgiveness when the man needed healing? Are all sicknesses due to sin? In the ultimate sense, 'yes', but in the immediate and individual sense, 'not always.' Sickness is of Satan's kingdom. In this man's case, his sickness was likely due to his past sins and the burden of guilt he carried.  
Pharisees' objection was that, we can only forgive the sins that are committed against us. Only God can forgive ALL our sins. Therefore, Jesus' pronouncement of TOTAL forgiveness over the paralytic was a claim to divine authority. The Pharisees were correct in their logic, but incorrect on Jesus' identity and His authority.
- d. Jesus' response: 'Why are you reasoning in your heart?' This was a word of knowledge.
  - "Which is easier?" On the surface it is easier to say, "your sins are forgiven" than to say "you are healed."
  - "That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." ('Son of Man' appears 26 times in the books of Ezekiel & Daniel, and 80 times in the gospels. It was Jesus' favourite self-description.) Jesus proves His point by saying, "...arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." The dramatic healing of the paralytic brought out mixed reaction from the crowd: they 'glorified God' and were 'filled with fear' (awe). And they were thoroughly confused: "We have seen strange things today."
- e. Jesus, the Holy One of God came to us to deal with our sins. "Axe is laid at the root of the trees," John the Baptist proclaimed. If Jesus stayed with healing ministry only, He would not have been killed. But Jesus dealt with sin. For this Jesus was hated. We still want Jesus to heal our sickness, but we don't want Jesus to deal with our sins. This is still the reason why the world opposes Jesus.
- f. *Do you believe that the Son of Man can forgive all our sins?* The Holy One of God who never shrinks from our 'uncleanliness', also goes straight to our root problem of sin. He is both willing and powerful to forgive our sins when we come to Him in faith.

### C. Calling of Levi (5:27-32)

1. Jesus calls Levi, the tax collector.
  - a. Tax collectors were the most despised of all Jews by their fellowmen. Romans sold the 'taxing rights' to the highest bidder and closed their eyes to extortionary rates (Josephus, Antiquities 17.318). So they were hated as traitors, extortioners, even 'robbers' (Sanhedrin 25b).
  - b. Jesus' call was simple, just two simple words: "Follow Me." (5:27). No explanation or proposal was offered. Levi already saw who Jesus was in the healing of the two men.
    - Jesus' call places a complete claim on the follower's life. *It is a TOTAL COMMITMENT. No ifs. No buts.*
    - Yet the call to follow Him is the ONLY DEMAND Jesus will require of His followers. He doesn't demand you become 'religious', 'smart', 'wise', 'resourceful', etc. Most of the apostles Jesus called were simple 'fishermen' with few exceptions.
    - *The essence of our Christian faith is "Following Jesus"*
  - c. Jesus' call is both a 'demand' and an 'offer'. If you simply follow Him and not quit in the middle, He will make something beautiful out of your life. Jesus never promised easy life to His followers. But He will make out of you, the most beautiful and worthy life you can have, and the crown of glory for eternity. Levi had no idea that he would write the first gospel!
2. Levi's Response: "*So he left all and rose up and followed Him.*" (5:28)
  - a. Levi must have been the richest disciple of all. If it does not work out for the fishermen, they could return to their trade without difficulty. But when Levi walked out, he burned the bridges. His commitment to follow Jesus was total and final.
  - b. Levi did not make this decision with grim resignation but in style, throwing a great feast for a large company of his colleagues. Clearly Levi found it exhilarating to forsake wealth for Christ. He probably also wanted to introduce Jesus to his colleagues. "A converted man will not wish to go to heaven alone." (Ryle).
3. Jesus' Response to Pharisees' Criticism
  - a. The Pharisees may not have been at the reception since tax collectors were a ceremonially unclean bunch. Eating with them meant full acceptance and friendship. Jesus' response to them was, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." It was unanswerable logic. Pharisees saw themselves as the righteous.
  - b. Religious people's criticism now begins, first of the people Jesus is associating with, then His disciples, and ultimately Jesus Himself.