

JESUS' AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS

Luke 5:17-26

Key Verse: 5:24

"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

There are many kinds of sinners in the gospel stories: powerful sinners and powerless sinners. Tax collectors are powerful sinners. In contrast to them, paralytics are powerless sinners. Today Jesus heals a paralytic. Through this event, Jesus shows himself to be the Messiah who has the authority to forgive sins. In this passage, we learn that Jesus has authority to forgive men's sins.

First, compassionate friends (17-19).

Jesus spent a good many days healing the sick and teaching the word in nearby villages. A few days later, Jesus again entered Capernaum. One day as he was teaching the word, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were already sitting there (17a). Obviously these religious leaders had heard how Jesus healed a man with leprosy and how the good news of great joy was spreading out to all corners of the Galilean district. So they devised an emergency countermove to stop Jesus' gospel work. What a surprise that the enemies of God's work were none other than the religious leaders! Probably they had no fear of God in their hearts. So they were afraid of everything. They felt their establishment power was threatened because of Jesus' popular ministry. The religious leaders were supposed to be servants of God and shepherds of his suffering people. But the devil entered them through their political mindedness and made them his agents. But Jesus was not intimidated by them. Rather, he was filled with the Spirit of God to heal the sick (17b).

What happened at this moment? Look at verses 18,19. "Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus." According to Mark 2:3, those who brought the paralytic were four people. They came carrying their paralytic friend on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. Probably they were all village friends who were pure and compassionate. They were so mindful of helping others cooperatively. This made it possible for them to have a team spirit. This made it possible for them to have an interwoven friendship in a bond of love. But one was paralyzed. They were all very sorry because of their paralytic friend. The worse his symptoms of paralysis became, the more helpless they became. One day they heard the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus heals the sick and welcomes everybody and anybody. They were so happy to hear about it that they shouted, "Yeah, that's it!" Of course, the friends knew that paralysis was incurable. But they believed in Jesus that Jesus could heal him. These friends were compassionate and they had faith in Jesus. Still there were many obstacles to overcome to bring him to Jesus.

When they tried to take their friend into the home to lay him before Jesus, there were already too many people lined up, waiting for Jesus' hand of healing. But did the friends give up at this point? No! Never! To get him to Jesus, they pushed and shoved and waded through the crowd until they came near Jesus. Still, they could not get him to Jesus because there was a long line of people who had already taken a number. But there was no deviation: "Where there is a will, there is a way." After looking around here and there, they looked up to God in prayer and saw the roof. They began to climb up on the roof, carrying the paralytic on his mat. Then they made a hole in the roof right above Jesus. How they made the hole in the roof is a question. Anyway, their compassionate hearts toward the paralytic friend were flaring intensely. Their compassion enabled them to overcome their impossible situation. The friends made a big hole in the roof and lowered their paralytic friend right in front of Jesus.

Here we have to think about the concept of friendship. Friendship is possible for anyone who has a heart like Jesus. The friendship between Jonathan and David is beautiful forever. When King Saul, out of jealousy, intended to destroy David, Prince Jonathan knew that his father was wrong before God. So he promised to help David at the cost of his own life. When King Saul sensed that his son Jonathan was siding with David, he hurled his spear at him to pin him to the wall (1Sa 20:33). Nevertheless, Jonathan did as he had promised. Later, when David heard of Jonathan's death at war, he cried and cried endlessly, lamenting, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (2Sa 1:26). Friendship is

always a sweet responsibility, never an opportunity. We don't say, "pick up friends"; we say, "make friends." Friends cannot be made naturally. Making friends is costly, and we have to count the cost when we want to make friends as our Lord Jesus did. Jesus said to his disciples, "I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends..." (Jn 15:15). Here we learn that fallen men want to make many servants under them. But godly men want to make many friends, because they have the compassion of Jesus in their hearts.

The Bible calls Abraham a friend of God because he loved God more than his own son, Isaac (2 Ch 20:7; Isa 41:8; Ja 2:23). Likewise, Jesus is our true friend because he tells us the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is our true friend because he gave his life for us. John 15:13 says, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." On the surface, the four friends looked very obnoxious. But in Jesus' eyes, they were life-sharing friends, and they were like our friend Jesus. Friendship is the measure of one's integrity.

Second, Jesus calls him, "Friend" (20).

Look at verse 20. "When Jesus saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven.'" Theologically speaking, faith cannot be inherited, nor is the forgiveness of sins ever bestowed on account of another's merit. So we can say that this paralytic had a personal faith in Jesus. Had he refused to come, his friends could not have brought him. But the paralytic came to Jesus as he was by the help of his friends. Out of respect and honor, like the four friends, Jesus became one of his friends and called him, "Friend." This one word of Jesus, "Friend," reveals that Jesus is the God of compassion. Jesus participated in the four friends' agony because of the paralytic friend. Jesus also called him, "Friend." One woman said, "My husband is the last person I can like." Her self-righteousness poisoned her husband, and he became like Nietzsche. But see Jesus! Jesus called the paralytic, "Friend," who was spilling saliva with no control and whose eyeballs were pointless. The paralytic was smelly and looked like a skeleton. But Jesus humbled himself to the level of a paralytic and called him, "Friend." Jesus is our everlasting Father and a Friend to those who come to him.

Third, "Your sins are forgiven" (20).

We wonder why Jesus said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven," instead of saying, "Your paralysis is healed." Jesus said this because sin is man's fundamental problem. Biblically speaking, the symptoms of paralysis can be compared to the symptoms of a powerless sinner (Ro 5:6). The paralyzed man came to Jesus carried by the four friends. He was totally powerless to do anything.

In light of the Bible teaching, God made man to work hard for the glory of God and to be a blessing to others. This paralytic was a sinner because he neither glorified God nor was a blessing to others. There are two kinds of people. The first kind is a source of blessing to others. One young man of God is a high school teacher. He goes beyond his teaching duty to be a shepherd to his students. He listens to their problems like a father and prays for them and shares God's word with them. Through his shepherding 25 students accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. He is a blessing to others. Because of this he suffers enough. But he is happy when God is glorified. The other kind is a burden to others. Some people burden others, being paralyzed by lustful desires. One young man is very handsome and intelligent and speaks well. But somehow he cannot do his homework without much help from others and he does not teach the Bible to even one person. Some people burden others, paralyzed by laziness. One boy has attended college for seven years. Still, he is an undergraduate student. He is a burden to others and a source of anguish. Moreover, he is a heavy sinner in the sight of God.

Finally, the paralyzed man was laid right in front of Jesus. Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven." He meant, "Don't be a burden; be a blessing!" When Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven," it meant literally, "your sins are forgiven." Simply speaking, he meant, "You are no more under the devil's rule." To the eyes of the historian Luke, God's love in sending Jesus who has the authority to forgive sins was truly amazing. In order to give us the grace of forgiveness, God sent his one and only Son to this world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." In order to give us the grace of forgiveness, the Son of God became the Lamb of God. John 1:29 says, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" In order to give us the grace of forgiveness of sin, the Son of God shed his blood in such a sorrowful way. Revelation 5:12 says, "...Worthy

is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!" Thus, he could have the authority to forgive men's sins.

Fourth, Jesus appeals to the consciences of the Pharisees (21-23).

The Pharisees asked among themselves, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (21) They said, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy?" Because of their jealousy, they branded Jesus as a blasphemer. At that time, the Jews thought that a blasphemer deserved the death penalty. However, in their criticism they admitted that no one ever mentioned the authority to forgive sins; only Jesus mentioned the authority to forgive sins. The work of the Messiah was self-evident when he was about to heal the paralytic. So the religious leaders should have realized that Jesus was the Messiah promised to come to this world to save men from their sins, and they should have been happy. But they were spiritually blind due to their bloodthirsty power struggle, and they became the prey of the devil.

What did Jesus do with them? Despite their rotten consciences, Jesus quietly appealed by faith to their consciences and asked, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?" (23) In this question, Jesus was telling them that the forgiveness of sins is more important and fundamental than healing a man's paralyzed body. It is because the man would remain as a spiritual paralytic, even if he were healed physically. So Jesus first forgave his sins so that he would be healed both in body and spirit.

At the moment, the situation was terrifying because the religious leaders found a basis to accuse Jesus of speaking blasphemy. Jesus was concerned, not about himself, but about the religious leaders. There was a danger that Jesus could be stoned or stabbed to death because the religious leaders saw his words as blasphemy. Jesus earnestly appealed to their consciences. But it did not work.

Fifth, Jesus risks his life to heal the paralytic (24-26).

Was Jesus hesitant to heal the paralytic? Was Jesus afraid of their intimidation to kill him? Not at all. In the midst of the crisis, Jesus commanded, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home" (24b). At the time of crisis, Jesus was filled with the power of the Spirit, even though he was surrounded by the murderous enemies. In order to save one pitiful paralytic, Jesus risked his life as well as the whole world salvation.

What happened when Jesus commanded him, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home"? Verse 25 says, "Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God." What a great sight it was! The paralytic who was never able to get up, suddenly stood up on his own feet. The paralytic had been bitter all the time. Suddenly, he experienced a new life and saw in Jesus divine majesty. He began to sing songs of praises, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah!" As a result, songs of praises flowed out of his soul. Only in Jesus, is there the authority of forgiving men's sins. Amen.

Jesus' healing the paralytic was to help the Pharisees open their spiritual eyes to see that the promised Messiah had come. Jesus' healing the paralytic was to demonstrate his authority to forgive men's sins. In history, many pious people have acknowledged that sin is the root problem of mankind. Nevertheless, they have been utterly helpless, not knowing how to invent the medicine for sinners. The people of Israel killed innumerable innocent animals to obtain the forgiveness of sin. But these were only ritualistic ceremonies. These days many people are tormented by the power of sins. They try to find a way to numb themselves by chemicals or CHO (alcohol) to reduce their torments of sin. But there is no medicine for their sinsick souls. Human beings need the one who has authority to forgive sins. Jesus invites us to come to him for the forgiveness of sins.

Look at verse 26. "Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen remarkable things today.'" Why were they filled with awe? It was because they saw with their own eyes that the paralytic was healed and was jumping around, praising God. But more than that, it was because they had seen Jesus who has the authority to forgive men's sins. This tells us that all kinds of people are happy when their sin problem is solved by Jesus.

Today we learned that Jesus has authority to forgive men's sins. Sin causes spiritual paralysis. But Jesus' authority breaks the grip of sin and gives us power to serve God and be a blessing to others. May God help us believe in Jesus' authority to forgive sins.