

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

## An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 5- Luke 5:17-26** 66- What is Saving Faith?- Part 2

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March 28, 2010

### **Luke 5:17-26**

Nothing is more foreign to sinful human nature than Forgiveness. Forgiveness runs counterintuitive to the fallen human nature. We like things like vengeance and retribution- we are so eager to avenge ourselves on our enemies and to bring Justice to them unless, of course, we are the guilty party and then we just love leniency.

But we need to know that unlike us- nothing is more characteristic of the Divine Nature of God than Forgiveness. In fact, never are we more like God than when we forgive, when we love our enemies, and when we do good to those who harm us- because then Jesus said we prove beyond all doubt that we are the children of God.

Because we are all sinful- Forgiveness is man's greatest need, and, therefore, Forgiveness is God's greatest Gift to us. Forgiveness is better and more needful and more important and more precious than anything else God could ever give to us. It trumps financial prosperity and physical healing and material possessions all day long.

And the Gospel- the single Message of the Church- is the Message that God will forgive all our sins in, by, and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Message of the Christian Church is not a Message of a good self-image, it's not a message of high self-esteem, it is not a message about great wealth or many possessions or fine cars or nice homes or even good physical health. The primary Message of the Church is not even about a repaired marriage, or family aide, and it's not a Message of success on this earth through psychology.

No, the single simple but profound Message of the Church of Jesus Christ is the Message of Forgiveness. And that Message is brought

home to us and its great value is elevated in our mind and hearts precisely because we need it. And the reason that we need forgiveness is because we are all guilty. You see, the Message of the Church is that all people are sinners, all people are evil, all people are unrighteous, that all people hate God by nature, and we prove that hatred by our continual rebellion to God and our stubborn refusal to glorify Him in all things and by our repeated sins.

The Christian Church says loudly and boldly that nobody can educate themselves out of sin, nobody can buy their way out of sin, you cannot develop technology that will remove sin, Government cannot eliminate sin, and Science and Medicine cannot take away one single sin out of the human heart. We cannot study our way out of sin, we cannot sing our way out of sin, and we cannot praise our way out of sin.

Sin is ever present with us, and all wars and all poverty and all diseases and all evil and injustice and pain and suffering in the earth is the result of sin.

And the Christian Church proclaims that because we are all guilty of sin- all people are under the Just Wrath of God for that sin. And all people are headed for eternal damnation because of their sin, and God as a Righteous Judge will bring about that eternal punishment.

And that is the Bad News, and that Bad News is true, and that Bad News is very, very bad indeed, and that Bad News has always and must always be the overwhelming part of the Message of Forgiveness that the Christian Church preaches. And any attempt by anybody for any reason to *minimize* or to *remove* or to *marginalize* the Bad News part of our Message is to fundamentally and radically change the Message. Any attempt to make the Bad News less bad or to make the Bad News less horrific or to make the Bad News more appealing so as to remove the sting and the offense and the terror of it is to fundamentally remove the supernatural Power that the Bad News has in gripping the human heart and opening it up to allow God's blessed Mercy access into our hard hearts to convict us and save us.

So the Bad News must be taught in all its horror, and it must be proclaimed and it must be heralded from the housetop in all of its terrifying detail- that every human being on planet earth is a vile and wicked sinner and nobody can *do* anything about that. We cannot cease from sin, we cannot *do* something by and through our own power and

ability and intellect that will make us less sinful or make us more attractive to God. But that's not all.

We cannot pray enough, we cannot read and study the Bible enough, we cannot take Communion enough, we cannot get baptized enough, we cannot preach enough or sing enough to cause us to stop offending God with our sin.

And we must know that part of parcel to what it means to be fallen is that sin is so deep seated in our flesh and minds and hearts that there are not enough Divine Threats in Scripture that will scare us out of sin permanently, and there are not enough Promises of Eternal Joy and Happiness in the entire Bible that will completely remove sin from us. But that's not all.

And because of that sin- God's Just Wrath is bearing down on us like a freight train at 300 miles an hour and we are all chained to the railroad tracks. And this Wrath is certain, and it is guaranteed for every single sinner, and it is absolutely going to happen.

So that is the Bad News, and this Bad News that we are all sinners and that God is correct to Judge us is what is called "The Offense of the Gospel". And this is the part that gets everybody so upset because in our heart of hearts- we really don't think we are that bad. We will freely acknowledge as human beings that we may have done some bad things in our lives- but we also believe down in our DNA that basically we are "good people". We may not be as "good" as Paul or as "good" as Peter- but we firmly believe that deep down inside of us- we are basically good people who probably *deserve* a place in Heaven.

So the Bad news is designed by God to destroy that myth and to allow people to see just how wicked and how sinful and how lost and fallen they really are, and allow them to see that even though we think we're pretty good people- God says that we are vile and corrupt and without God and without any hope at all. And God is angry with our sins and God is going to judge us for our sins.

Now nobody would ever get offended at somebody telling them that Jesus loved them or that God has a great Plan for their lives. That doesn't offend anybody, and saying that would never cause you to be persecuted or to be killed.

But the Bad News will. The Offense of the Gospel will absolutely anger people, and they will hate you for telling them that they are

really not good after all, but that they are wicked sinners in need of a Savior.

So understand this very simple but powerful Truth, dear friends. Without the Bad News being preached and taught and understood- the Good News of God's Grace and Mercy and Forgiveness through the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ would simply be reduced to being "News"; it would be only "information" that would have no power and no persuasion and no value.

Because if you don't think you're that bad, if you really believe that you're a nice guy, if you really don't think that God would ever judge you- as good a person as you are, or if you really believe that you can improve your own condition before God by what you do for yourself- then to be saved from that Wrath, to be rescued from eternal damnation, yea to know that Jesus died on the Cross for you may be "nice" and it may be "sweet" but it is certainly not important.

But if you come to realize- by God's Grace- that you are that bad and that you are lost and that God's Wrath is coming your way- then all of a sudden God's Mercy shown through what Jesus did on your behalf becomes infinitely valuable, and Grace becomes magnificent, and you are so grateful and so thankful that Jesus died for you.

So the Good News of the Gospel becomes very, very Good when the Bad News of our sinfulness and the Bad News of God's Just Wrath against our sins become clear and plain and real to us.

And these two parts make up what is called the Full Gospel, and the Full Gospel is the Message that the Christian Church has been authorized to preach.

So God is a God of Mercy and Grace Who will mercifully and wondrously forgive all guilty sinners who come to Him with a repentant heart and who desperately begs for that gift of Forgiveness. The Bible tells us that the predicament of fallen humanity is very bleak and deadly. It is as bad as it can be in both time and eternity. Every person is a sinner under the looming Sword of God's Judgment with no ability to love God, no ability to know God, no ability to please God, no ability to serve God, and no ability to obey God. So the situation appears hopeless.

And the verdict of God on Man is that man is guilty and he is helpless and he is hopeless. And by all human measurements and all legal measurements- Man is in an absolutely impossible situation. In

fact, I don't know if you know this but God Himself says, *"It is an abomination to justify a sinner."* God Himself says that it is an abomination to God to justify a sinner. In fact, God says, *"Justifying a sinner or declaring a sinner righteous or declaring someone guilty innocent, that kind of perversion of justice is as bad as declaring an innocent person guilty."* Please turn with me and read **Proverbs 17:15**. In this verse- the wisest man in all the world said:

**He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.**

This passage says that both the one who justifies the Wicked and the one who condemns the Just are both abominations to the Lord. Now we make a lot in our society about the court system and how occasionally they find an innocent person guilty. And one of the television tabloid programs does a special broadcast on a particular person who's been in prison X number of years, and finally they realize that this person was innocent and they let the person out, and there's need for preparation and somehow restoration and restitution to this person who sat in prison for a crime he didn't commit, and what a terrible travesty it is to declare an innocent person guilty. And it is.

And we don't make nearly as much out of declaring guilty people innocent. But the Bible says that both are an abomination to God on a human level. Both are an affront to a Holy and Righteous God Who makes a clear demarcation and distinction between Guilt and Innocence, Who makes a clear demarcation between Right and Wrong, and between Sin and Virtue.

So either wrong verdict, either declaring the innocent just or declaring the just guilty- both of these are an abomination to the Lord. Not only to the Lord, but because Man is created in the image of God with a built-in sense of Justice and Right and Wrong in his heart, **Proverbs 24:24** says,

**He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous," Peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him;**

So even though we are fallen- we even have enough of the Image of God in us, enough of the knowledge of right and wrong in the moral

Law of God to understand that it is not only an abomination to God to pervert Justice- but it is an abomination to Man as well. Repeatedly in the Scripture God Himself forbids anybody to declare a sinful person righteous.

And yet that is exactly what God does. And He alone has the right to do that. He is the Judge and He is the Law Maker. He is all three branches in one. He is the Legislative Branch and He is the Judicial Branch and He is the Executive Branch.

There is a singular Governor of the universe Who has written the Law, and Who applies the Law, and Who correctly and fully interprets the Law, and Who judges the sinner, and He is also the executioner.

Therefore, there's only one Person in all the universe Who has the right to do what for all of us is an abomination- and that is to justify sinners and to declare guilty people innocent. And that is exactly what God does, and that is the wonder of the Gospel and the uniqueness of Christianity. And like I said last week- the only way that God can forgive our sins and still maintain His Justice is through the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Other than that- God's Mercy to unworthy sinners would become nothing more than a travesty of Justice.

If one sinner ever, in any way, got away with his sin- then God would cease to be Just. And yet if God does not forgive the guilty- nobody would ever be saved- because all are of us are guilty. But because Jesus lived a sinless life and because God placed all of our sins on Jesus and because Jesus died with all our sins and because God poured all of His Fury on Jesus on the Cross- and because Jesus rose from the dead by the Glory of the Father in Triumph over all our sins- all of our sins have been forever paid for, and now God is free to grant us His glorious Mercy. And we rejoice in that and that is why we worship on Sunday- to commemorate the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead which sealed our Redemption.

But all do not rejoice at this. Because other than the full Deity of Jesus Christ- God forgiving guilty sinners by Grace through Faith, and not through obedience, is why the Jews hated Jesus and it is why all false religions hate Christianity.

Listen to **Romans 4:5**. In that verse- God is called "Him Who justifies the ungodly." So what God will not allow us to do for the sake of Justice- God Himself has done. He justifies the ungodly. And it

further says the faith of that ungodly person is reckoned as righteousness. So God justifies the ungodly solely on the basis of faith and not based on anything that that sinner does to make himself more appealing to God.

Paul writes further, quoting from **Psalm 32**,

**How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity.**

So this is the Message of Christianity. There is one Person in the universe Who has the Power and Who has the Authority and Who has the Right to declare guilty people innocent and to declare sinful people righteous, and that one singular Person is the Lawgiver Himself Who is the Judge and the Executioner. And this gracious God justifies the ungodly- declaring them innocent, righteous, and forgiven.

But just how can God do that? How can He be just and the justifier of sinners? That's the question of **Romans 3:26**. How can He be just and the justifier of sinners?

Only one way. Because He designed a Plan by which His Son would take the sinner's place and pay the penalty for the sinner's sin. So God's Justice was satisfied in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. "**He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**" What we *can't* do- God did. That is- we can't justify sinners because it is an abomination to God for us to deal with people unjustly in either letting guilty people go free or by unjustly convicting innocent people. That is a perversion for us. But God can do what He alone can do, and that is He can justify the ungodly and forgive the sinner. But only because He fully carries out His Own Law by paying for our sins Himself through Jesus.

Now only God can do this. It is an abomination. It is a perversion. It is sin for us to pervert what is right and what is wrong; what is just and what is unjust; what is innocence and what is guilt. For we have no way to cover our sin. Therefore, only God can be the Forgiver because only God has provided the substitutionary Sacrifice.

God alone is the One Who is offended by our sins, God alone is the Judge, God alone is the Lawgiver, God alone is the Executioner, and God alone is the only One Who can forgive sins. God alone has the

Power and the Authority to pardon the guilty sinner. And God does this solely and only through Jesus.

And that is the Message of Christianity. That is the heart and soul of the Gospel- the glorious good news that God will forgive your sins. And that means you will escape eternal damnation; you will escape eternal hell.

But having said that- the essential element- the core- the very heart of this Forgiveness is not simply the remission of the Penalty; it's not simply that we escape from hell. No, the heart of the Gospel is the *motive* that makes God do that. And this is where we see the very essence of the Gospel.

Listen it's wonderful that the Penalty is removed from us- but that is only secondary. The center of the Gospel is the motive that made God willing to do that. And what is the motive? **John 3:16** tells us:

**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**

And **Romans 5:8**, essentially says the same thing. **Romans 5:8** says,

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**

The great Baptist Theologian, Alexander McClaren said,

"The essential of the gospel is the unrestrained flow of love from the offended heart of God who has been sinned against." "Pardon is God's love," he wrote, "unchecked and unembittered, granted to the wrong doer. That is a divine act exclusively,"

You see, dear friends, all sin is against God. All sin is a violation of God's Law. And since God is the offended One, since God is the Lawgiver, since God is the Judge and the Executioner, therefore, only God can forgive the sinner.

And that was the knowledge that was so deeply and profoundly disturbing the Pharisees in **Luke 5:21** as they saw Jesus forgive this wicked paralyzed man his sins.

These self-righteous hypocrites cried out in anguish-



### ... Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

... which actually was very good theology. They knew that only God could forgive sin. They knew their Old Testament well enough to know that. And they were exactly right about this. No mere human- who is also sinful can forgive sins. And that was the implication of their musing, "Nobody can forgive sins but God alone. What is this man Jesus doing saying to this paralyzed man, '*Your sins are forgiven?*'"

Doesn't Jesus know that only God can do that? What does Jesus think- that He is God? So these deceived religious leaders had good solid sound theology at that point. And that's the heart of this entire passage.

This passage is all about forgiveness and the reason we need to spend a little time dealing with it here is because forgiveness is at the very heart of the Gospel. It's at the very heart of the Ministry of Jesus, at the very heart of our ministry today. Of course, the truth of the matter is you can't preach the Gospel of forgiveness unless people know they're sinners. You can't preach the Grace of deliverance from eternal judgment unless people know they're headed for eternal judgment.

Earlier last week- I was reading a book written by James Boice- who died of cancer in 2000- who wrote his last book called, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?* And I was reading it and Boice was talking about some recent surveys among evangelicals and this really shocked me. He said that one of the surveys, I think it's Gallop Poll, said 76 percent of all evangelicals surveyed believe that man is basically good. Now we might expect 76 percent of liberals to believe that. And we might expect 100 percent of pagans to believe that. But 76 percent of evangelicals believe that deep down- Man is basically good?

You want to cut the heart out of the Church's Gospel Message? Just convince them that people are good. I am routinely criticized on the radio for spending so much time talking about Man's fallen condition. They say, "*Brother Blair, people don't want to hear somebody tell them that they are sinners all the time. They want to hear about God's Love and how God wants to bless them and do good to them and to give them nice things. If you ever want to grow your Church- you have got to stop preaching so much about sin and man's fallen condition.*"

You know why I talk about Man's fallen condition and sin all the time? Because I value Grace. Because I value Mercy. And you *cannot* value Grace and Mercy and you *will not* value Grace and Mercy unless you know you need it.

I do not believe that most people even understand what Grace is anymore. Because from the way that people talk about it- they think that Grace is leniency- that sin doesn't matter to God anymore. But that is not what Grace is. Grace is unmerited favor and unearned love and undeserved special treatment, and you don't need *unmerited* favor if you can do something to merit God's favor. And you don't need *unearned* love if you can do something to earn God's Love, and you don't need *undeserved* special treatment if you can do something to deserve that special treatment.

So if in any way lost fallen man can improve his own condition with God by what he does or what he acts on or what he exercises- then Grace is no longer Grace and it becomes Payment and Reward.

And we need to know that this is why the Jews killed Jesus- because He told them that even though they thought they were good- they were bad, and they were as bad as bad could be, and they were headed for hell.

So the heart of this passage is really the heart of the Gospel. It's about Forgiveness and you need to understand that. This passage is not primarily about physically healing that paralyzed man- it is about Jesus having the Power and the Authority to forgive a wicked sinner.

Now remember, at this point in Luke's Story of Salvation- we already have a tremendous amount of evidence already packed in to the first five chapters- evidence that Jesus is God, and that He is Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior and Redeemer of the world.

And we've already noted that from the testimony of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary, Anna, Simeon, John the Baptist, and God Almighty out of Heaven and the Holy Spirit- His credentials and His genealogy is irrefutable.

We've seen His complete power over disease, and His power and Authority over demons. And we've seen His power over the natural creation as He controlled the fish in the Sea of Galilee. And we've seen His amazing power to escape from a mob that wanted to kill Him and throw Him off of a cliff in Nazareth.

So there are lots of evidences of the great power of Jesus. His healing power has been chronicled and the many occasions in which He cast demons out of people. So we've seen His power in the natural realm. We've seen His power in the angelic realm. But in this portion of Scripture we're looking at His power in the moral realm, His power to exonerate the guilty- His power literally to deliver a person from the position of guilt to a position of innocence- to totally change a person's moral estate- as the Puritan writers used to say- moral state, or estate, to move them from being under the Judgment of God to being under the blessing of God.

Jesus literally had the power to transfer a soul from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God. He had the power to walk right into satan's kingdom and steal souls and violently rip souls from the grip of satan and deliver them to God. And Jesus could do that with just a word and He did it right here to this man.

Jesus simply said to this vile sinner- "Your sins are forgiven." And the leaders were right, "No mere man had the power to do that." In fact, for a sinful human being to make a statement like that would be treading where angels fear to trod. That is why we cannot say that. And that is why no priest and no bishop and no cardinal and no pope and no elder and no pastor and no deacon and no prophet and no apostle can do say that. Only God can forgive sin.

So this powerful story then introduces us to the matter of forgiveness, and also to the hostility of the Pharisees and the scribes against that forgiveness and against that Grace and against that Mercy who eventually sought and achieved the death of Jesus.

Now last time we looked, first of all, at the context in verses 17 to 19, and we met the Pharisees, these "separated men" who were non-priests, they were laymen, devoted fanatically to the law and tradition.

And there were about six thousand of them in Israel at the time of Jesus. And they had developed a complex set of regulations to bind on the people in order to keep them loyal to the Law. However, their man-made religious system didn't do anything but obscure the real Law of God and hide it from the people- which is all that man-made religion can do. All that we do when we develop man-made philosophy or man-made religious trinkets and ideas and concepts is to hide the Truth of God's Word from the people and make it harder for them to see God.

And like with all man-made religions- all that it does is to make those who follow after it- self-righteous. These men were self-righteous, and they were void of Grace, and, therefore, they were all void of Salvation. They were legalists. And their human religious system had shut them off from God all together and shut them off from Salvation.

Now among the Pharisees was a smaller group called "scribes". And these guys were the legal experts and the scholars among the scholars. And they were all there this day, too, according to verse 17. They had gathered together to hear Jesus teach and to see the power of healing that He was able to do by the Holy Spirit, the power of the Lord as it's called at the end of verse 17. So they came really, I think, to incriminate Jesus. They already had heard about Him. And they had certainly heard about His message, heard about His healings, heard about His casting out of demons. They came to see for themselves from all over the land of Israel, even from Jerusalem where the most important of them lived. So we saw the context.

Then in verse 18 in the middle of this meeting going on in Capernaum in a...probably a large house because it had a tile roof. Most houses had a wood roof with beams and mud and straw packed in. But if you had tiles, this would indicate a little bit more sophisticated owner, maybe a little more money, maybe a larger house; a good place to accommodate a large crowd which was there that day. In fact, the crowd was so large that some men came and there were many, many people who would come wherever Jesus was who were sick and needed to be healed, and this was not unusual. Some men, four of them the other writers tell us, came carrying on a bed, a pallet, literally, just a flat kind of a cot, a man who was paralyzed. They were trying to bring him in and set him down in front of Him. Not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus. They couldn't get him in the front door. One-story houses in Israel at that time had a roof patio and had outside stairs that just went up, and you spent a lot of your time up there because of weather being somewhat moderate there, and also being a good place to get cool when it was hot down inside because of the cooking that was going on, you went upstairs. So it was the patio for the family. There would be some tiles there, they would locate exactly the right tiles directly over Jesus who was somewhere in the middle of the house. Literally crushed with

people all around, and they took the tiles off and dropped the man right in front of Jesus. Pretty dramatic moment. And we discussed that last time. That was the context in which this forgiveness occurred.

Then we see the claim that Jesus makes and it comes very rapidly. Verse 20, "And seeing their faith..." There's no conversation here- there's nothing recorded in either **Matthew**, **Mark**, or **Luke** that the man said anything. There is no conversation by his friends, apparently. They just plop him there in front of Jesus, and Jesus seeing their faith; that's interesting, isn't it? How do you "see" faith? Well, He could see everything. He could see everything. And what He saw was a persistent, intense, relentless faith that literally dismantles the roof, if necessary. A very embarrassing thing to do, by the way, to sort of thrust yourself in the middle like that, especially when you're like this man- a paralyzed man- who in the social structure of that day would have been an outcast.

Now he wasn't a leper in the sense that people feared he had a contagious illness- although it was very possible that he may have had some terrible venereal disease which back then would have gone untreated and would have eventually caused his paralysis. But whatever he had- this man would have been an outcast socially, and to embarrassingly plop himself in the middle of this gathering by dismantling the roof would take a tremendous amount of faith that Jesus was going to do something dramatic to change the situation. "Seeing their faith He said, 'Friend,'" the other writers tell us He also called him "son." "Your sins are forgiven you."

And this is absolutely amazing. The issue doesn't appear at first to be about sin- it appears to be about paralysis. It seems to be about the fact that he can't walk or he can't move. He's confined to this pallet and has to be carried around. So why is Jesus forgiving this man of his sins if this man's faith is all about being physically healed?

Well as I said a few weeks ago- Jesus noted the faith of *all* of them- just not the four friends, but the man as well. Nobody will ever be forgiven without faith, and nobody will ever be forgiven their sins without repentance. So what Jesus saw was not primarily a man who had a physical illness, but primarily a man who had a sinful heart, and a man who sought for and needed forgiveness.

You see, nobody is ever going to be forgiven by proxy. So it wasn't the faith of his friends that brought about his forgiveness. No, no.

Nobody is ever going to be delivered from sin and delivered from judgment on the basis of somebody else's faith, and nobody is ever going to be delivered and forgiven apart from their *own* faith and repentance.

Jesus healed people who didn't have any faith. He healed some people who had a little faith and healed other people who had a lot of faith. But Jesus never healed one single soul based on someone else's faith. Salvation has always been and always will be about faith. And always with repentance.

So the indication here is that what Jesus gave this man was not just a healing. In fact, at the point where He forgave his sins He hadn't healed him. That comes later in verse 24 where He says to him, "Get up." So before Jesus ever dealt with this man's physical problem- He forgave his sins. Now I'm sure the man already had faith in Jesus' healing power. He probably had faith that Jesus certainly was the Messenger from God. He had heard about His power to heal which was without any equal. Healings just didn't happen- even back then. They were rare then even as they are rare now. There hadn't been healings in Israel for five hundred years when Jesus arrived. They weren't common and they knew this was very unusual as people were being healed everywhere Jesus went. And this man knew that Jesus was a Messenger from God.

But the *real* cry of this man's heart was not the physical need. The real cry of his heart was for forgiveness. And he knew that the God of the OT was a God of Mercy and in his heart he wanted to be forgiven.

And Jesus read his heart. He perhaps had heard that Jesus preached forgiveness because He did. Everywhere Jesus went- He preached forgiveness. He preached the Good News to the poor, prisoners, blind and oppressed, as we learned in chapter 4. He preached that men were sinners, desperately needing forgiveness and mercy. That's why they tried to kill Him in His own town Nazareth when He preached that message in the synagogue. They tried to throw Him off a cliff. They couldn't stand the idea that they would have to reassess themselves as sinners.

But this man didn't have a problem with that. He knew his sin and he knew he needed Mercy and Forgiveness. And when the Lord looked at this man He saw not a paralyzed man- He saw a lost sinner. He saw a sinner who believed that God was merciful, and a sinner who

desperately wanted God to forgive him because that's the condition of heart to which God responds with forgiveness.

And Jesus called him "Friend." And He just pulled him in. He was no longer God's enemy- He was God's friend. Now "Friend" and "Son" is the language of the Kingdom, and there's no forgiveness ever given anybody without repentance, and there's no forgiveness given anybody who doesn't cry out in faith for the mercy of God. Somehow by God's Grace- this man knew he couldn't *earn* his Salvation by works. This man didn't have any self-righteousness. This man was not only an outcast on the outside physically- but he knew he was an outcast on the inside spiritually and he sought forgiveness. And Jesus gave it to him.

And that's always the way it's been. I mean, this is a classic illustration of how people were saved, always delivered, always forgiven throughout all the Old Testament era. The sinner had to take a look at his own heart and see that he had violated the law of God and violated the Law of God. That there was in him nothing but bankruptcy, he had to have that beatitude mentality, that meekness, that poverty of spirit, that bankruptcy, that hunger and thirst for righteousness that you know you don't have; where you've looked at yourself against the law of God and you know you fall short and you know you're a sinner and you desperately need forgiveness.

And you come to God Who alone can give it. And I think he came to Jesus that day not only for *physical* healing, but even more so because he knew that Jesus was preaching good news to poor people and prisoners and blind and oppressed, and he was one of those and he needed deliverance from sin and that's why he came. And Jesus knew that was in his heart and so He forgave him.

Now the question comes at this point, and it's very important to listen because this is a critical matter to have in mind as we go through this, was it necessary for that man to believe that Jesus was God? Did this man believe that Jesus was God? It doesn't say that. It doesn't say what he believed, it just says he had faith. It doesn't say that he believed that Jesus was the Son of God, God in human flesh, the incarnate One, Emmanuel, God with us, or that he believed that Jesus was Messiah, or that he believed Jesus was the Savior, Redeemer of the world. It doesn't say that.

Well was it necessary to believe that Jesus was God to be saved? Answer: No. Was it necessary for Moses to believe that Jesus was God

to be saved? Was it necessary for David to believe that? Was it necessary for Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah to believe that? Was it necessary for anybody in the Old Testament time to believe that Jesus was the Messiah? No.

What did *they* have to believe? They had to believe that they were sinners. They had to believe that they were bankrupt, that they had no ability to change their condition as sinners, no ability on their own to escape the judgment of God, no way to achieve self-righteousness that would satisfy God's standard, and, therefore, they had to throw themselves on the mercy of God and ask God to be merciful and save them. That's the way people were saved in the Old Testament. And, here in **Luke 5**- we're still in that dispensation. So I don't know what this man believed about Jesus. He certainly believed that He was preaching the message of forgiveness, and he certainly believed that He was sent by God because of the miracles that He was doing. And he believed it enough to believe that he would be healed and hoped that he would be forgiven. I don't know that he knew that Jesus was God. He may have had that kind of thought, but it doesn't say anything about his view of Christ.

Now for a moment, turn to **Luke 18** and I'll continue to make this clear in your mind. In **Luke 18** this is very familiar, and I referred to it a number of times, **Luke 18:9**. So here, Jesus tells a parable and this is right from the lips of Jesus so this is a good text to understand this matter. Please read with me:

#### **Luke 18:9-14**

**9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:**

**10 “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**

**11 The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.**

**12 I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’**

**13 But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’**



**14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

So what you have here is the two extremes- the Pharisee is at the pinnacle of religiosity and the tax gatherer who is the scum of the earth who is a Jew who has bought a Roman tax franchise and is now extorting money from his own people. So a tax collector was a traitor of all traitors. So you have these two great extremes.

And the Pharisee goes into the temple to pray and stands up and prays to *himself*. And that's the way it is, he's talking to himself. And he calls himself "God". He says to himself, "God, I thank Thee that I'm not like other people, swindlers, unjust, adulterers or even like this tax gatherer." I mean, this guy is very pleased with himself. Verse 12, "I fast twice a week, I pay tithes of all that I get." So he just comes before God to tell God how great he is.

But the tax gatherer standing some distance away wasn't even willing to lift up his eyes to heaven; he wouldn't even look up, his face is down. He's "beating his breast," which was a sign of deep, deep grief, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." That's all he says. He doesn't say anything about Jesus. He doesn't say that He believes Jesus is God. He just says, "*God, be merciful to me a sinner, measured against Your law I am undone, I am wretched, I am distraught, I am broken, I am contrite, I need mercy.*"

And Jesus says in verse 14, "*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.*" Now Jesus says right here that a man who fell on his face before God in the temple and pleaded for mercy was justified. So Who Christ is- is not the issue here- yet. The man was justified. It doesn't say anything about what he believed concerning Jesus. What he *did* believe, however- was that he was a sinner, he was distraught over his sin, he had no hope, he was headed for judgment. And he was outside the kingdom and he had no plea except, "*God, be merciful to me.*" So this is the way that things worked until Jesus died and rose from the dead. And after that- everything changed.

After the Cross and after the Resurrection- the matter of faith for salvation is still in place- but now what we believe is critical for Salvation. And in that light- the Apostle Paul wrote this in **Romans 10:9:**

**That if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;**

So on this side of the Cross- what we believe and what we confess matters. You must still believe that you're a sinner, and you must still repent and cry out for mercy- but only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was verified by God as satisfying through the Resurrection.

The Bible says that because of ignorance- there was a time, according to **The Acts 17**- when God overlooked some things- but now since He has sent Christ- God commands all men everywhere to repent and to acknowledge the One Man- Jesus Christ- whom God has appointed. Please turn quickly with me to **The Acts 17:22-31**:

**22** So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

**23** For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.’ Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

**24** The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

**25** nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

**26**and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

**27** that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

**28** for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

**29** Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

**30** Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent,

**31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”**

And this is the Message that we must preach today- the Message of Salvation.

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.