



## Road Trip: On the Road with Jesus in Galilee

---

### Week 8: Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man (5:17-26)

**THE TEXT:** (Luke 5:17-26; cf. Matt 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45)

**Let's start today at the end...** This remarkable story ends with those who witnessed the event commenting, "We have seen amazing (remarkable <sup>NIV</sup>, extraordinary <sup>ESV</sup>, strange <sup>NKJV</sup>) things today!" (Luke 5:26 NLT-SE). Doesn't that just whet your appetite?

**<sup>17</sup> One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus.**

- As Jesus continued to travel and teach, news about Him spread, and the religious leaders, the **Pharisees and teachers of the religious law**, began asking questions. After all, they were the ones responsible for deciding whether a person was teaching correctly or not.
- On this occasion they had come **from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem** to hear what Jesus was teaching. The title Pharisee comes from the Hebrew word meaning "to divide, to separate" and the Pharisees were known for their strict separation from the world, and for their exactness in making decisions and laws about what was allowed and not allowed in Jewish law and teaching.
- Luke writes that the religious leaders were **sitting**. In Jewish culture, teachers sat and taught while students stood. Probably Jesus was sitting as well, but the Pharisees wanted to be seen as equals to Jesus, as ones who did not need to learn anything from Him, but as those who would listen to what He taught in order to judge it.
- The parallel account in Mark 2 tells us that there were not just Pharisees and teachers of the law present, but also a large crowd of people who had gathered to hear Jesus teach out of the scriptures (Mark 2:2). Luke records that **the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus**. Luke, because he is a physician, emphasizes the healing ministry of Jesus, whereas Mark emphasizes the teaching ministry of Jesus. Jesus often did both. However, many others were skeptical, and were probably getting ready to question and challenge the teachings of Jesus when something strange happened.

**<sup>18</sup> Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, <sup>19</sup> but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. <sup>20</sup> Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."**

- **Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat.** In Jewish culture, paralysis was viewed as the judgment of God, likely due to serious sin. People who were paralyzed were banned from the priesthood, and in some areas, shunned within the community. This man was treated as an outcast by men who likely viewed as someone who had been judged by God.
- This man's friends had heard of the healing power of Jesus, and **tried to take him inside to Jesus.** The house was crowded to overflowing, and in Mark 2, it says that there ***was no more room, even outside the door.*** Trying to get the paralyzed man into a standing-room only crowd would cause quite a disturbance. This is what the man has experienced in life as a result of his paralysis. People, led by the religious leaders, were always keeping him from experiencing and receiving any blessing from God.
- Because of the crowd, the friends could not figure out a way in. The men were persistent, and **they went up to the roof and took off some tiles and they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus.** Jewish homes were designed with flat roofs. On summer nights, families might go up there to sleep where they could catch the cool evening breeze.
- To lower the man through the roof, they would have to pull up the tile, dig a hole through the clay and mud, and ripped out the thatching. All of this would have created quite a stir in the room below, both from the noise and with the falling pieces of mud and dirt. The owner of the house may have been a bit alarmed as well.
- **Seeing their faith,** Jesus was impressed. This is the first mention of ***faith*** in Luke. The fact that Jesus saw their faith probably refers to how they took every step possible to bring the paralyzed man before Jesus. They believed the words which Jesus taught, which was probably that since Jesus had power to heal, the Kingdom of God was at hand. As a result of this belief, they acted on it, and did what was necessary.
- When the man had been laid before Jesus, He said to him, ***“Young man, your sins are forgiven.”*** Many get confused by this verse because they think that Jesus has just given eternal life to the paralyzed man based the faith of his friends. But this is not the case. Jesus is not offering the man eternal life. He is simply announcing that his sins are forgiven. Through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is provided to the entire world without condition. This does not mean that all have eternal life, however, since faith in Jesus is required for that (John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47).
  - He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world. (1 John 2:2 NLT-SE)
  - “I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.” (John 5:24 NLT-SE)
- The men, including the paralyzed man, were probably not expecting to hear that the man's sins were forgiven. They just wanted the man to be healed. ***Jesus also wants to show them that He is destroying the religious walls that have been erected between God and man.***

**<sup>21</sup> But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, “Who does he think he is? That’s blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!”**

- As a result of Jesus declaring that the man's sins are forgiven, the scribes and the Pharisees began to ask each other, “Who does he think he is?” They come to the conclusion, ***“That’s blasphemy!”*** and because of it determine in their hearts, ***“Only God can forgive sins!”***
- Because of what the Pharisees say, many believe that in telling the man that his sins are forgiven, Jesus is making a claim to being divine. After all, what other form of blasphemy is there except someone claiming to be God when they are not?
- The religious leaders thought Jesus was speaking against the Torah, or at least, their understanding of it. In Judaism, forgiveness of sins is related to the release and restoration of people from the consequences of sin, such as physical sickness or death, temporal judgment, and bondage to other nations. It is not about gaining entrance into heaven or eternal life, but what precedes the arrival of the Kingdom of God. The primary way to be forgiven was through the sacrificial system at the temple. The priest would pronounce that their sins were forgiven (Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13, 16, 18, etc.).

- It was not uncommon for a priest to announce to a person that their sins were forgiven. Sometimes even prophets did this (2 Sam 12:13). **Yet nobody believed that when a priest said this, the priest was claiming to be God.** They were simply following the regulations laid out by God for the forgiveness of sins.
- So the issue was not what Jesus said, but rather the context in which He said it. Only the priests could offer forgiveness of sins, and even then, only to people who were in the temple, and after they had made the proper sacrifices. By telling the man, **“Your sins are forgiven,”** Jesus was bypassing the temple, the priests, and the sacrificial system.
- It was this that the religious leaders could not stand. Jesus was doing away with their religious system, and allowing humans to approach God without the temple, without the priests, and without a sacrifice. **It was unthinkable!**

**<sup>22</sup> Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? <sup>24</sup> So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”**

- Though He did not hear what they said, **Jesus knew what they were thinking**, or understood what they accusing Him of, and told them so. They have questioned Him in their hearts, and so now He sets out to question them.
- According to Jewish thinking, a Prophet’s words can only be trusted if he has the accompanying signs to back him up. Jesus is going to provide a sign to prove that He has the authority to forgive sins without religious rituals or intermediaries. If the man is healed, this proves that Jesus is not a blasphemer, but that the power of God is with Him. He asks, **“Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’?”** Clearly, saying, Your sins are forgiven is easier,” since there is no outward evidence that actual forgiveness has taken place. But if someone says “Rise up and walk” anyone watching would be able to see whether the paralyzed man actually walks or not. **The first statement cannot be demonstrated, but the second can.**
- Jesus refers to Himself as the **Son of Man**. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this title is most often used of the Prophet Ezekiel. A major theme in Ezekiel is that God will take the dead nation of Israel and restore her to new life. This is especially seen in the famous vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (Ezekiel 37). The truth is, Jesus is about to restore life to a paralyzed man as a picture of how He can restore life to a paralyzed nation.
- After referring to Himself as the Son of Man, He sets out to prove that **he has the authority on earth to forgive sins**. He does this by saying to the man who was paralyzed, **“Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”**

**<sup>25</sup> And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God. <sup>26</sup> Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!” (Luke 5:17–26 NLT-SE)**

- As a result of the words of Jesus, the paralyzed **man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God**. The physical transformation would have been visible to the eye as atrophied muscles strengthened and rebuilt.
- All the people who witnessed the miraculous healing were amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, **“We have seen amazing things today!”** Not only did they see the roof torn off a house and a bed drop down from the ceiling, but then a showdown between Jesus and the Pharisees followed in which Jesus healed a man of paralysis and proved that forgiveness of sins was available to all without the need of religious rituals.

## **WHAT DID THE DISCIPLES SEE AND HEAR?**

1. **The elephant in the room...**Jesus’ followers would see for themselves just how serious the scribes and Pharisees were about scrutinizing Jesus’ every move. The Jewish leaders would watch him like a hawk, making sure nothing he said contradicted their interpretation of the Torah.

2. **Sometimes it's the faith of others...**It was apparent from watching Jesus' face as the paralyzed man lowered into the room, landing right in front of him, that something unexpected was about to happen. Jesus saw the faith of the man's friends and responded to the man's need, moved by his friend's faith.
3. **An unexpected move...**It took a great deal of faith for the friends to open the roof of the house and lower the man down to have Jesus heal him. Everyone in the room thought Jesus would certainly heal the man, but that's not what happened. Jesus proclaims, **"Young man, your sins are forgiven."** This really sends the scribes and pharisees into a tailspin. Just as everyone thought the room was going to unravel, Jesus tells the man to pick up his mat and go home!
4. **Can't hide anything from Jesus...**The Jewish leaders are working themselves into a frenzy, literally, plotting their next move, now that Jesus has made the mistake of claiming to be God. Unfortunately for them, Jesus calls them out and says to them, **"I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins."** Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, **"Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"**
5. **A trick question...**This is Jesus at his Jewish Rabbi best. Most people were intimidated by the scribes and pharisees, but not Jesus. He knew needed to be said and done and was confident that he was being led by his Father's will.
6. **One crazy day on the road with Jesus...**After the man left with his mat, no longer paralyzed, but healed and set free, no one is more astonished than the disciples. That had seen Jesus deliver people from demonic oppression and heal others from physical sickness, but this day was different. They realized that Jesus seemed to do his best work under pressure. This was an amazing day with Jesus! Can't wait to see what tomorrow is going to bring?

#### WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE LEARNED WATCHING JESUS THAT DAY?

- **God is not just interested in faith, but obedience as well.** What we do with our faith really does matter. Biblical faith involves obedience. John Calvin says faith "is born of obedience." The connection between faith and obedience is even more clear in Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words: "Only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes."
- **It is impossible to please God without faith.** Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards **those who sincerely seek him.** (Heb 11:6 NLT-SE)
- Notice what James says about **how works affect our faith.** After noting that Abraham's faith was at work in the offering of Isaac, James adds, "You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete." (James 2:22 NLT-SE)
- Scripture clearly teaches that **faith and works are related**, yet we often think of that relationship flowing only one way - that is, faith produces works. But **James says the flow goes both ways.** Works also affects faith.
  - <sup>17</sup> So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. <sup>18</sup> Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." But I say, **"How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds?"** I will show you my faith by my good deeds." (James 2:17-18 NLT-SE)
- The idea is not that work adds something to an inadequate or defective faith, but that **work fulfills, strengthens and matures faith.** Our actions perfect our faith. Our actions may add new dimension to our understanding of God and his work or simply strengthen the understanding we already have.