

I. Jesus Prepared for Confrontation With Dependent Prayer

A. Jesus continually was withdrawing into the wilderness and praying.

1. The imperfect and participial forms indicate a perseverative habit of both withdrawing and praying.
2. Luke is showing us that even with Jesus' great and growing fame, He is not fanning the flame of His great name, but seeking the presence and the will and the provision of His Father alone.
3. Jesus' times of prayer mentioned by Luke are precessions to a key moment or series of moments
 - a) *Here Jesus is headed for series of conflicts with religious leaders over His increasing claims to be the Divine King promised in the Old Testament*
4. It was in these days of dependent prayer and teaching that the following story takes place

B. Pharisees (define) and "teachers of the law" (define) were sitting [during His teaching]

1. They came from each village of Galilee, Judea, even Jerusalem
 - a) *Jesus' influence is spreading*
 - b) *It has reached the pinnacles of the Jewish religious order, so they are here to check it out*
 - (1) The Pharisees were a lay order of those who desired to protect Judaism from Hellenism and keep the purity of the Mosaic Law
 - (2) The fact that they are here is probably indicative that they are here to judge whether or not this Rabbi's teaching is consistent with their understanding of the purity of the Law
 - (3) Thus, they are here to judge, not to consider
2. This is the first mention of these groups at Jesus' teaching
 - a) *Setting up a long and contentious relationship of those who should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah, yet rejected Him because He didn't fit their paradigm*

II. There is a Greater Need Than Physical Wholness

A. BEHOLD! - the Story changes course to a more particular point for Luke

B. "There are men carrying a man on a stretcher

- a) *The man was existing (impf) in a state of paralysis*
- b) *The men were actively seeking to bring him in and to place before Jesus [him]."*

C. TENSION

1. "They could not find any sort of way that they might bring him in on account of the crowd"

D. PLAN FOR RESOLUTION

1. "They went up upon the top of the house and let him down through the clay tiles with the small cot into the middle [of the crowd] in front of Jesus"

E. THE PLOT TWIST- AN UNLOOKED FOR RESOLUTION TO A PROBLEM TOO BIG

1. "Man, your sins have been forgiven you"
 - a) *Jesus spoke while beholding the dependence [faith] of the men*
 - (1) There is not necessarily a contingent relationship here for the word is a participle "seeing He spoke"
 - (2) Yet, He speaks directly to the man, not to the friends
 - b) *Jesus is giving more than the faith of these men bargained for, opening up the spiritual healing and the greater purpose for which He was sent, i.e. the healing of the brokenness not of the physical body, but of the relationship of contention and animosity between the holiness of God and the depravity of Man*

- (1) The hope of 1:77-79 is beginning to be revealed, that His miraculous works carry with them the central message of spiritual reconciliation with God by faith in Him
 - (2) Again, like the leper, Jesus is bringing this paralytic all the way in not merely to the community of Israel, but to the good grace of God Himself.
- c) *Jesus speaks in the perfect passive tense, "have been forgiven", indicating the state of forgiveness that has begun with His declaration and continues on into the future.*
- (1) Being passive also indicates that the forgiveness comes from God, not from the man's achievements or inherent righteousness. It is announced, declared, reckoned by Jesus.
 - (2) This also shows us that if Jesus has the authority to forgive sins against God, it means that all sins are, at their root, sins against HIM!
 - (a) Nobody can forgive sins against another, only the offended party has the authority to forgive sins
 - (b) Forgiveness is debt-related
 - (i) *When you sin against another, you incur harm unjustly, you "take" something from another, costing them something through your actions*
 - (ii) *Forgiveness is the willing act of not holding an offender liable for the cost as a debt, but instead absorbing the cost yourself.*
 - (a) Example: If I break your window, you can make me pay for it (just recompense) or you can forgive me and pay for the new window yourself (forgiveness)
 - (b) Jesus is not explaining how He will absorb the cost of the debt, but He is making an incredible statement that *the man's sin was against Him*, against His crown, against Him as Creator, and *therefore He had the authority to forgive these sins*, because only the one offended has the right/authority to forgive the debt.
- d) *Not everything concerning forgiveness of sins, or faith, or how that works righteously is explained here, only the central truth that Jesus has the authority to do it. More will be explained as Luke tells the story, and here we have only the first mention of forgiveness and the first mention of faith and the first mention of the contention between Jesus and the religious leadership (Pharisees and their scribes).*

F. PLOT THICKENS - Unbelief Deems Jesus as Unworthy

1. The Scribes [define] and Pharisees began to reason (*dialogizomai*)
 - a) *This word is almost always negative in sense in the NT*
 - b) *It involves the "accounting" of the human heart/mind that weighs truth claims and rejects the proclamation of the Word of God because it cannot fit it into one's already existing worldview*
 - (1) In this case, the Pharisees *rightly understood* the significance of Jesus' statement, but they *rejected His authority* to do it *because they rejected Him* as a) a prophet, b) a priestly mediator, or c) the Messiah
 - (2) There was no room for Him in their worldview as one who was capable or qualified to announce the forgiveness of sins because it meant that He had the authority of God.
2. Their reasoning found words:
 - a) *"Who is this that speaks blasphemies?" - "Who is able to forgive except God alone?"*

- (1) Blasphemy was a serious charge that one was abusing God, either directly or against His Name, which was equitable to His character, by word or deed
- (2) If Jesus' claim was untrue, it would be blasphemous because only God can forgive sins because all sins are against Him, ultimately.
 - (a) Thus, the reader (us) is left with two options:
 - (i) *Jesus is who He claims to be and has the right to forgive sins*
 - (ii) *Jesus is a blasphemer to be rejected as a God-hating idolater*
 - (b) Luke clearly represents Jesus as the former: authority to forgive sins b/c He is God

G. Jesus Challenges the Self-Righteous Heart With Authority

a) *"Why do you reason in your hearts?"*

- (1) Their problem did not lie in their ability to reason the ramifications, but in the unwillingness of their hearts to *believe* it.
- (2) They reasoned correctly, but refused to change based upon the truth claim being made.
 - (a) It is important to note that God never calls us to figure everything out, but to believe what He has said and done.

b) *Jesus Proves His Authority to Forgive Sins: Which is easier to say?*

- (1) Your sins are forgiven you?
 - (a) Anybody can say this and it cannot be verified for it is unseen, thus it is "easier"
- (2) Get up and walk? (3 words)
 - (a) If somebody says this, his authority is immediately verified by whether or not one gets up and walks
- (3) So, Jesus is closely linking His authority to forgive sins (unseen) to the His authority to heal the results of Adam's curse of sin (seen by making a paralyzed man walk)

III. Jesus Has the Authority to Heal Our Deepest Need: the Forgiveness of Our Sins

A. "So that" is a purpose clause

B. "You might know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins..."

1. This is the point of the whole story and *the point of the healing*

- a) *What good would it be to heal a man's body who is destined to die apart from God?*
- b) *Physical healing is never the ultimate good that God is doing, but a proof of His greater good, reconciling man to God by removing the barrier of guilt and sin through the death and resurrected life of Jesus*

2. King Jesus, the Son of Man, has the authority over evil spirits, illness and disease, Nature and human will, and now we see the authority to announce the forgiveness of sins

3. It's about authority, power, right of the Son of Man to bring the ultimate wholeness: righteousness before God, the forgiveness of sins

C. CLIMAX - Jesus proves His authority to forgive sins by speaking with more words than either comparative statements in v23:

1. "Get up and pick up your stretcher and proceed into your home" (11 words)

- a) *This is a bit of a sarcastic way of showing that He can do the harder thing just as easily as the "easier" thing.*

2. Healing the man is the means of showing His authority

- a) *Thus, the healing of the man is the secondary purpose of God, the primary purpose is to show that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins on the earth*

IV. Jesus Breaks the Mold to Glorify God

- A. The man got up *immediately* and went home
1. in their presence
 - a) *He picked up what had picked him up*
 2. He went home
 - a) *The completion of the wholeness is the restoration of all of life, not merely the physical act of walking, but of the restoration of the whole person to the whole life, i.e. home.*
- B. He glorified God!
1. He went home speaking of the splendor and greatness of God, the supremacy and beauty of the goodness of God
- C. Every healing and announcement of forgiveness that is accomplished by God through Jesus Christ is to result in the glorifying of God
1. "Bewilderment took all and they continually glorified God and they were filled with fear, saying "We saw incredible things (*paradoxa*) today!"
 - a) *Paradoxa means "contrary to opinion"*
 - b) *Jesus took their "opinion", their reasonings and their debates and shattered them with power and authority*
 2. He leaves people one question: Will you rely upon Me for everything?
- D. Jesus remains unable to be categorized! He is blowing the doors off of every box that people try and put Him all the way to the paradox of His authority to forgive sins. What a day!! What a unique man!

Conclusion:

The healing of the paralytic shows us that Jesus' kingly rule brings, first and foremost, a reconciled relationship with God. The last healing miracle in this section shows us a group of friends bringing a paralyzed man to Jesus. They obviously expect a physical healing, but first Jesus says to the man, "Man, your sins are forgiven."

This is Jesus saying, in effect, "Your physical paralysis is not, ultimately, your main problem. It is a symptom of the real problem, a branch of the root of the tree. If you don't get your sins pardoned and your alienation from God removed, then a physical healing will ultimately be fruitless."

Your sins are the major problem, for in them we have chosen to be enemies of God, to consider ourselves as equal, nay superior, to Him. To have them forgiven is to have our debts cleared with God, to hear Heaven's court declare, "I have nothing against this one." (Rom 5).

Jesus is saying that, though physical and social healing are important, nothing is more important than having our sin debt paid down, getting right with God, and HE HAS THE AUTHORITY TO DO IT. King Jesus came to restore all that is broken, and at the root of that brokenness lies the debts of our injustice against God, His glory, and His Creation. Jesus came to heal us, truly heal our shame and our guilt, and He does that by paying down our debt against Him with His own life. He offered Himself up as the representative in our place, a substitute for our sin. He lived the life that we should have lived and died the death that we should have died. What he calls us to do is to forsake trusting in our own works, in our own wisdom, in our own way, and to entrust ourselves to Him fully. If we will depend upon Him for our righteousness that God demands, for our debt that our sins demand, and for our life for which hope pleads, then we will find in Him one with the authority to present us to God holy, blameless, beyond guilt and without shame. He can do that. Fly to Him, die to your own strength, and be saved today.