

WEEK 4: JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC

Luke 5:17–26



The Place of the Passage

The Gospels may appear to record events from the life of Jesus in a random manner, with little to no connection between them, but this is hardly the case. A general rule is that the narratives in the same context are linked thematically, that is, by topic. This is clearly the case in Luke 5, wherein two men—a leper and a paralytic—are healed by Jesus. Both of these serve to depict the biblical relations between physical and spiritual sickness. This is notable, for the theme of sin is formally introduced in the story preceding these two miracles, as Peter is called forth by Jesus and attempts to decline Jesus' invitation by calling himself a "sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Peter's self-diagnosis is impressed upon him by the miraculous catch of fish that Jesus gifts to him and his companions (Luke 5:4–6). The two healing accounts that follow offer a biblical answer to Peter's crisis, explaining that Jesus is the healer of humanity in every way. Jesus makes this claim explicit in the healing of the paralytic not only when he shows the connection between the body and the soul but also when he declares himself the ultimate authority over both. This is not only a miracle of healing but also an "old creation" miracle, which means it is a sign with operations fitting the current world. In this miracle Jesus reveals an important purpose of his ministry and the way in which he intends to redeem his creation from the sicknesses of sin.

The Big Picture

Jesus is the healer of humanity, the one who has the authority to heal the body and to forgive sins, both of which address our fallen creation.

Reflection and Discussion

Read through the complete passage for this study, Luke 5:17–26. Then review the following questions and record your responses. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, page 1960, or visit esv.org.)

The Setting (Luke 5:17–21)

Why does verse 17 inform the reader that “the power of the Lord was with [Jesus] to heal?” What does this teach us about the authority shared between or given to God the Son by God the Father?

What does the aggressive manner in which the men bring the paralyzed man into the house communicate to us? How does verse 20 provide Jesus’ interpretation of their actions?

Why does Jesus see the paralyzed man and first address his sin (5:20)? What does this teach us about the nature of sin?

The Pharisees (the spiritual influencers of Israel) and the teachers of the law (or, scribes; the biblical scholars of Israel), introduced in verse 17, later challenge Jesus' ministry toward the paralytic (5:21). Why do they have a problem with what Jesus says?

The Miracle (Luke 5:22–24)

Before Jesus performs the miracle of physical restoration, he poses a question that explains the purpose of the miracle. How would you answer Jesus' question in verse 23?

Why does Jesus want to make clear that he can heal the body and the soul (5:24), and why is his authority over both aspects important?

The Conclusion (Luke 5:25–26)

Jesus commands the paralytic to rise, and verse 25 says that the paralytic does so "immediately." How does this detail give insight into Jesus' power and authority?

WEEK 4: JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC

The response of the man and all those present is overwhelmingly positive: “They glorified God” (5:26). What does it mean that they “glorified God,” and what does this collective response communicate to us?

In light of the purpose of miracles, what does this miracle teach Christians about the person of Jesus (who he is) or the work of Jesus (what he has done for us)?

Read through the following three sections on *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings*. Then take time to consider the *Personal Implications* these sections have for you.

Gospel Glimpses

BODY AND SOUL. The tendency to view the ministry of Jesus as pursuing the healing of our souls only is challenged by this miracle. This should be quite obvious, since Jesus’ work of redemption requires his body: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. . . . By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). This rebukes in us any “spiritual” talk that diminishes the ways in which the work of Jesus involves our bodies. The message of salvation that Scripture announces involves not only the soul (1 Pet. 1:9) but also the body, looking forward to a time when “death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore [nor any paralytics], for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4). Praise be to God that Jesus works miracles of redemption in body and soul.

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN. The first thing Jesus says when the paralytic man is placed before him is “Your sins are forgiven you” (Luke 5:20). To the ears of

the Pharisees and scribes Jesus' statement is blasphemy, for it is a claim that only God can make (5:21). Their theology of sin is correct, but their knowledge of God is deficient, most notably as God the Son stands before them. This might explain why Jesus declares himself to be the authoritative Son of Man in verse 24. But the significant connection Jesus makes between healing and forgiveness¹ of sins must not be missed, and the connection is rooted in the gospel. Just as the "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), so the gift of God is the miracle of life, true healing. Sin is the source of the man's paralyzed body, and only the redeeming work of God can heal him.

Whole-Bible Connections

THE SON OF MAN HAS AUTHORITY. Jesus' favorite self-designation is "Son of Man." The title is used in Daniel 7:13–14, which describes one who, clothed by God with heavenly glory, is to exercise God's rule on earth. In the context of this miracle the title makes clear to the Pharisees and scribes—and to the readers—that there should be no questions regarding Jesus' authority either to forgive sins or to heal bodies. In fact, as Scripture gradually reveals, this was the assignment given to Jesus from the beginning.

THEY GLORIFIED GOD. In the full story of Scripture the glory² of God is the manifestation of his being, nature, and presence that is revealed and experienced by humanity (see Ex. 33:18–23). The end of this miracle account makes clear to the reader that all the participants have experienced God's glory. As stated previously, the conclusion of the story is where the message of a miracle is interpreted. The narrative explains that the former paralytic is "glorifying God" (Luke 5:25) on his walk home, and all the witnesses have amazement "seize them all" as they also "glorified God" and are even "filled with awe" (5:26). This is a very detailed account of the human experience of God's glory, and it is a foretaste of the pleasure and power to be known by all God's people in his intimate presence in the new creation (cf. Rev. 21:23).

Theological Soundings

THE POWER OF THE LORD. The above discussion of Jesus' authority as the "Son of Man" helps us make sense of the brief statement at the beginning of the miracle: "The power of the Lord was with him to heal" (Luke 5:17). What the religious leaders do not accept, but the paralyzed man and his friends believe (note 5:20), is that Jesus has been given this authority from God. Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, has been given this authority: "The Father . . . has given judgment to the Son" and "given him authority" (John 5:22, 27). As Jesus himself states, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to

WEEK 4: JESUS HEALS THE PARALYTIC

me” (Matt. 28:18). In this way Scripture teaches us that Jesus has all authority, so that both our bodies and our lives must be submitted to him.

FAITH. The narrative reveals to the reader that Jesus is impressed with the faith³ of the friends of the paralytic. In contrast to the religious authorities, they believe in Jesus’ ability and authority to heal. Scripture teaches us this directly (“Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him,” Heb. 11:6). This biblical truth is like oxygen for our spiritual lives. The faithful disciple of Jesus places his faith in Jesus and trusts Jesus with his life.

Personal Implications

Take some time to reflect on what you have learned from your study of Luke 5:17–26 and how it might apply to your own life today. Make notes below on the personal implications for your walk with the Lord of the (1) *Gospel Glimpses*, (2) *Whole-Bible Connections*, (3) *Theological Soundings*, and (4) this passage as a whole.

1. Gospel Glimpses

2. Whole-Bible Connections

3. Theological Soundings

4. Luke 5:17–26

As You Finish This Unit . . .

May your faith be strengthened as you stand in awe of the fact that Jesus heals both the body and the soul, including the forgiveness of our sins. Take a moment to look back through this study and reflect on what you learned about Jesus the Healer and the ways in which he ministers to you.

Definitions

¹ **Forgiveness** – Release from guilt and the reestablishment of relationship. Forgiveness can be granted by God to human beings (Luke 24:47; 1 John 1:9) and by human beings to those who have wronged them (Matt. 18:21–22; Col. 3:13).

² **Glory** – The beauty of God gone public. The Scriptures are saturated with the theme of God’s glory—a glory that shines brightest in the person and work of Jesus. The Bible testifies to the glory of God in eternity past (John 17:1, 4–5), in creation (Ps. 19:1; Isa. 43:6–7, 21; Col. 1:16–18), in redemption (Ps. 79:9; Jer. 14:7, 21; Rom. 3:23–26; 2 Cor. 4:4), and in eternity future (2 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 5:9; 21:23).

³ **Faith** – Trust in or reliance upon something or someone despite a lack of concrete proof. Salvation, which is purely a work of God’s grace, can be received only through faith (Rom. 5:2, Eph. 2:8–9). The writer of Hebrews calls on believers to emulate those who lived godly lives by faith (Hebrews 11).