



God only can forgive Part 02.

Luke 5:17-26, Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them. ¹⁸ Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. ¹⁹ And when they could not find how they might bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the housetop and let him down with his bed through the tiling into the midst before Jesus.

²⁰ When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

²¹ And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

²² But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?" ²⁴ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins"—He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."

²⁵ Immediately he rose up before them, took up what he had been lying on, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. ²⁶ And they were all amazed, and they glorified God and were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen strange things today!"

The verdict of God on man is that man is guilty and helpless.

Proverbs 17:15, He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.

- Either declaring the innocent just or
- declaring the just guilty,

both 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, He who says to the wicked, "You are righteous," Him the people will curse; Nations will abhor him.

We even have enough of the image of God in us, enough of the knowledge of right and wrong and the moral law of God to understand that it is not only to God an abomination to pervert justice, but it is to man as well.

Repeatedly in the Scripture God Himself forbids anybody to declare a sinful person righteous.

Yet that is exactly what God does!
God alone has the right to do it.

God is the judge, and He is the lawmaker.

God is all three branches in one.
He is the legislative branch,
He is the judicial branch, and
He is the executive branch.

There is a singular governor of the universe who has written the law, who applies the law, interprets the law, judges the sinner, and He is also the executioner.

Therefore, there is only one person in the universe who has the right to do what for all of us is an abomination and that is to justify sinners, 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.

Romans 4:5-8, *But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:⁷ "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered;⁸ Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."*

What God will not allow us to do for the sake of justice, God Himself has done.
God justifies the ungodly.
God justifies the ungodly on the basis of faith.

This is the message of Christianity.

There is one person in the universe who has the power, authority, and right,
to declare guilty people innocent, and
to declare sinful people righteous.

God is the lawgiver, the judge and the executioner!

How can God do that?

How can He be just and the justifier of sinners?

Romans 3:26, *to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

God designed a plan by which His Son would take the sinner's place and pay the penalty for the sinner's sin.

So, justice was satisfied in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins.

2 Corinthians 5:21, *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

What we cannot justify sinners, it is an abomination to God for us to deal with people unjustly. That is a perversion for us. But God can do what He alone can do and that is He can justify the ungodly, forgive the sinner, not without paying due respect to His law, and that is why He had to send Jesus Christ to satisfy justice and die in our place.

Only God can do this!

It is an abomination.

It is a perversion.

For we have no way to cover sin.

Only God can be the forgiver because He has provided the substitute sacrifice. He is the Holy One offended. He is the judge, the lawgiver, the executioner, the only one therefore with the power and authority to pardon the guilty sinner.

That is the singular heart and soul of the gospel!

God will forgive your sins. That means you will escape eternal punishment in eternal hell.

The heart of forgiveness is not the remission of the penalty.

The heart of the gospel is the motive that makes God do that. This is where we see the essence of the gospel. It is wonderful that the penalty is removed.

But the centre of the gospel is the motive that made God willing to do that.

What is the motive?

Love!

John 3:16, *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."*

Romans 5:8, But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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 unchecked and granted to the wrongdoer.

All sin is against God.

All sin is a violation of God's law.

Since God is the offended one, God is the lawgiver, God is the judge and executioner, only God can forgive the sinner.

In this passage the Pharisees were musing in their minds, saying to themselves, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

They knew that. They knew their Old Testament well enough to know that. They were exactly right.

Why is this man Jesus doing saying to this paralyzed man your sins are forgiven?

Doesn't He know that only God can do that?

They had sound theology at that point.

This is a passage about forgiveness. Forgiveness is at the very heart of the gospel.

You cannot preach the gospel of forgiveness unless people know they are sinners. You cannot preach the grace of deliverance from eternal judgment unless people know they are headed for eternal judgment.

Gallup Poll shows that 76 percent of evangelicals surveyed believe that man is basically good. We might expect 100 percent of pagans to believe that.

But can you imagine 76 percent of evangelicals believe that man is basically good?

Just convince them that people are good.

Jesus did not believe that. That is why they killed Him because He told them even though they thought they were good, they were bad. They were as bad as bad could be and they were headed for hell. They were religious.

So, the heart of the passage is about forgiveness.

Jesus power to forgive the guilty.

Jesus power literally to deliver a person from the position of guilt to a position of innocence, to totally change a person's moral 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 do that with a word and He did it to this man.

He said, "Your sins are forgiven."

The leaders were right, "No man had the power to do that."

This meeting going on in Capernaum in a large house because it had a tile roof. Most houses had a wood roof with beams and then mud and straw packed in. But if you had tiles, a little bit more sophisticated.

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.

Four of them came carrying on a bed 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 centre, in front of Jesus.

V 20, "And seeing their faith..."

There is no conversation!

There is nothing recorded in Matthew, Mark or Luke that the man said anything.

There is no conversation by his friends.

They just plop him there in front of Jesus and Jesus seeing their faith.

He knew exactly what was in that man's heart.

As God, He knew everything.

Here was a poor, prisoner, blind, and oppressed.

All of them had faith!

It was not the faith of the four guys. It was his faith, too. They all had faith. It was more than just ordinary faith, this is strong, insistent, persistent. This is dismantling faith. This is indefatigable faith, overcoming all barriers, all barricades, all obstacles.

Now Jesus did heal people with no faith and sometimes He healed people with little faith. Sometimes He healed people with great faith.

No healing here.

This is salvation.

If your sins are forgiven, then you are saved.
Jesus saved the man from his sin.

Strangely, no one spoke. At least the narrative does not indicate anybody spoke. They did not make any requests!

How do you see faith?

Jesus could see everything.

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, particularly when you are like this man, a paralyzed man who in the social structure of that day would have been an outcast.

Not a leper in the sense that people feared that he had a contagious illness, although it was very possible that he may have since paralysis in some forms was a direct connect to venereal diseases.

But this man would have been an outcast socially and to embarrassingly plop himself in the middle of this thing by dismantling the roof would take a tremendous amount of faith that Jesus was going to do something dramatic to change the situation.

V 20, *"And seeing their faith, He said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.'"*

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 forgiveness.

- Nobody is ever going to be forgiven by proxy. It was not the faith of his friends that brought about his forgiveness.
- Nobody is ever going to be delivered from sin, delivered from judgment based on somebody else's faith.
- Nobody is ever going to be delivered and forgiven apart from their own faith and repentance.

Jesus healed people who did not have faith.

He healed some people who had a little faith and healed other people who had a lot of faith. But He never saved anybody who did not have faith.

Salvation has always been by 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 that He forgave his sins He had not healed him. That comes later in verse 24 where He says to him, "Get up."

Before He ever dealt with the physical problem, He forgave his sin. The man came and he 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 did not happen.

There had not been healings in Israel for 500 years when Jesus arrived. They were not common, and they knew this was very unusual as people were being healed everywhere Jesus went. He knew He was a messenger from God.

But the real cry of his heart was not the physical need.

The real cry of his heart was for forgiveness.

Jesus read his heart. Everywhere He went He preached forgiveness. He preached the good news to the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed.

Jesus preached that men were sinners, desperately needing forgiveness and mercy. That is 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 could not stand the idea that they would have to reassess themselves as sinners.

When the Lord looked at this man, He saw not a paralyzed man, a paralytic, He saw a sinner. He saw a sinner who believed that God was merciful and a sinner who desperately wanted God to forgive him because that is the condition of heart to which God responds with forgiveness.

He called him "Friend." Friend, son, the language of the kingdom. God does not call people "friend" lightly.

Matthew and Mark say He also said, "son." So, he was both a friend and a son.

Matthew writes, "*Son take courage.*"

"Friend, your sins are forgiven you," in the Greek, means a permanent condition.

The man is shaken with grief and fear over his sins and that is what gripped his soul. He wants to get to Jesus because he is heard the message.

He wanted a heavenly healer, but more, he wanted a heavenly forgiver.

Jesus knew what he wanted.

Jesus knew what he needed.

- ✓ No one's ever forgiven apart from faith!
- ✓ No one's ever forgiven apart from repentance!!

We know that if Jesus forgave his sins, he believed that God would forgive, and he had a penitent heart.

Jesus saw in the man's heart repentance.

He saw in the man's heart a longing to be forgiven.

This man knew he could not earn his salvation by works.

This man did not 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. Jesus gave it to him.

The sinner had to look at his own heart and see that he had violated the law of God and violated the law of God.

Where you have looked to yourself against the law of God and you know you fall short, and you know you are a sinner, and you desperately need forgiveness. You come to God who alone can give it.

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, prisoners, blind, oppressed, and he was one of those and he needed deliverance from sin and that is why he came.

Jesus knew that was in his heart and so He forgave him.

Forgiveness in the Old Testament:

Was it necessary for that man to believe that Jesus was God?

Did he believe that Jesus was God?

It does not say that.

It does not say what he believed.

It just says he had faith.

It does not 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 Saviour, Redeemer of the world. It does not say that.

Was it necessary to believe that Jesus was God to be saved? 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,

They had no ability to change their condition as sinners,

They had no ability on their own to escape the judgment of God,

They had no way to achieve self-righteousness that would satisfy God's standard.

Therefore, they had to hunger themselves on the mercy of God and ask God to be merciful and save them.

That is the way people were saved in the Old Testament.

We do not know what this man believed about Jesus.

He certainly believed that He was preaching the message of forgiveness and he certainly believed that He had been sent by God because of the miracles that He was doing.

He believed it enough to believe that he would be healed and hope that he would be forgiven.

I do not know that he knew that Jesus was God.

He may have had that kind of thought, but it does not say anything about his view of Christ.

Luke 18.

Very familiar passage.

Luke 18:9-10, *Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:*¹⁰ *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

We have is the extremes, the 180-degree poles here. The Pharisee who is at the pinnacle of religiosity and the tax gatherer, who is the scum of the scum, who is a Jew who has bought a Roman tax franchise and is now extorting money from his own people, traitor of all traitors.

Luke 18:11-14, *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.*¹² *I fast twice a week; I give*

tithes of all that I possess.’¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The tax collector all he says is that "God, be merciful to me, the sinner."

He does not say anything about Jesus.

He does not say that he believes Jesus is God.

He just measured against God’s law and realises that he was wretched and broken in his heart crying out to God for His mercy.

Now Jesus said a man who fell on his face before God in the temple and pleaded for mercy was justified.

Christ is not the issue here, yet.

The man was justified. It does not say anything about what he believed concerning Jesus.

What he did believe was that he was a sinner. He was distraught over his sin, and he had no hope. He was heading towards judgment. He was outside the kingdom and he had no plea except, "God, be merciful to me."

New Testament:

Now after the cross and after the resurrection, the matter of faith for salvation is still in place, but what one believes is critical.

Romans 10:9-10, *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

Now on this side of the cross that content is added.

You still believe you are a sinner,

You still cry out for mercy,

but only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which was verified by God as satisfying through the resurrection.

There was a time when God overlooked some things, but now since He has sent Christ, He commands all men everywhere to repent and to acknowledge the One, the Man whom He has appointed.

Acts 17:30-31, *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in*

righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Do not expect everybody who is forgiven to have a full understanding of who Jesus is. They could not be expected to have that until His work was complete.

Now the touchstone of the work of Christ is that you must believe that He is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead to verify His deity. But prior to the cross and prior to the resurrection, it was a matter of believing God would forgive by mercy the penitent sinner.

V 20, *"And seeing their faith, He said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.'"*

So, Jesus at that moment, on His own personal authority absolved the man of all guilt for his sins.

What Jesus did is on the human level an abomination.

To bring a man into a courtroom anywhere in the world, who is guilty and declare him innocent is intolerable. It is a breach of justice.

Now to bring an innocent man into a courtroom and declare him guilty is a breach of justice that is intolerable.

It is an abomination to God that that be done on a human level, but God is able to do!

Because God satisfied His justice on the sinner through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ on the cross. God is able to do what man can't do, God is able to forgive sin.

Only God can do it.

When Jesus did it, He was making the loudest statement possible that He in fact is God.

Jesus continued to do throughout His ministry forgiving sinners.

Matthew called!

Luke 5:29-32, *Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. ³⁰ And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"*

³¹ *Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

Luke 7:36-50, **A Sinful Women washes the feet of Jesus Christ.**

Luke 7:48-50, *Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."*

It does not say, "You believed that I was God, you believed in Me as your Redeemer or God." You were a sinner; you came with a penitent heart and you believed in the mercy of God and you cried out.

This was a woman, who washed His feet with her tears.

That is the kind of people Jesus wanted to hang around, sinners.

Jesus did numerous miracles. Healed all sickness. But to change a man's moral standing before God, that is the greatest alteration of what is conceivable.

But here is Jesus and He alone can do it. When Jesus said to this person, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you," He set Himself apart from every human being who ever walked on this earth because He alone can do this.

No priest can do it!

We can tell people their sins have been forgiven because they have believed in Christ and been saved. We can affirm that.

You can forgive the offense against you, but you cannot forgive the offense against God. Only God can do that.

Jesus never met this person to say, "I am forgiving you for offending Me. Serious forgiveness.

This man became permanently forgiven.

He saw the wretched spiritual condition of the man and He said, literally, "Your sins are dismissed permanently."

At that moment, Jesus by His own personal authority absolved that man of all guilt permanently. Jesus came to save sinners!

He saves one man here. This man is the prototype of many to follow in His ministry.

All the Pharisees, Sadducees, self-righteousness are unforgiven.

One poor, prisoner, blind, and oppressed, one sad, wretched, vile, outcast sinner with a penitent heart desperately wants to get right in front of Jesus and have his sin exposed and forgiven.

Like **Luke 18**, the tax collector beating on his breast is forgiven, and the Pharisee who told God how good he was, was not.

Two kinds of people get in front of Jesus, the self-righteous and the wretched.

The wretched are forgiven.

The self-righteous are deluded and damned.

Who are you?