



God only can forgive Part 01.

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!"

Great and important word that Jesus gives. "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

The greatest preacher ever was Jesus Christ.

The greatest message ever preached was the message of forgiveness.

The message that God will forgive all your sins if you repent and ask Him is the gospel!

Jesus came to preach that message and He came to make the sacrifice to make that forgiveness which He preached possible by His death on the cross.

Forgiveness is the single most important and blessed benefit that God can provide.

- ✓ Forgiveness is the door to all blessing.
- ✓ Forgiveness is the door to blessing in this life.
- ✓ Forgiveness is the door to eternal life in heaven.

Forgiveness is the heart of the Christian gospel.

We cannot preach the Christian gospel about forgiveness unless we understand sin and its consequences.

To understand that all men are sinners, alienated from God, headed toward eternal hell where they will forever be punished for their sins and then to understand that God by grace has devised a means by which He can forgive sinners all their sins so that they can escape judgment and enter into eternal bliss in the glory of His heaven, that is the message of the gospel.

Any true preacher preaches that message because that is the message that goes right through the story of redemption.

Acts 10:43, *To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."*

Acts 13:38-39, *Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; ³⁹and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

We preach the forgiveness of sins both by Peter and Paul.

Ephesians 1:7, *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*

Ephesians 4:32, *And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*

Forgiveness is the distinctive about Christianity!

God will forgive all your sins, which changes forever your relationship to Him.

- Instead of being your judge, He becomes your Father.
- Instead of sending you to hell, He takes you to heaven.

That is the message that Christ came to preach. To provide that forgiveness He had to die on the cross and take the judgment of God for sinners. Their judgment having been rendered on Christ, God could then forgive those who repent and come to Him.

Most understand that that is the message of the New Testament. Perhaps they do not understand that that is also the message of the Old Testament.

At the very beginning when Adam had sinned, and God has cursed him. Immediately God killed an animal and to make garments to cover Adam and Eve in an act that portrays sacrifice. By an animal sacrifice which provided a covering for Adam and Eve's shameful nakedness, God was giving a picture of the sacrifice of Messiah, by whose death a covering would be provided for the shame of sinners.

Always God has demonstrated a willingness to forgive sin.

This is how the Lord identifies Himself.

Exodus 34:6-7, *And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."*

Three synonyms were used by God when He said that to sum up the completeness of God's forgiveness.

- ✓ He is a compassionate God.
- ✓ He is a gracious God.
- ✓ He is slow to anger.
- ✓ He abounds in loving-kindness, which is an Old Testament word for grace.
- ✓ He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin.

That is His desire and His nature.

That is why from the very outset at the Fall God set in motion a redemptive plan by which He could grant forgiveness, putting all the guilt of all who repent on Jesus Christ, who died as the sacrifice, the substitute for sinners.

Nehemiah 9:17, *"You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in loving-kindness."*

Psalm 103:12, *"As far as the east is from the west, so far as He removed our transgressions from us."*

How far is the east being from the west?

Infinite.

Micah 7:18-20, *Who is a God like You, Pardoning iniquity And passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in mercy.¹⁹ He will again have compassion on us,*

And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins Into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ You will give truth to Jacob And mercy to Abraham, Which You have sworn to our fathers From days of old.
Certainly, the prophet Isaiah understood the forgiving nature of God.

Isaiah 38:17, *Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back.*

Isaiah 55:7, *Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.*

Isaiah 43:25, *“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.*

All these scriptures and many more give testimony to God as a forgiving God by nature. He is the sovereign, divine forgiver of sinners.

God alone can do that!

God is the only God, the only holy God. He is the God who has been offended. All sin is against Him.

Genesis 39:9, *There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”*

Psalms 51:4, *Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight— That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.*

The Holy and eternal God is offended by our sin.

It is His holy will and holy law that is violated. God then becomes our judge and executioner. It is God then and only God who has the right to forgive sin since He alone is the offended One, and He is the judge of all the earth. God sits on the divine throne.

Luke 5:17-26 Jesus did an astonishing thing.

He forgave that man his sins.

When Jesus did that, He was either doing the work of God as God, or He was a blasphemer.

The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason.

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

They had good sound theology on that point.

Nobody can forgive your sins, no priest, nobody.

We can forgive one another an offense against us, but we cannot forgive anybody an offense against God. We can tell sinners that if they repent and seek forgiveness from God that God will grant it, but we cannot forgive sins.

We cannot say to anybody, "I forgive you your sins," in the sense that we have pardoned that person from all record of iniquity. That only God can do.

Either Jesus was God, and He had a right to do it, or He was a blasphemer.

This is the first time Jesus has said this to somebody. He has been talking about preaching the good news to the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed. He has been giving that message synagogue to synagogue, town to town around Galilee. But this very straightforward, very open, very blunt statement, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you".

Jesus is claiming to be God.

Jesus is either God or He is a blasphemer.

He is not anything in between.

He is not just a good teacher, preacher, prophet etc.

He is either a blasphemer or He is God.

If you say that Jesus is not God, then you are saying that He is a blasphemer and that is the most terrible crime that can be committed against God. The Pharisees and the scribes knew it.

He has already solved the dilemma for us!

We know that Jesus is God.

How do we know that?

Luke has made it abundantly clear.

- ✓ The testimony of angels.
- ✓ The testimony of Zacharias and Elizabeth.
- ✓ The testimony of Joseph and Mary.
- ✓ The testimony of Anna and Simeon.
- ✓ The testimony of the shepherds who heard the angelic chorus.
- ✓ The testimony of John the Baptist.
- ✓ The testimony of the Holy Spirit who descended upon Him at His baptism.
- ✓ The testimony of the Father by His Voice.
- ✓ The testimony again of His triumph by defeating Satan in the temptation.
- ✓ The testimony of His power over disease.
- ✓ The testimony of His power over demons.
- ✓ The testimony of His power over nature.

V 17, 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.

Matthew chapter 9 records the same.

Mark chapter 2 records this same.

John chapter 5 records the same.

Jesus cleaned the demons out of that man, sent them into a herd of pigs, at the end of the 8th chapter of Matthew.

Having accomplished that mighty miracle over the forces of hell, and delivered that man, He comes back to Capernaum, which has become His hometown since He cannot go to Nazareth. They tried to kill Him there.

So, He has taken up residence in the town of Capernaum which is right at the north tip of the Sea of Galilee, a fishing town. No longer there, as the Lord said it would be destroyed and it was.

Simon Peter lived there with his brother and his family and many believed that Jesus stayed in the house of Simon Peter.

This is early in His ministry and the message of forgiveness is the primary message that He preached. They tried to kill Him in Nazareth just for preaching that He was the Messiah, the fulfilment of Isaiah 61.

Jesus claims to be the fulfilment of Old Testament promise, the Messiah, that He can heal. His message is the opposite of the current Judaistic theology.

Their theology is that God will forgive.

Jesus is saying that I have come to fulfil everything and I am the God of the Old Testament.

Luke 4:23-30.

He illustrated that by saying that the Lord even in the Old Testament knew there were many widows in the land of Israel, but He did not help any of them.

There were many lepers in the land of Israel, but He did not help any of them.

In Capernaum and He was teaching.

He taught that salvation and redemption by the way that God would forgive their sins. That is the message of the gospel. That is our message!

His healings drew immense crowds and verified that He was of God.

Luke focuses in on one group.

"There were some Pharisees and teacher of the law sitting there."

They were one of four main religious groups.

1. The Pharisees.
2. The Sadducees.
3. The Essenes.
4. The Zealots.

The Sadducees were the religious liberals, denied the resurrection, denied the existence of angels and demons, etc.

They tended to be the power brokers. They were among the chief priests and the high priests, were the Sadducees, so they were the political branch, at least in terms of having the power.

The Essenes was another sect of Judaism at the time of Jesus, and they were the monkish monastics. They were the ones who did not want anything to do with the establishment. They wore simple clothes, ate simple food, and lived out by the desert.

They were the anti-establishment group. They were the ones, by the way, who copied down the Scripture which was found that we now have called the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Zealots were the nationalistic ones. They liked to sneak up on Romans and stab them.

Who are these Pharisees and teachers of the law?

The word "Pharisees" comes from the Hebrew term *parash*, which means to separate.

They were the separated ones. They were separated to the law, to God, they thought, to righteousness.

They disdained anything that in their minds violated that separation.

They were devoted to the Old Testament, but it was a lot more than that. They were devoted also to what had been written by the rabbis about the Old Testament and they saw the tradition as equal to the Old Testament.

In addition to that, they were devoted to the oral tradition, some of which had been of course written down. So, they were devotees of the system of religion which included the Old Testament, which included the written tradition and the oral tradition.

They were fundamentalists in the sense that they believed in the fundamentals of the Judaism.

- They believed in what the Bible said.
- They believed in resurrection.
- They believed in angels.
- They believed in demons.
- They believed in predestination.
- They also believed in the written law and the oral law and the tradition and the Old Testament.
- They believed in the coming of Messiah.
- They believed that when Messiah came, He would establish His kingdom.
- They believed a literal kingdom would come to Israel, that was the promise of God and the Messiah would bring it.

They were non-priests. They were not in the priestly line. They were laymen. They were devoted, however, gave their entire life to keeping the people loyal to the tradition, loyal to the system of Judaism.

They did not want the law violated or broken.

So, they developed this complex set of regulations, man-made, that they bound on people to build a wall of protection around the law.

To protect the law from being broken they thought they would have to reduce the law or define the law or apply the law in 600-plus little prescriptions that everybody had to keep.

But what they did was obscure the true law of God, the true intent of God's law, and they replaced it with this man-made complexity of their own invention.

Now Pharisees were a powerful group, even though there were only about 6,000 of them.

They were very influential because they were so fastidious, they were so demanding, and they were the ones that the people looked to as the source of spiritual life and conduct.

Israel went back to the land after the Babylonian captivity in 603, 597, 586 B.C. When they went back to the land, they began to re-establish themselves. God raised up a man called Ezra.

Ezra was a scribe. He was one who was studying the law and he brought the law before the people. Ezra read the law and put the law back in its proper place.

He called the people now to reaffirm their belief in the law and their worship of the one true God.

Under Ezra, a group of serious men began to develop, and they saw as their objective to keep the people committed to the law, to preach the law, teach the law and apply the law.

Over the years the group of men who were the appliers of the law, definers of the law, interpreters of the law, the theologians, as it were, continued to develop from the time of Ezra for several hundred years.

They developed through the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the reign of the Greeks and they developed through the Maccabean era and they developed through the Roman era and the Herodian era.

So, by the time of Christ this group of men who thought it their responsibility to protect the law and keep the people looking at the law and obeying the law.

By the time you get to Christ, it has developed into the Pharisees, self-righteous, hypocritical, degenerate, filled with spiritual pride, living according to external rules and prescriptions and totally obscuring the true character of the law of God and not loving God at all, but loving themselves.

Teachers of the law.

This was a group within the Pharisees.

Verse 21 identifies them in another word, scribes, one familiar to you.

In order to teach the law, you had to study the law.

In order to teach the law, you had to interpret the law.

So, these were the legal experts within the Pharisees.

There were Pharisees whose responsibility was the law. They would have been religious lawyers.

When you wanted an interpretation of the law you went to them.

They were the theologians. They were the elite theologians.

These would have been the PhDs among the Pharisees. They were also self-righteous, externalists, legalists, deluded, and their presence indicates that this was a high-level conference.

We find out in verse 17 they had come from every village of Galilee, Judea and from Jerusalem, so this had to be orchestrated, this had to be mapped out, planned, everybody was having to come from various places.

They were really the people who prided themselves on being the rich and the free and the sighted and the delivered.

Although most of the operatives in the temple were Sadducees, they still got the picture that Jesus was after the existing contemporary form of religion.

These scribes and teachers of the law sometimes with the Sadducees because the Sadducees were dependent upon them and they got together for certain purposes. Particularly, even though they disagreed, they were in two theological camps, they got together on one thing, they all wanted Jesus dead.

It must have been a large house to accommodate this group alone. If nobody were there but the Pharisees and teachers of the law, had come from every village all over Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, that would be enough to fill up a good-sized house.

They came to hear Him. They came to see Him, looking to indict Him, get rid of Him.

V17 *"And the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing."*

Jesus, of course, never ceased to be God, He was God, He came to earth in the form of a man, the God-Man, He never ceased to be God. But one of the things we learn in His incarnation, He humbled Himself, He took upon Himself the form of a servant. What that means is He set aside the independent use of His own deity. He set aside the independent use of His own divine power and attributes and He did only what God willed Him to do, and He did only what the Holy Spirit did through Him.

If the Holy Spirit had not done it in Him, He would not have healed. It was the will of the Father and the agency of the Spirit that did the miracles.

When the Jews came to the point that they said His power is the power of Satan, Jesus said these words to them.

Matthew 12:31-32, *"Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. ³² Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.*

The incarnation was a self-emptying, humbling, and becoming a servant. His condescension He set aside His own use of those powers and submitted to the will of the Father expressed through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

On this occasion the power of God by the Holy Spirit was present for Him to perform healing. If the Spirit of God had not been there in that power, He would not have healed because He limited Himself to that.

At His Baptism.

Luke 3:22, *And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."*

Luke 4:1, *Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*

Luke 4:14, *Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.*

Luke 4:18, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed;*

This is the way it is in His ministry. He is subject to the will of the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit in the time of His humiliation.

Acts 10:38, *how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.*

He was God but He set aside the independent use of deity and God had to be with Him in the form of the Spirit to do these things. That tells you the depth of His incarnation.

Jesus provides these hostile visitors with an unforgettable experience and a formidable challenge to their theology.

V 18, *"Behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed."*

Now whenever Jesus was teaching anywhere, He drew a crowd of people and within the crowd were lots of people who had physical problems because He was healing people everywhere.

Mark tells us there were four men coming and so there were four plus the man on the bed. This would have been a portable bed.

The man could not move. He had paralysis.

People who were in this condition were generally left out of society. They were not like lepers in that they had a highly communicable disease such as leprosy which with such vividly deadly effects.

They were allowed into society, but they were branded. This man bore a social stigma that would have alienated him, made him somewhat of an outcast.

Remember in John 9 when they went to Jesus about the man who was born blind and they said, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Jesus said, nobody sinned, this is an illness for the glory of God. But they always felt that in their self-righteousness people who were physically diseased or injured perhaps were simply bearing the consequences of their sin.

So, he would have been somewhat of a social outcast.

Here four of his friends bring him to Jesus. They wanted to get him right up there. They were trying to bring him in and set him down in front of Him.

But in the man's heart what he came for was forgiveness. He may have connected his sickness to his sin, and it may have been that that was the cause. That is something we cannot be certain about. But the man wanted forgiveness and along with the forgiveness is the healing. He knew Jesus could do both. I think that he believed Jesus.

Whether he knew He was God, I do not know. He believed Jesus was from God and he believed Jesus represented God and he believed Jesus spoke for God. That is implied in what happens. Surely, he believed Jesus could heal him, but more than that, he believed. He hoped that Jesus would forgive his sin.

These men tried to bring him in and set him down in front of Jesus. But unfortunately, they had no handicapped access and nobody moved.

There was not any side door or window. There was not any way to get in. They wanted to get right up there in front of Jesus and put that man right down there because the man was desperate, and they had captured something of his desperation.

V 19, "They couldn't find any way to bring him in because of the crowd."

Very resourceful, they went up on the roof.

This is not complicated. Most of the houses were one-story houses. This was probably a big house, sort of a ranch style house.

It could be a large house, probably was a large house for a crowd like this, just the crowd of the Pharisees and the scribes would have been big enough.

Large house with tiles. Luke tells us they got up on the roof and they let him down through the tiles.

They start peeling off the tile. They have calculated exactly where Jesus is down below so that they can take the right tiles off and put the man right straight down in front of Him.

They do not want Jesus to miss this man.

We can imagine this stuff is dropping down around Him as they are taking the tiles off. Through the hole comes this man, let him down through the tiles with his stretcher right in the centre in front of Jesus. That is exactly where he wanted to be.

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

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.
This is salvation.

This indicates where the faith of the man was directed. It was directed at the matter of sin in his heart.

Strangely, no one spoke. At least the narrative does not indicate anybody spoke.

They did not make any requests!

The man comes in and lying there in his paralyzed condition before Jesus. Jesus looks right at what is in his mind. He said, "Friend," and let me tell you something, 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.

"Your sins are and always will be forgiven."

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 has 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.

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?