

A Study in Luke

Week Nine

Luke 5:17-6:16

Day One

17 One day as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. 20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

v. 17 – What did the Pharisees do for a living? They had time to sit for days at a time and listen to Jesus teach. They had traveled to see and hear John the Baptist and now they were traveling to hear Jesus. Yet even though they heard a lot of teaching, they were unrepentant and hardhearted. Being in “church” is no guarantee that someone is a believer any more than being in water can make someone a fish.

Jesus was teaching, yet the power to heal was present that day. Don’t ever underestimate the spiritual power that surrounds teaching. If that is true, then why are so many Sunday School classes poorly attended and dead spiritually?

v. 18 – I don’t know if the paralytic had faith, but his friends and associates sure did. Who do you have faith for today? Who can you carry to Jesus in prayer? Who can you pick up this week and drive to church?

v. 19 – These friends were creative! They weren’t deterred by the crowd, but came up with an alternative route to Jesus. Some people get discouraged when the direct, easy path to Jesus is blocked, but these men pressed on. Do you need to press on today? Can you be creative in your faith walk? These men took apart the roof to let Jesus touch their friend. They had to tear up the roof, but they knew that their friend’s healing was more important than a roof that could be repaired later. Does your church put the needs of people before buildings? Do you?

v. 20 – Jesus “saw” their faith. Faith isn’t invisible, because faith without action is dead (see James 2:17). If someone were looking, could they see your faith today? What would they see you doing? And notice Jesus response: Jesus forgave the man’s sins. His friends thought his problem was healing, but Jesus saw the real need and that was forgiveness. Don’t assume you know what someone’s problem is. Don’t assume you know your own. Come to Dr. Jesus and let Him prescribe the real medicine for your spiritual problem. Truth be known, most physical problems are spiritual in nature.

Day Two

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

v. 21 – The Pharisees were like judges in an Olympic event, sitting by to judge the performance of the Lord Jesus. I have felt that same spirit in some churches, where the people have come not to participate but to evaluate. Some people feel that they must defend God and the purity of His doctrine. God needs no defenders; He needs worshippers.

v. 22 – Your thoughts are as loud to Jesus as your spoken words. Jesus always knew what they were thinking. It isn't enough *not* to say something; we must clean up our thoughts as well. We can harbor bitterness in our hearts and never say anything bitter; yet we are as guilty of bitterness as if we had spoken nasty words! Jesus isn't interested in cleaning us up externally, but rather internally. For when the inside is clean, then the outside will be clean as well. How's your thought life?

"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean'" (Matthew 15:16-20).

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

vs. 23&24 – Jesus performed three miracles in this scenario to prove that He is God. He forgave the man's sins, He "read" the inner thoughts of the Pharisees and He healed the man's paralysis. That was quite a performance, but some rejected His works and were offended. That is why Jesus did not perform a sign when the Pharisees demanded proof that He was God—He had already done so and they did not see or believe.

Jesus healed the man to show that He had the power to forgive sins. The Pharisees and others should have flocked to Him at this point to be healed of their sins, but they did not. Instead they tried to justify themselves and their doctrine by judging Jesus' behavior

itself as “sinful.” Can you imagine—sinful man judging the perfect God as sinful? That is how perverted man is, having eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man had set himself up to judge God and His motives. Sin perverts and twists all of life and creation. Someone once said that we don’t know how far man fell until we begin the journey back to God.

v. 25 – What a scene! Immediately this man rose up and walked home, praising God as he went. What a service they had that day! I love that the man took his mat home with him. Perhaps he wanted a souvenir of the occasion, or maybe he was simply tidying up after himself. At any rate, he went home with his sins forgiven and a resultant healing. Are you singing because your sins are forgiven? If not, you should be. Don’t take this fact for granted:

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives (1 John 1:5-10).

v. 26 – Everyone marveled at what they saw. Both the crowd and the healed man praised God. They didn’t have to work up the will to worship; their worship was spontaneous and real for they had all seen magnificent things from the hand of God.

Day Three

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. 29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" 31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

vs. 27&28 – Levi, also called Matthew, responded immediately to His Master’s invitation and left everything to follow Him. That is the model for how to follow Jesus: He speaks, you obey, totally and without reservation.

v. 29 – It is my humble opinion that Levi was familiar with Jesus and His ministry, or at least His reputation. What is the first thing that Levi did? He held a banquet and invited the very people that Jesus was trying to reach—the so-called sinners! If the Church could only recapture this truth—the church is a hospital for sinners and not a rest home for

saints. Spending time with a sinner doesn't endorse their lifestyle or behavior, but it does endorse God's love for them and His desire that they repent. What is your attitude toward "sinners" these days?

v. 30 – The Pharisees didn't complain to Jesus about His behavior; they complained to His disciples. They were trying to influence the disciples into a more "Jewish" mindset toward these tax collectors. Did you know that the Pharisees would not accept money for the poor from a tax collector? That is how much they hated them and their money, for the tax gatherers were considered agents of Rome against their own people of Israel.

Are you worried about contamination when you "touch" a sinner? If what you have can be affected by what someone else has, then you must ask yourself what it is that you have! Jesus was never worried about a sinner bringing Him "down"; His goal was to bring the sinner "up." With that in mind, Jesus spent a lot of time with sinners.

vs. 31&32 – I don't know if Jesus overheard what the Pharisees said or whether the disciples reported it to Him. Maybe He even knew the thoughts of their hearts as He had done earlier. At any rate, He responded as a man of purpose, for He knew why He had come and what He was to do while He was here. Dr. Jesus was here to treat His patients who were morally sick, weighed down by guilt and condemnation. He was only too happy to treat anyone who understood their sickness and wanted His help.

This should be the attitude and mission of the Church as well. God is not angry with the world, but the Church is. We must work to reflect the attitude of Jesus and not our own. What's more, Jesus didn't wait for the sinners to come to Him; rather, He went to them. The Church needs to step out from the spiritual "ghetto" that it has built for itself and engage the world, where the sinners live. Rather than run into the ghetto to escape the sinners, the Church needs to run into the outside world, to seek and save the lost like Jesus did.

Day Four

33 They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking." 34 Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? 35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast." 36 He told them this parable: "No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. 37 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. 38 No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. 39 And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'"

v. 33 – The Pharisees didn't think that Jesus' and His disciples were spiritual enough, so they asked Jesus why He didn't fast more than He did. They of course were still

criticizing Him for eating with tax collectors and sinners. If not careful, someone who fasts can have a sense of spiritual superiority over those who don't fast. Don't be proud of your spiritual disciplines. They are a result of God's grace, not your efforts.

vs. 34&35 – Jesus had a short time to conduct His public ministry and therefore the issue of fasting wasn't a top priority at that time. But Jesus promised that it would be once He left the scene. It wasn't the season for fasting at that time, it was the season for public ministry and "eating with sinners." Do you fast? If not, why not? While there are things you can give up for a time, like television, reading, certain foods, there is only one way to fast and that is to go hungry! There is no way around bad breath, headaches and fatigue when you fast. Fasting isn't meant to be inconvenient to the flesh; it's meant to kill the flesh and that can't happen with halfway measures.

v. 36 – The Pharisees were judging Jesus and His ministry with an attitude consistent with the old covenant. Jesus was establishing a new covenant. The old was a covenant of works; the new a covenant of grace. In the old, one fasted to earn God's favor. In the new, one fasted because he or she had already received God's favor. Do you see the difference between the old covenant wineskin and the new?

v. 37 – Jesus did not come to "spruce up" Judaism, but to establish something new that had its roots in Judaism. The old could not contain what Jesus was doing and that became clear as the apostles went to the Gentiles in later years. The old mentality or wineskin made it impossible to receive the fresh move of the Spirit. The principle is still the same today. Are you trying to fit something new that God is doing in your life into an old wineskin? Are you trying to put a fresh patch on an old garment?

See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 43:19).

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Before God can do the new thing, you must let go of the old thing that gives you security, comfort and a sense of identify. Are you holding onto anything that is keeping new wine from entering your wineskin?

vs. 38&39 – Every once in a while, I watch a certain Christian show where people sit on stage, sing old hymns, and act like it is the optimum spiritual experience. I enjoy the hymns, but I can't help but sense that those folks are trying to preserve a part of their past to which they are emotionally and romantically attached. That day is done! We need the hymns, but we also need the new things that God is doing to reach the 21st century world. Don't hold onto your old wine and consider it better than the new! Change as God wants you to change; grow as He requires you to grow. Don't be nostalgic for the good old days—they're gone! As one modern song stated, "These are the good old days."

Don't worship or cling to the old because the new is unknown. Trust the Lord of the new and help build new wineskins that will contain what God is doing today.

Day Five

6:1 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, "Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" 3 Jesus answered them, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 5 Then Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

6:1&2 – The Jews were so legalistic about activity on the Sabbath that during the Roman wars, they refused to even defend themselves on the Sabbath! The Pharisees were watching Jesus and his disciples to catch them in some illegal Sabbath action, which in this case was like shelling some peanuts. It is difficult to be around a religious spirit, for it is consumed with rules and regulations.

vs. 3-5 – Jesus responded by “giving them Bible” for what His disciples had done, likening it to the time that David ate the consecrated “show-bread” that was always present in the tabernacle. God did not judge David for what he had done, and neither would God judge the disciples for cleaning and eating some grain on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath was instituted to give man a day of rest and to point ahead to the day when any man who trusted in Christ would rest from efforts to try and please God. Because God had instituted the Sabbath, then Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath—He and not a Pharisee was the One to judge what could and could not be done. Jesus was taking back from religious Israel what they had taken and perverted through their legalistic pronouncements. Of course this angered the Pharisees.

Any person who maintains a legalistic view of the Sabbath doesn't understand how hard pastors and church staff work on Sundays. If these religious zealots were consistent, they would not even meet on the Sabbath for their meetings require labor on someone's part to make it all happen. I personally take the principle of rest seriously, but I have never felt that there needs to be a day of rest that must be legalistically maintained. Let me say that worship, however, must be a priority. I do hold to a firm but not legalistic view that one day in seven is set aside as a time when we honor the Lord and change our schedules to include public worship meetings.

Do you go to church on Sunday or some other day if you must work on Sunday? Why or why not?

Day Six

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Get up and stand in front of everyone." So he got up and stood there. 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" 10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 But they were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

v. 6 – I don't understand why it was lawful to teach but not to heal. Do you understand this mindset?

v. 7 – Religious people watch others closely, not to encourage them but to accuse and condemn them. We argue over so many petty things. Hold your convictions as your own and be ready to present them to someone who asks. But don't try to impose your denominational doctrine, preferred translation of the Bible or pet theology on someone else. Make sure you carry it out in your own life as a conviction that God has given you. You are not God's military police who are charged with keeping the Kingdom pure and free from "sinners." Rather you are God's emissaries. Represent Him well and accurately.

v. 8 – Jesus always knew the thoughts of the heart. He did not recoil from this confrontation, but set it up for all to see. While I said not to ram your convictions down someone's throat, that doesn't mean that you should remain quiet out of fear or unwillingness to offend. Peter instructed us:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:15-17).

v. 9 – Jesus was an exceptional teacher who asked a lot of questions to help people come to their own conclusions. Here He asked a question and no one answered. Can you imagine that the Pharisees felt it unlawful to heal a man on the Sabbath? Instead of rejoicing, they found fault. Instead of being happy for the man, they were offended for God's sake.

v. 10 – The Pharisees were not happy that Jesus healed their brother and friend. They were angry that it happened on the wrong day. *Lord, deliver me from any religiosity. Help me, Lord, to see things as you see them. I must be the one to change, Lord, not You or Your ways. Change my way of thinking so that it may conform with Your thinking.*

v. 11 – I have found that often the meanest people are those who know the most Bible. Paul warned us how to act when we think we know something:

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God (1 Corinthians 8:1-3).

He also instructed us:

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load (Galatians 6:1-5).

I think these verses are clear enough. Are you doing them?

Day Seven

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

v. 12 – Jesus was so busy during the day that He needed to pray all night. What was He praying about? Obviously He was praying about the matter of choosing His leaders. Jesus wanted to consult with the Father and choose the right men. It is often tempting to choose those who are most gifted or who seem to stand out, as Samuel tried to do before he anointed David:

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

You may be disqualifying yourself from leadership because you are looking at your gifts or lack thereof. But if God has chosen you to do something, who are you to say no? Or have you chosen what leaders you will follow according to how they appeared on the outside? Perhaps you need to have an all-night prayer meeting to get the mind of God where leadership is concerned.

vs. 13-16 – These are the names that Jesus chose, most notable of whom is Judas, who betrayed Him. Jesus knew that Judas would do this, but chose Him anyhow because the Father instructed Him to do so. There may be someone in your life right now that is there because God wants that person there. They may not do you good, but God will work something in you through their life. I was pastor to some people who did more for me than I ever did for them; they helped form Jesus in me. Even though they were difficult to work with or love, God had put them there for a reason. Do you have anyone in your life like that right now? Don't try to get away from them; embrace them. As one pastor said, "When God has done in your life what He wants to do through them, they will disappear." Amen.