

Luke 5:17-39

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

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."

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."

The Calling of Levi

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."

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

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.' "

Luke 5:17-39

1. What quality did Jesus see in the paralytic man who was lowered from the roof? What were his first words to him? (Vs 20) Is forgiveness a kind of healing?
2. Why did the Pharisees think that Jesus' words to the paralytic man were blasphemous? (Blasphemy means to speak irreverently about God)
3. What question did Jesus ask the Pharisees? (Vs 21) What is the answer? Why is one easier to say than the other?
4. From whom do we need forgiveness? To whom should we give forgiveness?
5. What kind of jobs do you think present the greatest temptation to do wrong? Why? Was Levi in such a job?
6. What was Levi's first action as a new follower of Jesus? (Vs 29) Who did he invite to his "new career" party? Do you think he was proud to be associated with Jesus?
7. What was the point of the Pharisees' question to Jesus' disciples in Verse 30?
8. To follow Jesus or to walk more closely with Him, what are (or were) the most difficult things (or ways of life) for you to leave behind?
9. What is the meaning of Jesus' response to the Pharisees in Verses 34-35?
10. What is the point of the parable Jesus told in Verses 36-39?
11. In what ways does following Christ require us to replace old habits with new ones? Why do we resist making these changes?

The metaphors were drawn from contemporary culture in the time of Jesus. Wineskins would stretch with new wine being put in as it continues to ferment, and then they would harden. If new wine was put into a hardened wineskin, the continued fermentation risked bursting the skin. Similarly, new cloth would be expected to shrink considerably, so using it to patch already-shrunken cloth would be asking for problems.

Taken together with Jesus' similar statement about not using new cloth to patch old clothing, this saying is often interpreted to mean that Jesus' new teaching will not fit within the Jewish religion, or within the religious structures of the time. Many, especially Christians, have interpreted it as Jesus saying he was the start of a new religion separate from Judaism, and from that of John the Baptist. You have to be careful of taking this too far, as some Christians have used it to propose new ways of being Christian or even entirely new forms of Christianity.