

**The Work of Christ that Destroys Second Temple Judaism  
and Establishes the Ekklesia as the Community of the Forgiven  
June 13, 2021**

Over the last three weeks, we have looked at the story of Jesus, Simon the Pharisee, and an unnamed prostitute in the city who had earlier heard Jesus teach on the forgiveness of sins and was filled with hope that her sins, which were many, could be forgiven. She has followed Jesus to hear more of His words on forgiveness, and she discovers to her surprise that He has been invited to dinner in the home of Simon the Pharisee. She has arrived to be part of the crowd that had gathered to observe at a distance what kind of exchange might occur between Jesus and a dinner party with Simon and his religious friends and associates. But as the event unfolds, this woman observes the way Jesus was being mistreated when he was presumed to be the honored guest in Simon's house. So in a moment in which her emotions have been stirred, she is moved to tears and is emboldened to bolt in uninvited to give to Jesus the honor that this proud Pharisee had neglected to show Jesus. She makes up for his deficiencies in the common etiquette due a guest invited to dinner. She washes Jesus' feet with her tears, wipes them dry with her hair, she kisses his feet and then anoints them with a vial of costly perfume. I spent last week recounting how the Lord strategically used this story in my own personal life.

This morning I want to turn back two chapters in Luke's Gospel to a similar story recorded in **Luke 5:17-26**. Let's begin by reading the story.

<sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> Then behold, men brought on a bed a man who was paralyzed, whom they sought to bring in and lay before Him. <sup>19</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>22</sup> But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, 'Rise up and walk'? <sup>24</sup> 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."

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

As we consider this story this morning I will insert some of my own translation preferences and emphases which can be noted from the original Greek text of the story. Interestingly, this story is found in all three synoptic gospels, while the story of Simon and the immoral woman is found only in Luke's Gospel. I want to look at this story in Luke 5 because it contains some common elements with the similar story in chapter 7. The stories are similar in three particulars. First, the person who becomes the center of attention in each story becomes such by a bold and even rude interruption of what was happening. Secondly, in both instances the person who becomes the center of attention utters no words. Curiously,

they are both silent. Finally, in both circumstances Jesus responds to the interruptions with the exact same pronouncement for the man in Luke 5 as the woman in Luke 7

Let's note how these three things unfold in the Luke 5 story. We learn in Luke 5:16 that Jesus has returned to the city (which we know from Mark's account is Capernaum) after He had withdrawn into the wilderness for a season of prayer. This time Jesus comes into the city quietly and is staying in the home of an unnamed host. But Jesus cannot keep his whereabouts hidden very long and soon word spreads quickly that He is back in town and immediately a crowd begins to gather at the house where he is staying to hear him teach again.

The crowd quickly fills the main room of the house, and as it continues to grow, the entrance to the house is jammed with people, and many can only stand outside with hope of seeing and hearing Jesus as He speaks from inside the house. Jesus then begins to teach this gathered multitude. Arriving late are four men carrying a quadriplegic man on his pallet. Clearly, they want Jesus to heal this devastatingly paralyzed man, but because of size of the crowd, they saw no way to enter and gain access to Jesus.

So they take their paralytic friend up on top of the roof, and without permission from the owner of the home, they proceed to remove the tiles from the roof to create an opening over the room where Jesus is teaching. They succeed in making an opening large enough to lower their friend down on ropes to an audience directly in front of Jesus. While we are not told, doubtless many in the crowded room where Jesus was teaching (which included scribes and Pharisees) probably started to laugh at this comical spectacle unfolding before their eyes of a man being lowered on a pallet through a hole in the roof to be placed directly in front of Jesus.

Jesus obviously has stopped teaching as this exhibition unfolds before everyone. While the whole scene may have been humorous to many, Jesus does not miss the spiritual significance of what is happening. The text says that He saw the bold faith of these men, including the paralytic and the men who brought him. Undaunted by the crowd, they had taken the bold initiative of seizing the moment by coming up with an innovative way to get their friend in front of Jesus. And as the crowd quiets down from this unexpectedly funny scene unfolding before their eyes, Jesus resumes control of the situation, and having witnessed their faith, boldly says to the paralytic, *"Man, your sins are forgiven you."*

What an opening line! Without any prefacing word, Jesus simply announces to this broken man lying on a pallet before Him, "your sins are forgiven you." The immediate reaction of the scribes and Pharisees who were in Jesus' audience parallels how we saw a similar group of religious leaders react to the same word delivered to the immoral woman who rudely interrupted their dinner party in Luke 7. When Jesus said to her *"Your sins, which are many, have been forgiven,"* his word of sins forgiven triggered the scribes and Pharisees some of whom may also have been present earlier when Jesus healed the paralytic. Again, their response is, *"Who does this man think he is that he can forgive sins?"*

In Luke 5, the response had been even more pointed and specific. Jesus' shocking first words to the paralytic that his sins are forgiven stirs an immediate reaction among the scribes and Pharisees, *"Who is this who speaks blasphemies! Who can forgive sins but God alone!"*

The reaction of the scribes and Pharisees at both events is exactly the same! They challenge Jesus' authority to forgive sins, and in doing so, while they didn't realize it at that moment, they nonetheless disqualified themselves as leaders of God's people! They demonstrate the blinded, corrupt, apostate

hearts that had irreparably hardened the leaders of first century Judaism to the Christ who was accumulating a mountain of incontrovertible evidence authenticating His identity as God's Messiah. They had rejected the one gift that Jesus brought as the hope of Israel—the power to forgive sins; and their despising of this gift, and their willful blindness to its blessing, is what was now establishing their self-imposed condemnation that was reserving for them a coming judgment in what Jesus describes elsewhere as outer darkness. ***The old wineskin of corrupt Judaism could not hold the new wine of the gospel.***

We have to take a moment to weigh the radical nature of Jesus' words to this man. ***The place and means for dealing with sin and receiving forgiveness in ancient Israel was the temple and the sacrificial system.*** If this man had wanted to receive forgiveness of his sins, he would have been required to appear at the temple with the appropriate sacrifice and go through the entire ritual of rendering a whole burnt offering according to the law. Yet here is Jesus, without any of this ritual, declaring to this paralytic, *"Man, your sins are forgiven you."*

***The reason this was so blasphemous in the ears of these scribes is that Jesus was in effect declaring that He was Israel's new temple, and the place they should now come to find forgiveness of sins. He was making Himself Israel's new temple where the issue of sin could be dealt with and forgiveness obtained. He was setting Himself up as a replacement for what God had established centuries earlier through Moses. He was clearly declaring that the most exclusive of divine prerogatives—the right to forgive sins—now belonged to Him, and that was blasphemy in the ears of Israel's religious leaders!***

***So Jesus proceeds to prove that He has the authority to forgive sins by joining His pronouncement of forgiveness to the man's miraculous healing.*** He knows the thoughts of these scribes, and so He challenges them. *"Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk?'"* And Jesus doesn't wait for the reply because the answer is obvious. So Jesus continues, *"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..."* He turns and says to the paralytic, *"I say to you, arise, take up your pallet, and go to your house."*

And Luke continues,

*"Immediately he rose up in the presence of them all, took up the pallet on which he had been lying, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never expected to see anything this remarkable and wonderful!'"*

***Jesus makes His power to heal evidence of His authority to forgive sin, and in the process He joins together two blessings that David had earlier declared to be the first benefits that belonged to those in covenant union with the God of Israel.*** In Psalm 103:2-3, David writes, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases..."* Jesus takes these same two benefits and ties them together at the very beginning of His ministry and thereby proves that His authority to forgive sins is also accompanied by His power to heal all our diseases.

***These two matchless gifts are by divine intention integrally joined to each other. And what was true in Jesus' earthly ministry is to become true of Jesus' earthly body, the church. As Jesus was the source of forgiveness and healing, so also the church is to become a refuge and sanctuary of forgiveness and healing. This merits closer attention, and we will have more to say about the joining of forgiveness and healing in the new covenant in a later study.***

For the moment, however we want to focus on the promise of the forgiveness of sins. ***The forgiveness of our sins is the foundation stone of our life in God. It is the bedrock upon which our whole walk and relationship with God is founded in the new covenant.*** The new covenant that Jesus instituted at the Last Supper on the eve of His betrayal, the new covenant that was finally ratified by His shed blood at Calvary, is a covenant first announced by the prophet Jeremiah. There are five promises that the prophet enumerates in that covenant. They are:

- That the law of God will be written on the hearts of all those who are part of the community of the new covenant;
- That the Holy Spirit will be given as the indwelling presence of God to all the beneficiaries of this new covenant;
- That the Lord God will be their God everlastingly and unconditionally, and they shall be His people;
- That everyone in that covenant community, from the least to the greatest, from the youngest to the oldest, will know the Lord God savingly, personally, directly, and intimately.

***And then he adds a fifth and final blessing of this new covenant. He says that all these preceding promises will become realities because of this final blessing. This is the blessing that is the foundation of all the preceding: "For I will forgive their iniquity and their sin I will remember no more."***

The word "for" prefacing this last blessing declares that this last promise is the basis, the reason, and the foundation out of which flows all the preceding promises enumerated. All the others exist because this one exists. In other words, ***if we did not receive the forgiveness of heaven, we would not have the law of God written on our hearts, or be given the gift of God's Holy Spirit to comfort, encourage and enable us to obey it. God would not be our God and we would not be His people. We would be without hope and without God in the world. We would be lost, strangers to any knowledge of God. But thankfully all of these are realities because this covenant climactically carries the guarantee that our sins are forgiven, and we are cleansed us from all unrighteousness.***

***This makes the promises of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:26-27 the Mount Everest of God's promises to His people.*** There are none higher Their fulfillment required the coming, the death and the resurrection of the God-man, Jesus Christ. And thankfully what was required happened. God came in the flesh in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. He destroyed the works of the devil and thereby rendered powerless the great enemy of God's people, and now we are living under a New Everlasting Covenant.

The forgiveness and cleansing promised in the New Covenant is not just a flippant change of heart on the part of God. It was preplanned and foreordained from eternity. It was the resolve that could only be found in infinite love. And in its outworking, it cost God the absolute greatest price that could ever be demanded of Him. It cost Him His one and only unique Son. It could only be won by an infinite sacrifice that had the power to forever change the landscape of eternity.

***If it were possible for the benefits of Christ's sacrifice to be exhausted at some point in distant eternity, if the merits of Christ could somehow be used up and run out at some distant time and place, then our forgiveness and cleansing is only temporary and a time bomb waiting to go off, and when the bomb explodes it will take all the other promises of God with it. But thankfully, the sacrifice of God's Son who took on the flesh to become our kinsman, did in fact change the landscape of eternity.***

It secured what Paul describes as "the ages to come" as he writes concerning the matchless grace that has rescued us from our trespasses and sins. He writes in Ephesians 2:5-7 that God has made us alive with Christ by raising us up with Christ and seating us together with Christ in heavenly places, *"that in the ages to come He might show and keep on showing the exceeding (the surpassing, the infinite) riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus"* (Eph 2:7). It is that same kindness that Paul had earlier described in Romans 2:4 as leading us to repentance, a repentance that means we have rejected any attempt to attempt to manage our own sin problem in a way that would satisfy a holy God. Repentance is not a sin management program. Our sin must be cleansed, not managed. We must have an eternity that is ruled by the love, grace, mercy, and kindness of God that at the same time has answered all the requirements of God's perfect justice, righteousness, and holiness. By the work of His Son, eternity was prepared to be the place where all the moral attributes of God were released to become the foundation of a perfect, full and complete salvation enduring through all the ages of eternity.

Without the work of our Great Savior whose obedient life and sin-atonement death secured our salvation, all that eternity would have attested and put on display would have been God's attributes of justice, righteousness and holiness in holding fallen humanity accountable for our sin and consigning us to an eternity of judgment in the lake of fire paying the infinite debt for our failed attempts to produce a righteousness that would win a favored standing with a holy God.

But Jesus by entering the matrix of the sin that had hopelessly entangled us established the only rescue from the works-righteousness supremely illustrated in first century Judaism. Their corrupt religion had carefully constructed a false system of sin management that they imagined would in the end reward them with the favor of a righteous God who would look upon and be pleased with how their meticulous righteousness more than balanced the scales against the minor oversights of their little sins.

This false system of righteousness is what created their contemptuous response to John the Baptist's call to repentance. Their response to John was, "We have no sins to confess, and therefore we don't need your baptism in the filthy waters of the Jordan river." The religion of first century Judaism produced a false righteousness that declared they had no sins to confess. This is why Jesus warned all Israel in the Sermon on the Mount, *"I say unto you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matt 5:20).

***Jesus could categorically affirm this truth at the beginning of His ministry in the hills of Galilee because of where His ministry would end on another hill called Golgotha outside the city walls of Jerusalem.*** There the sin debt of all awakened sinners would be stamped in blood with the word of Jesus on the cross, *tetelestai*, "it is finished—paid in full." With this pronouncement Father God in heaven agreed as the final verdict against our sin accomplished by the sinlessly obedient life, and sin-rescuing death of His Son, which would be followed by His salvation-sealing glorious resurrection.

The blessings assured by His death and resurrection, Jesus had already begun to display ahead of schedule during His earthly ministry by releasing heaven's forgiveness and healing to sinners like the man in Luke 5 whose life had been reduced to the slavery of a quadriplegic paralysis, and the woman in Luke 7 whose life had been snared in the equally-tormenting moral slavery of whoredoms. Jesus makes them both showcases of the most important truth that He announced by the authority of heaven, "your sins, which are many, have been forgiven!" This man and this woman will sing and dance together for all eternity in the kingdom of God because the Savior looked in love and compassion upon them both and declared, "your sins have been forgiven." And these same words now resonate down the corridors of time as the first words that sinners hear as they enter the kingdom of God established in the work of Christ by the faithful proclamation of God's new covenant people known as the church of Jesus Christ.

This message of God's full and complete forgiveness of sins was heard and rejected by the proud, blind, corrupt Judaism of Jesus' day, but a handful of religious outcasts received it the best news that could ever be heard by listening ears, and they became the early nucleus of a new people of God known as the church, the called-out assembly, whom Christ has received as the inheritance and reward of His sacrifice. And we, the church of Jesus Christ, are now the guardians and custodians of the truth of sins forgiven in the shed blood of the Son of Glory.

So when the NT enumerates the results of Christ's death, the forgiveness of our sins is described as secure, certain, and complete. Paul says, "*And you...He (God) has made alive together with Him (Christ), having forgiven you all your trespasses*" (Col 2:13). John writes in his first epistle, "*I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you (perfect tense—past event with standing results) for His name's sake" (1 Jn 2:12).*

This is the glorious gospel of our Great Triune God. Let's stand and join our hearts and voices together in praise as we sing the doxology to our Great God in closing our worship this morning!