

- A leper cleansed and a paralytic healed

- Miracle stories help in at least four ways

1. Jesus' miracles are pointers to the authenticity of Jesus' ministry

- Jesus' prayerfulness

- Paralytic lowered through the roof

- Jerusalem observers offended

- 'That you may know' - confirmation of Jesus spiritual authority

2. Jesus' miracles are samples of what He can do for us

Luke once again follows material in Mark's Gospel. Luke 5:12–6:11 is very similar to Mark 1:40–3:6. In our passage a leper is cleansed (5:12–26; see Mark 1:40–45), and a paralytic is healed (5:17–26; see Mark 2:1–12).

In looking at miracle-stories one should keep in mind the way in which miracles should be handled by the preacher and expositor. The miracles help us in at least four ways.

1. **Jesus' miracles are pointers to the authenticity of Jesus' ministry.** Here are impossible problems. A man is full of leprosy but knows that if Jesus is willing to act, the leprosy can be cleansed ^{☐1}. Although Jesus tells the man to be quiet about what has happened and simply register the fact of his healing with the authorities ^{☐2}, nevertheless the news of Jesus' power goes out everywhere ^{☐3}. It makes Him turn to prayer ^{☐4}. The prayerfulness of Jesus is one of Luke's persistent themes ^{☐5}.

Soon Jesus is famous. The scholars and religious leaders begin to investigate Jesus, at a time when *'the power of the Lord is present to heal'* ^{☐1}. A paralytic is brought to Jesus. The friends of the paralytic are confident that if only they can get him to Jesus the paralytic will be healed. Some houses at this period of history had tiled roofs. The man's friends go up the outside stairs to the roof. They pull up the tiles of the roof, and make a hole. I suppose one of them swings down on a rope and the others then lower down the paralysed man on his thin wooden bed. Inside the house Jesus and the part of the crowd that have been allowed inside are surprised to see a hole appearing in the ceiling. Maybe the owner of the house makes some protests but the friends promise to repair the house afterwards! Soon the paralytic is in front of Jesus ^{☐2}.

Jesus knows that the man is concerned about his sinfulness. Jesus addressed himself first to the spiritual problem *'Your sins are forgiven'* ^{☐1}. This offends the observers from Jerusalem ^{☐2} but Jesus then deals with the man's physical problem ^{☐3}. The crowd and the visiting Pharisees were not much impressed at the words of forgiveness, but they are highly impressed at the miraculous healing! ^{☐4} A miracle may be a confirmation of spiritual authority. Jesus underlines this point: *'...that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'* ^{☐5}. However it is worth noting that the friends of the man had faith in Jesus before they saw the miracle. The miracle was done for them more than for the Pharisees!

2. **Jesus' miracles are samples of what He can do for us.** What Jesus did before He can do again. However one must not go to extremes in this matter. Miracles cannot be switched on at will, and they cannot be 'taken' by faith. No one can take what God is not giving! The leper knew this. He said *'If you will, you can make me clean'* ^{☐1}. Miracles are subject to Jesus' will but they are a sample of what He can do at any time He likes.

☐1 5:1
☐1 5:1

☐1 5:12-13
☐2 5:14
☐3 5:15
☐4 5:16
☐5 see 3:21, 22 already

☐1 5:15

☐1 5:20
☐2 5:21
☐3 5:22-24
☐4 5:25-26
☐5 5:24

☐1 5:12

3. Jesus' miracles are parables of what He is able to do at a deeper level

• The physical healing illustrated the spiritual healing that had taken place

3. **Jesus' miracles are parables of what He is able to do at a deeper level.** Again Jesus makes a point of this very fact. The physical healing illustrates the spiritual healing that had already taken place.

Jesus healed the body as an outward confirmation of the healed relationship with God which had already taken place. He said 'Your sins are forgiven' first, and then added an outward confirmation. This means that the miracles of Jesus can be taken as acted parables of what He is willing to do more deeply within our lives. The Pharisees could not exactly observe the forgiveness of sin and they were sceptical about it. But it was not quite so easy to deny that a paralytic was healed.

Jesus heals us at more than one level. There is a leprosy of the spirit as well as a leprosy of the body. There is a paralysis of spirit as well as a paralysis of body. This man was doubly paralysed. He feared that Jesus might not be willing to forgive him. There was a paralysing fear in his heart as well as a paralysis in his body. Jesus can deal with both!

4. Jesus' miracles are foretastes of the resurrection

• Cannot be 'switched on' at will in this life

• But a greater healing is yet to come when every believer will be raised with an imperishable body

4. **Jesus' miracles are foretastes of the resurrection.** Miracles cannot be 'switched on' at will; they are subject to the sovereignty of God. Sceptics are not likely to see God at work in any way at all. Yet every miracle is a foretaste of the glory that is to come. Not every person is perfectly healed in this life, and some are not healed at all.

Yet every person of faith is on his way to a healing which will be vastly greater than that of the paralytic. Every miracle is a foretaste of what God will do for His people in the resurrection of the body. One day every ailment will be healed with a healing never to be reversed or undone. The body will decay. Even the paralytic died eventually. There was a day in his life when healing did not come. But the greater healing is yet to come. Every little healing is a forerunner of the greater healing to come in the body when every believer is raised from the dead. Every person who belongs to Jesus will be perfectly healed: 'raised' with 'an imperishable body', 'raised in glory . . . raised in power', raised with a body which is a perfect vehicle for the Holy Spirit, the image of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ ¹. The cleansed leper and the healed paralytic were only given a foretaste of what is coming to every Christian.¹

Note

1. See further exposition of these stories in Mark (Preaching Through the Bible), chs. 3–4.

¹ 1
Corinthians
15:42–44, 49

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