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THE POWER OF JESUS.

– FEB. 2. – Luke 5:17-26. –

Golden Text – "The Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins." – Luke 5:24.

THE statement of verse 17 shows the rapidly growing influence of our Lord even at this early stage of his ministry. From the wilderness scene of temptation and victory he had gone into Galilee filled with the power of the holy spirit, and his fame had gone out through all that region. He had taught in their synagogues and been glorified of all. He had come down to Capernaum, and the people were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power. He had healed the sick and the lepers, and had cast out devils, and the multitudes thronged about him continually. And so great was the attention which his teaching and his works attracted that Pharisees and doctors of the law came out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem to hear and to see. – Luke 4:14-16,22.

We next notice the great faith that so perseveringly brought the palsied patient to the attention of the Great Physician. Being unable to reach Jesus through the crowds that continually thronged about him, so great was their faith in his healing power that they removed a portion of the tiling from the roof, and, with his couch, let him down over the heads of the people. This persevering, trusting faith in Christ speedily received its reward – the forgiveness of sins and healing.

We notice that the forgiveness of sins was the first blessing – "And when Jesus saw their faith [the faith of the sick man and those interested in him], he said unto him, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." This evidently was an unlooked for answer. The previous miracles of healing doubtless led all to expect a similar manifestation of healing power; but as yet it was not manifest. There lay the sufferer before them all while

the people pondered this claim of the man of Nazareth to have power on earth to forgive sins, probably while the Lord was proceeding with his discourse, not allowing this incident to interrupt it entirely.

But there were some whisperings among the scribes and Pharisees present, who said, This is blasphemy. Who can forgive sins but God alone? Though their murmuring words did not reach the ear of the Lord, he perceived their thoughts. Their cynical faces doubtless told the tale of their scorn and unbelief; and their influence upon the people who looked to them as leaders and teachers was also manifest. Has this man indeed power to forgive sins? has he authority from God to this effect? is he indeed the Messiah, the sent of God? – these were the questions revolving in the minds of the people. And it was to awaken these thoughts that the Lord had said it. His words implied the claim of Messiahship. Truly none could forgive sins but God alone, except as his anointed and authorized agent and representative, and in his appointed way. The divinely appointed way for the cancellation of sins was by means of the ransom as the legal settlement of the penalty, and faith in Christ the Redeemer.

The faith of this man and his friends in Christ and his claims had been put to the test and manifested, and though the ransom price had not yet been actually given, the Lamb for sacrifice had already been presented by our Lord at his baptism, and had been accepted of God and was on the altar of sacrifice. And therefore, in view of the complete consuming and acceptableness to God of that sacrifice, Jesus, perceiving their faith, could then say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

We observe that the healing did not follow as a result of the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins was one thing, and the healing was another; and Jesus intimates that the same divine authority that was necessary to the forgiveness of sins was also necessary to the healing; and that if the forgiveness of sins was blasphemy, so also was the healing. From what they had seen, they must all admit his power, and consequently also his authority, to heal, and that the authority and power

must be of God. And this power and authority they must therefore recognize as the divine testimony of his claims to be the Son of God and the Messiah of Israel. "Whether is easier," said he, "to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Rise up and walk;" for the same authority and power are necessary to both. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he said to the palsied man), I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all astonished, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day."

Thus our Lord called attention to his miracles of healing as the divine testimonials of his claims to be the Son of God and the long-looked-for Messiah of Israel, to whom was intrusted the great work of taking away the sin of the world, and subsequently of healing men of all their infirmities, these all being part of the wages of sin. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" said John; and Jesus endorsed that saying by his subsequent claim to have power on earth to forgive sins. And the Father also endorsed his claim by granting him the power to do many wonderful works in the sight of all the people.

While the forgiveness of sins is an assurance that the healing, or removal of the penalty of sin, will surely follow, as the palsied man doubtless considered it and waited for the healing, it does not signify that the recovery from the penalty will immediately follow. The Gospel Church, for instance, receives the forgiveness of sins in this Gospel age; but not until the dawning of the Millennium will she be delivered from the bondage of corruption. But in due time the power that accomplishes the one will accomplish the other also; and by and by those miracles of grace which brought health and gladness to so many in Israel, and which attracted the attention and were the astonishment of that whole nation, will be totally eclipsed by the wonder-working power and authority of this same Jesus exalted to power and dominion over the whole earth as the mighty Prince of peace, who, having in the days of his flesh

redeemed the world by the sacrifice of himself, comes again to heal all their infirmities and to restore them to the fulness of divine favor in which is eternal life and peace.

Blessed be God! it is as easy to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, as to say, Rise up and walk, and vice versa; for both the authority and the power are committed unto Jehovah's Anointed, in whom is all our hope and all our trust.

It will be observed that all the healings performed by our Lord were both instantaneous and complete, showing the fulness of his authority and power, and they included the worst forms of disease – leprosy, palsy, blindness from birth, and even awakenings from death. In all these respects [R1921 : page 22] they differed from the healings we hear of to-day, many of which are somewhat remarkable; and when the agents and agencies employed are not in opposition to the Lord and his truth, we are justified in accepting them as slight intimations to men that the times of restitution are at hand, and as a preparation for the great restoring work which may be expected as soon as the world's great tribulation is past.

Other manifestations of healing power through agencies in subtle opposition to the Lord and his Word of truth, such, for instance, as Christian Science, so called, we can only regard as the efforts of Satan to offset the power of God, which is now occasionally and partially manifested as a mere intimation of coming blessings to lead men gradually to expect their fulness.*

See The Epistle of James, in our issue of May 15, '92.
