

**TANGAZA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
URBANIANA PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**

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**HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC IN LUKE 5:17-26:
A RECAPICULATION OF AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE
GROWTH OF FAITH AMONG THE MEMBERS OF OUR LADY
OF GUADALUPE BIBLE STUDY GROUP**

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A Long Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in
Sacred Theology

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DECLARATION

I, here undersigned, declare that this long essay is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology. It has never been submitted to any college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my beloved parents, Mr Fredrick Byaruhanga and Mrs Fausta Tushemereirwe for through them I came to this world, their loving care nurtured me to who I am and whose Catholic faith laid a firm foundation to my religious vocation.

To my dearest siblings: Friday Wilbroad, Niwahereza Sebastian, Arinaitwe Selestine, Owomugisha Godian and Fatima Nyakato. Your affection has always been a source of love and joy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Books of the Bible

1Cor	1Corinthians
1Sam	The First Book of Samuel
2Sam	The Second Book of Samuel
Acts	Acts of the Apostles
Col	Colossians
Dan	Daniel
Deut	The Book of Deuteronomy
Ezek	Ezekiel
Hab	Habakkuk
Isa	Isaiah
John	The Gospel of St John
Lev	The Book of Leviticus
Luke	The Gospel of St Luke
Mark	The Gospel of St Mark
Matt	The Gospel of St Matthew
Ps	Psalms
Rom	Romans
Sir	Sirach
1Tim	1Timothy

Other Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini
BC	Before Christ
Cf.	Confer
Etc	Et Cetera
GS	<i>Gaudium et spes</i> : The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World
HBC	Harper's Bible Commentary
IBC	International Bible Commentary
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> : The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church
NAB	New African Bible
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Motivation and Aim of the Study

Having been here in Tangaza University College for four years studying theology, I am interested in Holy Scripture. Due to the great importance that Jesus lays on faith as a requirement to attain eternal life, I am inspired to choose the topic: “Healing of the Paralytic Man in Luke 5:17- 26 as a recapitulation of and contribution to the growth of faith among the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group.”

Throughout his ministry, Jesus emphasized that having faith in him and believing him as Son of God is a criterion to merit eternal life. In the Gospel of John, Jesus vividly says that, “... whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live” (John 11:25) and whoever does not believe in in him will die in sins (cf. John 8:24). Thus, the theological virtue of faith is very core to Christian life that without it, one’s works would be in vain for he would never merit heaven. One’s works must be united with faith in Jesus for through him we are saved. Jesus is the way, the truth and life (cf. John 14:6) and thus, without faith in him, one must be astray and without life.

Hence, this paper keenly looks at the paralytic man in Luke 5:17-26 as one who lived a life of faith in Jesus and was saved. Before he encountered Jesus, his life was in shambles both physically and spiritually for he had not encountered Jesus who is the source of life. After meeting with Jesus, he regained his life. This paper therefore, will put up various ways through which the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group can live as a means to grow in faith. Once they remain in Christ, he will remain in them. He will be the vine and they will be the branches.

2. Purpose of the Study

My purpose is to assure the members of the Bible study group at Our Lady of Guadalupe and other readers of this work that even though it is a demanding task to keep faith in Jesus mainly due to human pride that comes with the tendency to always want to depend on human abilities other than God's grace, it is possible to have strong faith in Jesus. What is required is to imitate the paralytic man in Luke 5:17-26, recognizing that each and every individual is both spiritually and physically paralyzed in in one way or the other and so put all trust in Jesus who can only liberate us and bring us to salvation.

This paper seeks to ask and answer questions like: What is the meaning of faith? Why did Jesus require faith in him as a criterion for forgiveness and healing? Why does Jesus require faith in him as a necessity to be saved? This paper will also discuss in details how Luke 5:17-26 can provide practical ways how the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group can live a life of faith. Our Lady of Guadalupe parish is surrounded by slums where there are many upcoming protestant churches, Catholics who backslide in faith join them. Thus, by providing ways how faith can be kept and strengthened, the members of Bible study group will in return do evangelization to

strengthen faith of their brothers and sisters by enlightening them with the ways offered in this paper as a means to grow in faith.

3. Sources, Method and the Content of the Research Work

To properly be successful in the above-mentioned purpose of this research work, I intend to carry out a comprehensive library research from different Biblical works, books, commentaries, biblical series, Bible dictionaries, articles and journals. On-line or internet research will also be done. The basic nature of the method is exegesis of the text.

The paper will be divided into three chapters beginning with general introduction which gives brief reasons, motive and purpose of the study. Each chapter will start with its own brief introduction and will have its own conclusion at the end. Chapter one will be concerned with the background and the structure of the text under study. Chapter two treats the exegesis of the pericope under study in its details. Chapter three will show how Luke 5:17-26 is an ideal text for the growth of faith. From this text, the paper will show various ways how faith can be lived and strengthened.

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF LUKE 5:17-26

1. Introduction

This Chapter intends to cover the background of Luke 5:17-26 and some of the texts that probably influenced it. This chapter begins with delimitation of the text, then follows the context of the text manifested in the remote and immediate contexts. Other core elements include: Judaism as the milieu of Jesus' life, monotheism in Judaism, second Temple Judaism as the setting of Jesus activity, forgiveness as a precondition for healing, healing in the Jewish worldview, sickness as a consequence of sin, grace and forgiveness, forgiveness and debt, forgiveness as letting go, interpreting *aphiemi* and *aphesis*, forgiveness in Mark, forgiveness in Luke, forgiveness and healing. Finally, the conclusion will be drawn.

2. Delimitation of the Text

2.1. Terminus a Quo

Terminus a Quo refers to the point where something begins. It is from the Latin term *terminus* which connotes the “end from which.” Luke 5:17-25 comes soon after Jesus’ manifesto in Luke 4:18-19. Therefore Luke 5:17-25 is part of the first events of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Luke 5:17 is the first verse of our text. It shows the setting of the pericope, the audience and the source of the authority of Jesus.

2.2. Terminus ad Quem

Terminus ad Quem refers to the point where something ends. It has its source from Latin word meaning “the end.” Though Luke 5:17-25 belongs to the Galilean ministry, it has a specific and unique message it wants to bring out which probably other texts within the large Galilean ministry cannot offer. The whole section, beginning with audience (17) is rounded off by verse 26 which manifests the astonishment, awe and their seeing of incredible things in Jesus.

3. Context of the Text

All scripture texts have a viewpoint. That is, the reader can partake in finding out the meaning of the text but he cannot determine its meaning. To properly understand the text, one needs to pay attention to contextual markers within the text which lead the interpreter towards a suitable grasp of the pericope. Thus, the reader should bear in mind that the text is mediated by the text itself. While stressing the textual meanings in history, the elements of concern of the current reader cannot be taken for granted. It is the role of the pericope to bridge the gap amid the reader and the text. Thus, it is past due to its

origin in history and at the same time present with the capacity to influence the reader with its message. Hence, we can neither neglect the remote context due to the text's origin in history nor ignore the immediate context of the text due its effect in the present. The remote context treats the outward structure of the pericope while the immediate context treats the pericope's innermost being that concerns the impact of the text on the reader.¹

3.1 Remote Context

To know the influence of Luke 5:17-25, one has to look at some core events of Jesus' activity in Galilee. Jesus activity in Galilee echoes Isaiah:

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; He has sent me to bring good news to the afflicted, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord and a day of vindication by our God; to comfort all who mourn (Isa 61:1-2).²

The question is: why would Jesus, having announced God's special concern for the poor and oppressed (Luke 4:18-19), chooses faith to be the setting for an individual to attain salvation? During Jesus' Galilean ministry there are many events of healing but this healing comes after portraying faith. Jesus amazed at their faith fulfills Isa 61:1-2 in their presence.

Luke 4:28-29 tells us that beginning his public ministry in Galilee specifically in his home town Nazareth, Jesus was rejected by his natives who plotted to kill him before he actualized his mission. Going to Capernaum, Jesus performed healing miracles and people were excited yet on the other hand Temple authorities got angry to the point of

¹ See D.S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation: Then and Now* (New York: Bakers Books, 1992), 180.

² C. S. Stuhlmueller, *New Testament Reading Guide: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1952), 66.

wanting to kill him.³ The same scenario is happening in Luke 5:21 whereby forgiving the sins of the paralytic gets the scribes and Pharisees angry. Despite encountering such opposition, Jesus continues his mission because the Spirit of the LORD is upon him (Isa 61:1). Similarly, our pericope especially verse 17 echoes Isa 61:1 showing that “the power of the LORD” was with him for healing. God intends to save people and ultimately establish the messianic age. Luke puts Jesus’ ministry in the context of salvation history. Luke does not put it clear but from the fact that he quotes from Isa 61, we can assume that he shares Isaiah’s vision of the messianic age.

3.2. Immediate Context

The use of a direct “you” in Luke indicates the existence of both groups in Jesus’ audience; Jews, gentiles, disciples and other people.⁴ For Luke, fitting in God’s messianic age necessarily requires faith (πίστις) in Jesus. In Luke 5:18-20, πίστις is not only expressed by the men who lowered down from the roof the paralytic man, but the sick man as well manifested faith in Jesus. In the first place if the paralytic did not have faith in Jesus, he could not accept to be carried by his friends. Again, there was a possibility of the consequence of shame in case during the process of lowering him, slipped off the stretcher and fell down but that still could not stand between his faith in Jesus to be healed. The paralytic accepted to forego the mockery and shame from the Jews who due to sickness could see him as a sinner but gathered strong faith to meet Jesus irrespective of what the audience would say of him. Therefore, the pericope of Luke 5:17-26 forms a fundamental invitation to a higher Christian spirituality of faith.

³ See W.R. Farmer, *The International Bible Commentary* (MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 1389.

⁴ See J. L Mays, ed. *Harper’s Bible Commentary* (New York: San Francisco, 1988), 1023.

4. Judaism as the Milieu of Jesus' Life

Jews believed in God's existence. Thus, Judaism emphasized a continual belief that God is concerned with people's way of life. Jewish life was inseparable from the Torah which expressed various ways that God manifested His love towards them.⁵ Responding to God's love meant living under the commandments (מצוותיו) and this brought one to holiness, hence, fit for God's kingdom. Habakkuk held that commandments were meant to fulfil the prophesy, "The righteous shall live by faith" (Hab 2:4). Faith was manifested in the way one lived his life.⁶ For the Jews, the Israelite way of life reached its highpoint when they fully trusted God.⁷ Such faith will be chief during Jesus' ministry especially in healings where mostly Jesus required that the sick first expresses faith in him as a prerequisite for healing.

The commandments which were part of Israelites way of life and faith mainly entailed the theological conviction: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:4). Fulfilling such a commandment meant being righteous and having faith in God. The מצוותיו also encompassed ethical obligations like "What is hateful to you do not do to your fellow." To Rabbi Hillel (60 BC-AD 10) the mastery of תורה was fulfilled in the later mitzvot. Thus, תורה did not just call Israelites to imitate God in holiness "you shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy" but required them to respond by devout actions like loving the neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18).

⁵ See Jacob Neusner, *Judaism: The Basics* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006), 82.

⁶ See Neusner, *Judaism*, 77.

⁷ See Neusner, 79.

4.1. *Monotheism in Judaism*

Monotheism entails a belief in only one God who is supreme and has authority over all that is. Jews believed that God is one, merciful and just and expresses these qualities in his rule over creation. Therefore, core to Judaism, God is one and only God, unique, and there is no other. He is responsible of all that is, of all that happens and nothing is by chance.⁸ Hence, Jews did not believe that the world operated under the domain of several gods. He was the creator and sustainer of the universe.⁹ When they became sick, they found healing in God. In times of need, He became their helper. Even in the face of total defeat, God was their savior.¹⁰ Such a belief in only one God tells it all why most of the Jews were at loggerheads with Jesus' forgiveness of sins and healings as for instance seen in Luke 5:17-26, for to them these were prerogative actions of God alone.

4.1.1. *The Creed of Judaism*

The Jewish proclamation and belief in only one God reaches its peak in the Jewish creed שְׁמָעָא as laid down in Deut 6:4-9. *Shema* means "hear."¹¹ In reciting *Shema* which is the focal point of Jewish worship, Israelites profess their faith saying: "Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the Lord is one." It signifies a submission to God's authority. This proclamation is followed by the scriptural passage: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might." Additionally, they were to instruct their offsprings the words of *shema* and speak about them in every place all the

⁸ See Howard R. Greenstein, *Judaism: An Eternal Covenant* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 6.

⁹ See Greenstein, *Judaism*: 6.

¹⁰ See Greenstein, 9-10.

¹¹ See Neusner, 95.

time, placing them on their foreheads and entrances. These words were to be tied as symbols on their hands (Deut 6:5-9) so as to never forget the content of their creed.¹²

The Shema had a lot of impact on the Jews right from their childhood since Jewish children grew up being instructed by their parents on putting their belief and faith only in God. This training would in future create problems in believing Jesus as God. Jesus would not escape criticism from various Jewish sects like Pharisees and scribes since their knowledge of Shema tuned them to the awareness of God alone. Knowledge of Jesus as true God was unheard of in the Jewish Torah and that is why Jesus' act of forgiving sins is considered a blasphemy. Jesus' healings and other miracles are doubted since they belong to the realm of God alone.

4.2. Second Temple Judaism as the Milieu of Jesus Activity

At the time of Jesus, existed mainly three kinds of Jewish way of living. Three elements were highly emphasized: 1) The priests who stressed doctrine, law, and sanctification. 2) Jews who sought visions, stressed on prophetic eschatology that tended towards gaining salvation. This orientation hoped in a messiah who would liberate Israel. 3) The sages seeking wisdom emphasized a wise conduct of daily affairs by focusing on the תּוֹרָה with its scribes and teachers.¹³

Though much of these diversities swept among the Jews, some central beliefs and practices were shared in common. These common practices among others include: Love of God, obedience to the תּוֹרָה, people elected by God and entered a covenant with him, both had the same origin and were connected to the Temple. Ἰουδαῖος is a Greek word which means "Jew." Translating it in another way it means "Judean," hence, a person

¹² See Neusner, 97.

¹³ Neusner, 114.

who has or traces his motherland in Judea.¹⁴ This translation expresses the connections of Jews to their homeland. Torah commonly known as Pentateuch comprised of Jewish origins and practices.

As time passed, Jews developed numerous forms regarding interpretation of the Law. For instance, at the time of Jesus, though the Temple of Jerusalem was generally still significant, alongside it was a belief in a new Temple capable of overthrowing the previous dishonest Temple authority. There existed diverse sects like Essenes who lived a life of asceticism in the desert, who emphasized rituals and were conservatives; Zealots who were militants; Zadokites, the group that ruled the Temple; and the priestly group of Sadducees. These diverse groups held different views. The Jewish historian Josephus, at the end of the first century writes reporting that, at the time existed 20,000 priests, 4000 Essenes, and 6000 Pharisees.¹⁵ Pharisees aimed at purifying Israel by returning her to her ancestral traditions, to be at the forefront of studying תּוֹרָה and focused on cleanliness. They kept dietary laws.

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus appeared like prophets Elijah and Elisha due to the miracles he performed. Besides, many Jews saw in him the example of a great Rabbi like Hillel. At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus seemed to be one of the great teachers of the time. He preserved the basics of Judaism which reach climax in his great instruction: “You shall love your God with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself” which is in line with Deuteronomy and Leviticus.¹⁶ However, Jesus

¹⁴ Amy-Jill Levine, “The Jewish Context of Jesus,” <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/people/related-articles/jewish-context-of-jesus>, accessed 3rd September, 2021.

¹⁵ David Brooks, “Jesus is a Jew: The Ineffable Becomes Intelligible in Israel,” <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/jesus-is-a-jew/>, accessed 3rd September, 2021.

¹⁶ David Brooks, “Jesus is a Jew: The Ineffable Becomes Intelligible in Israel,” <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/jesus-is-a-jew/>, accessed 3rd September, 2021.

most of the times opposes these Jewish sects and offends them especially the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Sometimes he is a product of his time, yet other times he establishes a new phase, initiating a new Gospel, and so transcends his time.

Jesus was born into a period when Jews expected a messiah who would bring an earthly paradise in which no nation would rule over Israel. They hoped for a messiah who would bring to an end politics and history. Jesus, however, came not as a political liberator but a messiah who would heal all sorts of infirmities and cast out demons, raise the dead, offer forgiveness of sins and so grant a foretaste of heaven to come. He transformed the Jewish concept of a messiah.¹⁷

5. Forgiveness as a Precondition for Healing

Ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν (forgiveness of sins) was core in the healing ministry of Jesus. In the Synoptic Gospels, healing of the paralytic man in Matt 9:1-18; Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-25, takes place after Jesus has first forgiven sins. One would then ask the reason as to why Jesus had to first forgive sins of the sick yet he was physically incapacitated. In giving an account of that, it is important to first explain the understanding of sickness in the Jewish world.

5.1. Healing in the Jewish Worldview

The Israelite idea of “Yahweh’s healing monopoly” had a powerful, lasting effect in Judaism. Healing of sickness is Yahweh’s exclusive work. On the contrary, in

¹⁷ David Brooks, “Jesus is a Jew: The Ineffable Becomes Intelligible in Israel,” <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/jesus-is-a-jew/>, accessed, 3rd September, 2021.

Hellenism, more than one god could exercise the duty of healing.¹⁸ For instance alongside the healing god Aesculapius was Apollo, from whom he had inherited his functions. Jews highly doubted the physician's treatment and mostly rejected them. This was not only inspired by "Yahweh's healing monopoly" in Judaism but also the parallels in Hellenistic miracle reports that were against miracle healing reports. Hellenists mostly refuted the healings of physicians in order to let God's healing power shine.¹⁹ Seybold and Mueller expound on this saying:

The Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who lived in the hotbed of ancient medicine at that time and was strongly influenced by Greek thought, is critical of physician's help and the trust many people put in those physicians. He says the following about those who doubt God's effectiveness: For whenever something unpleasant happens, it is because they previously did not trust in the help of God—they take refuge in the earthly aids, physicians, herbs, medicine, mixtures, exact diets and all the other measures standing at the disposal of the mortal beings. And if one should perhaps say: "You fools, flee to the only physician of spiritual maladies and let go of the husk falsely named by mankind which is capable of suffering," then they laugh and mock and cry: That tomorrow!"²⁰

To the Jews, God is "the only true physician." We find something similar in an apocrypha writing known as Testament of Job (composed within Greek-speaking Judaism). In Testament of Job 38, the friends of the sick Job ask him: what do you want us to do for you? For behold, we are here, and with us the physicians from our three kingdoms. Do you want to let yourself be healed by them? Job, however, answers that "my healing and my recovery are from the LORD, who also created the physicians."²¹

In the book of Tobit, healing is justified and owes its origin to folk medicine influenced by magic views. This particular manner of healing is only possible because

¹⁸ See Klaus Seybold and Ulrich B. Mueller, *Sickness and Healing*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 105.

¹⁹ See Seybold and Mueller, 106.

²⁰ Seybold and Mueller, 106.

²¹ See Seybold and Mueller, 106.

the angel of God himself, Raphael, conveys the particular healing method (6:8) and finally gives the instructions for the healing (11:6-12). Yahweh's healing monopoly is thus preserved.

According to Essenes, sicknesses had demonic origins and could only be healed by magical means. To treat them successfully, a kind of opposing magic was thus necessary; its administration was mediated to selected persons by God's angels and thus could be considered legitimate. These angels revealed to Noah the healing of all sicknesses, "so that he might heal through the earth's trees [plants]." And Noah wrote down all they had taught him "in a book, about all manners of healing" (Jubilees 10:12). "Roots," "plants," and the "properties of stones" were considered to be magically effective means of healing in antiquity.²² Josephus reports concerning king Solomon's healing ability, which even during Josephus' time was still believed within Judaism as Josephus expressly emphasizes:

God also taught him [Solomon] the art of banning evil spirits for the advantage and good of men. He composed namely sayings concerning the healing of sicknesses and incantation formulas, with which one can thus bind and drive out the spirits, so that they never again return. This art of healing is still valid with us today.²³

The Jewish healing arts, to the extent were considered legitimate, differentiated themselves in a fundamental way from the more rational methods which were characteristic of empirical medicine at the time, a medicine having its main center in Hellenistic Alexandria. The physician's activities were strongly permeated by magical practices they justified by tracing knowledge of them back to God's angels or to Solomon. Demons and evil spirits were considered to be the cause of sicknesses.

²² See Seybold and Mueller, 108.

²³ Seybold and Mueller, 108.

Jesus ben Sirach stands before the theological problem of solving the discrepancy between the divine and medical activities. For him, too, the Old Testament conviction concerning “Yahweh’s healing monopoly” holds true; at the same time, however, he maintains the rational insight into the necessity of the physician. He attempts to transcend this contradiction by understanding the physician as a creation of God and his tool. He thus says:

Make friends with the doctor, for he is essential to you; God has also established him in his profession. From God the doctor has wisdom, and from the king he receives sustenance. Knowledge makes the doctor distinguished and gives access to those in authority. God makes the earth yield healing herbs which the prudent should not neglect (Sir 38:1-4).

My son, when you are ill, do not delay, but pray to God, for it is he who heals...Then give the doctor his place lest he leave; you need him too, for there are times when recovery is in his hands. He too prays to God that his diagnosis may be correct and his treatment bring about cure (Sir 38:9-10, 12-13).

If one surveys the view of sickness within Judaism, four kinds of explanation can be ascertained. The first one is that in Wisdom literature, mainly in the book Jesus ben Sirach, we find a rational view of sickness. Physicians employ healing substances that have a natural effect, not a magical one (Sir 38:1-15) for sickness has a natural cause. Healing is made possible by the emphatic faith in God as the only creator. This view, however, was not able to establish itself in Judaism.²⁴ The second one is that Judaism believed that sickness is caused by demons. Baruch 16:3 deals, in general, with sickness demons, and in the writing, “Life of the Prophets,” King Nebuchadnezzar is attacked by a demon who causes his madness. In the rabbinic writings specific spirits are assigned to the individual sickness they are thought to cause. The third one is that for ancient Israel, sickness, captivity and other threats belong to the domain of death. Whoever is so sick, death is exercising its power over him. He is like a dead person, since he has to come

²⁴ See Seybold and Mueller, 112.

into contact with the reality of death. This kind of thinking appears to have experienced a certain continuation in Judaism. Elisha “healed Naaman’s leprosy, who was considered equal with death”. This view did not have the same significance for later Judaism as it did in ancient Israel.²⁵ The fourth is that rabbinic Judaism claims a close connection between sin and sickness as the consequent punishment. God sees to it that guilt and punishment are related according to the principle “measure for measure.” Appropriate transgressions were suggested for many illnesses. Incontinence was a reason for a certain kind of dropsy that causes the body to be hard. Quinsy arises because of neglected fruit tithes or because of slander. Leprosy could be thought to be caused by acts like idolatry, profaning the divine name, and slander among others.²⁶ Thus, Because of the connection between sin and sickness, healing must be preceded by the forgiveness of sins. Rabbi Alexandrai (around AD 260) thus says: “The sick person will not arise from his sickness until one (God) has forgiven him all his sins...” (Ps 103:3).²⁷

5.2. *Sickness as the Consequence of Sin*

The Jewish word *pesha* is important. In secular world it means “to rebel,” mostly against another party that is related in some way to the one rebelling.²⁸ Rebelling leads to a breakdown of the unity that had existed before. The word פְּשָׁע also points to an intended act of the will on the part of the one rebelling. In the religious field, פְּשָׁע could

²⁵ See Seybold and Mueller, 113.

²⁶ See Seybold and Mueller, 113.

²⁷ See Seybold and Mueller, 114.

²⁸ See Daniel Durken, ed. *Sin, Salvation, and the Spirit* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1979), 42.

as well be translated as “sinned.” In Isa 1:2, the word brings out the deliberateness of the action so that Judah willfully revolted against the Lord and so disowned God.²⁹

Sin is an act that begins within the “soul” and proceeds with the outward action leading to final dissolution or death. Hence, to the Jews, sin as linked to פָּשַׁע includes the costs of the act. Pederson in line with the Jewish thought sees sin as a dissolution of the soul which “must spread dissolution round it.”³⁰ Hence, the Israelites saw some evil end as necessary consequence of an evil act performed earlier. To Gerhard Von Rad sin and punishment were inseparable. He says:

The evil deed was only one side of the matter, for through it an evil had been set in motion which sooner or later would inevitably turn against the sinner or the community to which he belonged. On this view, the ‘recompense’ which catches up with evil is certainly no subsequent forensic event which the sin evokes in a completely different sphere—that is, with God. It is the radiation of the evil which now continues on: only so does the evil which the sin called out reach equilibrium.³¹

From the Jewish tradition it came out clear that a person suffered sickness as a punishment for sins. The sick, not only suffered from pain, but was also confronted with the religious condemnation because of that affliction. People in a way believed they could even determine the kind of guilt. Jesus, however, as written in Luke 13:1-5, was against this understanding.³² In Luke 13:1-5, people tell Jesus about the Galilean pilgrims whom Pilate had killed during sacrifice. The Galileans’ fate provokes the question of whether they were particularly sinful. When the tower of Siloam collapsed, eighteen people died and this provoked the same question. Jesus answers: “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you,

²⁹ See Durken, 43.

³⁰ See Durken, 43.

³¹ Gerhard Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker, vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:265.

³² See Seybold and Mueller, 126.

No, but unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:2-3). Jesus rejects the dogma that misfortune is punishment for specific individual sins.

Jesus does not condemn this Jewish understanding of sickness as a consequence of sin but he is rather against the practical consequences of the religious view that a Jew who was not affected by a particular misfortune could consider himself not a sinner and thus not in need of conversion.³³ Against that, Jesus threatens: All are sinners, thus the conversion of all is necessary in view of God’s impending judgement of destruction. Jesus completely opposed this dominant thinking because it could lead to self-righteousness amongst those who were not affected by misfortune.

5.3. *Grace and Forgiveness*

Grace which in Greek is translated as χάρις means a gift. Gift and giving are core to the meaning of forgiveness. Modern English, French and German highlight the element of “giving” in the act of forgiveness. The rationale is that these languages retain the aspect of giving in verbs for forgiving (“forgive” in English, *pardonner* in French and *vergeben* in German).³⁴

In New Testament occurs various words for forgiveness. One of them is the Greek word χαρίζομαι which indicates that giving is core to forgiveness. In both classical and New Testament Greek, χαρίζομαι means “to give” or “to grant.” In the New Testament it is also used at times to mean undeserved kindness and goodness freely given. Χαρίζομαι is close to the word χάρις which means “gift.” Hence, one can at times suitably translate χαρίζομαι as “to give something by grace,” that is, to give something that is

³³ See Seybold and Mueller, 126.

³⁴ See Anthony Bash, *Just Forgiveness: Exploring the Bible, Weighing the Issues* (London: SPCK, 2011), 43.

undeserved or as a favor.³⁵ In the healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:17-26, Jesus granted (χαρίζομαι) forgiveness to a sick man without him demanding it for it flowed from Jesus as a favor that would lead to a spiritual and physical healing.

5.3.1. *Forgiveness and Debt*

Some New Testament writers use the two words “forgiveness” and “debt” at the same time and even interchangeably.³⁶ They connect debt and forgiveness of sins for in the Jewish thought, one of the words for “sin” also means “debt.” A famous example is captured in Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer which has a request that God should forgive us our debts. Καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν³⁷ (Matt 6:12). However, in Luke the request is that God should forgive us our ‘sins.’ Καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτοὶ ἀφίομεν παντὶ ὀφείλοντι ἡμῖν καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκης ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν³⁸ (Luke 14:4). Both Matthew and Luke are talking about forgiveness of sins, but with words that can refer to the cancellation of debts.³⁹

In Col 2:13-14, forgiveness is understood as erasing the “record of our debts” and taking away that record by nailing it to the cross. In Colossians there is a use of a commercial language. Some commentators hold that the expression “nailing it to the cross” points to the way how the cancellation of a decree or debt was publicized: the record of the now cancelled decree or debt was hung up by being nailed prominently in a public place for all to see.⁴⁰

³⁵ See Bash, *Just Forgiveness*, 43.

³⁶ See Bash, 53.

³⁷ *Bible Works 10*.

³⁸ *Bible Works 10*.

³⁹ See Bash, 55.

⁴⁰ See Bash, 54

There is a link between sin and debt in the first-century due to the social context of debt. A debtor ran the risk in a way that if the debt was called in, either of the two things happened: to be imprisoned with immediate family members until the debt was paid in full (Matt 18: 30, 34; Luke 12:58-59), or being sold into slavery, together with immediate family members (Matt 18:25). Furthermore, a debtor could also easily lose one's status and freedom to the creditor. Hence, being a debtor kept one dependent on others and so low on the social ladder.⁴¹ One can therefore link the idea of debt with the idea of sin in such a way that sin like debt affected one's status and freedom, since those who sinned stood under the judgement of God.

5.3.2. *Forgiveness as Letting Go*

In the New Testament, two words express forgiveness as “letting go.” These are: ἀφίημι, a verb, and ἄφεσις, a noun. Ἀφίημι ordinarily means “to leave” or “to let go.” The word by extension connotes cancelling, remitting, pardoning or forgiving.⁴² Ἄφεσις as a noun is related to the verb ἀφίημι. It appears only 17 times in the New Testament. It always points to an act of freeing from an obligation, or from guilt or punishment. It often means “forgiveness.”⁴³ Therefore, in Luke 5:17-26, Jesus had to free the paralytic from punishment.

5.4. *Interpreting Aphemi and Aphesis*

Different authors in New Testament have different views on the import of ἀφίημι and ἄφεσις. This is so because the New Testament authors explored new approaches to

⁴¹ See Bash, 55.

⁴² See Bash, 52.

⁴³ See Bash, 52.

forgiveness in light of Jesus' paschal mystery and his command to forgive one another. Treating the New Testament and its writings on forgiveness as similar more or less supposes that the theology of the New Testament is univocal when it comes to forgiveness which in sense is not true. Thus, understanding ἀφίημι and ἄφεσις in Mark as the first Gospel which Luke mostly abbreviated is very important.

5.4.1. *Aphiemi and Aphesis in Mark*

Mark uses the verb ἀφίημι in seven verses, or eight if we include Mark 11:26, a disputed verse, and the noun aphesis in two verses to express the idea of forgiveness.⁴⁴ These verses are; Mark 2:5, 7, 9, 10; 3:28; 4:12; 11:25-26 (ἀφίημι); and Mark 1:4; 3:29 (ἄφεσις). Simply adding up the number of verses where the words “forgive” and “forgiveness” are found, forgiveness appears not to be important in Mark's Gospel yet the idea of forgiveness has an important place in the Gospel, that is, in John the Baptist's message repentance aims at forgiveness of sins. Ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν (Mark 1:4).⁴⁵ People offered themselves in baptism and looked to God for forgiveness, because they were repentant.

Looking at John's baptism and the Old Testament, both presuppose that God's forgiveness and repentance are symbiotic. However, appears significant differences between the forgiveness that John the Baptist speaks about and the forgiveness in much of the Old Testament. At no point does John urge people to offer sacrifices for their sins. Instead, he urges them to be baptized, something never before required of Jews.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See Bash, 59.

⁴⁵ *Bible Works 10*

⁴⁶ See Bash, 60.

In Mark 1, another reason for the Jewish resentment of Jesus is that both John and Jesus offered the hope of forgiveness outside the context of Temple sacrifice. This meant a serious threat to the religious power and control of the Temple. It also denoted the possibility of Judaism being a living faith outside the control of the Temple authorities.⁴⁷ Jesus' forgiveness was for all those who believed in him whether faithful Jews, tax collectors, sinners or Gentiles.

5.4.2. Aphiemi and Aphesis in Luke

In Luke, it is only through Jesus that forgiveness of sins comes. Jesus "gives" forgiveness of sins to only those who believe in him and are repentant. Forgiveness is for all people, whether Jew or Gentiles.⁴⁸ The only words that Luke uses for "forgive" and "forgiveness" are ἀφίημι and ἄφεσις. We find ἀφίημι (to forgive) in possibly 12 verses in Luke (5:20-21, 23-24; 7:47-49; 11:4; 12:10; 17:3-4). There are doubts as to whether Luke 23:34 is in the earliest manuscripts. We find the word ἄφεσις (forgiveness) in three verses in Luke (1:77; 3:3; 24:47).

5.5. Forgiveness and the Wider Purpose of God

The Paschal Mystery is not the principle foci of Luke, though it is important. As a historian, Luke is concerned with tracing God's activity in human events and interpreting, explaining and setting that activity in its proper theological and historical context.⁴⁹ Luke gives much attention to physical salvation. People are not simply healed

⁴⁷ See Bash, 60.

⁴⁸ See Bash, 85.

⁴⁹ See Bash, 86.

(θεραπεύω), they are saved (σώζω). God's salvation is tied to faith. Salvation is a wholeness that affects the entire person.⁵⁰

5.5.1. *Forgiveness of Sins (Άφεσις Ἀμαρτιῶν)*

Since according to Jews sin was seen as rebelling against God, it is only God who had power to take away the guilt through forgiving sins. With such a tradition, the criticism of the scribes to Jesus' declaration to the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven is perfectly intelligible: "why does the man talk in that way? He commits blasphemy! Who can forgive sins except God alone?" A sharp instance of God's prerogative power to forgive sins is found in Lam 5:21. The NAB translation formulates it this way: "Lead us back to you, O LORD, that we may be restored." Basically, the two verbs have the same root and can be translated in the same way: "make us come back to you, O LORD, and we shall come back," or, "convert us and we shall be converted." The repetition of the same verb in both cases makes it clear that the action on the part of Israel is impossible without the prior and enabling action of God. God alone can convert a sinner, and then only by forgiving the sin, He can reverse the movement of hostility from him.⁵¹

5.5.2. *Jesus' Forgiveness of Sins and Healing*

Due to the fact that sickness was associated with sin, suffering could, however, be intensified by rejection coming from fellow men who considered sickness to be a just punishment for alleged or real sins. It easily resulted into self-righteousness, when a

⁵⁰ See Bash, 86.

⁵¹ See Durken, 45.

person was himself healthy and only asked about a sick neighbor's possible guilt instead of practicing solidarity in sympathy.

Jesus understood that sickness does not just mean physical damage, but also affects the whole person. Real healing was thus not just a restoration of physical health, but also aimed at acceptance of the whole person by God.⁵² So, healing was seen as a complete phenomenon affecting man in his physical, spiritual as well as religious dimension. Again, we must remember that sickness as a consequence of sin was not basically what Jesus was against. Jewish understanding of sickness had two parts, namely, one part was that sickness was a consequence of sin while the second part was that one who was physically well saw himself as righteous and so not in need of conversion. Jesus did not have problem with the first part and that is why he first forgives the sins of the paralytic before he restores his physical health. On the other hand, he is against the second part (one who was physically well seeing himself not a sinner).

Those who brought in the sick man expected a physical healing but he answers with the sentence: "My son, your sins are forgiven." The context of sin and sickness correspond to the first part of the Jewish tradition where sickness is linked with sins. Thus, the physical restoration of the sick person is not enough. Sickness is not just a physical problem here, but rather, in a comprehensive sense, an indication of the disturbed relationship to God.⁵³ Hence, Jesus first tells the paralytic: "My son, your sins are forgiven" in order to grant the total acceptance of the person by God. The text does justice to the Jewish principle: "The sick person will not arise from his sickness until one (God) has forgiven him all his sins."⁵⁴ The forgiveness of sins mainly intends not to

⁵² See Seybold and Mueller, 166.

⁵³ See Seybold and Mueller, 166.

⁵⁴ See Seybold and Mueller, 166.

liberate the sick person from an assumed feeling of guilt that in some sense is connected with the paralysis. The emphasis in the forgiveness of sins is for the sake of a spiritual healing that leads to a physical healing and so a full reintegration of the person into a community with God.⁵⁵

6. Conclusion

Chapter one has looked at the preliminaries of Luke 5:17-26 and what could have been possible influences on it. This chapter has clearly indicated that the significant aspects of the pericope are not only found in the Gospel of Luke but also in Mark, Matthew and Isaiah among others. We looked at Jewish monotheism which maintains that there is only one God, who has power over creatures and so no any other being can deliver man from his agony. Again, we have seen that Jews understood sickness as a consequence of sin, a thing that promoted self-righteousness amongst those who looked physically well. Jesus always opposed such an understanding and so called everyone both sick and well to conversion and faith in him. The chapter has shown that forgiveness of sins is important for both spiritual and physical restoration and reintegration into the divine community. The first chapter has also taken a step to take some decisions that concern delimitation of the text showing the beginning and end points. Therefore, this chapter has made justification of the limits of the text that is under study. With this, chapter one has set the ground for carrying out the exegesis of the text as the chief work of second chapter.

⁵⁵ See Seybold and Mueller, 148.

CHAPTER II

EXEGESIS OF LUKE 5:17-26

1. Introduction

In chapter I we have looked at the background of the pericope under study. This chapter though having the exegesis of the text at heart, will also look at the literary dependence, the structure of the text, the message of the text which comes out clearly by looking at the controversy, the source of the controversy, how to resolve the controversy, how healing extends to Jesus and the message we get from the reactions. Then we will draw the conclusion.

2. Literary Dependence or Common Source Tradition

The act of healing the paralytic man is found respectively in the three synoptic Gospels. However, there are quite some obvious differences due to different viewpoints in the theological interests of each of the three evangelists. Luke mostly adjusts Mark's account but the elements which he deviates from Mark become very core. Initially

Mark 2:1-12 report a healing excluding the dispute regarding blasphemy and the authority to forgive sins. However, Luke cannot do without maintaining the Markan themes of teaching and healing in his report.¹

While Luke puts emphasis on manifestation of God's power for healing as seen at the beginning of the pericope, Mark on his part opens the pericope of healing (2:1) with the crowds gathering together in the house where Jesus was to the point that there is no space even at the door. Thus, at the start of the text, in Luke we see a calm atmosphere where as in Mark we see some conflict scene from which the scribes and Pharisees criticize Jesus.² The ending of both Luke and Mark seems to have an affinity whereby Luke ends with Jesus' victory over his opponents and the result is that the crowds are filled with fear and glorify God. Mark ends focusing on the aspect of wonder in order to suit "charismatic" theology which is also core in Luke.³ Matthew on the other hand has difficulties with this account from the beginning looking at the way he has structured the order of events. Matthew abbreviates the account to stress miracles in Gospel stories. The Matthean account is nearly 40 per cent shorter than Mark's account omitting some details.⁴ Luke locates this account just after the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac. Thus, he integrates an extra geographical setting where Jesus has to navigate back across the Lake of Galilee to his own city.

Luke changes the Markan ordinary Palestinian roof through which the paralyzed man's friend broke to bring him down and replaces it with a roof that suits the sophisticated Greco-Roman tiled roofing style of the time. Again, in Luke, the paralytic is lowered

¹ See Alan Culpepper, *The New Interpreters Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 122.

² See Keil J. Howard, *Disease and Healing in the New Testament: An Analysis and Interpretation* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), 75.

³ See Howard, 75.

⁴ See Howard, 76.

down διὰ τῶν κεράμων on a couch (κλίνη) as opposed to a simple pallet (κράβατος).⁵ On his part, Matthew points to the sick man as lying on a κλίνη without either commending that the healed man was supposed to carry it home. Matthew does not offer the Markan and Lukan version of drama of lowering down the paralytic through the roof but goes straight to the point that the faith shown by the sick man's friends in bringing him for healing moved Jesus to effect healing.⁶

Mark states the status of the paralyzed man as a child (τέκνον), a status that Matthew has faithfully maintained. Luke, on the other hand uses totally a different status from a "child" to a "man" (ἄνθρωπος). The Markan unfamiliar kind of address to the paralytic as a child is the only instance in Mark where Jesus addressed someone as "child." In other instances where such a term applies, it bears the usual connotation of a child or it applies as a familiar term between parent and a grown-up member of the household (7:27; 10:24, 29, 13:12 etc). It is not hard to find out the reason as to why Mark used such an address apart from having a memory from the tradition that the healed person was young, perhaps a juvenile as opposed to full adult. The use of a child as referring to the paralytic prompts possibilities of finding the cause of the paralysis. Trauma is one of the most causes of paralysis though there is no any hint on this in the story. However, looking at the story of Mephibosheth in 2 Sam 4:4, we find that his lameness was built on the fact that his nurses dropped him while a little child. Again, his lameness is thought to be a result of a birth defect due to the looseness of spinal nerves that led to a tumor.⁷ However, it looks more probable that the primary root of the paralysis was more functional than organic. Many suggest that this illness denotes

⁵ See Howard 76.

⁶ See Howard 76.

⁷ See Short A. Rendle, *The Bible and Modern Medicine* (London: Paternoster Press, 1953), 105.

another instance of conversion or somatization disorder, especially in the case where Mark tells us that the patient was a child since such illnesses are common among the young.

Like the Capernaum demoniac and the Lucan paralytic, discussions hold that majority of illnesses with such physical symptoms are linked to ailments of the central nervous system.⁸ Thus, the paralysis of voluntary muscles sought attention of the four friends to carry the sick man because such a person with hysterical type disorder would look being in a state of physical illness that required the help of friends. However, in medical practitioners, there is always a possibility that one can physically portray symptoms and signs yet he is short of any clear pathology. When that happens, after all other methods have become futile, professionals effectively apply “cognitive- behavioral therapy”⁹ and this treatment is much close to the method Jesus used to sort out the problem of the paralytic man.

3. The Structure of the Text

The structure of this text consists of 5 parts. The first part is the setting of the text (v. 17). The setting is again Jesus’ teaching. This time round the addressees are not merely crowds but includes Pharisees and the teachers of the law, likely the scribes. The second part is the forgiveness of sins (vv. 18-20). The Greek phrase used here (ἄνθρωπε, ἀφέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου) is a “divine passive” implying that it is God who forgives the sins of the man, not Jesus himself. Jesus only acts as God’s agent. The third part is the controversy with the religious authorities (vv. 21- 23). The religious authorities

⁸ See Howard, 77.

⁹ See R Mayou, “Medically Unexplained Physical Symptoms,” *British Medical Journal* 303.534-535. (1991).

believed that only God can forgive sins. The fact that Jesus has proclaimed the man's sins forgiven, he has uttered a blasphemy claiming for himself God's power. The fourth part is the healing of the paralytic (vv. 24-25). Jesus here proves that his words are not merely empty boasts. He then restores the man to both physical and spiritual health with the power of his word. The fifth and last part is the conclusion (v. 26) which expresses the amazement at what has happened and returning glory to God for what people have seen.

4. Exegetical Analysis of Luke 5:17-26

The healing of the paralytic introduces a series of four controversy stories. With this text, the general resistance Jesus encountered in Nazareth now becomes properly focused, and a particular: blasphemy is considered.¹⁰ More than the preceding texts, this pericope links more closely the twin themes of the power of Jesus' words and his power to heal. In the same text, Luke introduces for the first time the concept of faith and forgiveness of sins.¹¹

This story of healing the paralytic in Luke comes immediately after Jesus' healing of a leper. While the pericope of healing a leper presents Jesus as one who restores to human and religious order, the healing of the paralytic man contain deep theological meaning presenting Jesus as restorer of humanity to a proper relationship with God and the order of creation. Luke 5:17-26 is outstanding in portraying three core concepts and characters, namely, the Pharisees and Scribes, the concept of faith and the concept of the "Son of Man."

¹⁰ See Culpepper, 122.

¹¹ See Culpepper, 122.

V. 17 This verse marks the setting of the text and the story unfolds in the context of Jesus' teaching. This time round, the listeners of Jesus' teaching go beyond the mere crowds to include Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Luke in many instances identifies Jesus with the ministry of teaching as seen in 4:15, 31, 36, 43-44; 5:3. Thus, for Luke, Jesus is a great teacher.

In this verse much interest is on the Φαρισαῖοι καὶ νομοδιδάσκαλοι. In Luke's Gospel, this is the first time Pharisees and scribes are mentioned. Luke mentions them to highlight who the opponents of Jesus will be in verse 21. By the first century, the Pharisees are reported to have been a non-priestly class with the duty of teaching, interpreting, and observance of the Law.¹² This special role in the first century explains why when reports came concerning Jesus' claiming a special authority to interpret and teach the scriptures, the Pharisees would react furiously because Jesus would seem to interfere in their prerogative of interpreting and teaching activities.

The scribes were known to be experts in interpreting and in Hebrew can be referred to as *ha sopherim*, meaning "men of the book" and in the New Testament, they are referred to as γραμματεῖς.¹³ However, instead of using the usual term γραμματεῖς, Luke here employs the term νομοδιδάσκαλος (teacher of the Law), a term that he uses elsewhere only in Acts 5:34 when referring to Gamaliel.¹⁴ At times Luke employs the term νομικοί (lawyers) as a synonym of scribes (Luke 7:30; 10:25; 11:45, 46, 52, 53; 14:3).

Earlier on in 2:49-47, Jesus is seen in the temple seated among the teachers of Israel, but this time they have taken a step to move and come to hear him. Luke most

¹² See Culpepper, 122.

¹³ See Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 93.

¹⁴ See Luke T. Johnson, 93.

probably wants to show that the presence of the Pharisees and scribes from Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem listening keenly shows the magnitude of his teaching as beyond their knowledge. Another reason for mentioning that the religious authorities as from every village of Galilee, Judea and Jerusalem could be for the sake of broadening the audience and make the scene of healing more solemn. Luke for most of the times especially in the Galilean ministry compared to Mark and Matthew holds Pharisees and scribes with high negativity by portraying them the crown of Jesus' opponents.

Power of the Lord: Here, the noun δύναμις points to the energy in Jesus through which he will act. Thus, Jesus acts not on his own authority but on God's power. This mentioning of δύναμις κυρίου is typically Lucan. This power of the LORD in Jesus, looking at Daniel's vision reveal him as the Son of Man whom God gave power to exercise the divine judgement.¹⁵

Luke writes that "And the power of the Lord was with him for healing." The biggest question here is: Could it mean that there are moments when the power of God was absent in him? It is not true that at times he acted without the power of God. Luke had earlier in 4:1 mentioned that "filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert. In 4:14 Luke again mentions that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. More explicitly in 4:18 Luke writes: "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me..." similarly in 6:19; 8:46; and 9:1 Luke mentions the presence of power in Jesus. Thus, here in 5:17, Luke wants to emphasize on the role of the power of the Holy Spirit being upon Jesus for ministry.¹⁶

Luke's use of the name "LORD" to refer to "God" rather than Jesus is in line with Luke's use of the name in the infancy narratives where LORD occurs 27 times. The name

¹⁵ See Matthew Black, ed. *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (London: Routledge, 1962), 829.

¹⁶ See Ralph F. Wilson, *Healing the Paralyzed Man* (Luke 5:17-26) <http://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/012-salvation.htm>, accessed on 2nd September, 2021.

LORD also echoes the text of Isaiah 61 in Luke 4:18 where the term is employed while linked with empowerment of the Spirit (4:14).

V. 18 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες φέροντες ἐπὶ κλίνης ἄνθρωπον ὃς ἦν παραλελυμένος. In this verse, the focal point are the words, “man” and “on a stretcher.” Here, while Luke abbreviates Mark, he brings in some changes in the words used compared to the original source. Luke postulates that some men brought a “man who was paralyzed” and on a stretcher.” Luke by not using the term “child” in referring to the patient, he seems to be less interested in the debates that had cropped up regarding the position of children within the Christian communities around the middle of A.D50 (cf. 1Cor 7:14). Such a debate might have inspired the Macan use of “child” in reference to the paralytic simply because with children, the faith of their caretakers or parents is necessary and enough to bring them to Christ as well as the community of faith and make them holy.¹⁷

Luke does not clearly indicate how many people were carrying the paralytic. He just puts them in plural. They could have been as many as more than four as Mark proposes. On top of the number of friends of the patient, Luke adds that he was brought in on a stretcher. Luke mostly wants to magnify the distressful situation which will be a requirement for much praise of God who through Jesus effects healing.¹⁸

V. 19 In this verse much interest is on lowering the paralytic on a stretcher through the tiles. Luke uses κλινίδιον which is a definitive of κλίνη in v. 18. κλίνη is more less a bed attached to a wooden frame, a place upon which those who were sick could rest and be carried. There was no space to let in the paralytic due to the crowds that had closed all entries. The only option is to make an opening on the roof. It is more probable that no one watched them climb the roof either making an opening or carrying

¹⁷ See Howard, 80.

¹⁸ See Klaus Seybold and Ulrich B. Mueller, *Sickness and Healing*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 148.

the patient otherwise there could be chaos as there could not miss people who would try to stop them. On the other hand, Luke not pointing out that not even a single person saw them climb the roof wanted to emphasize that the whole audience was consumed into Jesus' teaching that they could not listen to any distraction.

Luke opts for the roof tiles (κέραμος) that were used in Palestine at the time.¹⁹ To make his audience more concrete, Luke makes an appeal to the Hellenistic listeners by employing in his text something familiar to the Hellenists and so in v. 19 he mentions that the paralytic was lowered down through a roof of tiles, a roofing famous in the Greco-Roman world as opposed to the matted reed and dried mud roof of the Jews in Palestine which would require digging.²⁰

V. 20 καὶ ἰδὼν τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν εἶπεν ἄνθρωπε, ἀφέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου. In this verse, the first element to analyze is καὶ ἰδὼν τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν (he saw their faith). It is in this verse that Luke mentions πίστις (faith) for the first time in the Gospel though he has hitherto used the verbal form πιστεύω in 1:20 and 1:45. Luke borrows it from Mark 2:5, and carries the meaning of hope, trust, and perseverance. πίστις is core in Luke-Acts because it is a prerequisite to the visitation, healing and salvation of God.²¹ The act of hope, trust, persistence and determination that are interpreted as πίστις, are manifested in the friends of the paralytic who after missing the way through the door do not give up but climb on top of the house, make an opening and lower the patient down through the roof. With this action, Jesus confirmed their faith. If they had doubted Jesus' power to heal, they would not have carried out this stressing act but would instead say to the themselves and the paralytic that they will try another time. Though much credits are

¹⁹ See M. J. Selman, *House: New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed (New York: 1982), 498-499.

²⁰ See Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 238-239.

²¹ See Luke T. Johnson, 93.

given to the faith of the friends, it would be sheer malice to deny the faith of the paralyzed man as well. If he did not have faith, he would have boycotted the drama of his friends. He was aware that there were possibilities of him sleeping off the stretcher while struggling to lower him down and this would risk him further injuries and shame in public. Being sick in the Jewish worldview was a sign of sinfulness and so it was in a way a shame for him to come to public. However, despite of all these challenges, the paralytic made up his mind that he must reach in front of Jesus. This is his great faith in Jesus to be healed.²² Faith was a great necessity for healing. We notice that lack of faith in Jesus' home town Nazareth led to few healings (Matt 13:58; Mark 6:5-6)

The second element to analyze in v. 20 is ἄνθρωπε, ἀφέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου (man your sins are forgiven). Instead of using the term “child” as used in Mark 2:5, Luke uses “man.” as in 5:18. The Greek phrase literally used here is “your sins are forgiven for you,” with the perfect passive indicative, meaning that, the man was healed at once, and that it is God who healed him.²³ This indicates that the sins of the man were forgiven by God and not Jesus himself. Jesus is here acting as God's emissary.

Vv. 21-22 In these verses, the major concern is about the Pharisees and scribes questioning amongst themselves “Who is this who speaks blasphemies.” The Greek word διαλέγομαι, διαλογισμός is interpreted here as “question,” “thoughts” and “debating.” Earlier in Luke 2:35, there is a hint by Simeon's prophesy on the capacity of a prophet to reveal the διαλογισμοί of hearts. Thus, the capacity of Jesus to know what the Pharisees and scribes are thinking in 5:22 fulfills Simeon's prophesy that because of Jesus the “hidden thoughts of many will be revealed.”

²² Ralph F. Wilson, Healing the Paralyzed Man (Luke 5:17-26)
<http://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/012-salvation.htm> , accessed 22nd November, 2021.

²³ See Luke T. Johnson, 93.

The term “blasphemy” in Greek βλασφημία refers to a malicious speech when directed against a divine being especially in a monotheistic religion like Judaism. This is an ultimate revolt against God. In this case Jesus pronouncing the sins forgiven is taken as a coup against the prerogative authority of God alone (μόνος) to forgive sins.²⁴ According to the Jewish leaders, Jesus was reserving God’s power for himself, in a way taking God’s place. For the Jews, blasphemy stands at the top of highest religious crimes that a person could commit. The convict of it could only be punished by stoning to the point of death.

The charge of blasphemy requires much assessment. In the real sense, Jesus did not claim to forgive sins on his own authority because his statement is formulated in the passive: ἀφέωνται σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου (your sins are forgiven for you). Here we cannot speak of the direct claim of Jesus authority to forgive sins. Thus, E.P Sanders contends that:

The most likely ground for considering that Jesus was speaking blasphemy would have been arrogant assumption-‘the claim to speak for God and to be supported by him, were it made by a wicked person, might be considered blasphemy: denigrating God by association.’²⁵

Hence, Sanders hardly believes the historicity of the pericope and takes the case for blasphemy as very weak. Some Jews believed that Jesus was a magician, fetching powers from Beelzebub, and this would possibly have been the only source of his power but not God’s power. Hence, with such powers from Beelzebub, Jesus would not be considered a fitting candidate to act as an agent of God’s forgiveness and healing.

Howard claims that the crime of Jesus by Jews is that Jesus was identifying the rule of God with himself and, furthermore, was doing so outside the properly constituted

²⁴ See Luke T. Johnson, 94.

²⁵ E. P Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1990), 63.

channels of divine action in Temple and Torah.²⁶ Jewish practice had it that sick people had seriously offended God. Such sufferers could be placed outside the community. Hence, N.T. Wright holds that to the Jews, Jesus on his own authority was offering to wrong people the final eschatological blessings of the kingdom outside the official structures. In other words, by healing, Jesus was offering peace, salvation and restoration to wrong people back to God's righteous people.²⁷

It seems that the concern of Luke was to show that God's authority could be delegated to the Son of Man. Luke, thus, brings to us a healing scene whereby in order to stress Jesus' authority to act in the spiritual sphere by forgiving sins, he furthermore exerts his authority in the physical domain by pronouncing physical healing. This could have been the main reason for the crowds glorifying God who had delegated his authority to mankind.

V. 23 τί ἐστὶν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν· ἀφεῶνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου, ἢ εἰπεῖν· ἔγειρε καὶ περιπάτει; Jesus seems to pose this question not to the general crowd but to the religious authorities who have charged him with blasphemy. Indeed, it would be easier to pronounce the paralyzed man healed than to say that his sins are forgiven because healing would be subject to verification yet forgiving sins is not. Healing was not a big deal since various other individuals had been known to possess power to heal. The big deal was on the power to forgive sins, something considered a highest claim since no one else had been known to have such powers apart from God alone. Looking keenly into the question of Jesus, we find a lurking suspicion that the man's sins and his paralysis were related. Thus, his question gives a preamble of what Jesus is soon going to do, namely, to first deal properly with the root cause of the man's condition by

²⁶ See Howard, 79.

²⁷ See N. T Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Durham: Fortress Press, 1996), 272.

forgiving his sin then he would turn to removing the consequence by healing the man. Sin was highly heavier than the illness and so Jesus has to start with what is weightier to what is lighter.

V. 24 The first element to explore is the phrase ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε. Looking at the grammatical construction of this phrase, it can be read in three ways. The first one is the most known reading that the “you” in the phrase refers to Jesus’ response to the scribes and Pharisees. The second reading is that the “you” refers to the readers instead of the scribes and Pharisees.²⁸

The second element to explore is, “the Son of Man has authority.” Luke uses this title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου for the first time carrying it from Mark 2:10. This phrase initially comes from the Hebrew מְשִׁיחַ בְּנֵי אָדָם. Thus, it raises much scholarly debate regarding its import for the intelligibility of historical Jesus. God uses this title to refer to prophet Ezekiel (Ezek 2:1, 3). The same title is seen in Dan 7:13 where one “like the Son of Man” dispenses divine role in the apocalyptic scenario. In Luke, Matthew and Mark, the title ensues only in the mouth of Jesus with a reference to himself. Luke uses this title in three contexts: Jesus present ministry (5:24; 6:5; 7:34 etc.), the suffering of the Messiah (9:22, 26,44; 18:31 etc.), and the future role of judging (11:30; 12:8, 10, 40; 17:22, 24, 26, 30 etc.). In Acts 7:56 Luke uses it to refer to Jesus as resurrected. Given the above use of this title especially in Ezekiel and Luke’s adoption in the contexts, this title “Son of Man” can be understood as part of his prophetic imagery.²⁹ It can also interpreted as an imperative addressed to the reader: “Know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins!”³⁰

²⁸ See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1981), 577.

²⁹ See Luke T. Johnson, 94.

³⁰ See John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* (Dallas: Word, 1989), 230-237.

Jesus identifies himself with the title “Son of Man” than any other title in the synoptic Gospels. Many have interpreted it to have been originally from Daniel. Thus, Mark whom Luke borrows it from mostly captured it from Daniel. Other interpreters think that it is a name used for an apocalyptic figure, as in 1 Enoch.³¹ This title was at times employed in a generic sense for “man” in pre-Christian usage. Luke then adds it to sayings where it does not appear in Mark or Matthew. According to Luke, it looks like Jesus employed the title in its generic sense or as a common self-address. Luke mostly uses the title “Son of Man” to emphasize the humanity of Jesus and his future role as risen Lord.³² Thus, it is not wrong while referring to Jesus to say that Jesus as true man has authority to forgive sins, will be exalted, will judge the nations, and will raise the dead. Eventually, the mystery resides not in the title but in the person of Jesus.

Generally, there is a need to look at the syntax of v. 24. This verse has been commonly translated with an assumption that the syntax is broken and places a dash before “he said to the man who was paralyzed.” There has been a proposal rotating around a construction that typically expresses purpose, “but in order that...” to be read as an imperative. There is another translation that creates a disjunction between v. 23 and v. 24, and assumes a change in the narrator, not Jesus and a change in the addressee rather than the scribes and Pharisees. The title “Son of Man” is also placed in a comment by the narrator rather than in Jesus’ speech. This expels the need to guess that the syntax is broken or that the subjective verb should be read as an imperative. Hence, there is no satisfying solutions but the second, which treats the first part of v. 24 as a narrative aside, is the least questionable since it permits a smooth reading of v. 24.³³

³¹ See Culpepper, 125.

³² See Culpepper, 125.

³³ See Culpepper, 124.

Vv. 25-26 In this ending of the story, there is much editing of Mark by Luke. He advances Markan syntax and language. Luke does not use the Markan rough term for “pallet” κράβατος but substitutes it with the diminutive of “bed” κλινίδιον. Luke changes the term for “immediately” from εὐθύς which appears 42 times in Mark but just once in Luke to παραχρῆμα which appears 10 times in Luke and 6 times in Acts but never in Mark. Luke is hailed for using participle phrases more competently, and doubles the account of glorifying God. It is the man who is healed that glorifies God first (v. 25); then, followed by the whole audience glorifying God (v. 26).³⁴

In verse 25, “The standing up before them” is typical of Luke emphasizing that the ministry of Jesus is of a public nature. The act of picking up what he was lying on and going home, the paralyzed man confirms the act of healing. What follows is an essential aspect of glorifying God. For Luke, this doxology is a steady response to wonder. In v. 26 we see that the crowds joined the healed man to glorify God. In order to correct the misunderstanding of the opponents, Luke declares that it is God who is glorified because Jesus did not act on his own power but with the “power of the LORD.”³⁵ Though this story of healing is captured in the synoptics, it is only Luke who mentions that the paralytic glorified God and the aspect of the fear of onlookers.

It is worth noting that each of the synoptics contain a different meaning in the conclusion to the story. For Matthew God is glorified by the crowds because he has given “such authority to human beings” (Matt 9:8). For Mark, the act of glorifying God is mostly intended for magnifying the healing: “We have never seen anything like this!” (Mark 2:12). Luke on his part employs a term that is not used anywhere else in the New Testament: “We have seen incredible (παράδοξα) things today.” The word παράδοξος

³⁴ See Culpepper, 125.

³⁵ See Luke T. Johnson, 94.

carries the sense of the “unexpected” and “wonder” as well. Thus, looking at the themes of faith, forgiveness of sins and the designation of “Son of Man,” for Luke, the story encompasses a description of Jesus as the prophetic, miracle-working Messiah.³⁶ Looking keenly at the end of the story, we find a double reference to glorifying. Hence, Luke underlines the irony that runs through the text from beginning to end.

5. The Message

This text has a deep and rich message beyond the exegesis. This message will come out clearly by looking at the controversy, how to resolve the controversy, how healing extends to Jesus and the message we get from the reactions.

5.1. Controversy

The theme of controversy is very common in the Gospel of Luke. A part from this controversy (Luke 5:17-26) there are other controversies for instance in 5:27-32 concerning Jesus eating at the tax collectors house where he was questioned about his choice of friends. We find another controversy in 6:1-11 where Jesus is questioned over healing on Sabbath, a thing which to them was an act of breaking the Sabbath. With such controversies, the religious leaders were furious and began to discuss amongst themselves what to do with Jesus. Such discussions continued for months and years till they yielded into Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion.

Jesus is convicted with controversy in Luke 5:17-25 by the Pharisees and teachers of the law (5:17). Since, it is the first time Luke mentions these religious leader meeting with Jesus, it is more likely that this is the first controversy in the Gospel of Luke. This

³⁶ See Culpepper, 125.

healing is the first of several incidents Luke places in a row that indicate growing conflict with the religious establishment.³⁷

Verse 20 helps to unveil the controversy: καὶ ἰδὼν τὴν πίστιν αὐτῶν εἶπεν· ἄνθρωπε, ἀφέωνταί σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου. Jesus pronouncing the forgiveness of sin becomes the heart of the controversy. Jews believed that God alone can forgive sins. An example is seen in 2 Sam 12:13 where after David has confessed his sins, prophet Nathan does not himself forgive the sins of David but pronounces that “On his part the LORD has removed your sin. You shall not die.” Prophet Nathan believes it is only God who can forgive sins.

Another element of the controversy is the Jewish understanding of sickness as a punishment for sins. Thus, Jesus first assures the forgiveness of sins to the sick man. Jesus as such was not against the Jewish belief that sickness was a consequence of sin but he was strongly against the Jewish misconception that one who was not physically ill was a righteous person who required no repentance. Thus, Jesus on his part has to first eliminate the root problem before he can advance to a physical healing. It is with this background that Jesus pronounces to the paralytic that his sins are forgiven and this becomes the center of the controversy.

The act of pronouncing the forgiveness of sins to the paralytic moves the religious authorities to think to themselves and ask who Jesus was that speaks blasphemy. They question Jesus’ authority and thus their problem has to do with Jesus’ identity.³⁸ Note that the Greek word βλασφημία, connotes any violation of the power and majesty of God. Thus, blasphemy entailed refusal to recognize God’s glory, ungodly speech or action, or

³⁷ Ralph F. Wilson, *Healing the Paralyzed Man (Luke 5:17-26)*
<http://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/012-salvation.htm> , accessed 2nd September, 2021.

³⁸ See Culpepper, 123.

violation of God's majesty.³⁹ One convicted with blasphemy could be punished with death (Lev 24:10-16). Definitely since it is God alone who can forgive sins, then any other person who claims to forgive sins commits blasphemy. This controversy at first remains amongst the religious authorities in the background because the verb *διαλογίζομαι* is used and means pondering or reasoning something in one's own mind.⁴⁰ However *διαλογίζομαι* may also specify a verbal argument, this cannot be accepted because in the following sentence Jesus asks them "What are you thinking in your hearts?"

5.1.1. Resolving the Controversy

Resolving the controversy begins with verse 23. Jesus begins by posing a question to those who have convicted him with blasphemy. This question intensifies their discomfort. He asks them: "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" What Jesus does after this question in conjunction with the faith of the paralytic will solve the controversy.

a) Faith as a Requirement for Resolving the Controversy

The concept of faith is mostly placed between the English concept of "trust" and "assent." At some point, they employ the Latin *fides qua* (the faith with which one believes) and *fides quae* (the faith which one believes) to differentiate the two. Trust can

³⁹ See Culpepper, 124.

⁴⁰ Ralph F. Wilson, *Healing the Paralyzed Man* (Luke 5:17-26) <http://www.jesuswalk.com/luke/012-salvation.htm>, accessed 2nd September, 2021.

also have the import of “faith,” “loyalty” and “faithfulness.” The Hebrew אֱמוּנָה and Greek πίστις can both have this triple sense.⁴¹

Faith in the gospels is directed, not to Jesus himself as a wonder-worker, but to the power of God active in him. Faith is the proper human attitude at the receiving end of an act of God.⁴² It is closely connected to Jesus’ teaching with prayer, which looks at responding action of God, and has power to call forth that act:

Have faith in God. [Note: Jesus does not demand faith in himself.] Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done [reverential passive=God will do it] for him (Mark 11:22-25).⁴³

Faith precedes the act of God and actively seeks his help. When Jesus says “Your faith has made you well” he does not merely mean that the patient has raised himself up by the power of auto-suggestion to such a pitch that he recovers. Nor on the other hand does he mean that the sick person is purely passive. Faith implies action and reaction between man and God. The sick person energetically grasps God’s help, and his trust, like prayer itself, calls forth an act of God.⁴⁴ Although this faith is not directly focused upon Jesus himself as a wonder-worker, it is intimately bound to his person, for it is through him that the powers of God for salvation are made active.

The faith in the healing stories goes beyond the popular Jewish belief that Israel’s God alone can effect healing. Faith has two nuances: one is religious while the second is secular. The religious faith looks at the firmness that God is the father of his people Israel

⁴¹ See George F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard U.P, 1930), 238.

⁴² See Reginald H. Fuller, *Interpreting the Miracle* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 42.

⁴³ Fuller, 43.

⁴⁴ See Fuller, 43.

and is inseparable from his acts of deliverance, namely, the exodus event.⁴⁵ The secular faith on the other hand looks at Jesus inviting people to believe in him and this meant that those who responded to it embraced a new way of being Israel, they believed that with Jesus' work, the God of Israel was initiating his long-awaited kingdom.⁴⁶ Thus, faith in Jesus entails a total conviction that Jesus has the capacity to dispense God's power. Such a faith in Jesus is first portrayed both by the paralytic and his friends. The determination and perseverance of the friends to go up the house, make an opening and lower the sick man down, together with the acceptance of all this by the paralytic, something he could reject, is a proof for the total trust in Jesus. Jesus is not interested in the religious orthodoxy but meeting the human need and so he rewarded the quest of the friends of the sick man yet watered down the quest of Pharisees and scribes that focused on defending orthodoxy.⁴⁷

b) Forgiveness of Sins and the Command to Walk

After Jesus has posed a question asking the religious authorities which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven, or to say, 'Rise and walk,'" Jesus proceeds to command the man to rise. Anyone could risk to commit blasphemy and say "Your sins are forgiven." However, he could not prove it. Again, anyone would pronounce healing words but could not provide a proof. To show that he has authority, Jesus pronounces the man's sins forgiven, he heals him, commands him to rise up and this healing is attested with the paralytic picking his stretcher and going home. F. Bruce comments that the ability of the paralytic to do exactly what Jesus told him to do, (to raise up, take up his

⁴⁵ See Wright, 262-263.

⁴⁶ See Wright, 263.

⁴⁷ See Culpepper, 125.

stretcher and go), something that was impossible before, the power of Jesus as a healer was confirmed, but, beyond that, it was a proof that his sins were forgiven. Hence, the authority of Jesus to forgive sins was confirmed at the same time.’⁴⁸ Some biblical scholars contend that the choice of Jesus to first forgive the man’s sins before healing him was for two reasons: the first one was to reassure the man that his sins would not stand in the way of healing. The second reason was for letting the Pharisees and scribes know that he had the authority to forgive sins.⁴⁹

5.2. Healing Extends to Jesus

According to Luke, paralysis was beyond just the physical. Thus, it had a spiritual dimension of sin which first required forgiveness. To Jesus the most vexing anomaly was the unforgiven sin than the paralysis. It is very clear that the sickness of the man could not be healed without the intervention of the divine who had the power to forgive sins. Since Jesus acted as God’s agent and such a paralysis could not be forgiven on the condition that the healer be possessing the prerogative power of God given to him, then healing extended to Jesus who possessed the power of the LORD. The spiritual and the physical healing were both two wings of the same bird. Healing one wing and leaving the other, the bird would not fly. The physical restoration to health proved an inward spiritual renewal. Thus, healing extended to Jesus and later impacted in the paralytic a holistic healing that intended to bring about a restoration of man to the human community and in a relationship to God.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See F. Bruce, *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983), 26.

⁴⁹ Whitney Hopler, "Miracles of Jesus: Healing a Paralyzed Man." Learn Religions, Jul. 29, 2021, learnreligions.com/miracles-of-jesus-healing-paralyzed-man-124575. accessed 3rd September, 2021.

⁵⁰ John Wyatt, Healing of a Paralyzed Man <https://www.cmf.org.uk/resources/publications/content/?context=article&id=591>, accessed 2nd September, 2021.

This time Jesus did not lay hands on the sick man but adapted a different methodology of a “a command” by word of mouth that required obedience in faith. The commanding words “Get up, take your mat, and go home” proved to the public that Jesus truly brought about healing. The act of giving authority to his disciples to heal in his name, Jesus proved that healing extends to him. We see that Peter at the beautiful gate of the Temple commanded the crippled man “... In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk” (Acts 3:6). Again, Paul the apostle to the gentiles uses the commanding words to a crippled man at Lystra, “Stand up straight on your feet” (Acts 14:10). In each of these occasions, as the sick man begins to obey, he is immediately healed.

5.3. The Message of the Passage Conveyed by Reactions

The accusation of Jesus by the religious authority to have committed blasphemy technically entails the denial of God’s glory working in Jesus. However, at the end of the day, the words and action of Jesus make all of those present to Glorify God. Such a conclusion serves to correct the opponents that through his δύναντες in the Messiah, God is the one at work.⁵¹ Thus, the offense of blasphemy is reversed by the response of the authorities themselves. Consequently, it is those who resisted Jesus’ ministry to the afflicted, bound and oppressed that are bound with blasphemy.⁵²

The reaction of the religious authorities was because this kind of welcoming of sinners was being offered indeed by someone announcing the kingdom of God. Thus, the center of the reaction was not the question of whether sinners were repenting or not. The reaction instead was ignited by the fact that Jesus was replacing adherence or allegiance

⁵¹ See Luke T. Johnson, 95.

⁵² See Culpepper, 126.

to the Temple and Torah with allegiance to himself.⁵³ However, the proper message is that Jesus was offering the return from exile, the renewed covenant, the eschatological “forgiveness of sins,” the kingdom of God and he was offering this final eschatological blessing outside the official structures, to all the people.

6. Conclusion

In this story of healing the paralytic in Luke 5:17-26, we see Jesus presented as a teacher, a healer, Son of Man who forgives sins. The visible sign of total healing both spiritually and physically confirms the authority of Jesus as the Son of Man, the authority which is given him by God, thus Jesus acting as God’s agent. This waters down the conviction of the religious authorities that Jesus commits blasphemy by pronouncing the forgiveness of sins. This healing again confirms that Jesus is concerned not with divisions in the human community but their unity. Thus, he has concern for those ritually outcasted from the community by restoring them to full participation in its life. The bottom line is that Jesus wants all of God’s people abiding in a relationship with humanity and God.

⁵³ See Wright, 274.

CHAPTER III

LUKE 5:17-26: A CONTRIBUTION TO GROWTH OF FAITH AMONG THE MEMBERS OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

1. Introduction

The evangelist John tells us that "... whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live" (John 11:25). Also, the Apostle Paul assures us that God justifies him who has faith in Jesus (Rom 3:26). Looking at the paralytic man from the Jewish understanding, he was dead by sin but because of faith in Jesus he had to live again. In the same vein, God justified the paralytic man by restoring him to the right relationship with the society and to spiritual community (God) because he had faith in Jesus. Thus, in chapter two we looked at the exegesis of the text and this chapter looks at how the text under study can challenge the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group to grow strong in faith. To be successful, we need to first know the nature of the Bible study group in question. Then what follows is how Luke 5:17-26 contributes to growth of faith through: attending to the teaching of faith, reading and listening to the Word of God, the role of prayer, healing contributing to faith, doing works of charity, having a loving heart, being

in the presence of the Lord, relying entirely on God, the role of liturgy to faith, and being grateful to God. Finally, the conclusion will be drawn.

2. Description of the Bible Study Group

This Bible study group is found in Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, Nairobi. The Bible study classes take place in only two outstations of the parish. One group at the main parish (Adams) while the second group at Olympic. Thus, the group is comprised of 20 members. 10 members at Adams and 10 members at Olympic. The members of the group meet on Sundays only. At Adams we meet from 2:15pm to 4pm whereas at Olympic we meet from 11am to 1pm. We are two brothers who journey with the group alternating after every month. When this month I am with the group at Olympic, then Friar Pethias Kafula is at Adams.

The group is composed of 2 high school students, 3 College students, 5 catechists, 1 primary school teacher, 4 high school teachers, 1 medical doctor, 1 PhD holder in social sciences, 2 caretakers of a rescue centre and lastly 1 member who does ordinary work at her home. 7 of the members are males while the rest 13 are females. Thus, this group is a group of elites. To journey with them requires proper preparation.

3. Growth in Faith in the Context of Luke 5:17-26

What now follows is the proper application of the pericope under study. Luke 5:17- 26 is a rich text as far as growing in faith is concerned. However, one has to read this text meditatively to grasp the aspects of faith in it.

3.1. Attending to the Teaching of Faith (Luke 5:17)

Our pericope of study unfolds in the context of teaching faith (v. 17). The crowds of people are gathered in a house attentively listening to Jesus' teaching. In many occasions Jesus was addressed by his disciples as Rabbi (teacher). The teaching of faith stands at the very center of the Church's existence and mission. Jesus commissioned his apostles to teach in his name. St. Paul reminds us of the significance of teaching and preaching towards the growth of faith. He says: "But how can they call on him in whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14- 15).

Jesus commissioned the Apostles to preach and teach, and through them, the Church announces, interprets, and preserves faithfully the teachings of Jesus. His teachings are administered through the Church's office which rests on the bishops and the Pope.¹ Thus, for the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe to grow in faith, they need to listen to the teachings of Jesus through the Church. They need to be obedient to their parish priest and other priests working in the parish for they represent the Bishop in the parish.

Each person receives an individual calling to faith but this faith must grow within the community of believers, the Church. Disobeying the Church is disobeying Christ. We see that the Pharisees and Scribes belonged to the community of listeners of the teaching of Jesus as seen in v. 17 but in v. 21 they disobeyed his teachings, could not believe in him, they want to challenge him since they see themselves as religious authorities and learned men and so could not grow in faith. While the crowds were attentively listening and obeying Jesus' teachings, the Pharisees and Scribes were

¹ See Avery Dulles, et al., *Toward a Theology of Christian Faith* (New York: P. J Kennedy and Sons, 1968), 142.

disobeying Jesus and hence separated themselves from the community of the believing community of Jesus and could not grow in faith.

The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study are learned, for, some are medical doctors, PhD holders, secondary teachers and primary teachers among others but once they see themselves as elites and start challenging the Parish Priest and his assistants, they are challenging, the Bishop, they are separating themselves from the faith of the Church, they are disobeying the teachings of Christ and so can never grow in faith. Thus, The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study must commit themselves to the Church, must know that faith is not merely the acceptance of what an individual has heard; it is rather the acceptance of what the Church has heard, an assent of to the profession of the Church.² Thus, to grow in faith, the members must always believe what the community of the faithful believes.

3.1.1. The Church as the Yardstick of Belief

To grow in faith, Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group must believe that it is the Church which is the standard of belief; she measures; she is not measured. They must know that the Church hears and obeys God and hence her standard of belief is not her own, but is only received from the word of revelation, from the Word of Scripture, from tradition.³ The Church's teachings are a ground for the growth of Faith. Thus, the duty of the members of the Bible study group is to hear the Church.

² See Dulles, 144.

³ See Dulles, 145.

3.1.2. On-Going Formation in Christian Instruction

Acquiring deep knowledge of Christ's teachings does not end with the 4 stages of catechumenate (Precatechumenate, catechumenate, purification and enlightenment and then mystagogy) but it is a continual process until one dies and that is why Didascalia was seen as lifelong process from baptism till death. In this on-going formation, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study learn how to live a Christian life that is in line with Christian faith. When the Parish arranges seminars, retreats, and recollection days, the members of Bible study group should always attend them for it is through such meetings that on-going formation is done, hence, enhancing the growth of faith among the members.

3.2. Reading and Listening Intently to the Word of God (Luke 5:17)

In the same v. 17 we see two actions taking place and both of them are core to the growth of faith. The first action is that of teaching while the second one is that of sitting. Jesus teaches while the audience is seated. The act of sitting presupposes being in a stable position to listen carefully and attentively to what Jesus was teaching. Since the mission of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels is preaching and teaching the kingdom of God, then Jesus was teaching the Word of God who sent him. Also, by Jesus being God, his words were words of God. Thus, for the members of the Bible study group in Our Lady of Guadalupe to grow in faith, listening to the Word of God is inevitable.

There is listening to the word of God when someone else is reading it, for instance, during the Holy Mass but there is also listening to the Word of God through individual reading the Bible. We are well aware that the Bible is the revealed, and written voice of God which is not static but dynamic, thus always a new voice of God every time it is read. Faith grows by reading the Word of God and listening intently to the Word of

God in order to live it every day. The members of Bible study group must be aware that when they read and listen to the Word of God, they can relate to the text either objectively or subjectively or both. In the objective sense, the word of God is an object of research to gain some knowledge but in the subjective sense, their relationship to the text becomes a “mystery” for them. In an objective sense, they are related to a “thing” but in the subjective sense they are related to a “person.”⁴ To grow strong in faith, their relationship to the text should initially be a subjective one for in such a way, they are not only related to the Bible but to Jesus Christ himself, to God himself.

As St Jerome says, these members should know that “ignorance of the Holy Scriptures is the ignorance of Christ.” They should know that Jesus though most fully present in the Eucharist, he is also present and lives in the Holy Scripture. They should know that there are two tables: the table of the Word of God as in the Scripture and the Eucharistic table where they are nourished with the Body and Blood of Jesus.⁵ Thus, whether the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group listen to the Word of God when someone else is reading it like during the Holy Mass or by reading it themselves, they are listening to Jesus, they are in a relationship with Jesus who affect them with his grace, they come to know him more, leads them to conversion and so aids them to grow in faith.

These members should learn the good example of Mary. Upon Jesus’ visit to the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, Mary chose to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen intently to the words spoken by him and when Martha burdened by serving, she asked Jesus to speak to her sister that she was letting Martha to do all the serving, he answered her: “Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her”

⁴ See Tadeusz Dajczer, *The Gift of Faith* (Nairobi: Daughters of St Paul, 2005), 152.

⁵ See Dajczer, 152.

(Luke 10:42). This better part for the Members of Our Lady of Guadalupe bible study group is to be beside Christ, sitting at his feet and listening intently his words spoken to us through the Scripture.

3.3. Prayer as a Means for Growth of Faith (Luke 5:17)

We see that in v. 17, the power of the LORD was with him for healing. We need to pause and ask ourselves the question: where was Jesus acquiring this power? We are pretty sure that this power was from God the Father who sent him but we need to go further and ask: by which means was he getting this power? The most obvious way that Jesus used to get power was prayer. Through prayer, he could enter into a dialogue with the Father. After his birth, Jesus does not appear in public for about thirty years, he does not do anything concerning his mission. He looks a failure in the eyes of all who hoped that he is the messiah. The world had waited for him for thousands of years and now that the messiah is with them, he is here “wasting” thirty years in Nazareth. Upon completing these thirty years, Jesus appears at river Jordan and the Holy Spirit descends upon him. The world now rejoices that he is going to start the mission but Jesus retreats again into the desert to pray. The world is frustrated, confused and cannot understand this messiah at all. Some people with the character of Peter would wish to take him aside and rebuke him saying: “Lord, what on earth are you doing? Multitudes are waiting, and yet you are going off to pray again: Have you not already prayed for so many years?” Imagine it is the same Jesus who will later say: “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2) yet he now leaves the harvest and disappears into the wilderness to pray ceaselessly for forty days.

Jesus had to go into the desert to be in an encounter with the Father through prayer, to be empowered before he can start his mission. This tells a lot the members of

Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group that if they want to grow in faith, to be filled with the power of the Lord, they must always be in dialogue with God through prayer.

Jesus did not only pray at the beginning of his public ministry but continued to retreat to be alone to pray. We see for instance that, “Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35). We know that a day of Jesus’ apostolic activity would be draining, working from morning, and in the evening, multitudes would gather from the whole city or any area bringing the ill and possessed to be healed. It is hard to determine when his daily activity ended. Probably he could work as far as midnight but here is Jesus who still has to deny himself his little sleep to wake up at dawn to pray. Therefore, the members of the Bible study group in order to grow in faith, must imitate Jesus’ exemplary life of prayer.

It is true that some members of the group are of a working class in government as civil servants, some are employed in other jobs, some are business people, some are students, while others spend the day doing house chores and thus can easily say that “my day is always a busy day” to the point that they cannot find a moment of desert in their life, a moment of prayer, a moment to be in dialogue with the Lord. They must not give excuses but imitate Jesus who amidst busy days, could find time to pray. The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group must be aware that when they stop being people of prayer, they become like tasteless salt worthy of being “trampled underfoot” (Matt 5:13).

These members of Bible study group should bear in mind that in prayer, the biggest part is to listen to what God wants to speak but not them speaking always. They are warned by Jesus that: “In praying, do not babble like the pagans, who think that they will be heard because of their many words” (Matt 6:7). A part from the prayer of words, there is prayer of adoration, a prayer based on thought of God, memory of the presence

of God.⁶ It requires attention and care. Members can also pray with silence. God also wants them to be calm before him, simply look at him without necessarily speaking. There is also prayer of gesture where they can either pray with tears when they are going through most vexing anomalies, or with a smile when they are happy just like a contact of a child with its father or mother. All these ways of prayer are meant to make the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group be in contact with God, obtain the power of the Lord like Jesus and so grow strong in faith.

3.4. Growth in Faith Through Healing (Luke 5:17, 20, 24)

We see that healing is an important aspect in our pericope. V. 17 ends with the verb “to heal.” Actually, it is reported that the power of the LORD was with Jesus mainly for healing. In our text, we see a double movement of healing, namely, the spiritual healing encapsulated in the forgiveness of sins (v. 20) and physical healing encapsulated in the paralyzed man’s response to Jesus command to pick up his stretcher and go home (v. 24). As a proof for healing, we see that, “He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God” (v. 26).

We see that faith forms an “inclusion” of the text for at the beginning, the paralytic accepts to be brought by his friends before Jesus because he has faith in Jesus that he would be healed. Again, the text ends with the paralytic glorifying God for he had been healed because of his faith. We see a progress in the growth of faith of the sick man, his friends and the crowds for they all at the end say, “We have seen incredible things today” (v. 26). This text is much applicable to the life of the Members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group.

⁶ See Dajczer, 163.

These members are spiritually sick for they are not perfect, every day they sin in one way or the other. They need forgiveness of sins, spiritual healing, so as to grow strong in faith. Again, most of the members of our lady of Guadalupe Bible study group have physical infirmities for some have shared with me that they have ulcers, prolonged backache, diabetes and heart difficulties among other sicknesses. On top of that, is psychological stress that comes from marriage and family problems they go through. Thus, they need healing so as to grow in faith. Like the paralytic, they must first have faith in Jesus who in turn will heal them and at the end, their faith will grow strong by experiencing the healing in their life.

3.4.1. Sacraments of Healing

The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group are lucky that Jesus instituted the sacraments of healing. These sacraments are: the sacrament of penance and anointing of the sick. Jesus commissioned his apostles and gave them power to heal in his name as seen in this early prayer: “Lord grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30). This power of healing continues today through the college of bishops who impart this power in the priests on their ordination.

a) The Sacrament of Penance (Luke 5:20)

Verse 20 says, “When he saw their faith, he said, “As for you, your sins are forgiven.” As sinners just like the paralyzed man, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group need forgiveness of sins, and so should always attend to the sacrament of penance with a contrite heart seeking God’s absolution through the ministering priest

of the sacrament. The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group should bear in mind that Jesus came to sinners and not the righteous. He is a good shepherd who looks for the lost sheep. With the sacrament of reconciliation, they will encounter Jesus who finds them, carries them on his shoulders and returns them to his flock, hence, a growth in their faith. Their confession should not be like that of Judas who ended in despair but should be like that of Peter who believed in the mercy of Jesus, focused not much on his sin but on Jesus' forgiveness.

The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group should never be tired of going for the sacrament of penance for it is one way of continuous healing and renewal of faith. If they go for confession and the following day they sin, they go back for confession and the next day sin again, when they stop going for confession, it is because they have lost faith in the mercy and healing of Jesus. They are now focusing not on what God can do for them but on their own perfection.

b) The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick

Anointing of the sick is the second sacrament of healing. Unfortunately, most of the members of Bible study group do not have a proper understanding of this sacrament. Sharing with these members on what they know about the sacrament of anointing of the sick, their response was that this sacrament is for those who are almost dying. One of the members was open to tell me that most of the times when someone receives the anointing of the sick, rarely does he/she survive. That soon such a person dies. Thus, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study fear the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. This paper following the teachings of the Church assures them that this sacrament initially has nothing to do with those who are dying but to strengthen the sick and bring them back to health. This sacrament is not primarily meant for those on their death bed

but for all who are physical ill. Thus, when the members of the Bible study group are very weak with physical sickness, they should invite the priest for anointing so as to be healed and continue to grow in faith.

3.4.2. Healing Through Spiritual Direction and Pastoral Counselling

The healing of God comes also through other means like spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. Spiritual directors and pastoral counselors guide the members of our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group to be in touch with the love of self and God. When the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe meet with such specialists, they share with them their problems. Before they share out their challenges, they seem to be burdened, in a box, without hope of coming out of this box, they are not free. Once they start sharing, they start feeling relieved. The spiritual director or pastoral counselor through the power of God gives directives that bring freedom to the members held captive, joy to the sorrowful, and sight to the blind. These specialists identify themselves with the work of Jesus Christ, who call the heavy burdened and sorrowful to come to him that they may be comforted and their burdens eased.

3.5. Growth of Faith Through Charity (Luke 5:18)

We see in our pericope that in one way or the other, healing was possible because of love and charity of the friends of the paralytic. “And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed...” (v. 18). Luke does not tell us whether these men were friends of the sick man or not but the fact is that they did charity to him. They could not bear to see him die yet they had means of bringing him to the healer. Actually, it is not only the sick man who portrayed faith but also the men who carried him for if they were faithless, they would not dare bother themselves carrying the man, destroying the

roof of the house and lowering him down in the presence of Jesus. Thus, their faith is combined with their heart of love and charity. By witnessing to what Jesus did to their patient, they grew in faith by glorifying God and saying that they have seen incredible things today (v. 26). St James warns that Faith without action is dead. He writes that:

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him if a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good it is? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead (James 2:14-17).

Thus, by learning from the example of the friends of the paralytic and by adhering to the warning of St James, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study should know that by attending to the needs of others, they also come to encounter God. By going to hospitals to visit the sick and pray for them, by taking care of the orphans, and other needy people especially in Kibra slums which is located in their parish, they are participating in the healing ministry of Jesus and so, they also encounter God who strengthens their faith just like the friends of the paralyzed man. Karol Wojtyla wrote in his doctoral dissertation, “Faith is a supernatural virtue that operates in the intellect and has the power of uniting this faculty with God... To be perfect, faith must be a living faith, vivified by charity and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It must be open to the other virtues and powers that can offer the plenitude and perfection of union” with God.⁷

In response to this calling to charity, already two of the members of this Bible study group are taking care of a rescue centre in Olympic under the Comboni missionaries. They have about 18 children. Some are in primary school, some in secondary school, some in colleges and universities while others already graduated and are taking care of themselves. Through this service, they encounter God who blesses

⁷ See John Paul II, *Faith According to St John of the Cross*, trans. Jordan Aumann (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), 265-267.

them and thus, they continue growing in faith. They also need to keep in mind the words of Seifert and Clinebell who note that, “religion is a way of life or a quality of man’s being and action, rather than a separate segment walled off from the rest of existence. Relationship to God and action in the human situation are always to be joined.”⁸

At his ascension, Jesus promised to remain with us when he said that, “And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Matt 28:20). He has not only remained with us in the Holy Scripture and Eucharist but in our neighbors especially the needy with whom he identifies himself: “... Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40). Thus, by doing charity, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group are serving Jesus who in return strengthens them in faith.

3.6. Love Ignites Charity (Luke 5:18-19)

The friends of the paralytic must have been moved by love to take him to Jesus. Love is an interior disposition which moves one to do charity. This interior disposition bears fruits through external actions. The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group must keep in mind that living faith is faith that is animated by love. These members should note the words of Pope Leo the Great that, “love is the strength of faith; faith is the power of love.” Faith without love is not living faith, and love without faith has no foundation.⁹ They need to know that love expressed in the service of our neighbor is the proper fruit of love of God and the proper sign of his presence among them. Through the words of St Paul, they should know that, “If one withholds this service of

⁸ See Harvey Seifert and Howard J. Clinebell, *Personal Growth and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 27.

⁹ See Dulles, 99-100.

fraternal love from those around him, he is lacking in faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim 5:8).

The love that should lead to charity must be that of agape, a love connected with life of grace and not love of *eros* that mostly has to do with emotions and feelings, a love that is geared towards satisfying one’s pleasures and comfort. This love should be patient, kind, seeking not its own interests, not quick-tempered. It must be love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things” (cf. 1 Cor 13:4-7). This is a spontaneous and unselfish love. This love is poured out, given further through charity. It does not matter whether the other person is ugly or pretty, pleasant or unpleasant, full of flaws and sin or not. It only minds about loving the person for who he is so as to make him a better person.¹⁰ This love is a response to Christ’s command to love: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (John 13:34).

3.7. The Need to be in the Presence of the Lord (Luke 5:18)

It is important for all Christians to be in the presence of the Lord if they are to be strengthened in faith. In the presence of the Lord, we share his graces that bring us close to him, graces that strengthen our Christian life. In the presence of the Lord, we encounter the mercy and love of God.

3.7.1. The Role of the Mother of Christ

Reflecting on the role of the friends of the paralytic, we see that sometimes though having an attitude of faith, we cannot bring ourselves to the presence of God. Without aid, we may never live a fulfilled life of faith but remain spectators of faith. If

¹⁰ See Dajczer, 174.

the paralyzed man did not have someone to bring him in the presence of Jesus, he would probably die without encountering Jesus (v. 18). The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group need to turn to Mother Mary, love her and seek her intercessions for through her they are brought into the presence of her Son Jesus. Mother Mary is she “who advanced in her pilgrimage of faith” (see LG, 58). Elizabeth crowned her as the model of faith by saying, “Blessed are you who believed...” (Luke 1:45). Thus, the members of Bible study group should see her as the model of faith, one who goes a head of them leading the way in their pilgrimage of faith. It is she who can properly direct them and bring them into the presence of Jesus.

In order for the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe to be aided by Mother Mary to grow in faith, they need to love her, imitate her and follow her as their example of faith. When they face difficulties along the way of faith, they should remember that Mother Mary also passed through a rough road of faith. After her fiat, it did not take long for Joseph to discover that she is conceived yet she did not know how to explain to Joseph. The time and place of birth are both dangerous, in the stressing moment of census, there is no conducive place for delivery, there is insecurity because of the crowds of visitors. After this, Herod wants to kill her baby but she escapes to an unfamiliar land. Jesus himself at times remains in the temple without the knowledge of her mother and when he is found, his words are hard for Mary. In Matt 12:48, Jesus almost denies Mary as his mother. God tested her faith, almost everything in her life was difficult but she remained faithful to God. Hence, Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group members need to turn to Mary and seek her help to always intercede for them to grow strong in faith as she was. The paralytic man was presented to Jesus by his friends, but these members of Bible study group need to make Mary their friend who can present them in the presence of the Lord.

3.7.2. *The Eucharist*

Christ himself, true God and true Man is present in the Eucharist. Receiving the Holy Eucharist is receiving Jesus himself, it is being in the presence of the LORD, encountering him face to face. Vatican Council II underlines that, “sacraments not only presuppose the presence of faith in those who receive them, but also give faith nourishment, strengthen it and express it.” (see *SC*, 59). The Eucharist imparts grace by itself (*ex opere operato*), hence leading to growth of faith. The members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study should be aware that by receiving the Holy Eucharist, they participate in Christ’s death and resurrection, they unite themselves with God’s love which leads them to conversion and transformation. Receiving the Eucharist, means letting Christ grow within you, and so entrusting him all your affairs, fears and anxieties.¹¹ This brings peace. Thus, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group should always participate in the celebration of the Holy Mass where they can receive the Holy Eucharist and be in the presence of the Lord.

3.8. *Relying Entirely on God*

The paralytic man in our pericope of study is an example of someone who relies entirely on God. This man knew that there is no one else to set him free from his paralysis apart from Jesus. At that time, there were herbalists and magicians in Israel but he did not seek healing from them. He believed and trusted that it is only the LORD who could heal him. The man was aware that in the Jewish religion, one becomes sick because he has sinned. Thus, coming to where other Jews gathered was a shame. Finding that there was no entrance, the man accepted to be carried on top of the roof to be lowered down, something risky for he could easily fall off the stretcher in the process. However, all these

¹¹ See Dajczer, 148.

aspects could not stop him from accepting to be brought in the presence of Jesus. This shows how he entirely relied on Jesus.

The paralytic can be declared poor in spirit for he stripped of self-confidence. He was aware that he cannot rely on himself, on his own strength. He was oriented towards awaiting everything from God. thus, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group if they are to grow in faith, should not trust in their natural abilities. They should take themselves as weak people for when they are weak, they do not trust in themselves and like St Paul, each individual will say that, "... power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me... for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2Cor 12:9- 10).

3.9. Liturgy as a Source of Faith (Luke 5:25-26)

In v. 25 and v. 26 we see the dominant aspect of glorifying God. There are various ways of glorifying God but the most efficient way is Liturgy. There are several liturgies but the most common is the liturgy of the hours and liturgy of Holy Mass. Sharing with the members of the group, they said that they do not say the liturgy of the hours and so in this section, the concern is the liturgy of the Holy Mass which they participate.

The members of Bible study group should bear in mind that when they are glorifying God in the Mass, they are also deepening their faith. The members of Bible study group should know that in liturgy, they are praying and so growing in faith. They should know that their way of praying determines their way of believing (*lex orandi, lex credendi*).¹² In liturgy, they praise God through gestures, symbols and words. In the Holy

¹² See Dulles, 276.

Mass, the faithful listen to the Word of God and receive the Holy Eucharist. Thus, for the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group to glorify God and grow in faith like the paralytic man after his healing, they need to always participate in the celebration of Holy Mass, where they encounter God.

3.9.1. *Faith Growing in the Community (Luke 5:26)*

By nature, man is a relational being. When a child is born, it finds itself in a family, it grows in a community of human beings. The communal life of man is willed by God who is relational. God the Father shares his power to the Son who is equal to him for they are of the same *homoousios*. The love between the Father and the Son is the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. God who lives in a community, wanted that man shares in his divinity and so created him also to live in a community. Thus, faith is lived and celebrated well in a community.

The pericope of our study has the communal aspect of living faith. The last verse 26, hints at the communal life in two instances. The first instance is that “.... Astonishment seized them all and they glorified God...” The second instance comes when they got struck with awe and they said, “We have seen incredible things today.” This last verse tells us that the crowds neither glorified God as individuals nor does the last part report that “I have seen incredible things today” but “we have seen incredible things.” Thus, the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group should be aware that faith continuously grows in a believing community. They should be aware that in the corporate worship of Christians, faith finds its most public articulation.¹³ Thus, the members of the Bible study group in question should always join the assembly of

¹³ See James Michael Lee, ed. *Handbook of Faith* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1990), 205.

Christians especially on Sundays in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist where faith is proclaimed and shared in union with others.¹⁴

3.10. Faith as Being Grateful to God (Luke 5:25-26)

Being grateful to God for everything is a way of growing in faith. V. 25 tells us that after healing, the man who was once paralyzed, did not just stand up, pick up his stretcher but went home “glorifying” God. He first glorified God for everything. The members of Bible study group in question should learn from the healed man who thanked God for all he did to him. The members should learn from St Francis of Assis who praised God in all creation. St Therese of the child Jesus should also be a model. Tadeusz brings to us the gratefulness of St Therese of the Child Jesu by writing that: “You had a lot of trouble today,” mother Agnes said to the ailing Therese of the Child Jesus. “Yes,” she answered, “but since I love it... I love everything that God gives me.”¹⁵ The members of Bible study group should also learn from the testament of St Bernadette who said: “For the poverty in which my mother and father lived, for the fact that everything failed for us, for the collapse of the mill, for the fact that I had to look after the children and watch over the sheep, for the constant tiredness, thank you, my God!”¹⁶

3.11. Conclusion

Faith is core for our Christian life. Without faith, we are just like a car without engine and fuel. Without faith we remain Christians because we are baptized and

¹⁴ See Louis Weil, *Gathered to Pray* (Cambridge: Cowley, 1986), 123-137.

¹⁵ See Dajczer, 20.

¹⁶ See Dajczer, 20.

incorporated into the Church but we are not effective. It is faith that keeps our Christian life dynamic, lively and fruitful. This chapter reflecting on Luke 5:17-27 has clearly indicated various ways that can lead to the growth of faith among the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group. We have seen that among other ways that: being obedient to the teaching of the Church, praying, doing works of charity, reading and listening to the Word of God, attending to sacraments of healing, attending the Holy Mass and turning to Mary as the model of faith, are the aspects that lead to growth of faith. Having faith in Jesus is to choose to be with Christ who grants the graces to live a worthy Christian life from which when our pilgrimage on earth is done, Christ will happy to say: well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things, come and share your master's joy.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study of Luke 5:17-26 which is about the healing of the paralytic man was to highlight the fact that faith in Jesus is core for one to be physically and spiritually healed, strengthened in faith so as to belong to Christ. It is difficult to live a life of faith because of human tendency to always want to rely on powers, but this paper by reflecting on the example of the paralytic man in Luke 5:17-26 has proved that it is possible to have faith in Jesus as long as one submits his will and powers to Jesus. The paper reflecting on the text under study successfully highlighted various ways how particularly the members of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group can grow strong in faith, and in general how other Christians can live a life of faith.

In the first chapter, we looked at the background of Luke 5:17-26. Since the text is about the faith of a paralyzed man, it was important in the first chapter to look at the Jewish understanding of sickness. It was found out that in the Jewish world, one became physically sick because he has sinned against God. Thus, healing required faith in God alone and not any other being. This is Jewish strict monotheism. Since sickness was due to offending God, it is he alone who had the right to forgive the sins of the sick person and so continue to restore his physical health. This is the reason why the religious authorities were against Jesus for he claimed the prerogatives of God to forgive sins and

impart healing. However, we saw that since Jesus was a Son of God, and had power from God, he effected healing as proven by his command to the paralytic to rise and take up his stretcher and indeed the sick man was able to rise and walk.

In the second chapter, we looked at the structure and exegesis of Luke 5:17-26. We found out that apart from Luke, Mark and Matthew also report the scene of the healing of the paralytic man though with some slight differences due to different viewpoints in the theological interests of each of the three evangelists. Luke 5:17-26 was very outstanding in portraying three core concepts and characters, namely, the Pharisees and Scribes, the concept of faith and the concept of the “Son of Man.” This text mainly presented Jesus as restorer of humanity to a proper relationship with God and the order of creation as long as one has faith in him.

The pharisees and Scribes saw themselves as possessing the religious authority, as the ones to determine the Jewish belief and that is why they saw Jesus as interfering in their office. They considered Jesus blasphemous for he forgave the sins of the paralytic. Exegesis of the text brought it out clearly that one of the main reasons as to why the Pharisees and scribes convicted Jesus of blasphemy is because of their stubbornness, their adamant refusal to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, one who had power and authority to dispense God’s will on earth. They saw Jesus as someone who was coming to take away their benefits and so convicted him with blasphemy which was punishable with death so as to get him out of their way.

Jesus was not against the Jewish traditional understanding of physical sickness as caused by sin but was against the Jewish understanding that those who looked physically well considered themselves as righteous and so without need of conversion. Hence, we saw that Jesus also had to first forgive the sins of the paralytic to restore him to the right relationship with God and later healed the physical paralysis as a way of restoring the

sick man to right relationship with humanity. Jesus healed the paralytic man because him and his friends portrayed faith in him.

In the third chapter, we have seen that there are different ways through which Christians especially those of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group can a life of faith and grow strong in it. These various ways that act as means to grow in faith are not of human making but have their source in God. Thus, as long as one cooperates with God, he grants him the graces to flourish in faith. These ways that promote a life of faith first and foremost must be practiced within the boundaries of the Church. That means, an individual's faith must not contradict the teachings and faith of the Church. Thus, obedience to the Church ministers is core to one's growth of faith.

In the same chapter three we have seen that Jesus is still present with his people and speaks to them especially, thorough the Gospel. Thus, to grow in faith, listening intently and reading the Gospel is inevitable. This chapter also highlighted the fact that God always energizes his people on their journey of faith through prayer for in it they encounter him, dialogue with him and seek for his strength. This spiritual power obtained through prayer should also be reflected in the works of charity for faith without works is not faith. In order to grow in faith, one needs to rely entirely on God, one needs to participate in the Liturgy of the Church, one needs to attend to the sacraments especially those of healing for through them God imparts in us his graces. And lastly, to be strong in faith, Christians need someone to intercede for them, someone who passed through the trials of life but was faithful to God, someone who now is with God, who can present them to God. Thus, Christians especially those of Our Lady of Guadalupe Bible study group must always turn to Mother Mary and seek her intercessions.

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