

## Bi132 The Gospels

### *Lesson Bi132-17 Authority to Forgive Sins*

Jesus continued to travel through Galilee gathering disciples and teaching them truths about the kingdom of God. Everywhere he went, he performed miracles. In previous lessons you learned that he turned water into wine, healed the sick, and cast demons from people. Where did Jesus get this power and authority?

God the Father is the ultimate source of power and authority. He sent Jesus to show mankind what God was like. Jesus performed these miracles, not because he was God, but rather as a man led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. He received both power and authority from his Father to accomplish his mission here on earth. Jesus, in turn, delegated power and authority first to the 12 disciples, then to 72 more disciples, then to the 120 on the Day of Pentecost. He wants to give us power and authority today too, as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

Today's lesson takes place when Jesus went into a house in Capernaum to teach. As soon as the village heard he was there, the house filled up with people. Among those sitting there were Pharisees and teachers of the law from Jerusalem. The crowd grew and spilled out the doorway, with people standing outside. The Pharisees were the religious conservatives of their day—their name means 'separated ones.' They were teachers in the synagogues. They believed that regulations handed down by tradition were equal with Scripture. The teachers of the law or scribes also interpreted both the written and oral law. These men often came to hear and watch Jesus, not to become his disciples, but to find fault with him. Jesus always preached the word of God to them.

And the power of God was present for him to heal the sick. Four men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They quickly realized they had no way of getting close to Jesus through the big crowd. So they carried the man up the outside stairs of the house onto the roof. There they made an opening by removing some tiles and digging through the roof. When the opening was big enough, they lowered the man on his mat into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man on the mat, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

*Consider this: Why did Jesus forgive this man's sin when the friends' purpose for bringing him was for healing?*

Jesus first met the man's deepest need: forgiveness of sin. The religious rulers were shocked when they heard Jesus' words, thinking, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Only God can forgive sins." The Pharisees considered blasphemy to be the most serious sin a man could commit. Anyone claiming to have majesty or authority belonging only to God was considered to be reviling the name of God and deserving of death by stoning. They realized Jesus' forgiveness of sins was a claim to deity—which they considered blasphemous.

Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said to the religious leaders, "Why are you so upset and troubled? Which is easier for me to say to this man, 'Your sins are forgiven, or to say,

‘Get up and walk?’” (We can see that neither was easier. Both are equally impossible to men and equally easy to God.) Jesus continued, “But you need to know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take up your mat, and go home.”

Immediately the man stood up, picked up the mat he had been lying on, and went home praising God. All the people were amazed and glorified God. Filled with awe they said, “We have seen remarkable things today” (Luke 5:17-26).

Jesus then left that house and walked toward the Lake of Galilee, teaching the crowd. Along the way, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax collector’s booth. The Jewish people hated tax collectors and considered them the worst traitors in all of Israel. They worked for the Roman conquerors and often defrauded their own people. In turn the Jews treated them as outcasts and expelled them from the synagogue.

Jesus stopped and said to him, “Follow me.” Immediately, the man left everything and followed Jesus. Since Jesus had been ministering in Capernaum for some time, Levi had probably known him previously. When Levi began to follow Jesus, he did not do it secretly. He hosted a great banquet for Jesus at his house. He invited tax collectors and others to the meal. Why did he do this? He did it because his life had been changed by Christ and he wanted his friends to experience the same transformation.

The Pharisees were appalled! They asked the disciples, “Why does your Master eat with tax collectors and sinners?” The term ‘sinners’ was commonly used to refer to such persons as tax collectors, adulterers, robbers, and prostitutes. And, to eat with such a person was a sign of friendship with them. Pharisees mistakenly taught that God’s grace extends only to those who keep his law.

Jesus heard this complaint, so he answered them. “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

The authority of Jesus is demonstrated in the first story when he forgives the lame man’s sins and heals him too. The religious leaders were obviously not expecting Jesus to forgive the lame man his sins. To them this was not the problem. Jesus shocks them with his words. He already knows what their response will be to his declaration of forgiveness for the lame man. Then Jesus asks a question, “Which is easier to say, you’re forgiven, or you’re healed? Both are easy with God. And Jesus can do both because through the Holy Spirit, he has God’s power and authority. The Pharisees were very angry, but the people rejoiced because they saw the power and authority of God at work! It is clear that one purpose of the miracles following Jesus’ teaching was to give evidence of God’s power. Later, when his disciples preached the Word, God also “confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it” (Mark 16:20).

The next time Jesus demonstrated authority was in calling Levi, known later as Matthew, to become an apostle. Christ called a hated tax collector to be one of his 12 disciples. He showed that he had the authority to call sinners to repentance. These people knew they needed God’s forgiveness in their lives. Whatever Matthew’s story, when Jesus called him, he left his past

behind to follow his new master! Then he called his friends to a banquet where Jesus was honored, so they could know him too.

This story is **important** because Jesus is always looking for people who will repent and believe to experience the new life God has for them. He will delegate to believers that same power and authority that he had on earth, as they are filled with the same Holy Spirit.

The **main truth** of this story is that Jesus gives us power and authority to defeat the power of Satan in whatever form it comes to destroy someone's life.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. What authority did Jesus possess that offended the religious leaders?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Jesus demonstrated that he had the authority to forgive sins," you are correct.
2. What did Matthew do to affirm his changed life after meeting Jesus?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said, "Matthew called his unbelieving friends to a banquet where Jesus was honored," you are correct.
3. What comment did Jesus make after the religious leaders complained about the people he spent time with?  
A. [Pause for 5 seconds.] If you said Jesus told the religious leaders, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the stories of the healing of the paralyzed man and the call of Matthew. Tell the stories to someone new and then ask this question. "What do you think the paralyzed man believed was his greatest need when he was taken to Jesus? What did Jesus see as his greatest need?" Discuss the difference between needs that show on the outside and needs of the heart.