



CHRISTADELPHIAN ISOLATION LEAGUE

EXHORTATION

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SECTION LEADER:

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Readings: 2 Kings 19, Ezekiel 9, Luke 5

Jesus Changed Their Lives

Our thoughts today are drawn from our reading in **Luke 5** where we read of the preaching and healing that took place in Galilee. We read these words and are reminded that each of us is different and our calling is different, yet one thing is universal, the need to repent and be saved.

What do we make of the ministry of Jesus over approximately 3 years? It is clear that Jesus visited Galilee and Jerusalem many times in that period and some people felt moved to approach him at their first meeting, while others who were affected by what he said responded later. Each of them was different, but Jesus had left his mark on all of them. So what can we see in this chapter?

Luke 5:1-11. I wonder what the disciples thought when Jesus told them to put out their boat into the lake to fish? This does not appear to be the first occasion they had heard him speak, and good preacher though he was, he was not a fisherman. They had had a bad night of fishing and to collect and cast nets again would have been not only a time-consuming exercise but also probably a fruitless one as well. Yet they did it and the haul of fish profoundly affected all of them, particularly Peter and they all left their jobs to follow him to be fishers of men

In **Luke 5:12** we read of the Leper who: *"...when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord if you will, you can make me clean" (ESV).* On what basis did he hold such a confident belief? Had he heard of what Jesus did or had he seen Jesus heal in a miraculous way in the past? We have no way of knowing, but his clear faith in Jesus' ability to heal, brought about life-changing adjustments to his life.

We read Jesus' reply in **v13**: *"And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying, I will; be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him."* He was well again and no longer deemed an outcast under the Law of Moses, to God or to society.

We are next introduced to the paralytic. The section in **Luke 5:17-26** starts in the following way: *"On one of those days..." (ESV) or: "Now it happened on a certain day..." (NKJV).* It seemed as though it was just one of those days of Jesus ministry, yet it cannot have been so for this paralytic we read about. We know very little about this man. He clearly was unable to look after himself and needed the help of friends to go anywhere. Like all of us before God he was burdened by sin but it is possible that he may have felt that he had received his illness because of sin. There is evidence that Jesus says and does things to help the receiver of healing know that they are not only healed but forgiven as well. We have just looked at the healing of the man with leprosy. Under the law people were not encouraged to touch a person with leprosy. Yet as we have already read in **v13**, Jesus quite deliberately stretches out his hand and touches him. What better way of showing that the problem he suffered from, had left him. As Jesus can read the mind of those he heals, it is very probable that this man felt that sin was the overwhelming reason for his paralysis. What better way to assure him that he was healed and the burden of sin lifted, than to tell him of that fact. It is of course quite possible that Jesus was making a more general point about his ability to forgive sins. However, we note his surprise and the way he dealt with it in **vs22-24**:

"When Jesus perceived their thoughts he answered them. Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven you, or to say, rise and walk? But that you may know that the son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins."

The information we have suggests that the locality is Galilee and possibly even Capernaum and therefore suggests this man knew of Jesus. If so, had he previously declined to respond to Jesus' preaching? Perhaps, as we have suggested, he was burdened by guilt as well as the practical issue of physically getting to Jesus. It took his faith in Jesus to confront this burden of sin and the practical help and faith of his friends to bring him to Jesus to transform his life. What were those changes to his life? Surely they were the calm of sin forgiven and the opportunity to walk and adjust to normal life.

Finally in **Luke 5: 27-32** we are introduced to the calling of Levi, who most commentators agree is the gospel writer Matthew. I do not think this was his first meeting with Jesus. If it was, it was a remarkable transformation in both faith and circumstances.

Let us think about this for a minute. Peter and the rest of the group may well have left all and followed Jesus. However, it is clear that they had left a family business and we know that briefly, following Jesus' death, they appear to have returned to fishing.

A return to being a chief tax collector would not have been possible for Levi. From what we read in the chapter, and from our knowledge of the time, Levi was clearly a wealthy man who had a wide circle of contacts within the tax collector community. His work of tax collecting was authorised by the Romans and he was allocated a district and may have been in charge of other tax collectors. This may have been the group with him at the feast. What is clear is that his contract with the Romans would have passed to someone else. Similarly he was aware of the bad feeling held by the common people towards tax collectors and surely would have found it difficult to go back to it after rejecting that lifestyle.

We look at these characters from 2,000 years ago and only have the briefest of details about their circumstances and their thinking at the time. In so many ways they are like you and me. They were people who faced up to the sins which clung to them and embraced the changes that belief in the gospel brought to both their thinking and their lives.

In their own way they measured themselves against Jesus and found themselves falling short and that is exactly what we have found in our own lives. Each of us is unique, but each of us has responded in a positive way, like them. The degree of change in their lives, both spiritually and practically, was immense. The change of circumstances for Levi and the paralytic was both immediate and great. But to varying degrees that is the same for all who focus on following in the steps of Jesus rather than focusing on themselves.

Levi could not go back; the paralytic would not wish to. Levi came to Jesus because he clearly understood that he was found wanting both spiritually and physically. He could not be better reminded of his previous state than to remember that it is those who are sick that need a physician, something the elders of the synagogue failed to recognise but which did not put Levi off from following Jesus. In a similar way the faithful friends of the paralytic would not be put off by crowds or physical difficulties. They were determined to bring their friend to Jesus because they believed he could heal him.

In taking the emblems we celebrate the fact that Jesus has come into our lives and had such an effect upon us that we were moved to respond to the hope of salvation. Whoever we were then, we are now alive in the Lord in a very real and personal way. We take the emblems to remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ conscious that he crucified sin upon the cross and that he is our continuing hope of a place in the kingdom to come, on earth.

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