

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

**THE SPIRITUAL
CONDITION OF
EVERY FALLEN
HUMAN BEING**

WITNESS LEE

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In Luke 5:1—6:11 we have a record of five cases: the attracting of the occupied (5:1-11), the cleansing of the contaminated (5:12-16), the healing of the paralytic (5:17-26), the calling of the despised (5:27-39), and the breaking of the deformed sabbatical regulation for people's satisfaction and liberation (6:1-11). We should not regard these cases merely as records of what happened to different persons. Actually, all these cases portray a single person.

FALLEN MAN OCCUPIED WITH MAKING A LIVING

The calling of the first four disciples in Luke 5:1-11 was a calling that attracted the occupied ones. Human beings do not realize how much they are fallen not only in sin but also in their occupation. Our occupation is our business or means of employment, that is, our means of

making a living. Today fallen human beings are occupied by their way of making their living. We may say that fallen human beings are occupied by their occupation.

Of course, it is necessary for us to work. Paul charged the believers to work for a living ([2 Thes. 3:10-12](#)). We should not rely on others to provide a living for us. This means that we should not have the kind of faith that requires others to exercise their love and take care of us. We need to have a means of employment. However, the problem is that our occupation occupies us and keeps us from God.

Human beings were created by God for Himself, but they are occupied and kept from Him by the matter of making a living. Nothing takes people away from God as much as their occupation. Consider today's world. Who is not occupied by his job or by the education in preparation for work? Although most people are busy, hardly anyone is busy with God. Instead, virtually everyone is occupied by something in place of God. The first disciples were called and attracted by the Lord not from their sinful life, but from their occupation. In particular, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were occupied with fishing.

MIRACLES RELATED TO FISHING

In [5:2-10a](#) we have a record of the Man-Savior's attracting some who were occupied with earning a living. This record is not found either in [Matthew 4:18-22](#) or in [Mark 1:16-20](#). As we read Matthew and Mark, we may wonder why Peter and the others followed the Lord when He told them to come and follow Him. Here in [Luke 5](#) we have an additional record indicating that when the Lord Jesus called Peter, He performed a miracle related to fishing. This miracle attracted Peter to the Man-Savior.

The calling of Peter in [Luke 5:1-11](#) is related to the highest standard of morality. [Verse 2](#) says, “He saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing the nets.” The Lord then got into Simon’s boat and asked him to put out a little from the land ([v. 3](#)). He taught the crowds from the boat, and when He had ceased speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” ([v. 4](#)). Simon answered, “Master, through the whole night we toiled and took nothing; but at Your word I will let down the nets” ([v. 5](#)). Before this Simon had

been brought to the Lord by his brother Andrew ([John 1:40-42](#)).

In [verse 5](#) Simon addressed the Lord as Master. The Greek word, a different one from that translated Master in [2:29](#), denotes one who exercises any kind of oversight.

Peter was a professional fisherman, the lake had an abundance of fish, and night was the proper time for fishing. Nevertheless, they did not catch anything. It must have been that the Lord exercised His sovereignty to keep the fish away. This was an exercise not of His human virtues, but of His divine attributes.

The reason the Lord exercised His sovereignty in this way was that His intention was to attract Simon and his brother. Therefore, at the proper time, the Lord commanded the fish to come near. As a result, “they enclosed a great number of fish; and their nets were tearing apart” ([v. 6](#)). Both boats were filled to the point of sinking ([v. 7](#)).

After the Lord Jesus performed a miracle related to fishing, Peter said to Him, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord!” ([5:8](#)). No matter what a person’s occupation may be, when he is called by the Lord and released, he immediately realizes that he is sinful. When

people are busy with their occupation, they may think that they are very good. But when they are released from their occupation to follow the Lord, they realize that they are sinful. Furthermore, after they are cleansed, they realize that they are paralyzed with respect to God and the things of God. They are not able to walk in God's way. But after they are healed, they come to see that they are "tax collectors," despised persons considered to be of no value. Eventually, they understand that they are under the bondage of certain regulations and are in need of both satisfaction and liberation.

CLEANSING THE CONTAMINATED

Luke 5:12 says, "And it came about that as He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man full of leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can cleanse me." The Lord "stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, I am willing; be cleansed! And immediately the leprosy left him" ([v. 13](#)).

EXPRESSING THE LORD'S DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

His divine attributes were expressed in the

cleansing of the leper. It is impossible for any human being to cleanse a leper. Therefore, the One who cleansed this leper must be God.

In the Lord's sympathy we see His human virtue, and in the cleansing of the leper we see His divine attribute. He was the genuine God-man. As man He was filled with the human virtues, and as God He had the divine attributes that enabled Him to cleanse the man's leprosy. In this case the Lord's human virtues express His divine attributes.

According to the scriptural examples, leprosy comes from rebellion and disobedience. Miriam became leprous because of her rebellion against God's deputy authority ([Num. 12:1-10](#)). Naaman's leprosy was cleansed because of his obedience ([2 Kings 5:1, 9-14](#)). All fallen human beings have become leprous in the sight of God because of their rebellion. But the Man-Savior has come to save men from their rebellion and to cleanse them from their leprosy.

A leper, according to the law, was to be excluded from the people because of his uncleanness. No one could touch him ([Lev. 13:45-46](#)). But the Man-Savior touched the one full of leprosy. What mercy and sympathy! By His one

touch, “immediately the leprosy left him” ([Luke 5:13](#)).

A leper portrays a typical sinner. Leprosy is the most contaminating and damaging disease, isolating its victim both from God and men. To cleanse the leper signifies to recover the sinner to the fellowship with God and with men. It is significant that the leper was not only healed but cleansed. The one with leprosy not only requires healing as those with other diseases; he also needs cleansing, as from sin ([1 John 1:7](#)), because of the filthy and contaminating nature of the disease.

HEALING THE PARALYTIC

In the case of the healing of the paralytic ([5:17-26](#)), we also see the Lord’s divine attributes expressed in His human virtues. In [5:20](#) He said to the paralytic, “Man, your sins have been forgiven you!” When the scribes and Pharisees heard this, they began to reason, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ([v. 21](#)). The Lord Jesus exercised His divine authority to forgive the paralytic’s sins and His divine power to heal him. But in this case we also see the exercise of the Lord’s kindness, which is a human virtue.

Therefore, in this case also the Lord's human virtues express His divine attributes.

Luke 5:24 says, “In order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins—He said to the paralyzed one, To you I say, rise and pick up your cot, and go to your home.” The Man-Savior was the very God incarnated, not regarding equality with God a thing to be grasped. He was outwardly in the likeness and fashion of man, but inwardly He was God (Phil. 2:6-7). He was the Man-Savior and the God-Savior as well. Hence, He had not only the ability to save sinners, but also the authority to forgive their sins. In this incident, He forgave the paralytic’s sins as God, but asserted that He was the Son of Man. This indicates that He was the true God and a real Man, possessing deity and humanity.

CALLING THE DESPISED

In 5:27-39 we have the case of the calling of a despised tax collector named Levi or Matthew. Verse 27 says, “And after these things He went out and beheld a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, Follow Me.” The tax office was a tollhouse, where Matthew collected taxes for the Romans.

Matthew was one of the tax collectors ([Matt. 10:3](#)), probably in a high position, a man who was condemned, despised, and abhorred by the Jews ([Luke 18:11](#); [Matt. 5:46](#)). Yet he was called by the Man-Savior and was later chosen and appointed as one of the twelve apostles. What mercy!

[Luke 5:28](#) says of Matthew, “And leaving all, he rose up and followed Him.” It seems that this was the first time the Lord met Matthew. There must have been some attracting power with the Lord, either in His word or appearance, that caused Matthew to follow Him.

With the calling of Matthew there was no miracle. When the Lord Jesus came to Peter, He attracted him from his occupation by means of a miracle. But He did not perform a miracle when He came to Matthew. His willingness to come to Matthew was a great mercy.

The Jews stayed away from the tax collectors, regarding them as worse than lepers. Therefore, Matthew must have been surprised when the Lord Jesus came to him. Perhaps Matthew said to himself, “Who am I that this One should come to me? I am a tax collector, a despised person. Who would care for me? Yet Jesus comes to me and tells me to follow Him.”

In the Lord's calling of Matthew we see the high standard of His human virtue. Perhaps the Lord said to Himself when He was about to call Matthew, "Yes, this one is a tax collector. But he is still a human being, and I will not reject him or give up on him. Rather, I shall come to him, contact him, and call him. I call not only the occupied ones, but also the despised ones."

BREAKING THE DEFORMED SABBATICAL REGULATIONS

In 6:1-11 we have two cases of the Lord's breaking the deformed sabbatical regulations. He did this for the sake of people's satisfaction and liberation. Sabbath regulations were given in the Old Testament. However, the Jewish religionists misused these regulations and caused them to become deformed. Hence, when the Lord Jesus came as the Man-Savior, He cared for man, not for the deformed regulations. For the sake of man, He purposely broke the deformed sabbatical regulations.

FOR PEOPLE' S SATISFACTION

The first case of breaking these regulations is recorded in 6:1-5. "It came about that on a Sabbath He was going through the grainfields,

and His disciples were picking and eating the ears of grain, rubbing them in their hands” (v. 1). Some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” (v. 2). Profaning the Sabbath was a serious matter in the eyes of the religious Pharisees. To them, it was not lawful for the Lord’s disciples to pick ears of grain and eat them on the Sabbath. According to their meager knowledge of the Scriptures, they cared for the ritual of keeping the Sabbath, not for the hunger of the people. The Man-Savior, on the contrary, cared for the satisfaction of His followers.

In 6:5 the Lord said to the Pharisees, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” This indicates the Man-Savior’s deity in His humanity. He, the Son of Man, was the very God who ordained the Sabbath, and He had the right to change what He had ordained concerning the Sabbath.

FOR PEOPLE’S LIBERATION

A second case of the Lord’s breaking the deformed sabbatical regulation is found in 6:6-11. Here the Lord restores a withered hand. He said to the man with the withered hand, “Stretch out your hand! And he did, and his hand was

restored” ([v. 10](#)). Exercising His compassion, the Man-Savior restored the withered hand. Here His compassion and His power to heal are a merging of His human virtue with His divine attributes. Therefore, once again His divine attributes are expressed in His human virtues. In these two instances the Lord broke the deformed sabbatical regulations for the sake of people’s satisfaction and liberation.

A PICTURE OF OUR EXPERIENCE

In [5:1—6:11](#) we have a composite picture of fallen human beings. A fallen person is occupied, he is a leper, he is a paralytic, he is despised, and he is under bondage. According to the record in this portion of the Gospel of Luke, such a person is attracted from his occupation by the Lord Jesus, and he is cleansed from his leprosy, healed of his paralysis, uplifted from his despised condition, and freed from hunger and bondage. This is a picture of what has happened to us. We all can testify that we were such persons. We have been attracted away from our occupations, and we have been cleansed, healed, uplifted, satisfied, and freed. This is the Man-Savior’s ministry in His human virtues with His

divine attributes. This matter is an underlying principle followed by Luke in writing this Gospel.

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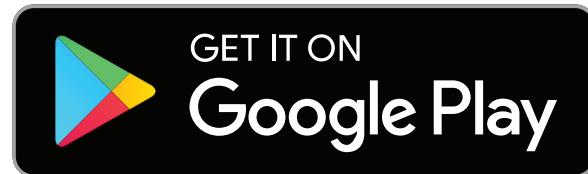
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