

EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL NOTES.

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General Statement.

For nearly a year Jesus had stood prominently before the people, teaching the principles of the new kingdom, and he was now at the most popular period of his ministry. The Pharisaic party and the enemies; and the unthinking masses thronged after him in a blind expectation that he would speedily draw the sword, shake off the Roman yoke, and establish upon Mount Zion a throne which should compel the homage of the world—an expectation which Jesus well knew was folly, and which, when disappointed, would soon turn the hearts of the people to a bitter hate. But at present vast multitudes were eagerly listening to his words, while crowds of the sick and the suffering sought his healing power. Just at this period two significant miracles were wrought. By touching with healing hand a man whose whole form was polluted with leprosy, Christ silently proclaimed his independence of the entire mass of ceremonial regulations which had grown up around the ancient law. And when, in presence of a company of jealous Pharisees, he said to the paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," he calmly asserted himself to be invested with an authority above priests, or even prophets, as the Son of God. To this last mentioned miracle our attention is called by the present lesson. If we carefully watch the pertinacity of these friendly hearers, the anguish of the sufferer, the skepticism of the "doctors," the divine discernment and power of Jesus, the joy of the sick sinner, who was at once converted and cured, and the awful joy of the multitude, we shall find every character turn into a teacher, and every incident to be full of instruction.

Verse 17. On a certain day. Better, "on one of those days." Verses 12-16 tell the story of the healing of a leper, which may have occurred just before this, but we have not exact knowledge of the chronology of this part of Christ's life. This incident probably occurred in the spring or early summer of A. D. 28. It occurred in Capernaum, which is now generally identified with the extensive ruins at Tell Hum, toward the northern end of the Sea of Galilee. It is not strange that Jesus selected this town as his residence, for it was at the junction of the great road's leading from Syria and the far East, to the Mediterranean on the west, and Jerusalem and Egypt on the south, and it was itself the center of the busiest manufacturing district of Palestine. **As he was teaching.** Probably in the courtyard of a private house. It is a prevalent fancy that he was in the residence of Peter. **There were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by.** The sect or party of Pharisees at this time exerted an influence over the minds of the common people as great as, if not greater than, the influence of the priests. They had begun centuries before as a sort of "Puritans," but the fervent devotion of the fathers of the sect had, most of it, died away, and Pharisees were now petty critics of morals, intent on minute and worthless details of the law, and oblivious to its great fundamental principles. Jesus repeatedly characterized them as a class of hypocrites, but recognized, as we must recognize, many earnest and holy men among them. The "doctors of the law" were teachers, rabbis who ordinarily thronged together in Jerusalem. We have no institution in our modern life which at all resembles the system of fundamental teaching which was recognized by the

ancients, both of the Hebrew and Gentile world. These doctors were, like all of the later Jewish teachers, notable for their appeals to authority. They did not pretend to originality of thought. **Which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem.** To bring out the full sense there should be an "of" before Judea. All regions in Palestine, and especially the capital city, sent representatives to investigate this new force. **The power of the Lord was present to heal them.** Jesus frequently interrupted his own discourse to heal some of the pitiable persons presented to him. There seems to have been little or no malignity on the part of the critics, and probably a fairer audience had never gathered about our Lord. It included fishermen and statesmen, peasants and lawyers. Note verse 16, where Luke notices the necessity on the part of Jesus for a renewal of his spiritual forces by communion with God.

18, 19. And, behold. An unexpected turn in affairs. The quiet teaching was suddenly interrupted. **Men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy.** The men were four in number (Mark 2:3). The palsied sufferer lay on a rug or mat which was carried by the four corners and sagged down with his weight. The "palsy" was certainly some form of nervous exhaustion. Our Saviour's words seem to indicate that this man's illness was closely connected with his sin. Every sufferer in that day seems to have been confident that if he could bring his suffering into the presence of the Master he would be healed, but many must have been disappointed because of the dense crowd. If, as often before, Jesus should suddenly withdraw, this palsied man might never