

5 - LUKE, THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN

Paul calls Luke, “The beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14). Evidence proves that Luke was a Hippocratically trained physician.

First we have Luke’s use of medical jargon. When Publius’ father was sick, Luke diagnosed his case as *puretois kai dusenterio sunechomenon*, or “suffering from a fever and dysentery.” This entire phrase is found in the Hippocratic medical writings. Other gospel writers (i.e. Mark and Matthew) use *puretois* (‘fever’) in the singular, but correct Greek medical usage is plural, which Luke always uses, demonstrating his knowledge of correct medical terminology. In describing the man suffering from dropsy, Luke uses the medical term, *hudropikos*, “a surplus of fluid in the body tissues.”

Secondly, we have Dr. Luke’s case histories: eighteen years, twelve years, congenitally lame (“from the womb of his mother”). Thirdly is Luke’s ability to describe the healing process. In the story of the woman suffering from *sugkuptousa* “curvature of the spine,” Luke is able to dissect this healing miracle into its component parts: *apolelusai* – “relaxing tendons and muscles of the chest”; *anakupsai* – “to straighten the vertebrae of the spine”; *anorthothe* – “to put back into natural position dislocated parts of the body.” The healing had to occur in this order, for if the curvature had been removed before the relaxing of the tendons of the chest, they would have been torn loose. *Anorthothe* was needed to complete the healing process.

Fourth is Luke’s ability to diagnose disease (see above). The girl with “a spirit of divination” was diagnosed by Luke as *echousan pneuma puthona*, “having a Python spirit” and used in Hippocratic medical writings as the ability to practice ventriloquism. Fifth is Luke’s knowledge of wound treatment. In the story of the Good Samaritan, wine and oil were used in treating wounds as recommended by Hippocrates.

Finally, we notice Luke’s adherence to detail as contrasted to the other gospel writers. Only Luke mentions that Peter’s mother-in-law suffered from a ‘high’ fever; the advanced state of leprosy; that the demoniac of Gardara wore no clothes; that the right hand was withered. Luke would never call a man a paralytic like Matthew and Mark (it was considered unethical for a physician to do so). When telling the story of the woman with the flow of blood, Luke uses the medical term for the stoppage of bodily discharges: *este*. Mark speaks of drying it up (like a river is dried up) and Matthew simply says it was healed. Luke was a fully credentialed doctor/physician able to minister to body and soul and spirit.