

## **Mark 2:1-12 Jesus Heals the Paralytic**

**1**When Jesus came back to Capernaum a few days later, it was heard that He was at home. **2**And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer space, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.

At this point, Jesus was basically besieged inside the house, with the crowd pushing in from the narrow street outside, listening to his teaching as best they could, and of course asking for healings and other miracles.

**3**And some people came, bringing to Him a man who was paralyzed, carried by four men.

So, Jesus' preaching was interrupted by the arrival of a small group of men who carried a paralyzed man on a mattress. He was unable to walk, and the determination of those who brought him to Jesus suggests that his condition was wretched.

**4**And when they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and after digging an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralyzed man was lying.

It wouldn't exactly take a crowd of thousands to make it impossible to bring a man on a litter into a typical Capernaum house of the day. They were not very large. But, with crowds overflowing out the door and onto the street, there was really no way for them to get their friend close to Jesus. Houses in that day had an outside staircase leading to the roof. This enabled the men to easily carry their paralyzed friend up to the roof on his mat. Once they were on the roof, they opened up a hole in the roof and lowered the man and his mat down to Jesus! The hole in the roof did not have to be very big, only big enough to get their friend through, and lower him down to Jesus, but it was still a bit of a deconstruction project going on only feet away. It's interesting that Jesus, while he was teaching, must have continued while these men deconstructed that section of the roof, with dirt and dust and debris falling down right in front of Him, very well aware of what they were doing, but did not chide them for it, or tell them to stop.

**5**And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralyzed man, **"Son, your sins are forgiven."**

Jesus recognized this bold expedient as an expression of faith: the four clearly believed that he had the power to heal this man. Faith always gets Jesus' attention. Jesus' response to their faith was the unexpected statement, **"Son, your sins are forgiven!"** The pronouncement was startling because it seemed inappropriate and even irrelevant to the immediate situation. Jesus dealt with the condition of the paralytic by focusing first on his sins, and echoing the Old Testament's perspective on the matter, taught that in some way the forgiveness of sin and physical healing were interrelated in this case. This spiritual battle against sin, and the disease and suffering that it causes highlights why it is appropriate for Jesus to proclaim the remission of sins. Here we have no record of a verbal expression of faith, but the action of the man's friends made their faith obvious to all. Their confidence and trust in Jesus was proved by their actions—what they did in life, and it is the same for us!

**6**But some of the scribes were sitting there and thinking *it over* in their hearts,

These scribes were men who were schooled in the written Law of God and its oral interpretation. The scribes who were present on this occasion were offended by Jesus' declaration. In the Old Testament, it is stated repeatedly that God alone can forgive sins. They took it as blasphemy. Their misgivings are expressed in the form of questions, but really they are stating "He is blaspheming", by claiming to do what only God can do, and putting Himself equal with God, and they were challenging Jesus' authority.

**8**Immediately Jesus, aware <sup>[e]</sup>in His spirit that they were thinking that way within themselves, **\*said to them, "Why are you thinking about these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, 'Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk'?"**

Jesus immediately sensed this sharp disapproval of the scribes and drew the attention of those present to it by addressing them with the pointed question, “Is it easier to say to a paralyzed man ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘Arise, pick up your mattress and walk’?” The scribes might think that a declaration of forgiveness is easier than one of healing, the efficacy of which would be open to immediate verification. This judgment seems to lie behind their contemptuous question, **“Why does this fellow speak like this?”** (verse 7). It is the declaration of forgiveness which is the more essential—and the more difficult—of the two actions. Jesus’ awareness of their criticisms is not derived from hearing any words, but is something which he knows. Jesus’ supernatural powers of discernment are far beyond what others enjoy, being able to see what was in their hearts. By bringing the issue into the open Jesus ensures that the implications of his claim to forgive sins are brought to public recognition, and it is evident that Jesus wants to make this clear to everyone.

**<sup>9</sup>Which is easier, to say to the paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’?**

Here, Jesus argues that if the more ‘difficult’ can be achieved, this guarantees the validity of the claim to do the ‘easier’. The answer to Jesus’ rhetorical question must therefore be that it is easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven’, since that is the point to be proved, and it will be proved by the successful utterance of the ‘more difficult’ command to the paralytic to get up and walk. To regard the forgiveness of sins as ‘easier’ than healing a medical complaint isn’t correct—but that’s what these Pharisees focused on worldly concerns, such as their own positions and authorities would think. They were doubting Jesus’ authority, and they reasoned that anyone might say that they could forgive sins, because there wasn’t going to be any outward sign that could prove it had actually been done! They thought that Jesus was trying to fool the crowds. Jesus wants everyone to focus on the fact that the proof of his ability to forgive sins—much more important from a heavenly perspective, since it is faith in Jesus that saves eternally—will be proved by the healing that he is about to perform for this man.

**<sup>10</sup>But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”**

In fact, Jesus states that the healing of this man is **so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”** that Jesus is the Son of God, that He does things that only God can do! I’ve noticed that Jesus tends to use this term Son of Man to refer to Himself, not only as highlighting His role as Messiah, but most especially to highlight why we have need for a Messiah in the first place! Jesus is the Son of Man, because it was man’s failure, man’s sin, and in particular Adam’s sin that caused there to be a need for salvation in the first place. And, it is as a Man, the Last Adam that is the true sense in which Jesus is the Son of Man (see 1 Cor 15:45-49). Jesus’ distinctive use of ‘the Son of Man’ to refer to Himself is precisely because Israel just didn’t get that they needed forgiveness, salvation, and that the Messiah was going to suffer and die for them. Nor did most of them accept it, certainly few of the scribes and Pharisees, and only a remnant of the people. Many of the people who called Jesus ‘Messiah’ or ‘Son of David’ on Palm Sunday were going to be the same ones who cried out “crucify him” on Friday, because they just didn’t get it. Those who deny Jesus’ authority over their lives, and over creation, are the same ones who end up denying His power to forgive their sins, and refuse to bow the knee before Him either in acknowledgement of His Lordship, or His redemptive power. They go together, and cannot be separated, because Jesus is both Savior, and the Son of God.

**He said to the paralyzed man, <sup>11</sup>“I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet, and go home.”**

Jesus emphasizes that it is He who is performing this miracle, or sign. He says **“I say to you”** At issue, thanks to the Scribes, is Jesus’ authority, and so Jesus ensures that everyone understands His authority by claiming the personally, the authority to heal this man, and also the authority to forgive sins on earth, as the Son of God.

**<sup>12</sup> And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen *anything* like this!”** The immediate effect is that the man immediately got up, picked up the pallet, and went out in front of everyone. If Jesus had just healed him, then the proof of the healing would still be lacking, but telling him to immediately get up and walk meant that the healing had already taken place. The bones, muscles, sinews, ligaments, and everything else that had been injured, debilitated, or wasted away, immediately all became whole, so that he could use them! Anyone who’s spent even a week in bed from an illness knows how quickly strength leaves the body. And so, not one, but many miracles had to take place for him to immediately get up and walk. Just like much forgiveness of many sins had to take place for all of his sins to be forgiven by Jesus. Everyone was startled and recognized that Jesus had proved that the sins of the paralytic had really been pardoned. When Jesus caused the paralytic to walk before the eyes of those who had questioned His authority, they were forced to recognize that this declaration of forgiveness had been effective. The inter-relationship of forgiveness and healing is emphasized by the conclusion to the narrative: having received the forgiveness of God, the afflicted man receives healing. This is the nature of the salvation which Jesus brings. The healing of the paralytic was more than a display of mercy to a wretched man. The announcement and presentation of radical healing to a man in his entire person was a sign of the Kingdom of God drawn near.