

Our Lord Heals a Paralytic

Mark 2:1-12

Mark 2:1-12 – *“And again He entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house.*

² Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them. ³ Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. ⁴ And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

⁶ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ “Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸ But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, “Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? ⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” ¹² Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

Background Notes

This miracle took place in Capernaum. Capernaum was a village that was located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was a base of operations for the Lord when He was in the Galilee region. This miracle may have taken place in Peter’s home. Peter and his brother Andrew lived in Capernaum, and they had a house there (Mark 1:29).

It’s helpful to understand that the construction of the average house in that day was not like the average house in the USA. In that day, the average house had an outside staircase that led to a flat roof - not a pointed roof like many houses today. (And by the way, most homes in the Middle East today still have a flat roof.) Furthermore, the roof didn’t have to be damaged in order to create a hole large enough to lower a man on a pad or a mattress. The typical roof was made of large stone or clay tiles that were laid across beams and supporting interior walls. For insulation, dirt or sod was layered on top of the tiles. So that’s what we have here. Luke 5:19 (in the parallel account) says that they *“removed the tiles.”* Verse 4 says “when they had *broken through* or *dug through*” - this implies digging through the dirt that was layered on top of the roof tiles.

It’s important to understand the background so that we don’t draw wrong doctrinal points or wrong practical applications from this account. For example, after reading this account, suppose I were to say to you: “So you see, brothers and

sisters, the Bible is teaching us that if we want to get our friends to Christ, we should do whatever it takes to get them to Christ. Even if it means that we have to destroy property, we should go ahead and do it, because the friends of this paralyzed man destroyed property to get him to Christ. Property damage wasn't important - the important thing was that they got him to the Lord!" So you see, if you don't know your Bible background, you're more likely to draw incorrect conclusions for your practical applications. So it's important to know the fact that they had flat roofs in that day, and they weren't destroying property to get this man to the Lord Jesus. I'm sure when they took off the sod, the dirt and the tiles, some dirt must have filtered down on the living room rug - but there was no destruction of property!

Not long ago I saw a painting of this event that was done by an Italian artist of the Middle Ages. The healed man was walking away, carrying his mattress, and in the background several men were up on the roof, repairing the damage. But the house looks like an Italian villa of the Middle Ages, with a pointed roof! Obviously, the artist didn't do his background studies - he didn't start his Bible study with "**Background Notes**" - and that's important!

One more background note: The "bed" that the Lord asked this man to pick up and carry – it wasn't a large, four-poster bed with headboard and footboard! No – it was a pad or a light mattress that could be easily rolled up and carried.

Doctrinal Points

1. Jesus can forgive sin because Jesus is God.

In verse 5, the Lord said, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*" I wonder what this man thought when the Lord said that to him as soon as he was lowered down through the roof. Do you think he thought, "Big deal. I came here to be healed, and all he says to me is 'your sins are forgiven'?" I don't think the man was thinking that way. In the Jewish mind of that day there was a definite connection between sin and sickness, and the paralyzed man was probably feeling a lot of guilt. The Lord knew this, and He went right to the heart of the matter. Knowing the faith of the man, He said, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*" The Lord's concern for the eternal condition of the man's soul was more important than the temporal condition of the man's body.

I think the Lord also took the approach of dealing with the man's sins before dealing with the healing of his body because of the religious scribes who were sitting by. He knew that they were thinking, "*Only God can forgive sins*" (v7). And that's true! But Jesus is God, and therefore He can forgive sin. When He said, "*Son, your sins are forgiven you,*" the Lord was actually claiming **deity**.

The Lord knew what the religious scribes were thinking, and He asked them a question: "*Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk?'*" What's the answer to that question? Which is easier? Well, if you're only a man, both are equally hard - in fact, impossible! If you're God, however, either is just as easy to say – *and to do!*

And so, to prove that His statement about forgiving the man's sins was valid, the Lord said to him, *"Take up your bed and walk."* At this point the scribes could not refute the logical conclusions. This indeed was *God* at work. Jesus was God, and therefore He could forgive sins. Although we don't read that the scribes believed, they certainly were amazed and confounded. The people praised God, in view of what we read in verse 12: *"[they] all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'"*

Only God can forgive sins - but Jesus can forgive sins because Jesus is God. Are your sins forgiven? Have you trusted the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, and received forgiveness of your sins? Jesus can forgive sin because Jesus is God.

2. God honors the faith of those who assist in the salvation process.

Verse 5: *"When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'" Their faith!* God honored the faith of the four friends who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus. The paralyzed man is certainly a spiritual picture of a sinner coming to salvation. Sin paralyzes. Sin defiles - we saw that picture in the previous miracle when the Lord healed the leper – and now He healed a man who was paralyzed. Sin paralyzes as well as defiles.

Notice that the faith of the friends didn't save the man. No - but God honored their faith. He saw their faith, and He honored that faith. In the same way today, as we pray for our unsaved friends and family members, and we do what we can to bring them to Christ (even if it's just "carrying one corner of the mattress"), God honors that faith. God honors the faith of those who assist in the salvation process.

In the sports of hockey or basketball, "assists" are kept in the record book. And God notices and keeps a record of "assists" in the salvation process. Of course we don't mean that somehow we participate in saving a person, and no person saves himself. God does all the work! But God does honor the faith of those who assist in the salvation process.

Practical Applications

1. Let's be creative and ingenious in bringing our friends to Christ.

It probably looked like there was no way to get the paralyzed man to Christ—the doorway was blocked and the room was crowded. But the friends said, "Hey, we can find a way!" And they did find a way! They were creative and ingenious. Are we creative when it comes to sharing the gospel with our neighbors, our fellow students and the people we work with?

When our son Ron was in college, a non-Christian friend sometimes commuted with him. This friend was about to be married, so Ron picked out a Christian tape on marriage that included the gospel, and put it on his dashboard. When his

non-Christian friend got in the car, he saw the tape and said, “Hey - what’s this about? Marriage? Do you mind if I borrow this?” Now that’s creative! We need to think through and pray for creative ways that we can use to bring our friends to Christ.

2. Let’s be willing to “carry one corner of the bed.”

It wasn’t exactly easy for these friends of the paralytic - struggling to get a man on a mattress up the outside staircase of the house, opening up the roof, and lowering him into the house - but they did it! One person could not have done it alone, but all four, working together, were able to do it. Each one carried one corner of the mattress.

We need to do the same. There’s so much need out there! So many people are hurting, and so many people need to feel the healing touch of the Lord Jesus. We should at least be willing to pitch in and help in some small way. Be willing to pass out Christian literature. Be willing to put in a word for the Lord with that person you sit with on the bus or the plane. Let’s be willing to “carry one corner of the bed”!

3. Let’s pick up our beds and walk!

The Lord said to the man, “Take up your bed and walk.” Picking up his mattress and walking away was a test of this man’s new faith. But I think there’s also a spiritual picture here: the Lord healed the man and gave him strength to carry his mattress - **but He didn’t carry the bed for him!**

In the same way, when the Lord saves us, He gives us the strength to pick up our normal loads in life. He doesn’t relieve us of our normal work and responsibilities and problems, but He gives us the strength to overcome our problems, and to carry out our responsibilities. Isaiah 40:31 says: *“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”*

Let’s “pick up our beds” and walk!