

# Jesus Forgives and Heals, part 2

Mark 2:1-12

- 1 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!"

Today, I want to talk about the forgiveness of sins. The forgiveness of sins is God's most amazing miracle. This is a sermon for sinners. If you've never sinned, if the red light in your soul has never flashed a warning signal, if you've never felt sorry about something you did or said before God or to someone else, then this is not for you.

We began this lesson last week as we saw that the news of Jesus' teaching and his miracles had spread all over Galilee. Jesus has returned to Capernaum. Here, he took up residence in a house and soon attracted crowds of people who were eager to hear him speak. Among these who came to hear Jesus speak, according to Luke, were **"Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem,"** (Luke 5:17). Here was a delegation made up of Pharisees and teachers of the law sent to examine him.

As Jesus began to preach and teach to the assembled crowd, four men arrived at the house carrying a paralyzed companion. They found that there were so many people inside and outside the house that they could get in to see Jesus. So

undaunted, they climbed up onto the roof and began to strip it away creating an opening large enough to pass their friend through the roof. They lowered him on the mat right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith he responded at once. But It may not have been the response that the men expected. Instead of saying, "You are healed from your paralysis, Jesus says, " **Son, your sins are forgiven you.**"

### **Jesus forgives sins.**

We can bring everyone's need to Jesus, but we know that Jesus will always probe the deeper issues of life. He's always looking at the heart issues. As He looks deep into the heart of this paralyzed man, he sees a heart crying out for release from guilt.

The presence of illness in any of our lives is a reminder that we belong to a race of sinners. Not that a particular sin always brings about a specific consequence of illness, but all illness is linked to the fall of the human race and is evidence of that fall. The presence of illness often brings about a longing for wholeness that can never be attained without forgiveness. "What we cry out for, all of us, sometimes without knowing it, is to be whole within, to be restored at the center of our being, to be at peace again with God. And that happens when God forgives us" (Brownson 1993, 93).

The experience of illness, i.e. the effects of sin, should always drive us to the cross where Jesus died so that sin can be forgiven and the ultimate effect of sin, death, could be conquered. We are all born spiritually paralyzed and like this man we are unable to help ourselves, only an encounter with Jesus will eradicate your sin problem.

Our greatest human need is not any physical need, not any emotional need, not the need for security or self-esteem but our greatest need as human beings living today is the need for our sins to be forgiven and us to be restored to a right relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ. Our greatest need is not a meal bag full of canned goods, but new life in Christ Jesus. Our greatest need is not a house, a car or any material possessions but rather our greatest need is for a savior and that savior is Jesus the Christ.

Jesus had looked at the men carrying their friend and He had seen faith. He looked at the paralytic and saw a man who needed forgiveness. Now Jesus looks at the religious leaders.

### **4. Jesus faces the critics**

As He looks into the hearts of the Pharisees and scribes, He sees skepticism. The religious leaders heard Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness and didn't say anything at loud. But, in their hearts they were ridiculing Jesus.

They have a theological problem with Jesus. Actually, their theology is sound, but their judgment is in error. They understood properly that only God can forgive sin. The OT Scriptures affirm this many times. But there's no room in their thinking for the possibility that God could take on human flesh and that Jesus could possibly be the incarnation of God. So they conclude in their hearts that Jesus is guilty of blasphemy. This charge follows Jesus all the way to His crucifixion.

The question behind the religious leaders charge that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy was, "Does he (Jesus) have the right (exousia) to forgive sins?" In their opinion only God had the ability and authority to forgive sins. This was a part of the very issue that they had been sent to answer. What they want to know was, "Is he the Messiah, and if so how should the religious establishment react to him?"

Jesus know what they are thinking. So he asks them a few questions in verses 8 and 9: **"Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?"**

Which is easier to say? The religious leaders thought that words of forgiveness were easier; Jesus implies by his question that the physical miracle is the easier of the two. It's a far greater miracle for a man to be forgiven than for him to walk again. I'd like for us to think about how difficult it is to forgive sins. If you think that forgiving sins is a light, easy, and simple thing, then you've not read your Bible. So often, I fear that we try to make our church look like bargain outlets for the kingdom of God. We sell a cheap grace to people, saying, "Everybody come and let your sins be forgiven. It's fun and easy." But forgiving sins is hard.

Forgiving sins is hard; condoning sins is not. If you say, "Sin doesn't matter. It doesn't make any difference or bother anybody at all. It's okay to sin," you're not forgiving sins, you're condoning sin. Forgiving sin is a very hard thing to do. It's hard for us and hard for God.

You say, "Why? Why is it hard for Him to forgive sins? He talked about it so much. He forgave sins every time He had the opportunity. He told the woman caught in adultery, 'I don't condemn you. Go and sin no more.' He kept saying to people, 'I will forgive you all of your sins. I am here to forgive sins.' He forgave sins so much and so quickly."

But ... listen ... it never says anywhere in the Bible that it was easy for Jesus to do that. It never was. It wasn't easy because He took sin seriously. The most amazing thing, the greatest miracle is that our Lord would forgive sins. That is because He does take them seriously and because He does love people and our sins always hurt people. The fact that He would forgive them is amazing.

No one ever hated sin as much as Jesus. No one ever fought sin so hard as He fought sin. No one ever hated what it did to people as much as Jesus hated it, and He fought it all the way to the cross. Yet, He could forgive. That's the amazing thing.

"To offer forgiveness took infinitely more. For that, God needed to come among us and share our humanity. For that, he had to take on himself the whole weight of our guilt and rebellion. He had to suffer and be forsaken in our stead. He had to die on the cross for our sins. That's how difficult how costly it was for the Almighty God to forgive sins" (Brownson 1993, 95).

If forgiveness is our deepest need and God's grandest miracle, there's nothing in all the world we ought to seek more eagerly, both for ourselves and for others (Ibid., 95).

This man's sins may have been connected to his suffering, we don't know for sure -- but Jesus dealt with the primary problem first, He dealt with his sin. You

might be here this morning, and you're suffering in your life because of sin, because of habitual sin. It's not hard to work out: if you drink too much you suffer for it, if you smoke too much you suffer for it, if you gamble too much you suffer for it, if you sleep around too much you suffer for it. The wages of sin is death, and the way of the transgressor is hard, and my friend: it's no use looking to God and praying the odd prayer that God will take your problem away if you won't let Him take your sin away!

If only God can forgive sins, and Jesus truly has the authority to forgive sin, then Jesus is God. Jesus has authority to forgive men's sins on earth. You don't need a priest, you don't need a Pope, you don't need a minister, all you need is the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **5. Jesus heals the man.**

Jesus now addresses the skeptics. They consider him to be blaspheming when he says, "Son, your sins are forgiven." So, he gives the skeptics an opportunity to come to faith.

Jesus opens a window of opportunity for these skeptics. His healing of the paralytic is not only an act of compassion (Indeed, it is!) but a confirmation of his authority to forgive sins. If healing is divine, then He is divine! If He is divine, He can forgive sins. That's his purpose for being here. The conflict has not gone away – it's clarified and intensified. The religious leaders have no way out – either Jesus is the Messiah or the greatest imposter they've ever seen.

Listen to His words and look at the healing of this man. Can He really forgive sins? Can He and will He eventually remove all of the effects of sin?

To make it even more personal - does He have authority to forgive my sins? Will He, whether now or later, remove the effects of sin in my life and in this world?

Have you turned from your sin? You say: 'I haven't got the power', He'll give you the power to do it if you're willing. Have you believed in the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus alone, and said: 'Lord, I'm sorry for my sin, and I want You to save me, save me now'? Do that today, by faith, sincerely from your heart, and He will forgive your sins, for He alone has the power.

In 1962, Billy Graham was in crusade in Seattle. One night, he awoke from a sound sleep with a deep burden to pray for actress Marilyn Monroe. That burden never left him for several days. He told his associates, and they tried to get in touch with her through her agent. They said, "Mr. Graham wants to see Miss Monroe and share with her." He said, "She's too busy. She can't be free for at least two weeks."

Within two weeks, the suicide of Marilyn Monroe had shocked our nation. They said when they found her body she was clutching a telephone as though she was trying to call somebody. Someone mused that she was calling for help, but no one was on the other end.

Listen, any time you call to God for help, He's always there. He will always forgive your sins, and He's waiting for you to call on Him. Whatever is gnawing on you, whatever that thing is that won't let you go, remember ... you can hide, and suppress it, but it's there and it keeps coming back. The only way to deal with it is to get it out, confess it before God, and let Him forgive it.

