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“Jesus' Authority to Forgive Sin” Mark 2:1-12

Introduction

William Wallace had won several skirmishes in Scotland's fight for freedom. These battles had been in Scotland. People wanted to know what he planned next—they were as caught up in their own story as we are! William Wallace says, “I will invade England. And defeat the English on their own ground”

Did you catch that? He would not sit around and wait for the battles to come to him. He went in search of battle. People thought he was crazy. He did it anyway. And eventually Scotland was freed from English tyranny.

When I read Mark's Gospel, I get caught up in the story in the same way. There is action, movement, and transformation. And there is a larger-than-life hero who invades enemy territory to free his people from tyranny.

Today we move into chapter 2 of Mark's gospel, a chapter which introduces us for the first time into the opposition that Christ will encounter all the way to the cross—that from the religious establishment in first century Israel. Mark 2:1-3:6 introduce five conflict stories with Jesus—stories which likely did not happen in quick sequence, but stories that are arranged thematically in this gospel to give directions to its first readers and to Christians in nearly every age—Christians who face opposition and must defend their faith as the world attacks it. In this section of Mark we learn of increasing conflict between Jesus and religious leaders who first get agitated in their spirit, then they talk to Jesus' disciples about him, next they protest to Jesus himself because of what he let the disciples do. Finally they start to think about how they should destroy Him.

An electrifying atmosphere emerges. Conflict is in the air. Two powerful forces emerge in this story: a sort of religious CIA is here—theological heavyweights sent to investigate this young rabbi. People sense something is going to happen. Conflict breaks out in this story

But it is also a story about reconciliation—or more precisely about forgiveness. At the heart of this story is the authority of Jesus Christ to forgive sin. So far Jesus has convincingly demonstrated his authority in the realm of truth and over the realms of demons and disease. Soon, he will display his power over death! Here we see His authority, his right, over sin—namely forgiving sinners.

In this story Jesus issues an exhilarating announcement! Sins forgiven! Forgiveness from sin is one of the most critical distinctives of biblical Christianity. You see, although most people might tend to think that morality, love, peace, purpose, happiness, or something else is the most distinctive characteristic of biblical Christianity, they are wrong on two counts. First, many other religious viewpoints promote one or more of these characteristics so they are really not distinctive to NT Christianity. Secondly, all of these are really secondary to the gospel—the main reason that Jesus came to this earth.

The biggest problem that every one of us faces is how to be right with a perfect, with a holy God. One thing the Bible clearly teaches is that God is the Creator and the Judge of every man. It further teaches that God is just and righteous. In Him is no darkness—no evil. He has given us His law by which He expects us to abide—encapsulated in what is known as the Ten Commandments. But far from keeping this law, we have violated it—not just once but thousands of times, in our lives. We have failed to keep the two greatest commandments God ever gave—to love the Lord our God first and most and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Violating God's law brings God's judgment; breaking God's law incurs the holy wrath of God.

This is man's greatest need: how to escape the wrath of God poured out against sinners. And the only way to do that is what we see in this passage today: forgiveness! Forgiveness of sin which leads to reconciliation with God is man's greatest need. Always has been, always will be. Without it we will go to hell.

Do you know what sends people to hell? Sin, you might think. But that is not quite right. The correct answer is unforgiven sin. Everyone who is or who will be in hell one day is there because they have unforgiven sin. And there is no back door out of hell. Once you are there, you stay there forever! You will never, ever have your sin forgiven in hell. Never.

Heaven, on the other hand, every human being who ever enters heaven will live there forever. And how do you get to heaven. By being a forgiven sinner. Heaven is full of people who have escaped the wrath of God. How? By being forgiven of their sin! And they will remain there forever. When a sinner dies (and we all will one day unless Jesus comes back first), he or she goes to either heaven or hell—immediately. And once you die, your destination is fixed for eternity. Do you see why forgiveness is so important? Crucial! Eternal consequences.

But how can a just God forgive sin? The penalty of sin, according to God's Word is judgment, death, and hell. It's impossible, impossible, for rebelling sinners to escape that judgment by something they do—good works, church involvement, social justice, etc. So is there hope? There is—that is the gospel. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for sinners and to absorb the wrath of God, to satisfy of

God, against every sinner who calls on Christ to save them! God, the lawgiver, the Judge and the executor of the sentence, is also God the Savior, the Forgiver. He alone has authority to forgive sin. That is what this story is all about! It is a story Mark tells so that men, women, and children everywhere would come as sinners, poor and needy, to Christ, turn from their sin and believe in His great work of salvation which He accomplished by living a perfect life and dying. His death was the great exchange as He took sin upon Himself and in turns provides perfect righteousness to every sinner who repents and believes.

This is a story about forgiveness of sins! Let's read it together and then view it from the perspective of several characters involved in this pericope.

“And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ‘Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, ‘Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— ‘I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.’ And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’ ” (Mark 2:1–12)

The Heart of the crowd

Unlike the last story, there are a lot of people in this story. There's the crowd that gathers, the friends of the sick man, the paralytic himself, Jesus, and within this crowd a particular group of religious leaders. What were they all thinking that day. What was in their hearts. We learn a lot from this passage.

But let's get the setting in the first two verses: *“And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.”*

For about half of his approximately three year ministry Jesus would travel throughout the northern section of Israel called Galilee, preaching, healing, and casting out demons. Capernaum would be the base camp of his northern ministry--a bustling city since trade routes ran through it, north to south and east to west. This city was headquarters to a Roman garrison and also had its own branch of the Roman IRS, a tax office being located in the city because of its strategic trade location. A significant city overall. About a year into his public ministry, he ministered in the synagogue there, cast out demons, healed Peter's

mother-in-law, and everyone else who came to him after the sun went down on a Saturday evening but then leaves the next day and travels around northern Galilee preaching repentance, faith and the kingdom of God and healing people. Jesus healed a leper instantaneously and then tells him not to tell anyone about it. But this man didn't obey Jesus, told everyone about his miraculous encounter with Jesus and so Jesus was no longer able to go into the towns or villages any longer, but rather lived out in desolate places where he prayed and where many people came and heard him preach.

But now he's back home in Capernaum, likely at the house of Peter once again. After a few days, news leaks out. So one day crowds start gathering and start entering Peter's house. We would think this rude or even disturbing if people just starting filling into our house, but that was normal Middle Eastern hospitality. There's standing room only—you couldn't even get your foot in the door. No fire marshals back then or signs for maximum capacity limits. That's the scene.

- **Curious**

But look a little deeper and see the heart of this crowd. This crowd is first of all curious. Now in this crowd there were some sincere disciples and committed followers of Jesus Christ already, but the vast majority are curiosity seekers who are there to see more miracles from Jesus who had left abruptly several months ago after a spectacular day of teaching, healing and casting out demons.

- **Passive**

Second, this crowd was fairly passive. We don't see them in the end actively following Jesus. They came to watch. They came to listen. They weren't aggressively seeking to enter the kingdom of God.

- **Selfish**

Thirdly, they were selfish. How do we know that? Well, here comes this man in need of obvious healing and when his four friends bring him no one in the crowd seeks to make an opening for this pitiful soul. This crowd wasn't very sensitive to this man's need. No, to the contrary, they appear rather self-seeking, self-indulgent, and self-serving.

- **Uncommitted**

Lastly, I would say this crowd is uncommitted. Crowds are mentioned about 40 times in Mark's gospel before chapter 10. They serve as large audiences for Christ's teaching and objects of his compassion. But they are never seen as turning in faith and repentance as the gospel call is issued. After Jesus clearly teaches on suffering at Caesarea Philippi the crowds demonstrate their fickleness and their lack of commitment by leaving in large numbers. The uncommitted crowd thins dramatically.

In fact, the single defining quality of the crowds in Mark is that they restrict access to Jesus. That is what they did here certainly. Mark even has a play on words of sorts in the first few verses here in the Greek. He has the crowds (ochlos) preventing this man from entering the house (the oikos).

We think crowds are often the barometer of success in our culture—even in religion. The greater the crowds someone draws, the more adherents to a particular religion, the candidate with the most votes—those are all important to us. But not to Jesus. Crowds were never a measure of ministry success for Jesus. In fact, the crowds, for the most part, represented those outside of Christ—even after they heard the good news and call to repent and believe in Christ.

Here's an important lesson: Enthusiasm for Jesus and even proximity to him are not the same as faith—Being a part of the crowd around Jesus is not that same as being a disciple of Jesus. Crowds stand and observe, disciples act!

No doubt the crowd on this day gained a lot of knowledge about Jesus just like we do by coming to church, but faith is not mere knowledge about Jesus—it is active trust that Jesus is sufficient for one's deepest and most heartfelt needs.

The Heart of the friends

Notice next the heart of four friends “*bringing to him a paralytic. . . And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”* (2:3–5). In contrast to the passiveness of the crowd, these four men demonstrate an active, creative, and sacrificial faith! Jesus acknowledges “their faith” in verse 5, which refers to the faith of the porters and the paralytic.

● **Active**

First, you see a heart of active faith. They are bringing this man to Jesus. We don't know if this man was their brother, father, uncle, neighbor or just a fellow they knew and had compassion for. But one thing we do know they brought this guy to Jesus. They didn't just pray about doing this, they did it !

What a great illustration of what James teaches in the second chapter of his letter. Faith without works is dead! You say you have faith, I say have works! Well, show me your faith by your works! Faith strives to pursue its object! Faith believes and acts upon what it believes!

Matthew records Jesus saying talking about entering the kingdom with much struggle: “the violent take it by force.” Well, these men were demonstrating real faith by acting upon what they knew must be done to get this man to Jesus.

- **Creative**

The problem is they had arrived too late. The house was paced and “they could not get near Jesus because of the crowd.” So “they removed the roof above Jesus” (2:4).

Here's the picture. The typical first-century roof in Israel was constructed of timbers that laid paralleled to each other about two to three feet apart. Then crosswise over the timber were laid sticks close enough to each other so you had this roof. Upon these sticks you would lay reeds, branches, and thistles. And then you overlaid all this with a mixture of wood, clay, mortar, tar, ash, or sand. Then you would roll the roof, pack it down really well. Sometimes in the spring grass even grew on this roof and you would look up and see some goats eating off the roof. All in all you had this two feet thick roof, that periodically you would roll with this special implement to pack it down every year.

Now most of the houses in Israel were one story only but you still had to get up on the roof so most houses had this outside stone staircase that lead up to the roof. That's probably was the case with this house, but the houses were built fairly close to one another so if you didn't have one, you usually went to one of your neighbor's house who did and you got on his roof and jumped to yours.

The typical house was pretty dank and dark inside so the residents spent most of their time outside in the warm climate. If they wanted to get away from it all and get some fresh air, wanted to dry some laundry, or wanted to have a quiet place to pray, rest or sleep, they regularly retreated to their roof.

But that isn't why these four fellows and this invalid get up on the roof. They intend to literally (there is a play on words in the Greek) “unroof the roof.”

I don't know if the crowd listening to Jesus heard any movement up on the roof. But pretty soon they must have become aware of shovels above, some pounding, little clods of dirt starting to fall in their face, maybe some sticks falling on their heads, beams starting to loosen and light starting to filter through. What's going on? More removing of tiles, dirt, mud, thatch, until there's about a four feet by six foot opening. There are shouts inside and outside. I wonder what Peter is thinking and his wife and mother-in-law. And then a voice, watch out below. Sun light filters through the dust and dirt and four, sweaty, impish-looking faces appear lowering a guy on a thin straw-filled mattress. . The religious leaders are fit to be tied as they sit brushing off the debris that is soiling their robes. And I think these friends must have figured out by listening or some other way where Jesus was standing so they could lower their friend right in front of Jesus. So Jesus looks up and sees the faith of his friends, he looks down slightly and sees the faith of the paralytic and he looks around and sees the disgust and the snobbery of teachers of the law.

So here you go, they start digging, somewhat disrespecting those below by throwing dirt on them, damaging this house, and distracting a preacher. I mean distractions are among a pastor's worst nightmare. Imagine trying to teach with people unroofing a roof! But Jesus didn't seem to mind. He saw creative faith.

That's creative faith. Sometimes it takes quite a bit of creativity to get the gospel to people, doesn't it. Thank God for missionaries who often have to be very creative to get the gospel out. People like those at HCJB who built radio towers in Ecuador in the mountains so that they can pipe the gospel around the world. That's unroofing the roof. People who have smuggled Bibles or printing presses into closed countries so the Word of God could impact lives. That's unroofing the roof. Using technology for the advancement of the gospel. Going into closed countries as students, businessmen, doctors, teachers! Raising the roof!

I love it! These guys didn't say, "Well, why don't we come back tomorrow first thing!" No, they wouldn't be put off. So much could be said but let me just put it to you this way, "Is that the kind of faith you have when you seek to introduce people to Jesus. Do you let difficult circumstances stop you from telling people about the Lord?"

- **Sacrificial**

And lastly, I see sacrificial faith here. I mean think about it. Transporting this man through town. Then getting up the outdoor stairs. Then unroofing the roof with the awareness, you were going to have to fix this roof. There could be considerable outlay of time, labor, and expense in all this. It wasn't easy. But that is the heart of these friends: a heart of love, a heart of faith.

The Heart of the paralytic

- **Burdened**

What about the heart of the paralytic? That's who we see next. Jesus sees the paralytic and says to him (v. 5), "Son, your sins are forgiven." And a few seconds later he says (v. 11), "Rise, pick up your bed, and go home. And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all [he obeyed Jesus unlike the leper]."

Several simple insights here. First, this man was burdened. Now, we don't a lot about this man. We don't know how long he was paralyzed. We don't know the medical cause of his paralysis—disease, an accident, genetic. We don't know the type of paralysis. Was he a quadriplegic or a paraplegic?

But we do know that being paralyzed is a burden! In those days it was humiliating because we know that the Jews connected sickness with sin often times. And since Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven" some speculate with some evidence that this man knew that sin was the specific cause for his paralysis. Whether that's

true or not, even for this man to come out would have been a humbling experience. And to ask help from four friends would have been humbling as well. You know how it is when you are in need. Lots of times we struggle with asking for help because of our pride. Yet this man was so burdened with his illness and maybe his sin that he was willing to go. And he obviously granted them permission as well to do whatever it took to get him to Jesus.

- **Believing**

Though burdened about his condition, this man too had faith so he had a believing heart. Jesus looks at this man and says, “Your sins are forgiven!” Jesus looked into this man's heart and saw belief. He saw saving faith.

- **Forgiven**

So this man came with a sinful heart that day and left with a forgiven heart! I love this! Literally, “forgiven are your sins!” That shows you that Jesus never took sin lightly! Jesus saw sin as an inexcusable departure from the holy law of God that produced soul-choking effects. He saw sin not only as an issue of external actions but also as a heart matter and he offered the only true solution for sin.

Warren Wiersbe reminds us, “Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results.”

I love this as well!

- **Healed**

Lastly, note this man had a healed heart and a healed body. He got up and immediately walked—walked out. If there was electricity in the air during this gathering, this was the lightning bolt! Jesus speaks a word, just like God spoke a word in Genesis 1, and it was so!

My sanctified imagination says that they guy goes out leaping, whooping it up, Giving high fives, shouting yahoo. The crowds are oohing, aahing and gasping. The Pharisees are probably frowning and plotting.

Spurgeon wrote: “I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God’s glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God’s glory ... he carries his bed to God’s glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God.”

Healed physically! And I'm guessing he runs out of the house, up the outside stairs, bear hugs his friends and starts helping them repair the roof that afternoon before going home!

Healed spiritually. A clean heart. No more guilt, bitterness, tension. His healing was only temporary—till he died. But his forgiveness was eternal!

Of course, the healing of his body was just an illustration and demonstration of how Christ brings healing to the soul. “He forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases (one day when we get our new bodies in heaven)” (Psalm 103:3).

The Heart of Jesus

● **Word-occupied**

What do we learn about Jesus here? Well, we learn that He is Word-occupied. When the crowd gathers in this house, Jesus “was preaching the word to them” (2:2). “Preaching” is really just the word for speaking (laleo). What word? “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe” (Mark 1:14, 15). He is not healing! He wasn't doing miracles which were designed simply to authenticate His message. No He was occupied with the Word, just like we should be. It was the Word, the Word, the Word with Jesus. Words of grace, word of truth, clear and simple, were falling from his lips that day.

● **Merciful**

Secondly, he was merciful. He had compassion on this pitiable man. He didn't get irritated that he lost his audience or that he was interrupted. On this day, mercy there was great and grace was free. Just like the day He died for despicable sinners like you and me.

● **Willing to Forgiveness**

His heart is revealed in that he was willing to forgive. He was eager, ready, and willing to pronounce forgiveness. After all, he came to seek and to save sinners.

● **Authority to Forgive**

And add to his willingness to forgive, his authority to forgive. Notice, Jesus absolves this man's sins instantly! Apart from works! No man can do that! No priest can do that. There's no such thing as last rites or absolution. It's not true. But millions of people believe that. I read recently about the assassination of John F. Kennedy who probably died before he arrived at the hospital about five minutes after a third bullet blew through his head. According to official records, the doctors pronounced him dead at 12:50 but it was announced that he died officially around 1 PM because it wasn't till around 12:53 PM that a priest arrived and gave him last rites which absolved him of sin. Roman Catholics believe that last rites aren't effective if they are pronounced after a person dies so Mrs. Kennedy wanted to have the time put down as 1 PM so that the President died after he received absolution so he was covered. So sad, so misleading. Even the Pharisees, wrong as they were on many things, got this right: “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” they privately thought (v. 7). Right on! Where they

missed it is that Jesus is the Son of God. But they got that right: only God can forgive sins!

His Name is "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin (Exodus 34:6–7)

"as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. " (Psalm 103:12)

"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. " (Isaiah 43:25)

"I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. " (Isaiah 44:22)

"Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. " (Isaiah 55:6–7)

"And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." " (Jeremiah 31:34)

"You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. " (Nehemiah 9:17)

"Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, " (Acts 13:38)

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, " (Ephesians 1:7)

What does it mean to forgive sin! Kenneth Wuest, eminent Greek scholar explains what the word means:

the act of dealing with the act of wrong doing in such a way that the sinner who appropriates the Lord Jesus as Savior, has his sins put away, and in two ways. First, they are put away on a judicial basis by the out-poured blood of Christ. He paid the penalty the broken law required, and thus satisfied divine justice. Second, on the basis of that, God removes the guilt of that sin from the believing sinner and bestows a positive righteousness, Jesus Christ Himself, in whom this person stands justified forever

The Heart of the religious leaders

Finally look quickly at the heart of the religious leaders. Friends you don't want to have their kind of heart. Mark identifies these religious leaders as "the scribes." Luke adds that the "Pharisees and teachers of the law. . . who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem (he had ministered for a year in the last two regions mentioned). Most of you have met them before and we will meet them again. But simply put they are the strict separatists of Judaism, the legalists, the architect and guardians of the oral

tradition that was added on top of the law, promoters of salvation by works—by self-righteousness. Oh, they were orthodox on many points. They affirmed the OT, resurrection, angels, the supernatural, demonic activity, individual responsibility, the written law, the coming of Messiah. But they added to God's law by demanding adherence to man-made traditions that had developed about the law over the last several hundred years.

There were only 6000 of them in Israel but they had great influence by basically running the synagogue network which had been developed some four hundred years earlier. Very influential.

The Pharisees were the power-brokers, the teachers and preachers, the up-front guys in religion. The scribes who are mentioned were the theological scholars, the seminary profs. Some scribes belonged to the Pharisee section of the Jewish religion, others to the Sadducees, and others were independent, but the ones here this day were likely theologians backing the Pharisees.

- **Envious**

Three things about their hearts. First they were envious. They weren't coming to learn anything. They weren't there with a thirst to hear the possible Messiah. No, they were there because more and more people were talking about and going to hear this preacher, this supposed miracle-worker. He was drawing away people from their monopoly on religion.

- **Critical and fault-finding**

They also had critical and fault-finding hearts. They were “questioning” that is they were talking to themselves in their hearts. “Heart” in the Hebrew culture meant the mind, the intellect. “Why does this man [now there's the problem—they saw Jesus simply as a man—speak like that?”

You would have thought that after hearing that this man's sins were forgiven, these religious leaders would have been rejoicing. But no, they had come to find fault and there was no room in their hearts for joy for this miserable man who just heard words of hope and cheer.

“He is blaspheming! Who can [is able to] forgive sins but God alone?” (v. 7). A. T. Robertson notes “It was, they held, blasphemy for Jesus to assume this divine prerogative. Their logic was correct. The only flaw in it was the possibility that Jesus held a peculiar relation to God which justified His claim.

“*“And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? ” (Mark 2:8). This is amazing. Jesus knows the deepest needs of the paralytic, and he also knows the thoughts of the Pharisees. (I think there is more than just human*

knowledge or deduction implied here). So he confronts them, “*Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk?’*” (Mark 2:9). The truth is: they are both relatively easy to say but both are equally difficult to follow through on. But when it comes to proof that it was done, it's actually easier to say, “Rise up, take up your bed and walk,” because that can be verified, whereas the other cannot be.

But so that we may know might that Jesus, the Son of Man, (a key term that we will develop later in Mark but that speaks of his suffering and death, and his second coming in judgment) has this authority (exousia), to forgive sins, he says to the paralyzed man, “I say to you, pick up your bed and walk.” Jesus is going to verify the moral miracle by performing a physical one. Or as one man observed, “He did the miracle which they could see that they might know that he had done the other one that they could not see.” And you know the rest of the story!

● **Paralyzed**

Jesus healed the physical paralytic that day, but let me tell you the scribes and Pharisees came and left with spiritual paralysis. The scribes were the real paralytics in the story. They came in and were just sitting there. And from what we know in the rest of the book, they left that day in a state of spiritual paralysis—with hearts unmoved by the grace-filled, forgiving words of Jesus.

Whereas the one man and his friends knew their own helplessness and hopelessness and came to Jesus, weary, worn and said, these men left, not perceiving their need of Christ. They are like so many even today who think of themselves as religious, moral, law-abiding, good-to go-with-God types—not in need of repentance and forgiveness.

No, instead, they accused Jesus of blasphemy—a sin punishable by death in the OT law (Leviticus 24:16). They eventually crucify Him because of this. They missed the truth. Jesus was no blasphemer. Blasphemers don't read people's minds. They don't create new limbs and reverse paralysis instantly.

Don't leave here with heart of a Pharisee this morning in regard to Jesus. Don't leave here with the heart of the crowd either who as verse 12 tells us “were all amazed and glorified God.” Don't think they were converted that day. Miracles amazed them. They praised God for it. But there's no indication they trusted Jesus—and that is clear from what follows in the rest of the book. They remained uncommitted, simply wanting more miracles.

Jesus Christ and your heart?

What think you of Christ in your heart? Will you receive forgiveness of sins and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ alone? Here are several exhortations worth developing and applying.

- **Be amazed at the power of Jesus:** When Jesus was on earth he had the power and the authority to forgive sins. Do you think that now that he is in heaven he has less power to do so. No, go before him with all your miseries and heaviness of heart, your guilt, your despair and break through every obstacle, approach him with assurance of his power, and his willingness to save.
- **Be aware of the benefits of affliction:** if this man had never been paralyzed it is likely he never would have come to Jesus to have his sins forgiven. Oh, how he could say, "It was good for me to be afflicted." Don't look on your disability! Look on God's grace in giving you that affliction to draw you to himself.
- **Be diligent in the grace of intercession:** Help others! Be like this man's friends. You can't take them physically to Jesus but you can pray for others. Do what you can to bring others into the presence of Jesus! Never know what will happen.
- **Believe in Jesus who still forgives repentant sinners.** If you see your own hopelessness and despair, that is a sign of grace to point you to Christ. Jesus welcomes repentant sinners but he rejects those who only see their goodness and refuse to believe in Him.