

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26

After the first tour of Galilee, Jesus and His disciples return to Capernaum. He was probably staying in Peter's home and again great crowds came to hear Him and sought healing. In this incident, a small group was not frustrated by the crowds but having faith in the power of Jesus, came up with a plan to get their friend to Christ.

Capernaum was Christ's home base and the hometown of several of His followers. The first tour of Galilee is over. Though we don't know how long it lasted, our Scripture simply states, "after some days" Jesus will return to Capernaum. In reality, only one miracle is recorded for us during those "days." It tells of the reason for the switch Jesus needed to make from a town-to-town ministry to an open air. Several verses summarize the first time out into Galilee. (Matt. 4:23-25)

"And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised ("on a certain day," Luke 5:17) that he was in the house (Lit. - Jesus was at home). ²And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them ("and the power of the Lord was present to heal them." Luke 5:17) ("as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law (Lit - teachers) sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem:" Luke 5:17)." Mark 2:1-2

I. The Crowd

- "many were gathered together," – Most scholars believe that Jesus would be lodging and now teaching at Peter's home. The Greek adjective used here indicates that this is a specific home, the English is translated "the house" versus "a house." Again, it was "noised" that Jesus was back, and immediately the crowds gathered, the Greek gives us the picture that the door was jammed with people. There was absolutely no access to Christ and no way for Jesus to see out. Remember, the sight of people bringing the sick, injured, bedridden, weak, and lame was not new to this neighborhood, but according to this passage, there was no way to make room for them; there was no room!
- "and he preached the word unto them." – Mark records this phrase for us! I love it! As I looked up other translations of "word" I found that 79% of the time "word" was used – the other words were "the message;" or "the teaching." Interestingly, in many translations, "word" was capitalized. Remember, Jesus is the Word. Christ is the revealer of God to the world. (John 1:1, 14) In the Old Testament the phrase "Word of God" is used over 1,200 times and it refers to the message of God. Jesus Christ was both the incarnate and the inspired Word showing us God and bringing the good news of the Gospel both in word and in demonstrating the love of God by dying on the cross. John 1:18 It didn't matter the reason why the people came, whether for healing or curiosity, whatever the reason, but here, probably in Peter's home, Jesus is again, preaching the Word to them, revealing God's person and plan for the world.
- "the power of the Lord was present to heal them." – The passages tell us that Jesus was preaching not necessarily healing at that moment, but this phrase from Dr. Luke is highlighting the power Jesus was displaying to heal all those that came to Him with needs. He is setting up the next healing event in his narrative, the paralyzed man!

- “there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by,” – The ancient historian Josephus tells us that at the time of Christ there were over 6,000 Pharisees in Israel. Here Luke records there were representatives from every corner of Palestine that came and were “sitting by” as Jesus taught and healed. This begins the start of the **official opposition of the Religious Leaders** against Christ. Jesus’ ministry has probably moved into its second year by now. 1) His message and claim to be the Messiah, 2) His supporting miracles, 3) the great crowds that were following Him, 4) along with the longevity of it all, had certainly gotten the attention of the Religious Leaders! **This is the first time in the ministry of Jesus, we are told about hostile religious establishment spying, criticizing, taking notes, conferring, and spreading lies.** Soon they will show up in almost every incident of Jesus. We will talk about them over and over again all the way to the cross! The Old Testament gave them the authority to watch over the spiritual aspect of Israel. They were to determine the legitimacy of prophets and Rabbis, but all too often they got it wrong! And in their pride and self-preservation, killed the prophets, and now will do the ultimate rejection – turning their backs and that of the people against their very Messiah!

³And (“ behold ,” Matthew 9:2/Luke 5:18) they come unto him, bringing one sick (“taken with” Luke 5:18) of the palsy (Lit. - paralyzed), which was borne of four. ⁴And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, (“they sought means (Lit - “sought how”) to bring him in, and to lay him before him. ¹⁹And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop,” Luke 5:18) they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down (“through the tiling” Luke 5:19) the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay (“into the midst before Jesus” Luke 5:19).” Mark 2:3-4

II. The Problems and the Solution

- “they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy” – The need of this paralyzed man moved four friends or family, to carry him on a stretcher-type cot to Jesus. (What compassion, faith, and hope.) This paralyzed man could not get to Jesus without the love of at least four people! Yet the passage hints that perhaps more than four came with the stretcher! “they come unto him, bringing one sick.....which was borne of four.” Perhaps a whole entourage of support brought this paralyzed man. He was unable to see Jesus any other way. Now remember this scene is not new to Peter’s street, I’m sure the neighbors were getting accustomed to the crowds and the lines of sick who had come to hear and seek healing!
- “could not find by what way they might bring him because of the multitude,” – Here’s the big problem – the multitude – this probably means hundreds of people had jammed into the narrow street, through the gate, into the courtyard, and the Bible tells us “they could not come nigh unto him for the press.” But for these men, nothing was going to stand in their way. There was no Plan B to come back later or wait until Jesus would move. The time was now, and these men looked the situation over and acted! Their faith was urgent and unrelenting.
- “when they had broken it up, they let down the bed” – I read much about the construction of homes at the time of Christ. We’ve probably all seen pictures of the flat roofs and staircase along the side and this is probably very accurate. Some even suggested Jesus was under the roof of a covered courtyard. It is pretty much agreed that Peter did not live in a poor, small house but instead in an upper-middle-class home. The fact he had his mother-in-law living with him, had room to house Jesus, and entertain other

disciples reveal this. When these men started to take apart the roof, making a hole large enough to put the stretcher down before Jesus, I would guess Jesus' lesson was over, all eyes were turned upward, and people had to dodge falling debris! Though the roof was damaged it was not destructive to the structure, and I would suspect the same four men saw fit to repair it. But don't miss the fact – this was a pretty extreme measure to get their friend to Jesus!

“⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, (“Man,” Luke 5:20) (“be of good cheer;” Matt. 9:2) thy sins be forgiven (Gk – driven away, sending away) thee.” Mark 2:5

III. Jesus' Deity and Power Displayed

- “When Jesus saw their faith” – I think most of us read this phrase and think of the four men carrying the cot having faith. But several of my commentaries made a very good argument that all five men had faith in Christ that day. Don't miss this – **Faith is visual!** Jesus saw their faith, He didn't have to read their mind, He could see it with His eyes! That's how our faith affects others – **Faith is visual** – it is seen - In actions, in obedience to God, in words - **Faith is visual**. But realize, **faithlessness is also visual** – in faithless worry, faithless words, and disobedience to God. **Faithlessness** is also visual, and it also affects others! Here, Jesus saw their faith and responded to it!
- “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” – This is Matthew's narrative of Jesus' words. Wow, there is a lot here! First, the word “**Son**” – it is a word of endearment, and one that would bring comfort and ease – many English translations even use the word “child,” and most scholars believe he was a young man, younger than Jesus. Maybe they were all in this age group! 19-24-year-olds! What they did was not the norm for 40-year-old men! They would have come back later or waited! What these young men did was radical, spontaneous, and very impractical!

“**be of good cheer**” – this phrase is found solely in Matthew's narrative of this event. Jesus will say these words at other times during His ministry. In Matthew 14, He called out to His disciples “**Be of good cheer**, it is I; be not afraid.” You see Jesus was walking on the water and Jewish folklore taught a type of the “grim reaper,” – a ghost – took one in death. They were thinking Jesus was this ghost! This was a Jewish belief concerning death – the same verse says the disciples, “cried out for fear.” Again, we see Jesus use this phrase in John 16. Jesus was spending a lot of time in the upper room explaining to the disciples His future plans for them. He finished by telling them the hour had now come when they would scatter and leave Him alone. At this point, Jesus said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but **be of good cheer**; I have overcome the world.” Even in the book of Acts we see Jesus coming to Paul in prison and saying, “**Be of good cheer**, Paul:” and going on to affirm the great ministry and plans He had for Paul. What is the common thread of all these events – fear and distress in one who was a follower of Jesus. Here is where we see this paralyzed man's faith, Jesus responded to him with the words, “**be of good cheer.**”

Based on this statement we can assume; this man's heart was full of fear as he lay before the Messiah. Remember, the Jewish thinking of the day; bad things happened because of sin in one's life, but Jesus always refuted this belief. (John 9:1-3). It is very probable; he lay unable to move with his heart full of sadness over his sin. Perhaps he was thinking, “How can I be healed with such sin in my life!” Some commentaries believed his paralysis was a direct result of sin or youthful foolishness – at this time a fall

or fight would be the greatest cause of paralysis. Let's look quickly at another incident of Jesus where a sin caused a long-term issue. (John 5:1-15) We don't know what happened with the young man in this event of Jesus, but Christ's first words to him were, "Son, **be of good cheer.**" You see, Jesus gave him something to be immensely cheerful about, even before Christ said "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house." Jesus said, "**thy sins be forgiven thee.**" Here is the greatest response to faith. The forgiveness of sins. Without faith (belief in the person of Jesus Christ) there is no forgiveness of sin. (John 3:16, Acts 8:37; 16:31; Rom. 10:9-10; Eph. 2:8-9) Jesus forgave this man's sins because of faith and repentance! That is how sin is always forgiven! That is how your sins can be forgiven if you have never come to that place in your life before. (*give your testimony of salvation*) Jesus went first to this man's greatest need, his spiritual paralysis, and removed the burden of sin! Keep in mind, forgiveness is the biggest miracle of Jesus! It meets the biggest need; costs the greatest price; brings the greatest blessing and gives the most lasting results! If you are not sure of your place in heaven, if you carry the load and guilt of your sin, repent, and turn to Jesus and He will remove your sin far from you! This is an Old and New Testament teaching – God forgives the sin of those who repent and believe in Him! Ps. 103:12; Jer. 31:34; Micah 7:18-19; Rom. 3:22-24; I Peter 2:21-25

Did you notice this – up to this point Jesus has totally ignored the paralysis of this young man! But instead, the burden of his sin had been taken away!

6 ("And, behold," Matt. 9:3) **But there was certain of the scribes sitting there** (How did these rascals get such good seats? Of course, they were used to having prominent places. Did they come early for the front row? Did Peter, in his enthusiasm, make room for these VIPs? We don't know, but they were sitting comfortably in the crowd.), **and reasoning ("within themselves," Matt. 9:3) in their hearts, ("and saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies?" Luke 5:21) ⁷ Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? ⁸And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, ("Wherefore think ye evil" Matt. 9:4) Why reason ye these things in your hearts (Notice where their evil originated.)? ⁹ Whether (Lit. - Which) is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? ¹⁰ But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) ¹¹ I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed ("that whereon he lay," Luke 5:25), and go thy way into thine house. ¹² And immediately he arose ("before them," Luke 5:25), took up the bed, and went forth before them all (who? – onlookers, Jesus/disciples, 4 friends, Religious Leaders) ("glorifying God" Luke 5:25);" Mark 2:6-12**

- The Religious Leaders' Thoughts – These Religious Leaders had not traveled to hear the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth! They came to find fault. These men will ask two questions – Who and Why. Yet Jesus will, in His mercy, prove to them, without a doubt, who He was – the Messiah; and why He would forgive sins – He was the Messiah!

Many times, Jesus will answer the heart and thoughts of man as if those thoughts were shouted out! This is another example of Jesus reading minds. Remember, our thoughts are always open to God too!

"Who is this which speaketh blasphemies?"/"Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?" – Other words, Who does this man think he is? – Jesus knows He's God! With Jesus' declaration of the man's sins being forgiven, these Religious Leaders understood Christ's claim to divinity! It was plain to them! Here we see in their minds, Jesus was on trial for his assertion of being God. He could be stoned for such a statement.

“Who can forgive sins but God only?” – In this statement, the Scribes and Pharisees that had gathered that day were exactly right! Ps. 103:3; Is. 33:24; Ps. 32:5; 130:3-4; Is. 43:25 Only God can forgive sins! Edersheim, a former Jewish Rabbi, wrote of the beliefs within this sect of Religious Leaders, they believed God brought calamity to those who sinned, and it was only God who could then forgive them.

➤ Jesus’ Clear Declaration and Demonstration – Christ’s words are full of authority and power.

“Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?” – Talk is cheap, saying “sins are forgiven” cannot be proven, there is no evidence, there is no test of truth to the statement. BUT, to tell a man that is laying on his bed not able to move, to get up and walk, there would be proof to that statement – either the man will get up or continue to lay there! An imposter would stick to forgiving sin; healing is only of God! This was a difficult case and restoring this man to strength would be very convincing. **Jesus proposed a proof test.** A great message was going to be delivered to these religious scholars that day. One their forefathers would have only dreamed to hear. He didn’t challenge their statement by saying He was the Son of God, but with authority, He will show them!

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,” – I took time to study the word “know” in this statement. Overwhelmingly “know” is used in English translations. The other phrase used is “that I may prove.” Yes, Jesus did prove He was the Messiah, God in the flesh, they just never believed it – Knew it! Even the term Jesus used to refer to Himself, “Son of man” was an understood Old Testament reference to the Messiah from Dan. 7:13-14. Everyone in that room knew this! He could have simply used the pronoun “I have power on earth” but using “Son of man” declared exactly who he was! Eighty times this phrase is used in the four Gospel books. It is the name Jesus used most often when referring to Himself. Jesus was the Messiah, and it was noted by this name.

“Arise, and take up thy bed,...And immediately he arose,” – I love the fact that Jesus not only will demonstrate His power to forgive sin, but do it while relieving the suffering of the paralyzed man. The man, who once lay motionless, got up, and with new strength put his stretcher together, and left, Luke, telling us, glorifying God! How did this young man glorify God, we can only imagine, but I would guess he was uninhibited and he went home with a sound body and soul at peace with God and ready to bless those who he had once been a burden.

So, Jesus proved He was God – 1. He forgave sins, 2. read their minds, 3. called Himself the Son of man, and 4. healed the paralyzed man. Did the Religious Leaders leave that day convinced knowing Christ was their Messiah? The last verses of this incident have nothing more to say about the Scribes and Pharisees; no words, no thoughts – nothing! They had judged wrong; they never took into consideration Jesus was the Messiah. And when Jesus proved it, they still wouldn’t believe and submit to God. Those men, from all over Palestine, could have gone away rejoicing, with their sins forgiven too, but their faithless, critical, unbelieving spirit didn’t allow them a heart of repentance! When writing about this event of Jesus, John MacArthur said, “This was a decisive moment and should have ended once and for all the Pharisee’s opposition.” p. 115 Instead the Religious Leaders would spend the rest of Christ’s ministry trying to trap and ultimately eliminate Jesus, their Messiah!

²⁶ (“But when the multitude saw it, they marveled , and glorified God which had given such power unto men.” Matt. 9:8) And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear , saying, (“We never saw it on this fashion.” Mark 2:12) We have seen strange things today.”
Luke 5:26

IV. Reaction to Jesus’ Power

- “marveled”/“amazed” – All three Gospels texts record the amazement of the crowd. These are very strong words. I read the ideas that it caused them to be “beside themselves with amazement and astonishment,” “amazement seized and gripped their soul.” Another said, “to drive one out of one’s senses” in other words, it drove them crazy! This bothered them to their core!
- “We never saw it on this fashion”/“We have seen strange things today.” – Matthew Henry translated it this way, “Never were such wonders as these done before in our time.” MH p. 1522 Christ’s works were without precedent.
- “filled with fear”/“glorified God” – The people were filled with reverential respect and saw this healing as a work of God, but they missed what Jesus demonstrated! He was their Messiah! Matthew had this to say about the crowd’s reaction in verse 8, “they marveled, and glorified God which had given such power unto men.” The people regarded the healing and authoritative forgiving of sins as divine gifts to a man. They got it so wrong! **The power wasn’t given by God to a man, it was the power of the God-man Jesus Christ!** They didn’t view Jesus as God!

Who reacted with marvel, glorified God, amazement, and were filled with fear? It was the multitude. John MacArthur had this to say about the passage, “Their response is “curiously noncommittal,” wonder and amazed but void of true faith.”

Again notice, we hear nothing about the reaction of the Religious Leaders at this point! We know they will go on to hound and stalk Jesus seeking to find fault. Most will never consider Christ being the Messiah. Jesus certainly didn’t look like the Messiah they had envisioned, and He didn’t work into their plans at all! But some did have a heart toward truth, we find some did come to believe in Christ after the resurrection. (Acts 15:5)

Believers Application:

1. Though the physical needs of the paralyzed man were apparent, Jesus dealt first with his need for spiritual forgiveness. Let’s be careful to concentrate on what Jesus put weight on---the spiritual needs of a person! Though this man was brought to Jesus on a stretcher because he could not walk, the greatest need he had was the sin that held him! It seems the young man was very aware of this and was saddened because of it. Let’s make the needs of the soul always our first consideration when teaching and discipling. Everything we do must be focused and pointing others to the Healer of the soul. As with Paul, “that they might be saved” should be our driving purpose. Romans 10 1) Heart’s Desire – “that men might be saved” an attitude we live by v. 1 2) Heart’s Prayer – “that men might be saved” actively bringing souls to God in prayer v. 1 3) Heart’s Message – “that men might be saved” actively, and boldly giving the Gospel v. 14-17
2. Jesus knew the faith of the four men that brought the paralyzed man to Him. He rewarded their faith by healing their friend. Like these men, we need to be exercising faith and doing all we can to bring others to Christ! So what does this heart for souls look like? These men are examples of how we should minister to the needy, and spiritually sick around us! Here are three characteristics of these men, that should be in our lives!

- 1) **Concern** for their friend – We should go through life concerned for unbelievers around us! Our unbelieving loved ones, friends, neighbors, and acquaintances should all bring us concern for their souls! We should not be living life unaffected by the need for Christ that is around us!
- 2) **Faith** Jesus could heal – We know that Christ can forgive sin, change lives, and give peace and joy. We should be doing all we can to bring people to the Great Physician of the soul! Many times this is where our boldness stops – faithlessness that God can save!
- 3) **Action** without discouragement – nothing should stand in our way when giving out the Gospel or seeking souls for Christ!

Remember, many will not hear without someone **concerned** enough to be moved into **action** and in **faith** bring them to Jesus! The radio preacher J Vernon McGee had this to say, “What we need in the church today is stretcher-bearers—men and women with that kind of faith to go out and bring in the unsaved so they can hear the gospel. There are many people today who are paralyzed with a palsy of sin, a palsy of indifference, or a palsy of prejudice. A great many people are not going to come into church where the gospel is preached unless you take a corner of the stretcher and bring them in. That’s what these men did. They had the faith to bring this poor man to hear the Lord Jesus deal with him personally and say, “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” We need a heart of desire, and a heart of full of prayer, a heart-felt message, and then go with concern, faith in God’s power to see people born again!

3. Faith is visual, it pleases God, and it affects others. Often it is seen when one lives trusting God in difficult circumstances or obeying Him in unpopular, culture-defying living, but it always is visual, pleases God, and affects others! Here are three truths about Visual Faith:
 - 1) **Our Faith in God is Visual** - Just like these five men, God can look at us and see our heart of belief and trust in Him. Our **actions** and **words** demonstrate our faith and it’s visual! James uses the word “works” in his book in James 2:14-26. “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” v. 17 “works” defined here is **action** and **words** that demonstrate faith! True faith is played out in our works! Also, Hebrews 11 is full of saints who demonstrated faith and belief in God. They trusted Him and their lives were lived obeying Him in **action** and **words**! Believed God – Hebrews 11: 11, 13, 19, 22, 27 and it pleased God – Hebrews 11:5, 6, 16
 - 2) **Our Faithlessness toward God is Visual** – Living in fear and worry is seen by God and always displeases Him. Our **actions** and **words** demonstrate our faithlessness and it’s very visual to those around us! It is seen as fear and worry! God has called us to live by faith, trusting Him with our very life! “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Prov. 3:5-6 Living by faith is an Old and New Testament principle – Deut. 31:6; Ps. 34:3-4; Matt. 10:31; John 14:27; 2 Tim. 1:7
 - 3) **God is always Faithful and it’s very Visual** – This is an Old and New Testament principle, and nothing expresses this principle better than the Word of God. Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:23; Ps. 36:5; 86:15; 89:8 I Cor. 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 10:23; Rev. 19:11