

Mark 2:1-12

Authority Over Sin

1

Introduction

Jesus came into this world to do what we cannot – to forgive us of our sins and their consequences. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He taught about the Kingdom of God and healed the multitudes. In today's lesson, Jesus drives home the point that disease, pain, and suffering are the direct or indirect consequences of sin. It appears that the people in Jesus' day did not connect His ability to heal as His authority over sin. That will change when Jesus heals this paralytic – He will forgive his sins and then demonstrate that authority by restoring him to health.

2

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!"

3

Jesus' Return to Capernaum

Mark 2:1-2

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Last week we saw that after the healing of the leper, Jesus was no longer able to enter the cities because of the multitudes. The phrase "**after some days**" designates an extended period of time. After a period of time, the excitement died down and Jesus was able to return to Capernaum.

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Capernaum was Jesus' base of operations during His earthly ministry. The term "**in the house**" could be understood as "**at home**". This was most likely the home of Peter and Andrew in Chapter 1. Though the crowds had diminished, when they learned that He had returned, they quickly gathered. They filled the house and the door to capacity. Jesus then "**preached the word to them.**"

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The crowds were made up of a variety of people. Some probably came to see if Jesus would perform a miracle. Others came because they were curious about who Jesus was and what He had to say. Embedded in the crowd were also Pharisees and Scribes. This group saw themselves as the protectors of the religious traditions. They saw themselves as holy and loved the attention of the people. Though some would come to place their faith in Jesus, collectively they saw Jesus as a threat to their way of life and positions of power. They were not there to learn from Jesus, but to find reason to reject and accuse Him of wrongdoing.

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The Crippled Sinner

Mark 2:3-4

Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four *men*. ⁴And 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.

This story is given in both Matthew and Luke's gospels because of how Jesus deals with the issue of sin. Mark explains that there was a paralytic man whose four friends were attempting to bring him to Jesus. Upon arrival, they were confronted by the crowds that were so tightly packed in and around the house that they were unable to get to Jesus. According to Luke 5:18, the four friends made an unsuccessful effort to get in through the door. Refusing to give up, they devised a plan for reaching Jesus. They went up and "**uncovered the roof where He was.**" Once they had dug an opening, "**they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.**"

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Jewish houses were typically one story with a flat patio roof accessible by an external staircase. The typical roof was constructed using large wooden beams with smaller pieces of wood in between, covered by thatch consisting of grain, twigs, straw, and mud. Tiles would then be installed on top of the thatch.

The process must have disruptive to the crowd below. It would have been noisy with bits of wood, hay, and mud falling down upon the people below. I can only imagine the displeasure of the religious leaders who were being contaminated by the debris. If this was Peter's house, I wonder how he reacted?

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The Compassion of Jesus

Mark 2:5

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.”

The four men lowered their friend before Jesus. The term “**faith**” seems to indicate more than they believed Jesus could heal and the extremes they went through to come to Jesus.

Recognizing one’s sin and turning from it are essential to receiving forgiveness.

Jesus looks at the paralytic’s need for physical healing but recognizes the greater need of spiritual healing. Jesus recognized the man’s heart desire and states “**Son, your sins are forgiven you.**”

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The Calloused Leaders

Mark 2:6-7

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?”

Jesus’ declaration of forgiveness gave the hostile religious leaders all the ammunition they were looking for to attack Him. When they heard what Jesus said, some of the scribes were reasoning in their hearts, “**Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?**” Their premise, that only God can grant forgiveness of sins, was correct. The justification of sinners is a prerogative that belongs to God alone. As the supreme Judge, only He can grant eternal pardon to wicked people. Since every sin is ultimately an act of rebellion against Him and His law (Ps. 51:4), the right to forgive, as well as the right to condemn, belongs to God alone.

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The Calloused Leaders

Mark 2:8-9

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? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Arise, take up your bed and walk’?”

In the face of their allegations of blasphemy, Jesus demonstrated His deity in three important ways. **First**, He read their minds. Immediately Jesus was aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves. The fact that He knew their thoughts proved His deity, since only God is omniscient (1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kings 8:39; 1 Chron. 28:9; Jer. 17:10; Ezek. 11:5). Jesus did not need them to verbalize their thoughts, “for He Himself knew what was in man” (John 2:25).

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Second, He did not argue against their basic theological premise, that only God can forgive sins. Rather, He affirmed that truth. Jesus knew that the religious leaders were accusing Him of the blasphemy of claiming equality with God. That was His whole point. His claim to be able to forgive sins was nothing less than a claim that He was God.

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Third, He backed up His claim by demonstrating divine power. Having unmasked their thoughts, Jesus said to them, “**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?’**” Jesus was not asking which is easier to do, since both are beyond human ability. Rather, He was asking which is easier to claim as reality. Obviously, it is easier to say that someone’s sins are forgiven since there is no empirical way to confirm or deny the reality of that claim. Conversely, telling a paralyzed man to get up and walk is something that can be immediately tested.

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The Calloused Leaders

Mark 2:10-11

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.”

Jesus purposely waited to heal the paralyzed man until after He declared His authority to forgive sins. Disease and disability are consequences of living in a fallen world. **By healing the paralyzed man, in demonstration of His power over sin’s effects**, Jesus proved His authority over sin itself. Jesus performed the miracle of physical healing so that everyone watching could know that the Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins. The title “**Son of Man**” was one of Jesus’ favorite self-designations. Not only did the title humbly identify His humanity, but it also had messianic implications (cf. Dan. 7:13–14).

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The Evidence

Mark 2:10b-12

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!”

Looking with compassion at the man still lying on the bed, He said to the paralytic, “**I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.**” This miracle would prove whether or not Jesus had power over sin and its effects. More to the point, it would demonstrate whether or not He truly had the divine authority He claimed to possess. The scribes accused Jesus of being a blasphemer, but blasphemers are not able to read minds. They cannot forgive sins, and they cannot validate their claims by healing people who are paralyzed. By performing this miracle, Jesus proved for all to see that He was not a blasphemer. If He was not a blasphemer, then He was God as He claimed.

15

The Crowd's Reaction

Mark 2:12

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!”

Though the religious leaders reject Jesus' claims and dismissed His miracles, the people “**were amazed and glorified God.**”

No one had ever done the things that Jesus did.

It is important to recognize that there is a difference between being amazed and true faith. These people had never seen a paralytic healed and rightfully recognized that only God could bring such restoration. The question is did they recognize Jesus as God, or merely a prophet who God was working through?

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So What ...

The world is filled with people who know some things about Jesus. Rather than accepting His claims and glorifying God, they sit as the religious leaders searching diligently to find an excuse to reject or diminish Him.

Many claim that Jesus is just a myth, or a good man and teacher, or even a con artist. However this does not change the reality of who Jesus is. These people deceive themselves. Unfortunately, if they will not accept Jesus for who He is and what He has done, they must accept the consequences of that decision!

Is Jesus your Lord and Savior?