

**Mark 2:1** 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!" (NKJV)

So, Christ had gone out of Capernaum to the region of Galilee and spent some days preaching in the towns, just as he said. Then, evidently he snuck back to the house, probably Peter's house. But someone must have seen Him. Word spread that Christ was in the house. That is all it took. This was not a Sabbath so people started showing up right away.

Jesus evidently stayed inside this time. If it was in the heat of the day that would make sense. So instantly the crowd has surrounded Jesus to the effect that no one could get close to Him.

It isn't at all difficult to picture this. We see it all the time when famous people show up somewhere. So we have a home, which usually consisted of a one room shelter made of clay. Then often for a roof there would be wooden beams stretching from one wall to the next. On those beams would be clay tiles laid upon them. And then to make the roof watertight, there would be mud spread to cover the cracks between the tile and over the whole surface.

Then there would usually be a staircase outside the structure that led up to the roof. They would use the roof to dry food and other things that made use of the sunlight.

**And He preached the word to them.**

The word for "word" here does not mean a literal word consisting of vowels and consonants. Often when you see the word "word" in scripture it is not referring to a spelled out word. Often it is referring to a message. The Greek word is *logos*.

Christ **is** this logos in John 1:1. He was the message, the thing discussed, the topic at hand. He was the communication of the message of God.

We need to keep this in mind. Even when scripture talks about profanity, the focus is on the profanity of **the message** being spoken. It is not so much about the literal words being used. We tend to focus on the later and overlook the former.

In our text this morning, Christ is preaching the Word to them. I think He is essentially preaching **Himself** to them. He is preaching **God's means** of salvation and **man's need** of salvation.

Remember Christ said that He needed to visit other towns in order to preach. Well He is staying true to His purpose. If a crowd gathers, He is going to use that opportunity to preach. Remember that no one is saved by experiencing a healing or a demon being cast out. They are only saved by hearing the word preached and responding to it. So Christ is preaching.

And all this while His disciples are listening. So while He is talking to the crowds, He is also teaching His apostles.

**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.**

Just imagine yourself carrying a refrigerator to the stage of some popular music group in the middle of one of their concerts. It would be something like that. It would be very hard to squeeze your way to the front **if it was just you** and you were very skinny. It would be impossible to get the refrigerator through the crowd. That is what these four men are faced with.

They have a friend who is a paralytic. Carrying this man, even without obstacles, would be hard enough. Suppose he weighs 160 pounds. Each man would be carrying 40 pounds. We have no idea what he weighed, but we can know that what these men were doing was far from convenient.

And these men were not stupid. They assessed the situation and weighed their options. I doubt they liked the idea of what they were going to do next, but it was the only way they could accomplish what needed done.

So they took the steps to the roof. Probably there was no one up there, especially in the heat of the day, because, from there, you could neither **see** nor **hear** Christ. So they got up on the roof and they started scraping the clay covering from the tiles. They then exposed the tiles. Now this whole time you probably have stuff falling out of the ceiling. As these chunks of clay started dropping, the crowd is probably wondering, what in the world is going on. When the first rays of daylight came through people probably started getting the idea. Someone is busting through the roof.

**. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.** From what I have read, the beams in the roof would give

them just about enough room to drop a small cot through between them. So the crowd and Christ would have seen the tiles pulled up by the hard working men above them. Then the space would have been filled with a cot. And the cot would have been let down right into their midst. It would have been interesting to see how a space large enough for him was cleared.

We can't go farther without drawing attention to just how good of an example these men were for us.

If you want a picture of loving friendship, here it is.

They had a friend in need. This paralytic would have been in a horrible spot. He could do nothing for anyone, at least that is how he might have felt. He cannot provide for a family if he has one. He cannot do any kind of work to support himself or help anyone else. There is little he could do. All he could do would be to talk to his friends and family.

His friends did what friends do. They thought about what **they would want done to them** if they had a need.

You know we as believers can sometimes be so hard hearted. We can look into the face of need, give some empathetic words, and walk away and completely forget the travail of our fellow believer or unsaved acquaintance.

These men couldn't do that. They couldn't just say, we will pray for you brother. No. This man is in a tough spot, and if there is any way out of it, his friends are going to find the way. Isn't that the kind of friend you want, you need? Isn't that the kind of friend you want to be?

I work with a guy who programs phone systems. He talks a lot about his life to me. He told me about a friend of his who has had some serious heart issues. And he is depressed. His wife was concerned that this man would not get out of bed. So this phone guy went over to his house, got a bucket of ice water, and threw it on his friend while he was in bed in the early evening. The man jumped out of bed and chased the phone guy outside of his house. The phone guy just smiled and said, I will be back. But you won't know when I am coming. If I catch you in bed I am going to do the same thing again.

I talked to him later about his friend and he told me that he now has an alarm rigged in the guy's bedroom that he can call remotely and set it off. All in an effort to do what is best for his friend.

I am fairly sure that this man is not a believer. But he understands how to take it upon himself to give his friends what they need. How much more should we be like this. The men in this story show so many good traits.

First, they don't just blow off this man's calamity. They treat it like it is their own. They want it solved. They don't just want to not feel guilty about his condition.... (You know, so you feel like you have done enough that you don't feel guilty. )

These guys go further than that. They want to fix the problem. Women, you may

not always like that about a good man, but that is really what they are made for. So you might want to learn to appreciate that fact. They can be very useful in that regard.

Then what do these men do? What do you think is the first thing these guys thought of when they heard that Jesus can heal people. I would bet that all four of them said- my friend needs healed. And probably one of them led the group with a plan of getting the man to Christ.

Notice also that they made it a priority to bring their friend **to Christ**. We as believers know that ultimately Christ is the solution to all of our deepest problems. He has what we ultimately need. And the best effort we can give is to see our friends and family and acquaintances come to Christ. There is no better effort than this for people we know. Yet consider this. When is the last time we made a plan to do such a thing? We say it is important. We think it is important. But we act like, for this to happen, God will have to cause this person to beg to come to church with us, or ask for some literature or a visit. Think about it. If this man's friends treated this paralytic like we treat our acquaintances and friends, would he ever have been brought to Christ? I am all for looking for opportunities and taking them. But how about us making them? Wouldn't we want that if we were lost? These men were nothing if not intentional in their love for this crippled friend.

What plan do we have to reach our coworkers or unsaved acquaintances?

And look at the obstacles these friends faced. The crowd was impossible. That was probably true. If they would have just conventionally waited in line they may have never gotten to see Christ. And they knew it. Now, they could have easily given up. Most people would. Most people would say, well we tried. But it must not have been God's will because it wasn't easy. It didn't just happen.

These men were different. They overcame all the obstacles in their way due to their love for their friend. They would not take no for an answer. So what did they do? Well they were very ingenious. Evidently one, if not all of them, knew how houses were built. So they came up with a plan that could not be ignored. They were going to get their friend to Christ. They were going to get their friend what he needed. And they were likely going to do it at great expense to themselves. It isn't like they are going to destroy this patch of roof without witnesses. They knew full well when they tore the roof apart that they were going to have to fix it. There goes their day off, doing a roofing project. But they didn't care. They had their minds fixed on meeting the need of their friend. That is all that mattered. So they finally accomplish the task. They lower their friend down into Jesus's presence.

Now they did all this not knowing how this was going to turn out. It could have just as easily turned out that the owner of the house came up the steps and told them to hit the road. It would have been a great likelihood in fact. These men

could have easily stopped here because they did not want to offend their neighbor by destroying his roof. They could have cared what people thought too much to do this ministry. But they were beyond that. They only wanted one thing, to get their friend to Jesus.

Here is something that is true. If we cared as much about getting people to Jesus as these man did, **we would get more people to Him.**

We accept all kinds of excuses. We accept all kinds of limitations. We come up with all kinds of reasons. But at the end of the day, we care more about other things.

These men are excellent examples. They display the diligence of faith.

Now, what did Christ say to these guys? Did he say, you were wrong for the damage you did to that clay roof? Did he say, I hope you guys are planning to repair that roof? Did he criticize their efforts? No. He said this:

**5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."**

Notice that it says when Jesus saw their faith. How did He know it was faith? By the works. And what were the works focused on? What was the assumption? The assumption was, if they could get their friend in front of Christ, not only could He heal him, but He **WOULD** heal him. They trusted in the character of Christ to display His love to this man. They came to Christ expectantly, trusting in His grace and mercy and power. That is faith.

Where do you stand with Christ this morning? What do you really need? Will you do whatever it takes to get into His presence to plead for His provision? Will you come to Him asking Him to save your soul, to forgive your sin? If you will, He will.

So then, look at what Christ says.

**"Son, your sins are forgiven you."**

I have often wondered if these 5 men might have been disappointed at this point. While they were faithful, they may have not been fully informed. They really didn't do the demolition to the roof in order to get their friend's sins forgiven. They let him down through the roof so that Christ would heal his body. That would kind of be like, as a kid, going trick or treating for candy and someone gives you a bible. You know that you should think that is a good thing, but you really had your heart set on a snickers bar.

Sometimes God tests us by giving us what we need and withholding what we want.

Now, the gift that Christ gave this crippled man was utterly amazing. It was far more valuable than anything else that could have been given to him. He was given eternal life. No matter whether he is healed **or not**, this man is going to die. And after death, judgment. So by far, the most important thing in life is being prepared

to die. Many times we lose perspective. We desperately want our pains and sufferings and difficulties to go away. Sometimes we feel as if we will die if they do not relent. And what Christ gives us is eternal life and promises. It is easy to lose focus and think that this is not really what we want. But as we live longer and get wiser, we begin to understand that, yes, this **is** what I want. This life is short and full of turmoil. What really matters is hope. What matters is purpose. What matters is eternity. Healing would be nice. But hope is essential. We must know that we are headed to an eternity that makes whatever we have suffered worthwhile. That is where Christ started with this man. We don't know if he was thrilled that he got way more than he bargained for. We cannot be too hard on him if he was not. Because it takes us a while to recognize the value of eternity. But without a doubt, **when we consider everything**, we know that Christ gave the greatest gift first.

This paralytic, still paralyzed, is now headed for eternity of bliss with Christ and His people. Even if his body was not healed, the time would be short before he would go to live with Christ. What an amazing thing.

**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?"**

Isn't there always one in the crowd that finds something wrong with even the most amazing things?

We find in other Gospels that the Pharisees and Scribes had become aware of this ministry of Christ's and people are being sent from all over to check this out. Now you can rest assured that this is not a fact finding mission. This is a mission to undermine the influence of Christ. Because there is nothing that the false church is more sensitive about than power.

So the scribes are sitting there in their critical capacity. They must have arrived early or Christ may have offered them front row seats. We don't know. But they had a good view of what was happening.

Now, I doubt that **these scribes** reported to Peter, after the fact, that what they were really thinking when Christ said the crippled man's sins are forgiven is why is this man blaspheming? So my guess is this information came from Christ Himself as he explained His actions to Peter. Then Peter told it to Mark and Mark wrote it down.

So these religious experts, religious leaders were asking, "Why is Christ blaspheming?" Wouldn't an equally valid question be- "Is Christ blaspheming?". Wouldn't a valid question be, if this man is the Messiah, is it possible I have misunderstood what the Messiah is? There are all kinds of good questions, honest questions, truth seeking questions that these guys could have been asking. But no. The questions they were asking displays the wrong assumptions that they are

dedicated to. They assumed that it is impossible that Christ could be God, therefore it is safe to assume that He is blaspheming.

It is always our assumptions that are the most dangerous to us. You cannot receive truth if you are not willing to challenge your dearly held assumptions. These men were not willing to do that.

They were correct in their theology that no one can forgive sins but God alone. Why did they not read the scriptures enough to understand that Christ **would be** God? That is the problem. Their theology was good as far as it went, but it did not go far enough.

**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?"**

Christ would have been very difficult to hang out with. You could never lie to Him. Nor could you lie to yourself in His presence. We often think we would like to have seen Him, been with Him, gotten to know Him. But I suspect it would have been extremely difficult. He would always be calling our bluffs and accepting nothing but the truth. And the truth isn't very cuddly. It is often brutal. Christ knew the thoughts of people. Just that, in itself, should make us a bit nervous. Christ immediately perceived these men's duplicity and challenged it. He said, essentially, why are you thinking what you are thinking? Aren't there other things that you could think? But no. You choose to think that I am wrong, that I am sinning the worst possible sin. Why?

That is the influence even now of the Holy Spirit when we read the word and allow it to show us ourselves like a mirror. It shows us why we do what we do. It shows us who we are. It points out hard truths and asks us hard questions. And the miracle of being a Christian is that **we want this**. We welcome it.

Now this is Jesus's response to His critics who were concerned about His authority to forgive sin.

**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!" (NKJV)**

Christ asks which is easier, to **say** something amazing or to **do** something amazing? Obviously it is easier to make a claim that would be **impossible to prove untrue** than to make a claim that requires an **absolute miracle to prove**

**true.** The scribe was used to dealing with the world of ideas, the world of teachings that conform to their teaching and teaching that contradicts it. But that is not the world Jesus lived in. He lived in a world of spiritual reality, spiritual power. So He had the power to forgive the paralytic's sin. And He also had the power to heal the paralysis.

Note the point that Christ makes here. It is very important that Christ makes these religious zealots, and anyone looking on, know that He truly has the power to forgive sins. After all, that is what He came to do. So He makes that claim. And then **He does** the thing that would be **impossible to deny**.

He looks at this paralytic, the one who had no power to make His way to Christ. No power to do anything really. And He says, take up your bed and walk. He commands Him to do so. And the man does so.

**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!*"**

There was no process here. There was no delay. It was just like Peter's mother in law. The healing was instantaneous and complete. That's what proves it was truly a miracle. There was no natural healing process in motion. This could only be supernatural. It could only be a miracle.

So this man, dropped through the ceiling flat on his back, no ability to do anything but to look imploringly to Christ, probably sat up, got on his knees, stood up, picked up his cot, and made his way through the crowd. He did exactly what He was told. Jesus told him to get his cot and go to his house. The man wasted no time. He picked up his cot and all Christ would have seen was his back as he left through the door.

It is almost funny that the man didn't stick around longer and that Christ didn't really want him to stick around any longer. It was kinda like- well I got what I came for. Thanks a lot but I'll be leaving now. The whole crowd is now more amazed, more enthralled, but the main event is leaving to go to his house.

We don't find out about the guys on the roof. Maybe they stuck around to put the roof back together. But I am sure that they would have made their way back to their friend's house and celebrated with Him. What a wonderful day. He had a spiritual and physical healing. It could not possibly get any better than that.

And what effect did it have on the crowd?

**all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw *anything like this!*"**

These people knew this was real. Many of them probably knew this paralyzed man. And they had no trouble at all knowing what had just happened. They had seen God move. As is so often the case, the common man knew easily what the religious experts could not discern. It reminds me of the man in John when dealing with the religious leaders. This is one of my favorite passages in scripture.



**John 9:24** So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, "Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner." **25** He answered and said, "Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see." **26** Then they said to him again, "What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?" **27** He answered them, "I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" **28** Then they reviled him and said, "You are His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. **29** We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for this fellow*, we do not know where He is from." **30** The man answered and said to them, "Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! **31** Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. **32** Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. **33** If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing." **34** They answered and said to him, "You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?" And they cast him out. (NKJV)

The most obvious answer is the best answer in this case. Christ did a miracle of God and God deserves the glory. So the common man gives it to Him. Just like the blind man did. He didn't know much. He didn't go to seminary. He didn't know all the names for the doctrines. But he knew one thing. He used to be blind, but he isn't any more. The paralytic used to be paralyzed, but he isn't any more. It is unheard of for someone to open the eyes of someone blind from birth. It is unheard of for someone to cause a paralytic to walk. And the common man would say, If this man were not of God, if He were as bad as the religious rulers say He is, He could do nothing. But obviously Christ is doing great things, wonderful things, miraculous things. Therefore the thinking of the leaders must be wrong.

At that point the leaders essentially belittled him. They could not counter the truth he was saying with any logic, so they just insulted him and shut him up. That is what you will always get from people who do not love truth. But the blind man was correct, just as the crowd in our text was correct. They gave glory to God, and that is where the glory belonged.

And then they said- "**We never saw *anything like this!***" Now the religious rulers were in control for hundreds of years. They had lots of time to come up with this type of miracles. But they never did. Why? They never had that kind of spiritual power. They were spiritually impotent, with all their traditions and legalisms. But Christ showed them what God was capable of. Christ displayed the power of God. And the religious leaders were jealous. But the crowd praised Christ's Father.