

## JESUS' AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS

Mark 2:1-12 (Key verse 10)

*"But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..."*

What is the most distinctive benefit that Christianity has to offer the world? There are some people who think the great legacy of Christianity is a kind of morality, a form of how to live a good life, respecting others or loving others as the ultimate approach to life. I can agree that the Bible does teach about moral and ethical standards, the Christians faith is marked by love and peace and happiness. Christians do express some social responsibility based on a higher motivation and that there is an amazing fulfillment, purpose, and satisfaction in Christianity. However, none of these are a great benefit of Christianity, these are the by-products of the great benefit. This great benefit alone addresses man's greatest need. We have all kinds of needs, obtain good grades for the job market, obtain a job, to be accepted, to be part of a community, to be happy and so on. But what is man's greatest need? Simply put our greatest need is to escape the wrath of God poured out on sinners. And only the Christian gospel offers the benefit that meets that need. We shall learn through this passage why the Christian gospel is the only good news to the world because of who Jesus is.

Look at verse 1-2, "A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them." From the previous passage we learned how people brought the sick and demon possessed and Jesus healed many and drove out the demons. Lastly Jesus had also healed a man with Leprosy. After which Jesus had told him not to tell people of his healing. However instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, people heard about Jesus and his mighty miraculous works. They now gathered in large numbers that there was no room left not even outside the door. All these people came having faith that Jesus will do something for them.

However, at the same time there were some men who wanted to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus [3], these men tried many ways to get their friend to Jesus, it says, in verse 4, "Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on." They tried a lot of different ways to get the man to Jesus. They were very determined to get to Jesus and looked for a way. In the end they made an opening in the roof above Jesus. It is no simple thing to open the roof, they had to dig through it. It is said that they had to remove the tiles, then face some layers of mud which they had to dig through. They had to make the whole big enough in order to lower the paralyzed man through. They had to make sure they lower the man right where Jesus was busy teaching. These men were really determined. The act of even lowering their friend itself was a great distraction for Jesus and a possible huge embarrassment from the people. I do not think anyone can go through such lengths unless they were fully sure Jesus would heal their friend. This just goes to show how much faith they had in Jesus to heal. Even in verse 5, Jesus saw their faith. Biblically faith is always linked to action, James put it this way, "Faith without works is dead." It seemed impossible to reach to Jesus, but when they looked by faith they could find a way. This goes to show that by faith, there is always a way to reach Jesus and that faith is something that can be seen. Faith overcomes, faith pursues Jesus and faith strives towards Jesus.

Though their faith may have seemed like human faith, which is to come to Jesus for his healing powers, for example, I had a mini-surgery this week, I had two of my teeth removed. I had faith that the dentist on campus could do the operation. I had the faith because he told me of the many successful teeth removals he had done. However, if we looked closely at verse 5, we realize that they actually had a far better faith than just human faith. Let's all read verse 5, "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." After seeing their faith Jesus said, son your sins are forgiven. We know biblically that, your sin cannot be forgiven unless you repent and turn to God (Acts 3:19). This kind of faith cannot be easily seen, however Jesus could see his heart. Many people came there with the human or natural faith to see Jesus, however only to this paralyzed man did Jesus say, "son your sins are forgiven." Jesus even called the paralyzed man, "son", he was now a child of God who had repented by having real faith in Jesus. This was not just healing, this was salvation to those who repent. Though Jesus knew what the man wanted which was healing, however far greater than healing the man needed forgiveness.

Physically with human eyes in this event, we might be like, no Jesus! what are you talking about? the man needs to be healed can't you see he is paralyzed. For Jesus, resolving the sin problem was the most urgent and fundamental problem of the paralyzed man. It did not help to feel sorry and sad for him seeing how he struggled. Jesus was rather saddened that he was a prisoner of sin. But when Jesus forgave the man's sin, it disturbed the religious leaders.

Look at verse 7, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" the teachers of the law were troubled to hear that Jesus could forgive sins. They asked in their minds, "why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sin but God alone?" and they were right, only God can forgive sin. So, either Jesus is a blasphemer or he is God. There is no in between on this one. Look at verse 8, "Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?" Jesus even knew in his spirit what was in their hearts, something that should have made them think twice about who Jesus is. Jesus then asked them in verse 9, "Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"

I think both of these things are actually not easy. However, Jesus wanted them to know something grander, something wonderful about who he is, let us all read verse 10-11, "But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins". So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Jesus was telling a paralyzed man who could not walk, "GET UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND GO HOME!" probably at this moment the whole eyes of the crows and the teachers of the law fell on the man. At this very moment, at this very moment what was about to happen in the next two seconds or so was the defining moment for Jesus. He is either a blasphemer or he is God. If Jesus could command a paralyzed man to walk and he walks, then it follows that in the same way as he take away paralysis. He can also forgive sin, he can also take away sin from the man. How then did the paralyzed man respond? Let us all read verse 12, "He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" Jaws are all down, in full view of everyone, the man got up from his paralysis and walked. The man who had been paralyzed for years, by the hearing of Jesus words, "GET UP, TAKE YOUR MAT AND GO HOME" he got up and walked. How could this be? It is because of one simple reason. Jesus has the authority to do so, because Jesus is God. Let us look at the relationship between this

paralysis and sin and why healing the man's paralysis proved that Jesus could forgive sin.

Firstly, If we looked at the man's paralysis, we can learn some things about sin. The man's paralysis was symbolic to what the power of sin can do. Sin causes us not to function the way God had created us to function, sin causes us to be a burden unto others, sin makes us live a life void of purpose. It makes us joyless and dependent on things for joy other than God. Because of sin, we think that if I can finish my studies at Wits I will be happy, if I can get good grades I will be successful, if I get that job or my life will be great, that house that car, be like that person and so on. In fact sin is the very reason we have load shedding, greed, corruption and political interference into engineering matters. So sin does not matter if you are educated or not. It is like virus, no medication can cure the virus, no effort and works can do away with sin. It makes us proud, stubborn, self centered and fundamentally enemies of a holy God. By sinning we actually offend God and thus no one else but God, can clear us from offending God except God Himself. We are all born sinners, no one is born wanting to live for their God given purpose. We all born wanting to be the center of the universe, wanting all things to be about us. Furthermore, our societies have raised us to think success is defined by material gain with no acknowledgment to our creator God. Imagine a God who made us, gave us his breath to be alive today, yet we live as though he does not exist. Sin puts us under the wrath God, that is what sin is and what sin does. It is then actually not sin that sends us to hell, it is the unforgiven sin. This is man's greatest need, to move him from hell to heaven. To cleanse him from this sin sickness. However, praise to God that Jesus has come, taught us last week that, the kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news. We can repent and believe the gospel because, Jesus has the authority to forgive sin. From the healing of the paralytic, Jesus further shows us that, he has the authority over the consequences of sin and he has authority over sin itself, its power and its false promises.

If a paralytic in a moment could be completely well, completely whole, completely restored, Jesus is God. And if He is God, then He can forgive sin, something only God can do. If He displays the power to heal, if He displays the power to do creation miracles, Jesus has to be God. And if He is God, then He has the authority to forgive sin. So if He has said, "Take up your bed and walk," and the man takes up his bed and walks, that is evidence that He is God, and it validates the fact that He said, "Your sins are forgiven." That also becomes reality. Only God can do both. That means you are a Son and daughter of God. It means you are the righteousness of God, before the eyes of God you are beautiful, you are awesome only because of the authority of Jesus. This is really the good news. The paralyzed man repented and could experience the power of God when he came to Jesus by faith.

This also reminded me of the time I committed the sin of sexual immorality. I broke down in despair and fatalism. I lost the joy to sing praises to God on Sundays, I just wanted something terrible to happen to me so that I could feel that God obtained his justice. I just I deserved God's wrath and nothing good but God's punishment. I could not find anything I could do to cleans myself from my sin. Non of my good works brought any peace in my heart. My sin left me paralyzed to deal with it. I lost even the spirt to serve bible studies. I remember once while walking on the streets, some old lady greeted me. And her greeting felt like the greatest thing in this world. I even felt I had become a burden to my brothers and sisters since now they had to pray for me and that I to could not participate in the joy of being part of the body of Christ the Church. However, I cannot remember whether we were doing the book o Romans in that period or I just stumbled on Romans 4:5 while studying the bible. Which reads as follows, "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his

faith is credited as righteousness." It is the passage around Abraham that he was not justified to be righteous because of his works or obedience to the law. But he was credited righteous before God because he trusted and believed God. Further on David said (Rom4:8), "blessed is the man whose sin the lord will never count against him." And from that very moment I felt a great burden fall of my shoulders. I felt relieved and free. That very word of God changed everything in me. There was no work I did, but the very word of God had authority to turn me from a fatalistic and despairing man to a complete God's righteousness. Just like that. I believe that is the power and authority of Jesus when we are brought to him in repentance. I was rest assured that my sin had been forgiven. I could now praise and rejoice with other believers in the lord.

In conclusion, in full view of everyone, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "GET UP PICK UP YOUR MAT and GO HOME" and the man got up picked up his mat and walked. Likewise, If Jesus words could make a paralyzed man walk, then if Jesus says, son or daughter, your sins are forgiven, we can rest assured that they are forgiven indeed. What does this mean to us? How can we respond to this? Do we have sins that have captured us, causing us to be slaves and filling us with fear, anxiety and despair or fatalism like the paralytic. I pray that we may repent by believing that indeed Jesus takes away our sins. He was not some nice, well-meaning great teacher. No. He is either the One who can forgive sin or He is not. Jesus has demonstrated his authority. In Nehemiah 9:17, we read, "You are a God of forgiveness, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness." And in Psalm 103:12, it says that wonderful truth, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Isaiah 38:17 says, "You have cast all my sins behind your back." And lastly, Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I," says God, "I am the one who wipes out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." I pray we may come to him in full confidence as our creator God who takes away the sin of the world. We do not need to worry about what our families will think or what our friends will say, this is personal, between you and your heavenly father, our creator God. May no one in this place perish with unforgiven sin. We do not know if we will meet again next week, if you and I will be around in the next second. We need forgiveness, this is our greatest need. May we all know the full, complete forgiveness that God offers those who put their trust in Christ. Amen.