

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
Pastor Stephen Felker  
Swift Creek Baptist Church, 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
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## Mark 2:1-12 “Who Can Meet Our Deepest Needs?”

Intro. Last Sunday we learned about Jesus healing a man from his leprosy. After this amazing miracle Mark 1:45 tells us, “...Jesus could no longer openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.” As Jesus toured Galilee, teaching, preaching, and healing, He was attracting large crowds everywhere He went, even in remote areas. There was something special about Jesus.

This Sunday we will learn about an event that took place when He returned to Capernaum (Mk. 2:1). It was probably winter in Capernaum at this time, for Jesus was teaching in a house, possibly Peter’s house, for chapter 1 indicates that Peter’s house was there in Capernaum. Now the house that day was packed with people. Included in the audience were several types of people. No doubt the disciples and friends of Jesus were present, with a genuine interest in the truth. Also, there must have been people who were merely burning with curiosity, hoping to see Jesus perform some miracle. But Luke’s account focuses our attention on still another group, consisting of strait-laced Pharisees and like-minded law teachers (5:17). They seem to have been filled with envy, probably deeply disturbed about the large crowds Jesus was attracting. Finally, we will read of 4 men bringing a paralyzed man to Jesus.

Now the main focus of my text is not the faith of the paralyzed man & his helpers, and not even the miracle that Jesus performed. After all, He had come to do much more than relieve the afflictions of the sick and the demonized. Those miracles were wonderful, but there was something greater for the people to experience. So our focus today is rather upon the forgiveness that Jesus offers. Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. Do you realize that forgiveness of sin is your greatest need today? It brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results. You may have a financial need, but that is not as important as your need for forgiveness. You may have a physical need, but your greatest need is for God to forgive you of your sin. After all, the Bible says, “The soul that sins shall die” and “The wages of sin is death.” The unforgiven soul endures the anguish of guilt in this life and the pain and agony of hell in the next life.

This morning I want you to see that it is Jesus Christ that can forgive you of your sins. Jesus’ authority to forgive is the most distinctive message Christianity has to proclaim. The word “forgive” means to send away, or to leave behind. A separation from our sins is the root meaning of the word. The prophet Micah said that God is willing to take our sins and send them away from us into the deepest ocean, never to be remembered again (Mic. 7:19; cf. Psa. 103:12<sup>1</sup>; Jer. 31:34b<sup>2</sup>). Every person here can leave this building today forgiven and free from the burden and guilt of sin. So let’s look into this passage together and allow God to speak to our hearts.

Now one main truth from our text that confronts us is this:

### I. WE HAVE NEEDS

As with the man with leprosy, the man who was brought to Jesus had at least two basic needs in his life. First:

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<sup>1</sup> “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

<sup>2</sup> “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

A. We Have Physical Needs – In v.3 we read, “Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.” He has some type of paralysis. It could have been the result of a neck or back injury, a birth defect, or perhaps a stroke. It’s apparent in this man’s case that he had a severe paralysis that may have even rendered him a quadriplegic, like Christopher Reeves. Of course, one of the most difficult realities of this problem is the fact that so often paralysis is irreversible. Even today, modern science is unable to cure this problem.

You might think that this was his main problem, but notice he also illustrates the fact that:

B. We Have Spiritual Needs - This man probably accepted the Jewish teaching that sickness or injury was due to personal sin. This lent itself to confirm the Jewish teachers in their own self-righteousness. If sickness and disease is always due to personal sin, then it is logical to believe that good health is a sign of being right with God. Too many are deceived into thinking that they are right with God just because everything seems to be going OK. But they fail to consider the fact that God often delays His judgment. Therefore, many people enjoy a false security and therefore do not sense a need for Jesus Christ. Today, when a message is preached on forgiveness, some will open their hearts to Christ. Yet many others will leave uninterested, failing to recognize the problem of sin and therefore not willing to accept the solution of forgiveness.

But now, getting back to this man’s problem, perhaps he was distressed that, because of his sin, he would not be healed. I can say that Jesus taught in John 9 that sickness or accidents which cause pain and suffering are not always due directly to personal sin (cf. Luke 13:1-5 & the case of Job). But perhaps in this man’s case it *was* due to some sin he had committed. Often, there is a relationship between a sinful lifestyle and disease or injury. When you sow sin, you reap the consequences (Gal. 6:7-8). So the paralytic not only suffered from the disease itself and the stigma and incapacitation that accompanied it, but also from an overwhelming sense that he was sinful and responsible for his illness. But whether this was the case, or whether he just *believed* this was the case, what this man needed most was an assurance that his sins had been forgiven. For without that, he would have a hard time believing that he could be healed. MacArthur even states, “I believe without any doubt that the paralytic came to Jesus primarily because of his sin, not his sickness.”

How can you know that I am on target regarding this man’s spiritual need? Notice what Jesus said in v.5, “Son, your sins are forgiven you.” The Lord knows the heart. And He knew what this man needed. In a wonderful way, the Lord comforted and encouraged one who was fearfully conscious of his sickness and sin. If Jesus had said or done nothing else, that should have been enough to make the man joyful. David wrote, “Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (Psalm 32:1). Jesus therefore spoke to the conscience before He touched the bodily ailment, and met the sufferer’s deepest need first. He thus proclaimed that the cleansing of the soul was even more important than the healing of the body.

We have the same need for forgiveness today. What you need more than anything else is a consciousness that you are right with God, that all of your sins have been forgiven. Guilt will gnaw away at your inner strength. I would fear death if I lacked an assurance that my sins were forgiven. There’s plenty to fear if you come before God as a sinner without repentance. Someone has said, “If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. But since our greatest need was forgiveness, God sent us a Savior.” [Illus. # C-73].

Today people spend so much time, money and effort on their bodies, all the while not considering their spiritual condition. The secular media says that evangelicals put too much emphasis on the spiritual to the neglect of the physical. But though we are not to neglect the physical and social needs of people, it is right to put most of our efforts in correcting the spiritual

diseases of man.

## II. HOW OUR NEEDS CAN BE MET

How could his needs be met? For example, how can *we* be forgiven of our sins? Many seem to think that you can be forgiven by “making up” for your wrong doings. That’s what we do in human relationships. When a friend or spouse is mad at us, we try to win their favor back with gifts, words, or thoughtful deeds. And we think that is all we need to do with God. You sin on Saturday night and make it all OK by coming to church on Sunday morning, putting money in the offering plate, and going through prescribed religious rituals. Or you do some good works. Perhaps you reform and turn over a new leaf in life. That sometimes works in human relationships, but not with God. I can tell you, based on the authority of God’s Word, that forgiveness of sin from God does not come that way. You need to come to Jesus. He is the One who died for your sins, and you can be forgiven only by your faith in Him.

Yet this paralyzed man couldn’t get to Jesus on his own. Likewise, since people are sinners by nature, we are not able to come to Jesus on our own. The Bible says, “There is none who seeks after God” (Rom. 3:11). So first of all:

A. We Need Friends Who Will Bring Us to Jesus – Again, we read in v.3, “Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.” Mark tells us that there were 4 men who brought this man to Jesus. They were possibly friends or relatives of the man. This man would not have been forgiven and healed had it not been for these 4 friends or relatives who brought him to Jesus.

We must admire several characteristics of these men, qualities that ought to mark us as “fishers of men.” First of all,

1. We Need Friends Who Believe in Jesus - They believed that if they could just get this man to Jesus, He would heal them. So they brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus with great effort. Notice that Jesus “saw” their faith (v.5). Whose faith? It was the faith of these 4 men. How can you “see” faith? After all, faith in something that’s intangible. They could “see” their faith because true faith always shows itself in action, in works. If you truly believe the weatherman that it is going to be cold, you will dress accordingly. These men were demonstrating their faith in Jesus by going to so much trouble to secure healing.

Can Jesus “see” your faith today? 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. Wouldn’t it be exciting if most of our classrooms were packed with people? We only have 1 or 2 classes that come close to being packed. Yet 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 bring them in. If we are not trying to get people to Jesus, it says something about our lack of faith in Jesus to forgive sin and change lives.

2. We Need Friends Who Care about Us - They had heard that Jesus was in town and wanted to get the paralytic to Jesus. We ought to care enough about people to lead them to Jesus! But times have changed. There was a time when people would pray at church altars and weep in concern for lost loved ones. I don’t see much of that any more. We either don’t believe that people are really lost and on their way to a devil’s hell, or we just don’t care.

If you go to Fredericksburg Battlefield Park, you will see a statue dedicated to the memory Richard Rowland Kirkland. During the Battle of Fredericksburg on Dec. 13, 1862, Kirkland’s South Carolina unit formed behind the Stone Wall at the base of Marye’s Heights. The Union forces kept

attacking in wave after wave, but no one even reached the stone wall. After a day of severe fighting, the scene shifted from severe fighting to tremendous suffering.

Daylight on the 14th revealed a ghastly scene to the Confederates behind the Stone Wall. About 8,000 Union soldiers had been shot in front of the wall and many of them remained where they had fallen. As hours went by without food, water or medical treatment, their suffering increased. Nearby soldiers from both sides listened to the painful cries and pleas for help. While the suffering emotionally moved many, none dared face almost certain death to provide help. At some point in the day, Kirkland could no longer bear listening to the pleas, so he walked over to the home of Martha Stevens. He went upstairs and told General Joseph Kershaw, his brigade commander, that he would like to try and help the wounded Union soldiers. The surprised general at first refused the request, but he later relented. Kirkland gathered all the canteens he could carry and filled them at the nearby water well. Then, at extreme risk to himself, he ventured out to help the Federal soldiers. He carried water and warm clothing to the suffering Federal soldiers. Kershaw anxiously watched Kirkland for hours on his errand of Christ-like mercy. Later, Kirkland was called The Angel of Marye's Heights.

Even so, we need to be like Kirkland, and “rescue the perishing, care for the dying.” Souls are lost without Christ, and we need to bring to them the water of life.

3. We Need Friends Who Are Persistent - They arrived at the house where Jesus was teaching, and Luke 5:18 indicates that they kept trying to get into the house, but couldn't. The people were standing in the doorways. They were sitting packed in the windows. And no one would yield his or her spot.

Application: It reminds me of some church folks. They have their spot on a certain pew, and woe be to the visitor who takes *their* seat! They say, “We don't want all these new people coming in and taking our seats.” Don't you care they might be lost & in need of Jesus?

Since the crowd was too tightly packed, they looked for another way to get the man to Jesus. Even so, you are not going to get people to church & to Jesus without some effort and persistence. If you are going to get a friend to come with you to Sunday School and church, you will probably need to ask the same person several times, or you will need to ask several people until you get someone to agree. And then, you may need to do what these men did, and personally bring them to Jesus. And if you really get on fire for Jesus, and get more people to come than you can fit in your car, then let me know. We'll get you a driver for our church van, and the two of you can go pick them up!

4. We Need Friends Who Will Use Creative Means to Bring Us to Jesus - They were not easily swayed from their task. Now more than likely the house had an outside stairway to the roof, which was often used as a kind of deck for relaxation & conversation, and so the men carried their friend up the stairs to the roof. The roof was composed of beams laid from wall to wall, probably about 18 inches apart. The beams would be overlaid with tree branches, or something similar, and on top of that layer clay would be spread and allowed to dry. Then, as Luke states, there were tiles on top of that which could be walked on, and served as a floor. A railing of at least 3 feet surrounded the roof, thus providing a floor and added lounging area. The roof was slanted only slightly to allow rainwater to run off. So as Luke states, they removed a few tiles, and Mark tells us they dug through the layer of hard clay, and began to lower the man into the room below (describe this vividly). I'm sure the meeting came to a sudden halt. Peter might have gotten upset about the hole in his roof! But our Lord must have looked at them and smiled.

[Describe some creative ways to get people to come to church.]

Now all of this indicates another characteristic of these men:

B. We Must Exercise Our Own Faith – Eph. 2:8 & many other Scripture teach that we are

saved by faith alone. So I believe that in the inmost heart of the paralytic was a faith in Christ. How do I know? He may have enlisted the help of these 4 men. Furthermore, I question if the man would have let his friends lower him somewhat dangerously through the roof if he had not faith. Also, the evidence of the man's faith can be seen in the fact that Christ would not have pronounced forgiveness to the man if he did not have faith.

Furthermore, we see evidence of his faith after Christ commanded him to rise up and walk. If he did not have faith in the Word of Christ that his sins were forgiven, he would have not even tried to walk.

Of course, for you to be forgiven of all your sins, you will mostly likely need someone who cares enough about you to either bring you to church, or personally tell you about Jesus. Then, the Bible says that we are saved by faith in Jesus, and not by our works. So do you believe in Jesus? Have you put your faith in Jesus? Well, to help you make that decision, let see last of all:

### III. THE PROOF THAT CHRIST CAN MEET OUR NEEDS

I am calling upon you to put your faith in Jesus Christ. But I am not asking you to exercise blind faith. I want to give you evidence that Jesus is worthy of your trust. You see, faith is only as good as the object of your faith. For example, let's say you have a great financial need. If you do not come up with \$10,000 you are going to loose your house and your car. And suppose a caring person says to you, "I will give you the \$10,000 you need." Will you put your faith in that person and report to your family and the lenders that you will have the money by next Monday? Well, it depends on your faith in that person. But even if you do have faith in that person, your faith is only as good as that person's word, and that person's ability to come up with the money. Even so, only a great person is worthy of our faith to grant forgiveness of sin and a new life.

Now in vv.5 & 10 Jesus clearly claims the authority to forgive sin. We all need forgiveness. Does Jesus have the authority to forgive sin? Can you trust Him? Well the scribes and Pharisees rightly understood the implication of His claim. They said in v.7, "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus pronounced forgiveness, but by what right could He do that? Only God can forgive sin, since all sin is directed ultimately against God (Psa. 51:4). And Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions...." So Jesus needs to back up His claim by demonstrating that He is God's Son. This is one of the few occasions where Jesus performed a miracle in the face of unbelief to prove His deity. I see two proofs of His deity here:

A. He Demonstrates That He Is All-Knowing – Notice in v.8 that "Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves...." Had He not been God, He would not have been able to penetrate so deeply into their "secret" thoughts. Several times in the gospel accounts we see evidence of Jesus ability to know what people were thinking. In John 2:25 it says: "[Jesus]... had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man." This is an attribute of deity. 1 Chron. 28:9 says, "...for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts." So Jesus did what only God can do.

Since I'm not God, I don't know what is going through your mind right now. You may be thinking about what you are going to do after the service is over. You might even be listening to me! But I don't know for sure that you are!

B. He Demonstrates That He Is All-Powerful - In response to them, He asked a penetrating question in v.9, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?" If you consider His question from the perspective of doing,

then both are equally impossible. Only God could do either. From the perspective of “saying”, it is easier to *say*, “Your sins are forgiven you” than “rise and walk.” Why? It is because the latter may be put to an immediate and obvious test. But the onlooker does not know whether sins are forgiven or not. Jesus will say in essence, “I will do the visible impossibility, and then I leave you to judge whether I can do the invisible one or not.” But their own theology told them that the One who could heal diseases could forgive sin and vice versa.

Imagine the scene. The paralytic’s four friends were looking down through the big hole in the roof, the people were listening, and the scribes and Pharisees were unable to respond. Then Jesus said in v.11, “I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” He spoke the Word and notice what happened. In v.12 Mark reports, “Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all...” He got up, rolled up his bed, and walked! When he got outside, you can image the excitement when he met his four buddies running & tripping down the stairs! What power they had experienced! Not only did Jesus have the power to heal that man’s disease, He had the power to forgive sin - and still does.

What I have just read to you is the eyewitness account recorded by 3 different gospel writers. This really happened. And if Jesus manifested God’s omniscience, & God’s omnipotence, then you can be sure that He can indeed forgive sin, change your life, and give you eternal life.

The spoken word was not enough to convince men that Christ can forgive sin. A dramatically changed life was necessary. The world takes its notions of Christianity, and its belief in the power of Christianity, a great deal more from you than it does from preachers. You are the Bibles that most men read. Is personal forgiveness evident in your life by an evident sense of peace and joy?

There is one other important basis for Jesus being able to forgive sin. He alone died on the cross for the sins of others. Now God can justly forgive sin, for our sin has been paid for. So in light of His healing power, and in light of His sacrificial death for your sin:

#### IV. WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?

Well let’s see how the people in the story responded. After this great miracle it says in the last of v.12, “so that all<sup>3</sup> were amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this!’” I believe there were 3 responses that can still take place today:

A. Astonishment - All 3 Synoptic Gospels report how jubilantly the onlookers reacted to what they had just now witnessed. “They were all amazed” literally speaks of being beside yourself, but here it speaks of astonishment, amazement. Oh, I hope I never loose the wonder of Jesus.

Application: Has God done such a work in your life that people were astonished? Wouldn’t it be great if God would do such a work in our church that people would be astonished?

B. Unbelief – While the Pharisees & Scribes probably were amazed along with everyone else, some of them almost certainly refused to believe in Christ, regardless of the facts. What an opportunity they missed when they came to the meeting with a critical spirit instead of with a repentant heart!

Could there be some here today who arrived with a critical, unbelieving heart? When I first

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<sup>3</sup> The question is, “Who does ‘all’ and ‘they’ refer to here?” Hendriksen states, “This ‘all’ is very general, and does not mean that the scornful and faultfinding scribes suddenly experienced a genuine change of heart and mind.” Certainly all, including the scribes and Pharisees were seized with amazement, but few, if any of them, glorified God.

started going to a Baptist church, that's the way I was. But by the grace of God, He changed by heart & attitude. Don't let a critical spirit cause you to miss the opportunity to be forgiven of your sins.

However, many responded with:

C. Belief in Christ to the Glory of God - This miracle should have led everyone past the point of amazement to faith in Christ. For the Pharisees taught that a man could not be healed until he is forgiven. So His healing proved His forgiveness! The complaints of the Pharisees had recoiled on them and left them speechless.

Application: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Who in human history has done what Jesus did?

I believe we need to learn a lesson about faith from the paralyzed man. Christ commanded him to walk, and he trusted Christ to help him obey His command. The man believed that He who had so ordered would also enable him to obey the order. That is an important lesson for us. Christ does not give you a command to do the impossible without also giving you the power to accomplish the command. Christ commands you to repent, believe in Him, & be saved. Step out & trust in Him to give you the strength to obey His voice today! You may say, "I can't give up my old life. I don't think I can live the Christian life. I don't want to be a hypocrite." But Christ says, "You must", and with His command He will give the ability to obey His command if you will only trust Him.

Conclusion: Here we see that Jesus Christ is the only One who can forgive your sins. Won't you believe in Him today? And Jesus says, "Follow Me." One of the first ways you can follow Jesus is by walking down this church isle and express your willingness to make a confession of faith in Jesus, and follow Him in baptism. Do it today!

Sources: Virtus E. Gideon, *Luke: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978); John MacArthur, Jr., *The Power of Jesus: Study Notes on Matthew 8:1-9:8, 18-35* (Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications, 1984); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 7 & 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Charles H. Spurgeon, *12 Sermons on Repentance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973 reprint), 79 [25G.51]; Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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