

Forgives  
March 10, 2019  
Allen Power

Mark 2:1-12

Opening: If you watch the news much you sometimes hear it said that someone “walked it back.” **What does it mean?** We live in a time where opinions are formed based on headlines and sound bites; most people don’t dig for the facts. It’s a time when people make claims with no proof or authority.

In the first twelve verses of Mark chapter two Jesus uses divine physical healing to make a bigger statement about His authority, identity, and divinity. The story is recorded in Matthew, Luke, and Mark: “...so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority...to forgive sins.” (2:10)

The Big Idea: If you think miracles are amazing, just wait until you’ve experienced total forgiveness for all your sins.

- The place is Capernaum, a fishing industry “hub” on the shores of Galilee. It was also Jesus’ adopted home base when He began his ministry.
- His miracles and strong teaching stirred things up in Capernaum so Jesus shifted to the outlying areas for things to calm down. Now He’s back.
- Jesus is staying in a home that likely belonged to Simon or Andrew.
- In that culture the rules of hospitality were such that if you were home anyone could drop by or barge in. When word spread that Jesus was back the house became a mob scene made up of the curious, the suspicious, and a few sincere seekers. Jesus had begun to teach them.
- Verse three says, “*And they came...*” let’s call them the “four faithful friends.” They were carrying a paralyzed man on a pallet.
- They tried the front door, the back door, the open windows – nothing!

- *“Don’t you people see we’re carrying a man who needs healing?”*
- The curious crowd doesn’t care. *“We got here first!”*
- In that time and place houses were typically one-story dwellings with a roof made of wooden beams, slats, and a combination of mud, thatch, and perhaps some tiles of baked earth. Often there was an exterior stairway so the roof could be used for outdoor sleeping or praying.
- The “four faithful friends” refused to be diverted from their mission. In fact they come up with a plan like “Mission Impossible.” While Jesus is teaching they are dismantling the roof. The word means “unroof.”<sup>i</sup>
- Imagine the scene in the crowded house. Jesus is teaching and debris begins to fall from above. Then down comes a man on a pallet lowered by ropes. There’s no indication that Jesus was upset or startled.

Mark 2:5 (ESV) <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

- Other than Jesus, none of the “players” in this story speak out loud, but the four friends must have been thinking: *“With all due respect rabbi, he needs his legs healed. What does this have to do with forgiveness?”*
- “In that culture there was “widespread belief...that physical maladies were a result of sin. It naturally followed in their thinking that restoration depended upon forgiveness.”<sup>ii</sup> Even if some in the crowd made that connection, what Jesus said had bigger implications.

<sup>6</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,

- Jesus’ miracles and teaching had attracted the scrutiny of the religious establishment. They were there looking to condemn Him for heresy.

<sup>7</sup> “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup> And immediately Jesus, perceiving in

his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— <sup>11</sup> “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” <sup>12</sup> And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!”

- What can we learn from the “players” in this little one act drama? We have the “callous and curious crowd”, the “four faithful friends,” the “man on the mat,” the “scandalized scribes,” and God’s Son in the middle of it all.
- **First, what are your impressions of the crowd? How would you describe them?**
- Throughout Jesus’ ministry on earth it appears that most of the crowds were just there for the show and for the miracles.

John MacArthur: *“Crowds were no measure of ministry success. Crowds were no measure of spiritual success. Never does Mark say the crowds were coming to Jesus in repentance and faith... They’re spiritually passive...spiritually indifferent...spiritually uncommitted. They want the healing...they want the food. But they really are not seeking anything spiritual from Jesus in general.”<sup>iii</sup>*

- When things got tough, John 6:66 (ESV) tells us: After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.
- Sadly, today many are the “fans” we talked about in Mark 1. Just there for the show and for the prizes (...you get a miracle, and you get a miracle!)
- What about the “four faithful friends?” **How would you describe them? What lesson from these four friends can we apply to our lives today?**

Warren Wiersbe: *“We must admire several characteristics of these men...they were deeply concerned about their friend and wanted to see him helped. They had the faith to believe that Jesus could and*

*would meet his need. They did not simply “pray about it,” but they put some feet to their prayers; and they did not permit the difficult circumstances to discourage them. They worked together and dared to do something different, and Jesus rewarded their efforts. How easy it would have been for them to say, “Well, there is no sense trying to get to Jesus today! Maybe we can come back tomorrow.”<sup>iv</sup>*

- We should be like the “four faithful friends” would stop at nothing to get this man to Jesus who has the power to heal everyone inside and out.
- What about the “man on the mat,” the paralytic? He’s in the middle of the story but he never speaks. However, Jesus’ response to him says a lot.
- Verse five: “...when Jesus saw their faith.” Whose faith? Some scholars believe it refers to the faith of the four friends; their faith that Jesus had the ability to heal. That’s no different than us trusting the doctor to treat us.
- Other scholars believe Jesus saw the faith of all five men.
- I would contend that the faith of the “man on the mat” was more than just trusting in Jesus’ reputation for healing. I base that on Mark 1:15: <sup>15</sup> and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” Jesus would not have said, “Son, your sins are forgiven” unless the “man on the mat” in his heart had repented.
- MacArthur: *“This is not just healing, this is salvation. Jesus knew what he really wanted. He wanted healing, sure. But far more than that, he wanted forgiveness.”<sup>v</sup>*
- Then we have the “scandalized scribes.” What can we learn from them?
- First, **what was their agenda, their motivation in being there? What kind of attitude or spirit did they seem to have?**
- When confronted with the truth of who Jesus is, some people fold their arms and refuse to give up their self-sufficient, ego driven beliefs.
- Chuck Swindoll writes of the scribes: *“The earliest signs of a critical spirit are hidden and unspoken. This malignancy begins deep down in the hidden recesses of the heart, where it grows unnoticed. Unless it is treated like a cancer—aggressively*

*hunted and eradicated—a critical spirit becomes deadly. As the proverb urges, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23).<sup>vii</sup>*

- Sadly, even followers of Christ can become callous or legalistic and miss the point of who Jesus is and what He teaches.
- What about Jesus? What was His real purpose in this episode beyond compassion for the “man on the mat?” Back to the scribes for a moment.
- **Were the scribes theologically correct in saying, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” What did they get wrong?**
- Their theology was sound but they missed the point. Only God can forgive sins --- that’s what Jesus was telling them. He IS God (Son of man.)
- Jesus’ real purpose is spelled out by his words in verse ten:  
<sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”
- Jesus had been healing and preaching, now He really shook things up by announcing that He has the authority of God because He is God’s Son.
- This would set in motion the animosity that would lead to His crucifixion.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Psalm 103:2–3 (ESV) says <sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, <sup>3</sup> who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
- Wiersbe writes: *“Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results.”<sup>viii</sup>*
- Hopefully we’re nothing like the “callous and curious crowd.” If we’ve been changed by Jesus through regeneration, we should have compassion for those in need and open up the way to the Savior.
- We also need to be on guard for the bitter, critical spirit of the self-righteous scribes. Even followers of Christ can become callous or legalistic and miss the point of who Jesus is and what He teaches.

- Instead of finding fault, the scribes should have been praising God.
- We could pray that we WOULD be like the “four faithful friends.”
- Friends who will stop at nothing to get people to Jesus because He has the power to heal everyone inside and out.
- The only way to enjoy what Jesus offers is to be like the “man on the mat” who sensed the truth of who Jesus is, repented in faith, and trusted Him.
- As we said: If you think miracles are amazing, just wait until you’ve experienced total forgiveness for all your sins.

---

<sup>i</sup> **648.** ἀποστεγάζω *apostegazō*; from 575 and στεγάζω *stegazō* (to cover, roof a building); to unroof:—removed(1).<sup>i</sup>

<sup>ii</sup> Leavell, L. P. (1972). [Mark](#). In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The teacher's Bible commentary* (p. 619). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/41-8/jesus-authority-to-forgive-sin>

<sup>iv</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 115). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>v</sup> *ibid*

<sup>vi</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. *Insights on Mark* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 2) (p. 61). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [The Bible exposition commentary](#) (Vol. 1, p. 115). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.