

Mark: Chapter 2
Jesus the Great Physician

Mark 2:1-12 [2:1] *And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. [2] And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. [3] And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. [4] And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. [5] And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." [6] Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, [7] "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" [8] 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? [9] Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? [10] But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—[11] "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." [12] 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!"*

The power of Jesus to forgive and to heal.

Jesus teaches and is interrupted.

Mark 1:28 says that after a dramatic rescue of a demon-possessed man, *immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.* At this point in His ministry, Jesus attracted crowds wherever He went.

And He preached the word to them: Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus **preached**, yet he still emphasized the preaching ministry of Jesus as he did in Mark 1:28 and Mark 1:38-39. Jesus came to preach.

Everywhere he went people besieged him with requests for healing and the casting out of demons, so that he was unable to do what he had come to do primarily, which was to preach the Word.

Because of the crowded room, the friends of the paralyzed man had to lower him down through the roof. This was an unusual way to interrupt a sermon.

The roof was usually accessible by means of an outside stairway and was made of thatch, dirt or tile laid over beams. It could be taken apart, and the friends of the paralyzed man lowered their friend down to Jesus.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed

What determination. These are good friends to do all of this. They counted on Jesus healing their friend, because it would be a lot harder to bring him back up through the roof than lowering him down. They counted on him *walking* out of the room.

Jesus forgives the sins of the paralyzed man.

"Son, your sins are forgiven"

Jesus looked up at the four men struggling with crude ropes tied to each corner of the stretcher with their paralyzed friend on it. He looked at them and **saw their faith**. Their faith could be *seen*. Their bold, determined action to bring their friend to Jesus proved they had real faith.

"Son, your sins are forgiven"

We can imagine how the friends on the roof felt. They went to a lot of trouble to see their friend healed of his paralysis, and now the teacher only wants to **forgive his sins**.

Jesus knew what the man's *real* need was and what his *greatest* need was. What good was it if the man had two whole legs and walked right into hell with them. Whenever there is a problem, almost always, *sin* is the bigger problem. Jesus got right to the problem.

Jesus did not mean that the paralyzed man was especially sinful or that his paralysis was directly caused by sin. Instead, He addressed the man's greatest need and the common root of all pain and suffering - **our sinful condition**.

"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." W. Wiersbe

Who can forgive sins but God alone? The scribes used the right kind of logic. They correctly believed that only God could forgive sins, and they are even correct for examining this new teacher. Their error was in refusing to see who Jesus is: God the Son, who has the **authority to forgive sins**.

During the life of Christ the same situation was to re-appear. If Jesus is not divine, then he was most definitely a blasphemer. There is no other option.

Jesus demonstrates His authority to forgive sins and His power to heal disease.

In a powerful moment, these scribes knew Jesus could read their evil hearts. This should have helped persuade them that Jesus really was God, having power to forgive sins.

Which is easier

For men, both real forgiveness and the power to heal are impossible, but for God, both are easy. It is a logical assumption that if Jesus has the power to heal the man's disease, He also has the authority to forgive his sins.

In a way, it was "harder" to heal the man than to forgive his sins, because forgiveness is invisible - no one could verify at that moment the man was forgiven before God. Yet it could be instantly verified whether or not the man could walk. Jesus is willing to put Himself to the test.

Jesus also met the scribes on their own turf. The Rabbis had a saying, "There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him" . . . to the Jews a sick man was a man with whom God was angry.

The Son of Man: Jesus often referred to Himself with this title. The idea is not of "perfect man" or "ideal man" or "common man," but a reference to Daniel 7:13-14, where the coming King of Glory, coming to judge the world, has the title *Son of Man*.

Jesus used this title often because in His day, it was a Messianic title free from political and nationalistic sentiment. Jesus could have more commonly referred to Himself as "King" or "Christ," but those titles, in the ears of His audience, sounded like the One Who Will Defeat the Romans. **Son of Man** was Jesus' favorite term for himself, a claim to be the Messiah in terms that could **not easily be attacked**.

Immediately he arose: Imagine the tension in this scene. The scribes were tense because Jesus challenged them and said He would demonstrate He was the Son of God. The paralyzed man was tense because he wondered if Jesus really would heal him. The crowd was tense because they sensed the tension of everyone else. The owner of the house was tense because he wondered how much it would cost to repair his roof. And the four friends were tense because they were getting tired by now. The only one *not* tense was Jesus because He had perfect peace when He said, "**arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.**" The man was **immediately** healed. The *power* of Jesus to heal and the *authority* to forgive sins were **immediately** vindicated.

Imagine if Jesus had failed. His ministry would be shattered. The crowd would slowly leave the house. The scribes would smile and say, "He can't heal *or* forgive." The four men would struggle to pull up the paralyzed man who looked more dejected and embarrassed than ever. The homeowner would look at his roof and think it was all for nothing.

But Jesus did not and could not fail because all He needed to heal this man was *His word*. There is wonderful healing power in the word of Jesus, in the promises of Jesus, for those who *come to Him in faith*. This man came to Jesus in faith, even if it was the **borrowed faith of his friends**.

"**We never saw anything like this!**" The people were **amazed** to see the power of God in action.

"The experts in the law were hoist with their own petard. **On their own stated beliefs the man could not be cured, unless he was forgiven.** He *was* cured, therefore he *was* forgiven. Therefore Jesus' claim to forgive sin *must* be true." (Barclay)

The story of Matthew

Mark 2:13 – 17 [13] *He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. [14] And as he passed by, he saw **Levi the son of Alphaeus** sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "**Follow me.**" And **he rose and followed him.***

[15] *And as he reclined at table in his house, **many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.** [16] And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, **said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"** [17] And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "**Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.**"*

Levi / Matthew was a tax collector

Tax collectors received their position by paying for it. It was like a franchise. They were like Jewish Nazi collaborators. Selling out their own people for money.

The Romans govt would assign a territory to the highest bidder. Then the Romans put a total yearly amount that needed to be collected. Anything over that amount was payment for the tax collector.

While Matthew was in collusion with the Romans, the Romans hated him because he was just a necessary evil. And his own people, the Jews, hated him as well because he was a traitor to their race and their religion. The Jews basically excommunicated the tax collectors and excluded them from their society in every way including their faith. Matthew had no one and nothing... but his money.

Jesus said "Follow Me": We like to get our affairs in order first don't we. We like to get well before we go to Jesus.

Mark 2:18-22 [18] *Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, **but your disciples do not fast?"** [19] And Jesus said to them, "**Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. [20] The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. [21] No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. [22] And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins.**"*

Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast? The Pharisees were well known for fasting twice a week (Luke 18:12). It made sense for the disciples of John to fast because his ministry stressed repentance. Yet Jesus and His disciples did not have the same emphasis on fasting as these other spiritual men.

God is not against fasting... He is *for* fasting: But fasting has its time and place in the Christian life.

Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The Jews would know what Jesus is talking about here. During the weeklong wedding celebration, rabbis declared that *joy* was more important than observing *religious rituals*.

In the days of Jesus some Rabbis declared that if the observance of any law came in the way of having a good time during a wedding, you didn't have to keep the law. You could just go and have a good time. Marriage feasts were times of extraordinary festivity.

Jesus' message was pretty bold: "I'm not like the Pharisees or John the Baptist. I am the Messiah, the bridegroom to the people of God. Wherever I am, it is appropriate to have the joy we associate with weddings."

The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.: Jesus knew His physical, immediate presence would not always be with the disciples. When He was physically gone, it would be more appropriate to fast.

No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment:

The same principle was true for wineskins. A wineskin expanded under the pressure of fermentation. So if new and unfermented wine was put in an old and brittle wineskin, it was sure to burst.

We can't fit Jesus' new life into the old forms. Jesus traded fasting for feasting; sackcloth and ashes for a robe of righteousness; a spirit of heaviness for a garment of praise; mourning for joy; and law for grace.

Jesus came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old. This is what salvation is all about. In doing this, Jesus doesn't destroy the old (the law), but He fulfills it, just as an acorn is fulfilled when it grows into an oak tree. There is a sense in which the acorn is gone, but its purpose is fulfilled in greatness.

Mark 2:23-27 [23] One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples **began to pluck heads of grain.** [24] And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is **not lawful on the Sabbath?**" [25] And he said to them, "**Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: [26] how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?**" [27] And he said to them, "**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. [28] So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.**"

Have you never read what David did: In referring to David's use of the "holy bread" in 1 Samuel 21:1-6, Jesus showed an important principle - human need is more important than religious ritual. The Sabbath was meant to serve man (the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath).

This is exactly what many people, steeped in tradition, cannot accept: that what God really wants is mercy before sacrifice (Hosea 6:6); that love to others is more important than religious rituals (Isaiah 58:1-9); that the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.

The second principle was even more dramatic. Jesus declared that He was the Lord of the Sabbath. If He, the very Lord of the Sabbath, was not offended by His disciple's actions, then these sideline critics should not have been offended either.

Summary:

People go to Jesus to have them fix their life. To put a patch on the problem. But Jesus doesn't want to fix their problems, He wants to change everything. He wants to bring you whole new life. He won't just redeem your problem, He redeems everything.

Jesus is called the Great Physician because He does just that, He heals everything about you. But a physician can't help you if you don't seek them out. You've got to receive treatment.

In this chapter we've seen Jesus:

Heal the paralyzed man, Call a most sinful tax collector to follow Him, Bring Joy to His followers in the Wedding Feast, and proclaim His Lordship of the Sabbath.

Jesus wants everything from you so He can change everything about you. You are loved by this amazing friend of sinners.

