

to my Jan 30, 72 PM WXP

OCT. 23, 60 P.M (P)

## BARRIERS TO BLESSINGS

Mark 2  
Verse 4

### INTRODUCTION:

A few days before the occurrence of what we want to talk about tonight -- Jesus had healed almost all the people in Capernaum. The whole city on that occasion had been gathered together - at the house where he lodged to witness the fruits of his power.

He had crowds which were over whelming and Jesus was intent on preaching and teaching. And the house was filled - there was not room for so much - it was a vast company.

The story is considered one of the most charming.

Why were people so interested in Jesus? There were several reasons. First, a leper came and when Jesus saw him, he was moved with compassion. Mark 1:41. Throughout his ministry he was concerned with the needs of people.

He loved people and never once did Jesus turn any person back or away.

When he spoke, people knew that he was trying to help them. And as people heard him, they realized that here was a person who was different.

He was not trying to get something out of them - but he was offering them something. And that is exactly the expression of Joseph Scriven - who had marriage plans, to marry a young lady who was drown. He was very bitter

after that. But soon he wrote these lines.

↑  
What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer.

People loved Jesus and they still do - because Jesus cares.

The crowds came to hear Jesus because he had something important to say. He spoke in a language that they understand. The common people heard him - because he was not trying to impress them. But to give them a great offer. Once he said to his Disciples, would ye also go away. And Peter replied, Lord, to whom shall we go? And that answer still holds today.

Regardless of the barriers that we have, we would still do well to seek Jesus.

President Wale, of Chestnut College, put the question in a simple form. What is Christianity? What is the distinctive thing which it has to proclaim to men. He answers his own question - "The forgiveness of sins." The answer was right. We are not surprised to read that the people crowded here and we are not surprised that people everywhere still seek to find Jesus. He saw their needs, he knew what to do, and he did not refuse to help them.

I have divided this story into three or four swords that may help us to remember it.

↑  
The Diseased Man - V. 3

The Devoted Friends - V. 3

The Divine Power - V. 4

The Devil's Opposition - V. 8

The Destiny Confirmed - V. 12.

I. THE DISEASED MAN - V. 3

This was a great barrier. A man who had the palsy. Now he had either been overlooked at former healings that Jesus had performed in the town, or he had no one possibly to bring him near enough to Jesus to speak to him. Or it could have been, that he had this disease to lay hold of his body after Jesus had visited the place before.

As we look at him, we see him suffering from a terrible physical disability. It is described as the Palsy. He could not walk. It was a horrible thing. As you know, it is the loss of muscular control. Hands shake and the whole body has been reduced to trembling and helplessness. A person of this description cannot feed himself, cannot dress. I am told that palsy does not affect the mind - he was alert, but he was helpless to control his body.

It is evident that this man had been suffering this disability as a result of moral decay. I think we are absolutely justified in believing that he was conscious of the reason for his condition. The kind of sickness renders one unfit for employment and sin had not only sickened his soul - but it had hindered his body and caused him to be helpless.

He had no power for action. We know that hearing may leave, taste, smell, and touch - all about that individual except his breath. He could swallow. He could speak, perhaps. And there was no wonder that this man

took such drastic measures to find a cure. The fact that Jesus had healed many people had reached his ears.

This is a familiar story to us as we think of people that are bound by all sorts of sins. And they need some drastic measures to find a cure.

## II. THE DEVOTED FRIENDS - V. 3

The man had to be carried to the house where Jesus was. And here was a helpless person on a blanket. Whether they carried him a few blocks or from outside the village - it was a considerable undertaking. The house was completely occupied. The hallways, the stairway.

And someone begins to tear away part of the roof. And soon a bed is lowered from the roof - down into the room. That to me, is the thrilling part of this story. The news had gotten around that Jesus was in town. They could not get to the presence of Jesus in the usual manner. And except this man be born on his pallet - these men mount the roof - break up the tile or the roof, and let him down in the presence of a surprised audience. And of course, cutting the hole in the roof - can you imagine that with the dust falling down on the platform, on a Sunday morning - the dust and the rubble upon the Scribes. And they fuss and grumble about the embarrassment. And about the inconvenience.

Here is one man in town who could not go to the meeting because he was paralyzed. Most of the people forgot him. But there were four men who didn't forget. And they took the time and the effort to go and to get this man - and bring him to Jesus. We do not even have the names of these four men listed.

But I am sure that we could immediately render a decision that these were kind people. They wanted to see Jesus themselves. They wanted somebody else to see Jesus. That could not have been otherwise.

The typical reaction of Christians outside the meeting house that day would have been well - we are relieved. The place is jammed. We may try again next week. You know how it is at the first sign of rain on Sunday morning. They beat a quick retreat - in a confession that they really don't care. But these men defied the door and tore up the roof top and lowered their burden. And that was faith. And that was a move in the right direction.

My how Jesus must have reacted to this interruption to his sermon. The bulletins had been printed - the ushers could have been signaled - and told to go and tell those (boys) to come down off the roof. They are supposed to use the door. Somehow Jesus was interested in this man as he dropped right down in his lap. And God had decided that here was a time that something needed to happen. As I think about the great company of consecrated people who have helped to build our church - the teachers, the Sunday School, the choir members, the workers, the parents - in every community there are those who are consecrated in diligent work.

There are those in your community who would like to go to church but have no way. There are vast numbers of people who go to church meetings week after week with empty seats in their cars. That is the most effective way to win somebody to Christ. Course we can pray - but these friends were willing to bring this paralyzed man into the presence of Jesus.

It required a little extra time to go get this friend and they arrived a

little late at the house because the crowd had already gathered. And most people would have said, well - it is no use and they would have turned back. But these people would not let this barrier block them from a blessing.

And I might say if Jesus had not been the right kind of a preacher - he would have resented the disturbance. But he realized that people were more important than a sermon. And bringing even a sick man, or a child, to preaching service was worthwhile.

Every parent should take this - because when a child is two or three years of age - they ought to begin getting him into the worship services. Some people have an idea that a child ought to be 10 years old before he goes to worship service. No so with Jesus.

When I think about these four men bringing this sick and helpless one to Jesus, it shows to me what effort can do. One man might have said, I can do nothing for him. But the four could say - we can carry him. Souls perish because of neglect and lack of united effort on the part of people.

Jesus knew that the four friends had faith - they believed that Jesus could and was willing to heal this poor man. And like an instant, picture - an empty pitcher brought to the fountain, he filled it. They carried the individual to the fire where he could be warmed.

I wonder this week, if the director or superintendent in a Sunday School Department, if the teacher, if the president of the class, if the secretary of the class - there are four people. And if those four people would go out to some lost person - man or woman, boy or girl, in this city or community - and tell him or her that they would like to bring them to Jesus. Then they bring

that person next Sunday. And discover that the Lord offers forgiveness for that person's sins. What would happen. Do you teachers, do you officers in the Sunday School see how that you can make your faith work. Here are four men - four individuals, unnamed, who are here and had that faith.

Now it took conviction. These men first had to feel convicted in their hearts that here was a man who needed God. And they knew that outside of Christ, this man would never get helped. How many church workers today are not even sure that they are Christians. And who are not even certain that people are lost without Christ. They have no conviction about this great need.

These men had compassion. They felt and were controlled by a feeling in their hearts that they ought to be missionaries.

These four men had what I call co-operation. Now there are a lot of people today who object to the church as an institution. They object to organization. Here were four men who did not object. But in Christian co-operation, they brought this man. And not much would have been done for this man had there not been this co-operation. These believers were working together. They had pooled their resources. Very seldom is a person brought to Jesus Christ by one person. An alcoholic, a drug addict, whatever he is - it takes a lot of forces working together so that God's power can work. It takes the prayers of some, the gifts of others, the personal work of many. Missionaries co-operate on the field. No matter how much one man may have desired to carry this sick man - he couldn't do it. It took four men - one at each corner of the bed. And they stuck to it and they found the place crowded. These four men - if they had been like some church workers - would have said, well, we have done our part - now let the people on the inside do their part. They didn't talk that way. They had undertaken a job and they would let nothing interfere. No barrier. They would climb

on the roof. They were resourceful men. They worked together as a great team.

I wonder how it would be if we would join hands and work in the same manner.

It takes four to carry a soul out of darkness of sin and into the salvation of light. Here they are.

~~First~~, there is the love of the Father.

~~Second~~, there is the blood of Christ, the Son of God.

~~Third~~, there is the power of the Holy Spirit.

~~Fourth~~, there is the faith of the <sup>Sinner</sup> Christian.

The first three are mighty but I have often wondered about the last. The faith must be there - whether it is little or great - it takes all four.

I would like to challenge you that you would expand your faith and do just like this in the name of Christ to bring men in. They uncovered the roof. They did not give up because there was a crowd.

And they did not wait for a more convenient season to call upon the people. And their method of taking a man to Christ caused a great deal of dust and confusion. This brought some criticism - but the Lord never finds

fault about the way we come - if we only come believing.

### III. DIVINE POWER - V. 5

We shall see here as in V. 8 - divine power in action. Now this broke down all the barriers and brought blessings.

When the sick man came to rest at Jesus' feet - Jesus said the most surprising thing in the world to him. "Thy sins be forgiven thee".

Had Jesus missed the point entirely. Was Jesus not sensitive to the man's need for healing.

No. Jesus felt that first things first - just like a doctor. He comes to treat you, you think, for a problem. It may be something else more important. So this man first of all was sin sick. And his soul had to come first. This is the hardest part of the story for most people to believe. This is a big barrier for people today. It is not that Jesus healed a palsied man. It is that sin is worse than palsy. And this is the thing that people seem to think is impossible today. The carefree people who spend their Sundays on the beach and others under the power of sin, in heartbreaking tragedy after tragedy in their hearts - fail to see that there is something important. A lot of people cannot see why we should send a missionary to happy natives. And Jesus, not only cleansed this man of sin - but he cleansed him of disease.

Jesus looked at the man let down before him and saw his paralyzed legs. And he might have said, arise, take up your bed, and go on your way. But he

looked deeper to find out the man's cause of sickness. There are few details given us but it is not hard for us to understand it. The case of this man - there was a shameful guilt of conscience.

I read once the statement of a doctor. It said that many of his patients did not need his drugs or medicine - or even an operation. They needed the forgiveness of God.

Jesus was the greatest physician of all time and he saw this need in this man. This needed first his attention and he said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee". Now that was the real miracle. Even if the man's body had remained crippled. His soul was released, and there was power.

Later Jesus did heal the man's legs. But Jesus does not always do that when we come to him through faith. He does not always heal our bodies but he will always meet the need of the soul. Sometimes he lifts the burden and sometimes, he does not lift the trouble we have physically - but he will give us strength to bear the burden whatever it is.

Now there are two or three things to notice here.

First, Son, be of good cheer.

Second, Thy sins are forgiven.

Third, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.

Now between the second and third of these words, spoken to him, Jesus had something to say to his critics.

Be of good cheer - this speaks of tenderness. It may be rendered child - it is the word of the virgin mother used to Jesus long ago. This, in itself, reveals that here is a man physically and morally helpless and hopeless. Filled with fear and Christ's words - first, were as words to a child - they were tender words. He looked into his eyes, into his consciousness of sin and said, be of good cheer. Now if we get the meaning of this - it will give us a great deal of courage.

The real source of the idea is not lost. Cheer up. To say to a man in physical weakness and moral decay - cheer up and be of good courage. It may not mean a whole lot. But it describes a form of courage that is a real one which a man may exercise. Not because he fears the master - but because here is one who can dissolve his fear.

Matthew Henry said that he once remembered when he was a boy, the fear of dark rooms. One day his father asked him to go into a room where there was no light and bring him something. Now he said, I was brought up in a day that when my Father told me to do something, I was expected to do it. Therefore I was frightened. Half out of my wits with the darkness, and as I went in, I whistled. Perhaps this would have passed entirely from my memory - for the fact, I heard my father say to my mother - while I was in the midst of the darkness, that boy has proven his courage. Listen, he is whistling. Now that was a simple thing - but it is a greater thing to listen to Jesus. When he says to a man, to be not afraid - I am going to vanish your fears. That man's conscience immediately was blessed. Here he was - paralyzed. Shaking every part of his body. Gripped with fear. And Jesus, in effect, said there is nothing to be afraid of.

You can imagine this man saying in his heart - there is nothing to be afraid

of - I am ruined. I am sinful. My conscience tells me I am a sinner. And yet Jesus says, be of good courage. That my friends is divine power. He vanished the man's fears. And he did it with those words - Thy sins are forgiven thee. It was a simple sentence but full of significance.

Our Lord used the plural number of sins. Referring to all the failures, all the short comings, all the moral laxities that this man had.

These, said our Lord to him, are forgiven. By a literal translation we might render it - thy sins are sent forth. I have dismissed your sins and they have departed from you.

#### IV. THE DEVIL'S OPPOSITION - V. 8

When Jesus had finished speaking to this man - his critics - those who were sitting by looking on said, who can forgive sins - but God only. And they began to reason.

These critics were not so unreasonable as some modern ones who profess Christianity - and yet exclude the supernatural from the work and from the person of Jesus Christ.

But what he simply meant - there layed the whole question. Was he stepping out on divine natural power, alone? And yet they were in their hearts pre-judging and foreclosing the whole thing. So Jesus answered them and took up their unspoken thoughts. And he gives them in so many words the truth as to what they are thinking about.

A little while before it is simply recorded that he saw the faith of the man sick with the palsy with his four friends. That was visible proof. He employed his spirit with his heart searching power. Now he turns and gives them the thought of their hearts.

Here is a man who could read their thoughts while they were reasoning in their hearts - the Lord knew what they were thinking. All things are naked to his eye. Heb. 4:13.

I know the things that come into your minds - every one of them. Ezek. 11:5.

Now the workshop of a man's mind - that is where the weapons are forged in secret against people and against the purposes of God.

Why these religious on-lookers said, he is a man who blasphemes. None could forgive sin but God only. And today there are those who believe that the church can render forgiveness.

But Jesus said I have authority to lay down my life and to take it up again. And the secret of his authority was given to him for the forgiveness of sins. And he had the power and the right to dismiss a man's sins. And they were jealous in their hearts about this.

He questioned, is it easier to say, thy sins are to be forgiven, than to say - pick up thy bed and walk. Our Lord did not mean to imply that it was easier to forgive a man than it was to heal him of his disease. But he says does this prove that there is power by doing the hard thing or doing the less harder thing. But it was easier to say - thy sins be forgiven. Or to take up your bed. They had no difficulty in answering. They say it is easier

to say, thy sins be forgiven thee. He can say with equal ease - arise and take up ~~your bed~~ and walk. This was power that none of these critics dare to claim.

We may take note here that the securing of things worthwhile in life is generally accompanied by hinderances. There are barriers in the way. The journey to the far country is one of neglect - drifting with the crowd because going that way is easy. And some of these barriers must be overcome in our selves. We have excuses that are like cobwebs - they hold us down.

We see the barrier that the devil had here - it cost too much to become a Christian. We hesitate to let go and to let God. We feel that there is a high appraisal of ourselves - and this is a barrier when we measure our standards by some Christian that we know - instead of by Jesus Christ. If there are hypocrites in the church - there are vastly more of them outside of the church. And there are those who mis-represent and even the barrier of repentance. There are people who do not want to undergo repentance. They do not want any part of a change of mind to make things right.

There is a barrier of feeling - they think they have to feel a certain way. But what we need to know is - that God loves me. It is like Sam Jones said, that here was a man who goes out into the woods on a frosty morning - he stands with his ax resting against his knee and says "good morning, my friend, what are you going to do?" He answers that he is going to cut down this tree. Why don't you get at it. Oh, I am waiting, he says, until I get up a good sweat first. I have to have feeling. What are we to act on - is it our convictions or is it just our feelings.

There is a good slogan - never put off until tomorrow what you ought to

be easier to act upon tomorrow. It gets harder day by day. In other words, opportunities are like cement - they freeze up. They become barriers.

Dr. Gordon tells the story of a certain city where the water supply failed. A letter from one of the city employee's who had been discharged in a certain place revealed that if you will look at a certain section - you will find a plug in the pipe. I placed it there in my anger when I was discharged. They removed the plug and the water flowed again.

And that is exactly what happens in this story here. These men got all of the barriers out of the way. And they overcame every barrier of Satan.

V. DESTINY CONFIRMED - V. 12

They were amazed - strange things had happened that day.

What was strange was not the miracle of healing - he brought many miracles but the instantaneous and certain forgiveness of sin.

For no doubt, that would remain in their minds, that this man's body was diseased, his soul was diseased, had been pardoned as a sinner. The wonderful work of salvation had been wrought. Wherever Christ works our salvation in the inner soul, the pardon is sealed by his power.

The power to resist sin is the only certain proof that sin is pardoned - holiness is the death and indispensible evidence to ourselves that our sins are forgiven. Soul, arise, take up thy bed. Thy spiritual inability is over. And walk victoriously over your sins.

This was no counterfeit pardon - this was genuine. His forgiveness was sealed by his power. He never leaves a forgiven soul paralyzed. He never says thy sins are forgiven - but that he says, arise and walk.

For it is certain if you have repented and had your sins forgiven - sin no longer has power over you. Those things that stock your soul - this diseased man knew he was pardoned before he had healing from Christ. The power that enabled him to arise and walk - remained with him and abided with him then as evidence that it was real.

Why did Jesus work this miracle of healing, on the paralyzed man. He tells us himself, not that this man did not need it. But he says that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Jesus had come into this world to take care of the morally sick and he came face to face with it here in this story.

There are people today who approve of Christ and Christianity, in a mental way, in a material sort of way, but they do not have much to do with him in a moral way. They do not think that he can give and cleanse them of sin. Do you believe that Jesus can forgive sins.

Are you living victoriously over your sins. God appointed a sin bearer - the lamb of God.

Do you believe that he has power on earth to forgive sins. Many who hear the Gospel miss this truth - or either they change it and hear the great secret - yet they are never saved.

The supreme revelation is he has absolute authority now - he still can say - be of good courage. Thy sins are dismissed. Arise and walk.

Martin Luther, the old monk, tried to comfort him by repeating the article from the Apostles Creed. I believe in the forgiveness of sins. Said the old monk, it is not enough to believe in the forgiveness - of David's sin, or Peter's sin, this the Devil believes. God commands his to believe that our own sins are forgiven.

What is there standing in your way in believing in Jesus Christ.

Is there some roof that needs to be upset, some barrier that needs to be broken down. Are there some things that stand between you and Christ. That Christ might remove. That he might get to your needs.

Let us try every method to get to Christ - through the gate, through the roof, anyway, that we possibly can come to the Saviour.

The old jailer at midnight was grateful to God. When all the obstacles were removed out of the way and he could be saved.

When a man is saved and changed - he will show it. A man can never remain the same after coming in contact with Jesus. This man was going forth and glorifying God to the amazement of everyone. We never saw it on this fashion.

From the manuscript of an old Scotch preacher, we read the conversion of Lord Jeddard, who had been famous for his recklessness and sin. And it was astonishment to everyone that this man had been converted. They had never seen anything like it. And after his conversion, he came to the Lord's table one Lord's day and was seated next to a lady who had her head bowed in prayer. And it was not until she lifted her eyes to receive the

Who had been so renowned for sin, that she trembled in amazement. That such a man was there in the house of God. And he said, madam, be not troubled - the grace of God is free.

Guthrie, a Scotch minister, once visited a dying woman. He found her in a very anxious state. He had the opportunity to explain the Gospel to her and she received the Lord Jesus before she died. On his way home that day, he said, I have seen a strange thing this day. A woman, whom I found, in a state of nature - I saw in a state of grace, and I left in a state of glory.

John Newton said, when I get to Heaven I will have three wonders - first, there will be many people there whom I did not expect to see. Second, the wonder that I shall miss seeing many people that I did expect to see. Third, the greatest wonder of it is is to be found there myself - the wonder of grace, to belong to God.

We never saw it on this fashion. They had seen many people trying to help others. They had watched these four men bring this man and Christ had wrought something that was different. And Christ is still doing the same where the Gospel is preached in his name. Christian faith can do for people what nothing else in the world can do. Arise, I tell you, and go home. That was a visible show of power. It was convincing. The man went under his own power. Then did the four men forget to repair the damaged roof. Or did the owner of the house patch it up. The story ends by saying, at this, they were all amazed and they glorified God saying, we never saw the like of it.