

The Paralyzed Man

A friend once told me that he believed people became sick because they had committed a sin. He believed that the Apostle Paul's "thorn in the flesh" in 2 Corinthians 12:7 was due to some sin that the apostle had committed. He also believed that the Old Testament saint Job was ill because he had sinned. He did not know how to respond when I told him that God had said Job had been "a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 2:3). This comment reveals the fact that Job's problems and illness were not due to personal sin. God had allowed these trials to cause Job to spiritually grow. Yet, some teach that all illness occurs due to sin. The Jewish leaders in Jesus' time also believed as my friend did. Scripture teaches that sometimes we are sick because we have sinned, but not always (1 Cor. 11:30).

THE START. Our last study was about a leper whom Jesus had healed. After the man was healed Jesus strongly encouraged the leper not to tell anyone, but he ignored Jesus' request anyway. Next we are told that Jesus went into the wilderness and prayed. When we come to this study (Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26), we discover that "some days" had passed when He returned home.

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. (NASB) Mark 2:1

Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city. (NASB) Matt. 9:1

If we combine the facts provided to us by Matthew and Mark, we discover that Jesus had returned to the city of Capernaum, His current home, by crossing the Sea of Galilee. Luke adds that crowds of people had discovered that Jesus was back home and had come to Him.

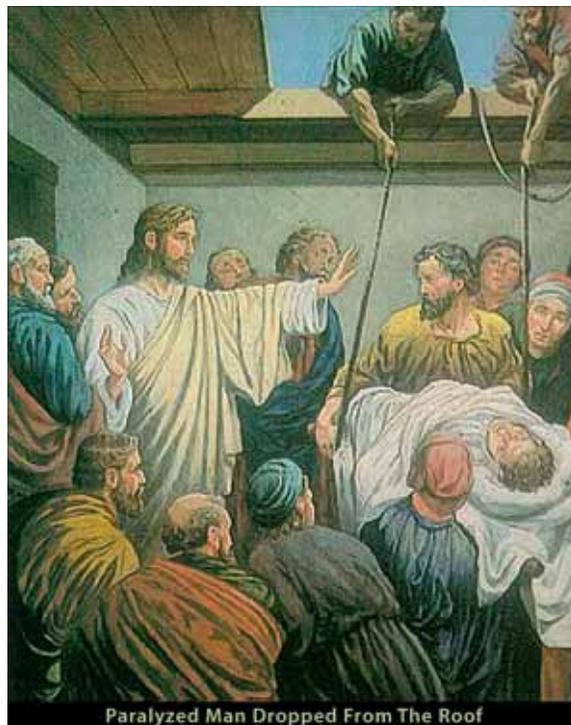
One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and

the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. (NASB) Luke 5:17

The people came from the surrounding areas and among them were some religious leaders.

WHY DID THEY COME? Mark tells us that Jesus' home was packed with people, like a bunch of sardines in a can.

And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. (NASB) Mark 2:2



Paralyzed Man Dropped From The Roof

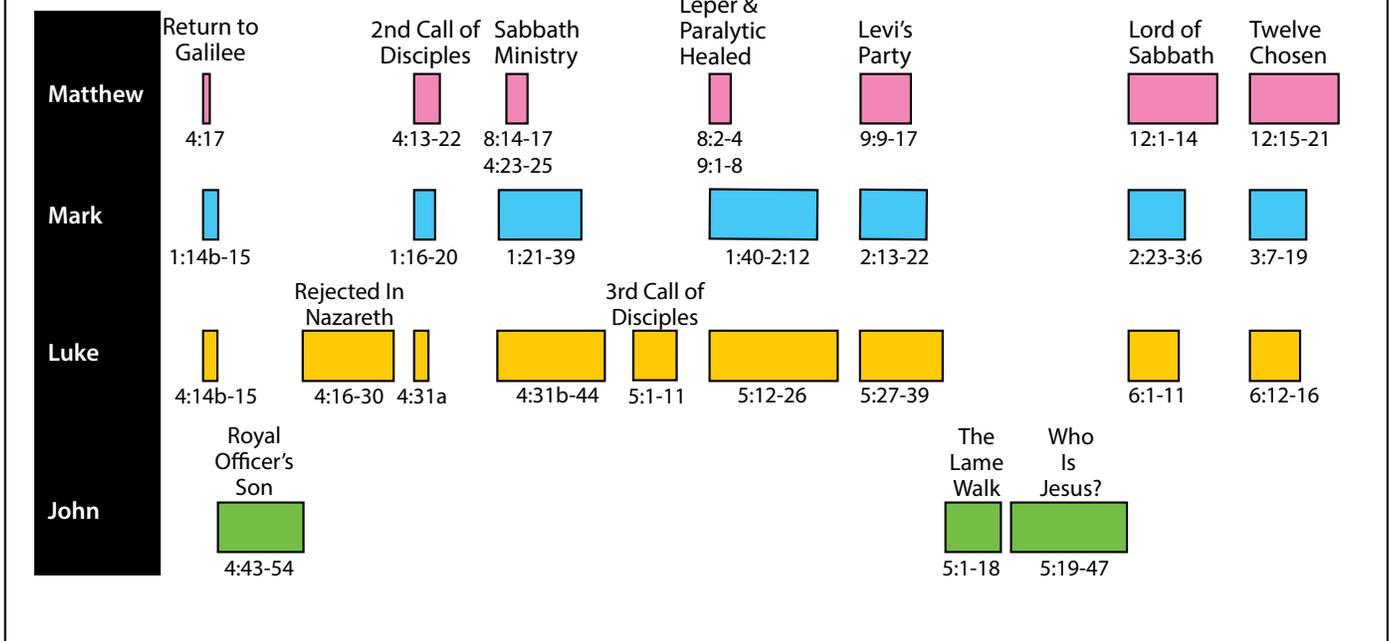
The home was so full that people were standing outside the door of the home. No one could get in. Could those standing outside hear Jesus? Why would people stand outside? Would you stand outside in order to hear someone teach? Many of us would leave.

Why did the religious leaders come? We suspect that they came to see if Jesus was going to teach something with which they did not agree. They were not truth seekers. They were critics.

But why did the crowd come? Both Mark and Luke say that they came to hear Jesus teach.

Life and Heart of Jesus

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee (Mid A.D. 31)



They did not come to see His face, or to hear Him teach philosophy, mental health, astronomy, mathematics, or history. The crowd was not seeking food or water. The gospels say that they came to hear Jesus teach the Word of God.

This reminds me of the early years of a very large church in Sun Valley, California. The church was about 650 people in size and they were packing out the building they were in when they built a larger building, which today functions as a gymnasium. The building could seat about 1,000 people at one time. Within one year the church doubled in size. Then they started conducting two services and eventually put sound speakers outside so that the people could sit outside the building in order to hear the Word of God. People would come very early in order to get a seat, and those who did not come in time would sit outside in the cold and moisture. After several years, they built a larger building which is now called the Worship Center. The number of people attending the church doubled and then they started providing two services. About 10,000 people would gather on a Sunday morning, and about 20,000 attended the church. Why did they come? Why were they willing to sit outside?

Several facts are true - they did not come primarily for fellowship. They did not come primarily for worship music. They did not come primarily because of the children's ministry or the women's ministry. They did not come in the early years because the church was large. They came to hear the Word of God. They sat outside in the cold to hear the Word of God. They wanted to hear the Word so much that they were willing to suffer.

Teaching was always Jesus' priority! Jesus set the standard and He modeled the purpose for the church. The role of teachers and pastors is to teach the Word of God. We are to teach the scriptures in depth. We grow by in-depth teaching of scripture. That is the priority.

THE WONDERFUL TEAM. Next we are told that some men wanted to bring their friend, a paralyzed man, before Jesus.

And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through

the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. (NASB) Luke 5:18-19

The man was lying on a bed. The Greek language reveals the man had been paralyzed for a very long time and everyone knew it. The man was not faking his paralysis. Mark 2:3 says that four men were carrying him. Apparently there was one man on each corner of the bed in order to carry him.

We are also told that the men had been trying to bring their friend inside. The Greek language is helpful once again and reveals that they had been repeatedly trying for some time. In short, these men were frustrated. They were not able

to get into the house because of the crowd. Their goal was to get their friend in front of Jesus, and it was not possible. So someone had a great idea. Why not lower the man down through the ceiling of the home?

Apparently, they used the outside stairs to get the paralyzed man up on the roof of the home. Archaeology tells us that the roofs of the homes in Jesus' day were constructed of timbers (tree poles) which were spaced about 2-3 feet (0.6 - 0.9 m) apart. Then small branches, reeds, brush, and palm fronds were laid on top of that. Next came leaves, dirt, and finally some clay which was rolled flat with stone rollers. Consequently, the roof could be removed in sections or in "tiles." The bottom floor of the home was usually dirt or beaten clay. The second floor was usually made of wood. The doors were usually made of cloth, hides, or wood panels. The homes were commonly laid out with a courtyard in the middle or to one side.

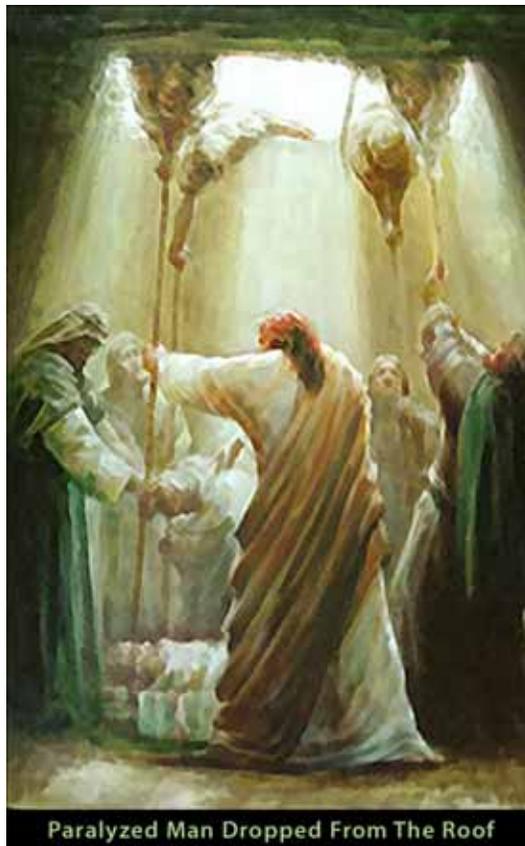
Apparently, Jesus was sitting and teaching in the courtyard within the home. So when Luke says that they removed the tiles of the home, it appears that they removed a section of roof covered by clay over the courtyard. Mark 2:4 adds

that they "dug" through the roof. That is, they removed the clay, dirt, and leaves in order to create a hole in the roof. Dirt and leaves must have started falling. If one of us had been there, we would have probably seen dirt and leaves falling. Jesus' teaching would have been interrupted when the hole in the roof was created to lower their friend down through the roof in front of Jesus. All eyes would have been focused on the paralyzed man and Jesus.

YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN. The gospel of Matthew says that Jesus told the paralyzed man, "Take courage." The Greek word for "take courage" could also mean "Be brave." Apparently, the man was fearful. Was he fearful because he

believed that his paralysis was due to sin?

Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." (NASB) Luke 5:20



So Jesus encouraged him by forgiving his sins. The Greek word for "forgiveness" reveals that Jesus forgave all of his past sins. Jesus forgave all of his sins. The man did not do any penitence on the ground. He did not recite the rosary or do some good deed. He was just lying there. He was paralyzed.

So why did Jesus say this to him? The answer is found in James 5:14-16.

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. (NASB) James 5:14-16

Here we discover that we can be sick because of some sin that we have committed. Healing comes when our sins are forgiven and the elders pray over us. Notice that the prayer of the elders must be offered in faith. The sick person is not required to have faith. If we look carefully at Luke 5:20, we discover that Jesus saw the faith of the four men and then forgave the man. Forgiveness came first, and not the healing. The healing came later.

How much faith was required? James 1:6-8 says that we must not doubt. Does that mean that we must believe that God **will** heal; otherwise, God will not heal? The answer is provided in the example of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in Daniel 3:13-17.

In this passage, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego are ordered by Nebuchadnezzar to bow down and worship the king's image. The three men respond by telling the king that they will not worship the image, and then add this,

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. (NASB) Dan. 3:17-18

These men did not know if God would deliver them, but they believed that God could. These three men are examples

of faith, and God honored them.

The double minded man in the book of James is one who does not know if God could heal. People are healed when elders believe and the illness is due to sin. And the four men carrying the paralyzed man believed that Jesus could heal. Jesus saw their faith, forgave the man and planned to heal him. The paralyzed man was paralyzed because he had committed sin as implied in Jesus' statement. But all paralysis is not due to personal sin.

When Jesus said, "... Your sins are forgiven you," He comforted and encouraged the man. The man would have believed that his paralysis was due to sin because the religious leaders of his day taught that all sickness was due to sin. In his case, his paralysis **was** due to sin and Jesus forgave him, comforting him.

JESUS' AUTHORITY. When the Pharisees heard this, they were upset.

The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man

who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? (NASB) Luke 5:21-22

Matthew 9:4 tells us that Jesus had read their thoughts. This is proof that God can read your mind. He knows your thoughts, your wishes, and your sins. We cannot hide anything from God.



“Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’ “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic —“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.” (NASB) Luke 5:23-24

Jesus’ response is wonderful. Is it more difficult to heal a paralyzed man or to say the words, “Your sins have been forgiven you”? Then Jesus performed the more difficult task from a critic’s perspective - He healed the man. The message to the religious leaders was that Jesus had divine authority. He had authority that they did not have. They could not forgive sin, but Jesus could. The same is true today. Only God can forgive our sins. No man, priest, rabbi, pastor, or any other clergy can forgive our sins - only God. This event is all about Jesus’ authority.

INSTANT HEALING. When Jesus said, “. . . get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home,” the man was instantly healed.

Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. (NASB) Luke 5:25

It was not his faith that healed him. He did not have to wait for his healing. The man stood up, picked up his bed, and went home. There is no mention of Jesus asking him questions, touching him, or receiving a holy zap. The man was just simply healed. He was healed in the sight of everyone in that home.

They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen remarkable things today.” (NASB) Luke 5:26

Luke tells us that the people were astonished. Mark says that they were amazed, and Matthew says that they were awestruck. All three gospels say that the people glorified

God. Everyone was stunned by what had happened.

CONCLUSION. Sometimes when we are struggling through an illness, we often ignore the most obvious. We reach for some medicine, we call a doctor, or we complain. Sometimes complaining seems to help us feel better. But when we are down, discouraged, or “feeling blue” we should stop and ask, “What does God want me to learn?”

Sometimes we go on a fishing trip to escape or start looking for sin in our life. Not every illness is due to sin, but some of our illnesses are due to our own sin. So when we become sick, we should look at the possibility that our sickness is due to sin. Usually, we already know if this is the situation. If that is the case, we should confess our sins to God immediately (1 John 1:9). God will forgive our sins as He promised in Isaiah.

“Come now, and let us reason together,”

Says the LORD,

“Though your sins are as scarlet,

They will be as white as snow;

Though they are red like crimson,

They will be like wool. (NASB) Is. 1:18

If our illness persists, then we should call the elders or the leaders of our church to pray for us. If they are men of faith, then our illness will be cured as God promised in James 5:14-16.

If you have not asked God to forgive all your sins, if you have never asked God to take control of your life, then stop and tell Him that you believe in Him and ask Him to forgive all of your sins. If you are already a believer in God and you are sick, then confess any known sins and call the elders.

The greatest miracle in this passage is not the large crowd, the roof, the healing or Jesus’ compassion, but His forgiveness of sin. Only God can forgive and it is amazing that He wants to and is willing to forgive any of us. And it is wonderful that Jesus has authority to forgive your sins! God forgives sins!