

THE POWER OF CHRIST UNTO SALVATION (Mk. 2:1-12)

Imagine arriving late at church and not being able to get in! I remember when that was how it was in some churches when I was growing up, - if you didn't go early, you didn't get a seat. I also remember large tent meetings with people standing outside ... Sadly, gone are those days when people came to the meetings knowing for certain they were coming to hear sound preaching of the Word of God, with the clear proclamation of the Gospel.

It wasn't a church service in Capernaum, - instead, it was in a home ... probably belonging to Simon and Andrew. The four men with their invalid, - paralytic, - friend *tried* to get in but they were prevented by the great crowd. It is not that the crowd were interested in what Jesus was saying ... they were *curious*. If there had been any decency in them, they would have stood aside and given access to the four men with their friend.

... It would be lovely to have a big church, with plenty of people of all age groups, being involved in various spiritual pursuits and activities. However, sometimes *some* spiritual pursuits and activities can get in the way of the Lord's work if they are not in accordance with His will ... And if God's people don't take seriously the place of prayer and serious Bible study, that is a great risk! Sometimes, when everything seems to be going very *comfortably* it's easy to slip into a kind of malaise with an 'anything goes' mindset ... That's what happens when the people either don't know Him, or they 'take their eyes off' Him.

The people standing inside and outside this house would have heard of Jesus. He has been healing for a few weeks and months and He would have inevitably had His 'followers', His 'admirers'. They weren't there to listen to what He had to say and act upon it, they were there to see what great miracle He would do next. ... But, Jesus' reason for coming into this world was not to be remembered for the multitude of miracles He did ... the reason He came was to save lost sinners! And consequently, our worship should reflect that ... and He should be the primary focus ... not us!

When Jesus was in that home He would have prayed and He would have preached ... and those people were listening, but they weren't hearing! They weren't worshipping! Worship is, said Warren Weirsbe, "the believer's response of all that they are, - mind, emotions, will, body, - to what God is and says and does".

I have lost count of the number of times I have heard people say, “We need to make the worship more interesting to bring in the young people. We need to cut down on the preaching. We need to have more ‘this, that, and the other thing’”. ... The only problem with that, though, is worship is not meant to be man-centred ... We don’t come into a church to tell God how we are going to worship Him ... We look into His Word and we see there *how* He is to be worshipped. Read the Scriptures and you’ll notice how the people thought they could worship God any old way ... and He had to correct them, sometimes very harshly! (e.g. Malachi) ... There is only one way to come into His presence, and it is in the way prescribed in His Word, - with holiness and reverence. ... We come encouraging one another ... not putting up barriers or trying to hinder our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

You see, this crowd ought to have stepped to the one side and allowed this paralytic man to Jesus. That was why Jesus came, for you will notice that after He had healed the man His work was finished for the time-being and He went out of Capernaum and down to the shore (v.13). In other words, this man was on Jesus’ mind to heal ... and His work in Capernaum was not finished until these four men brought their friend to Jesus. But, sadly, this curious, uncompassionate, and spiritually-calloused crowd gave no thought whatsoever of stepping back and allowing this man in.

So, his friends took him up to the roof of the house. They carefully carried him up the steps at the side. It would have been awkward and a bit of a struggle ... and more time-consuming than if the crowd had simply allowed them through the door, but they did it anyway because they wanted to bring their friend to Christ. They would have been sweating in the heat, slipping on one or two of the steps, but they managed to bring their friend up onto the roof.

It would also have been quite disruptive. Jesus was speaking inside the house, and people were listening to Him ... and I doubt very much if these men would have been all that quiet! Middle-eastern folk aren’t usually! I’m sure there were a few heads turning round, and looking up, to see what the commotion was. It could have been very disruptive. Jesus was trying to hold the people’s attention as undoubtedly He was explaining to them the good news of the Kingdom ... and it was hard enough without having four men and a paralytic causing a scene on the roof!

As you know, it was a flat roof the men went up to, with the stairs at the side of the house. The roof was made out of large beams, and in between the beams were smaller sticks, and some kind of thatch was laid on them, and it would have been mixed with thick mud and slates/tiles laid on top. This would have dried out ... and that was the roof! So, this was what they had to dig through ... lift the slates, 'scoobe' through the mud and 'thatch', pull away the sticks ... and do it all large enough to fit a man on a stretcher so as to be able to let him down through the hole to Jesus! They had to judge exactly where Jesus was ... for there was no point in digging a hole in the roof and putting the man down anywhere, - they would have been no further forward!

So that is what was happening. ... The men are digging, Jesus is standing below them preaching the Gospel, dust and 'bits and pieces' from the roof are falling on Him, the people inside are looking up, tempers were becoming a little frayed ... It was an awful distraction! ... We wouldn't want anyone washing the windows when our church service was on, or cleaning the hall, tooting the horn outside ... and what these four men were doing was disturbing everyone gathered! As well as being dusty and dirty, it could also have been potentially dangerous! The roof could have collapsed!

But here is something that Luke particularly mentions, [Lk. 5:19](#) *And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch [κλινίδιον, *small bed*] into the midst before Jesus ... right at the feet of Jesus!*

These men had done their work well. They could not have done any better! They were skilled, and they had put great thought into what they were doing. They didn't take the man so far, and when they saw their way was blocked they left him to try and take the final few steps to Jesus. No, they took him all the way to the Saviour! They could have stopped at the door, tapped the people on the shoulder and told them there's a man here to see Jesus ... and pass on the responsibility to someone else ... No, they did everything they possibly could to bring that paralytic right to the feet of Jesus! They had carried him up the stairs ... and they had taken away all the hindrances to him meeting the Saviour. What an illustration for faithful servants of the Gospel!

Now, the crowd would have been agitated ... but these four men had no doubt Jesus could heal their friend, and they were willing to do all this so that it would happen. ... And the paralytic also believed, otherwise he would have been too embarrassed to be seen in public, because of his condition.

So this man really believed Jesus could heal him, ... and his four friends *also* believed Jesus could heal him ... and Jesus recognised their faith (Mk. 2:5).

... Why did the men believe Jesus could heal their friend? They believed it because they had seen Him heal other people. That was what He had been doing throughout the whole area. So, if you like, they had a natural *human* faith ... the kind of faith that guides you to believe a doctor gives you the right medicine to heal you, and not to harm you. You hear you are going to have an operation, so the day arrives when you go into hospital, the preparations are made and you are brought down to the theatre and a man you've never met him before starts to open you up ... and you don't even know what his name is ... but you trust him *because he's a doctor!*

It is the same faith you exercise when a stranger in a restaurant sets food in front of you ... You don't believe it is going to harm you ... because you believe they have washed the plates, and the knife and fork, and you believe they know how to cook, and you have faith the food they are setting in front of you is very tasty and will satisfy your appetite. ... That is a natural *human* faith. It was also a very strong and determined faith those men had, to do all this for their paralysed friend. ... Incidentally, this is the first mention of faith in the Gospel of Mark, and it portrays a faith in action, a faith that overcomes, and a faith that doesn't stop until it finishes what it set out to achieve.

However, when you look closer, you see this was more than *human* faith because Jesus said very specifically to this paralytic man, *Son [τέκνον, child], thy sins be forgiven thee [ἀφέωνται σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι σου].* ... Jesus was speaking directly *and only* to this man! Out of all the crowd in and around the house ... Jesus was speaking *only* and *directly* and *personally* to this man! ... It is *your* sin I am addressing ... Jesus could see into the man's heart something that was not visible to anyone else!

Now forgiveness from sin is not automatic... Not every person whom Jesus healed was forgiven of their sin. For example, there is no evidence nine of the ten lepers who came to Jesus were forgiven (Lk. 17:11-18), - they were all healed, but there was only one who returned to give glory to God (v.18). So, forgiveness from sin is not automatic ... Forgiveness from sin is only for those who repent and believe, who turn from their sin and have faith in God ... so this wasn't merely a natural and a human faith the paralytic had ... it was a *spiritual* faith ... a faith beyond the natural impulses of man ...

And it wasn't simply to do with his healing, it was a spiritual faith that brought him salvation from sin. In other words, this man's faith was not limited to the healing power of Jesus, but this man's faith extended to the saving power ... believing that Jesus offered salvation to all who repent.

John 2:25 tells us Jesus knows what is in a man's heart ... and He *knew* what was in this man's heart! He saw not just the faith to believe Jesus heals, but also the faith to believe Jesus saves! ... Jesus could see into every orifice of this man ... and this man realised that not only was he a sorry paralysed paralytic, but he was also a sinner in need of the Saviour! ... Wretched and weary, and yet trusting in Christ's power to save! ... What he was on the outside, he was far worse in the inside! And he needed not just healing, he also needed and wanted saving ... He wanted forgiveness of his sins, and to be made righteous before God.

That is a work of God's grace... Nothing else but God's grace would have showed that man his need. Nothing else but God's grace would have softened his heart and brought him to that place that day. Out of all the people, Jesus healed in that home ... here is a man who went away healed inside and out! ... That is grace! "Grace! 'tis a charming sound, Harmonious to the ear ... 'Twas grace that wrote my name In life's eternal book; 'Twas grace that gave me to the Lamb, Who all my sorrows took." ... Coming to Christ is impossible apart from God's grace. Many people came to Him that day to be *physically* healed, but grace alone brings those who will be *spiritually* healed. Grace even provides the faith to believe ... because the faith to believe is a Divine gift of God at the cost of His Son, - our Saviour, - dying on the cross, said John Newton, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear". ... God's grace was what changed this man's life, - he came as a sinner, and he went away as a saint! He left his bed, and he went home righteous!

However, Mark introduces a 'But', v.6 [But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,](#) ⁷ [Why doth this \[man\] thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?](#) ... And of course, they were right ... Only God *can* forgive sins ... and this was the opportunity they were looking for to confront Jesus and to show Him up as a pretender and as a deceiver. They didn't actually voice their opinions ... nevertheless, Jesus knew what they were thinking because He [perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves](#) (v.8). They reckoned Jesus was a blasphemer, and according to Lev. 24:10-23 a blasphemer was to be taken out and stoned to death, v.16 [he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, \[and\] all the](#)

congregation shall certainly stone him ... They weren't actually saying it, but Jesus knew they were thinking it ... so He confronted them, v.8 Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

That was their first problem, in dealing with whether or not Jesus was Who He said He was. They were hesitant to voice their opinion, since Jesus was a local popular 'celebrity' but God knew what they were thinking ... and the Bible tells us many times only God knows the thoughts of the heart ... and Jesus knew the thoughts of these men's hearts, I Sam. 16:7 [*the LORD seeth*] not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart ... I Kings 8:39 Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, [*even*] thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) ... I Chron. 28:9 the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts ... Jer. 17:10 I the LORD search the heart ... Ezek. 11:5 And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, [*every one of*] them. ... So therefore, on the plain evidence before them, Jesus of Nazareth is being presented as God!

The Saviour pushes it further though, v.9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, [*Thy*] sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? Well, of course it is easier to say Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk, for the simple reason you can actually see if they do it or not ... whereas, you can say to someone "your sins are forgiven" ... but who can tell? How do you prove it?! Who's to know!

Well, here's the proof ... if the man gets up off his bed and walks away, Jesus has the proof He has made it happen and everyone who sees it knows it! So since Jesus told the man to get up, leave his bed and walk away ... and he does it ... then Jesus' claims to do something only God can do ... which is not only to heal the body but also to forgive sinners their sin is wholly acceptable! He has power over the consequences of sin, - disease, - and He has power over sin itself and, therefore, He is God ... and that is what He explained, v.10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) ¹¹ I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

... And you can see the Jewish leaders quaking. They don't know how to answer Jesus. He has silenced them. Blasphemers don't read minds, - they cannot see into people's hearts, they cannot create new limbs, and new bodies.

... This *has* to be God! All the evidence supports the claims of this Man from Nazareth. Therefore, it is not blasphemy for Him to say, *Thy sins have been forgiven thee*. ... And so the man got up, picked up his belongings, and went home! It was instant, total, and an unmakeable display of *God* at work! In fact, Luke adds, 5:25 *And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God*. In other words, the man, - formerly paralysed, and who previously had to be lowered into the house, - walks out of the house in front of everyone, through the crowd outside ... and on down the street ... and back home!

The crowd was so awestruck, astonished ... and understandably so! ... they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, *We never saw it on this fashion* (v.12).

Luke adds, 5:26 ... *were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day ... and the word for 'fear' is φόβος, phobia, dread, terror ... The people were terrified, they were in a state of panic and confusion ... but also awe and reverence. However, it falls short of repentance and faith. It falls short of acknowledging Christ for who He really was. ... How do we know the crowds didn't believe with the same saving faith as the paralytic man? We read in Matthew's account of the same incident, 9:6 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. ⁷ And he arose, and departed to his house. ⁸ But when the multitudes saw [it], they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. ... *Men!* That's the point! As far as their blinded hearts were concerned, Jesus was still nothing more than a man! How could that be? John 12:40 explains, *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: ³⁸ That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? ³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰ He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with [their] eyes, nor understand with [their] heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. ... Jesus was still a man. They refused to accept Him as the Messiah, as God. No matter what the evidence pointed to, they refused to believe.**

Jesus is God. He is the second Person of the Holy Trinity. He is the only Saviour from sin, and He has the power to do all His Father has sent Him to do. He is the centre and focus of our preaching ... we have none other and nothing else to present to the world but Him ... Paul wrote, *we preach Christ crucified* (I Cor. 1:23) ... *for we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord* (II Cor. 4:5). ... That is why we are here, and that is why He has kept us here!

Someday soon He is coming back again ... and what He did then in a fairly small part of this world He will do right across it, for the whole earth will be filled with His glory (Ps. 72:19) ... **The power of Christ unto salvation!** Here's how it will be ... Let's finish by reading that great Messianic psalm, v.2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. ³ The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. ⁴ He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. ⁵ They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. ⁶ He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers [*that*] water the earth. ⁷ In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. ⁸ He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. ⁹ They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. ¹⁰ The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. ¹¹ Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. ¹² For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and [*him*] that hath no helper. ¹³ He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. ¹⁴ He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. ¹⁵ And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; [*and*] daily shall he be praised. ¹⁶ There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and [*they*] of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. ¹⁷ His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and [*men*] shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. ¹⁸ Blessed [*be*] the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. ¹⁹ And blessed [*be*] his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled [*with*] his glory; Amen, and Amen.