

Forgiving Sin

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[0 : 00] Since Mark chapter 1, verse 21, Mark has been giving us consecutive examples from Jesus' life where Jesus showed that He's the Messiah, the Son of God.

And that string of consecutive examples ends with tonight's passage. We're going to be looking in Mark chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. But this passage is far from the last time in the book of Mark where we'll see Jesus' actions prove that He's the Messiah.

And even though tonight's passage ends a series of consecutive messages with a common theme, it starts another series of consecutive passages with the same theme.

And the next section of Mark, which goes all the way through chapter 3, verse 6, features a series of five controversies. And the same pattern is present in each one.

We're going to see Jesus do something surprising. The scribes are going to challenge it. And then Jesus is going to respond in a way that silences the scribes.

[1 : 09] And these conflicts will build to a climax in which Jesus turns the tables on the scribes. In the final conflict, at the beginning of chapter 3, Jesus will confront them with a direct question.

And he becomes angry because they refuse to answer. And then they respond with the plot to murder him. So the encounters that we're going to look at starting tonight could have happened at any time during Jesus' ministry.

And they all follow a similar pattern because each contains an important pronouncement by Jesus. Mark prepared for his passionarity by showing how the religious authorities opposed Jesus throughout his ministry, and especially in Mark chapter 3, verse 6.

Mark preserved material that was valuable in disputes with Jews and also with others in Mark's own day. And we know that Christians of all ages have had opponents and have had to defend their beliefs.

And so the broader passage all the way to chapter 3, verse 6, has given and continues to give some direction in how we can defend our beliefs. So with that introduction, let's go ahead and look at the first of the five conflicts by reading Mark chapter 2, verses 1 through 12.

[2 : 23] It says, And he returned to Capernaum after some days. It was reported that he was at home. 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. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 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. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

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? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise, take up your bed, and walk?

[3 : 28] But 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, Rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

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.

You might think that the healing of the paralytic would be prominent in the passage's main idea, but the healing of the paralytic is secondary. The main idea is this.

Jesus initiates conflict with the religious leaders by announcing his authority to forgive sins. The scribes recognize this as a claim to be God. So, once again, Jesus initiates conflicts with the

religious leaders by announcing his authority to forgive sin, and the scribes recognize this as a claim to be God.

As we study this passage, keep something in mind about the culture. The people of Jesus' day, particularly the religious leaders, believe that physical problems were a direct result of the afflicted person's sin.

[4 : 39] We know that all suffering is an indirect result of sin, but we also have to remember that not all suffering is a direct result of the afflicted person's own sin.

We have to be clear about that. We should reject any teaching that claims that all suffering is a direct result of the afflicted individual's sin. And to prove that point, consider Job in the Old Testament and also the New Testament's man born blind.

In John chapter 9, we meet that man born blind. Listen to John chapter 9, verses 1 through 3. John 9, 1 through 3 say, As he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth.

His disciples questioned him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? Neither this man nor his parents sinned, Jesus answered.

This came about so that God's work might be displayed in him. For our Mark passage tonight, commentators have devoted many pages to opining about whether the man's paralysis was a direct result of the man's personal sin.

[5 : 53] We're going to avoid that temptation to think about that. Just remember that the people of that culture believe that the man's condition was a result of his sin. That will come into play as we look at the passage tonight.

The paralyzed man himself may even have believed that too. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, starting with verses 1 to 5.

And in verses 1 through 5, we meet the helpless sinner. So the helpless sinner goes in your first set of blanks. You might be thinking that the heading contradicts what I just said about avoiding the temptation to speculate on whether the paralyzed man's physical condition was a result of his sin.

But here's why the heading fits. We know that the Bible is clear that everyone, excluding Jesus, is a sinner. We'll skip looking at verses to prove that, but if you need proof, just look at Romans 3.23 for a homework assignment.

Regardless of whether the man's personal sin caused his paralysis, we know that he was still a sinner in some form. So was every other person in that room except Jesus. The paralyzed man was just more obviously helpless than most.

[7 : 09] Before we meet the paralyzed man and his friends, let's set the scene by looking at verses 1 and 2 again. Mark 2, 1 and 2 say this, Four weeks ago, we spent quite a bit of time getting the historical background of Capernaum.

Remember that it's located on the northwest edge of the Sea of Galilee, and it was a prosperous fishing town. Peter, Andrew, James, and John had their fishing operation there, and Jesus established Capernaum as his headquarters during his Galilean ministry.

In Mark 1, verse 29, Jesus left the Capernaum synagogue and went to Peter's house. And because of that, many assume that the events recorded here in chapter 2 also occurred at Peter's house.

That certainly could be the case, but the Bible doesn't tell us whether the house is Peter's. We do know that word got out that Jesus was back in Capernaum. The locals flocked to see him, and they wanted to see more miracles and healings like Jesus did for them during the evening documented in Mark chapter 1, verses 32 through 34.

To refresh your memory, here are Mark chapter 1, verses 32 through 34. That evening at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons, and the whole city was gathered together at the door.

[8 : 44] And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. So in the people's minds here at the beginning of chapter 2, Jesus had returned for a second act.

Those people wanted to see what Jesus would do this time. So many people had come to the house that no more room was to be found, the text says not even at the door.

For just about anyone other than Jesus, the temptation would have been to give the people what they wanted. Instead, Jesus gave the people what they needed. Look at the last sentence of Mark 2, 2 again.

It says, And he was preaching the word to them. So Jesus preached the word of God, and that's what we're supposed to preach. 2 Timothy 4, 2 says, Preach the word, and that's the commission for God's preachers.

But so many of them are so often involved doing other things that they do a poor job of preaching and teaching the word. We have to remember, though, that people need to hear the word of God more than they need miracles or many other things.

[9 : 53] Ministers need to put a high priority on preaching if they're going to fulfill their call from God. Just think about that scene. Many and perhaps most of the crowd likely was disappointed.

They had come to see miracles. Instead, this guy was preaching from the scriptures that Jesus was focusing on the people's greatest need, and that is hearing the word of God. Think about human nature today.

Human nature today is the same as it was back then. Many, if not most, people in all churches combined come to church to be entertained. And so we should be thankful that we have pastors focused on preaching the word to us rather than simply entertaining us.

For those people in the Capernaum crowd who might have been getting bored, things were about to get more interesting, though. Look at verses 3 and 4 again. Starting in verse 3, it says, A typical house in first century Israel had a flat roof constructed of timbers laid parallel to each other. Sticks were laid across those timbers, then reeds, branches, and thistles were laid upon that layer, and finally the whole thing was overlaid with about a foot of dirt which was packed down to resist water.

[11 : 25] Some houses even had tiles put on top of that layer of dirt. The roof usually was accessible by an outside staircase. First century Israelites used the roofs of their houses similar to how we today use an outdoor deck or a patio.

Marco omits details about how the crowd reacted, but you can imagine that digging through the roof would have taken some time and it would have caused some disruption.

You can just picture that some debris likely was falling on the people below, and even the people in the crowd who came for Jesus' teaching would have been distracted. We would have expected the owner of the house to try to stop the damage from being done, and the lack of action by the owner may have been another indication of how big the crowd was.

Perhaps the owner was pinned in by the crowd and powerless to stop what was happening.

Regardless, though, the men continued making a hole in the roof until it was big enough to accommodate their paralyzed friend and his cot.

And their approach was effective. In Luke's account of this event, Luke 5.19 says that the paralyzed man's cot came directly down in front of Jesus.

[12 : 38] Here is Luke 5.19. But finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus.

Let's take just a minute and consider what we can learn from the four men who brought their friend to Jesus. For one thing, they were deeply concerned about their friend and wanted to see him help. They had the faith to believe that Jesus could and would meet his need. They simply didn't just pray about it. They put some feet to their prayers. They didn't permit the difficult circumstances to discourage them.

They worked together and dared to do something different and we'll see that Jesus rewarded their efforts. Just think how easy it would have been for them to say, well, there's no sense trying to get to Jesus today.

Maybe we can come back tomorrow and hope he's still here. But imagine what a sense of anticipation must have been in the room. Jesus' teaching had been interrupted by people making a hole in the roof and that doesn't happen every day.

[13 : 45] And on top of that, a paralytic had been placed directly in front of Jesus. So people had to be wondering how Jesus would react. And Mark 2, verse 5 gives us Jesus' reaction.

Here is Mark 2, 5 again. It says, And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven. We can speculate a little bit that those words likely were met with a mixture of confusion and disappointment from the crowd.

After all, they wanted to see something big happen. Instead, Jesus simply appears to have made a nice-sounding statement. The paralytic and his four friends might have felt deflated.

The men who brought the paralytic and the paralytic himself obviously expected Jesus to heal the paralyzed man. And maybe they even thought, we went to all this work and all he said was, your sins are forgiven.

But although the four friends' reaction and the paralytic's reaction may have been disappointment, that disappointment might not have been as deep as you would think. Keep in mind what we discussed in the introduction.

[14:54] Regardless of whether the paralyzed man's condition was a direct result of his sins, people of that day, likely including the paralyzed man himself, would have believed that his condition was caused by his sins.

So because of that, the paralyzed man might have appreciated Jesus' words more than we know. Let's dig a little deeper into what Jesus said. Even how Jesus addressed the man is significant. The English Standard Version says that Jesus called the man son. The Greek word there literally means child. So from the very first word Jesus spoke to the man, Jesus was signaling that the man had been adopted into Jesus' family.

So Jesus identified the man as a child of God. We'll discover the same truth in Mark 5 when Jesus stops to heal a woman who's been bleeding for many years.

She receives more than healing, she receives a family too. Jesus calls her daughter and declares that her faith has saved her. So these declarations are stunning reminders that adoption into Jesus' family is an even greater gift than forgiveness.

[16:04] Forgiveness says you are not guilty, you are free to go. Adoption says you are free to stay here forever. In the book of Mark so far, you probably have noticed that Mark often directly references or alludes to the prophecies of Isaiah.

Jesus' subsequent words to the paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven, show us that Jesus is proclaiming himself to be God. Isaiah's prophecies prove that.

Isaiah reminds us that forgiving sins is something that only God does. Listen to Isaiah chapter 1, verse 18.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

Here's Isaiah 33, 24. Isaiah 33, 24 says, And no inhabitant will say, I am sick. The people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity.

[17:13] Now here's Isaiah 38, 17. Isaiah 38, 17 says, Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness.

But in love, you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. And obviously, that verse is spoken to God.

Then God himself is speaking in Isaiah 43, 25. In Isaiah 43, 25, God says, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

Now listen to Isaiah chapter 44, verses 22 and 23. In Isaiah 44, 22, God is speaking here. He says, I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like a mist.

Return to me, for I have redeemed you. Sing, O heavens, for the Lord has done it. Shout, O depths of the earth. Break forth into singing, O mountains, O forest, and every tree in it.

[18:21] For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and will be glorified in Israel. Only God can forgive sin because sin is primarily against him.

Some commentators say that Jesus' claim to forgive sin is another messianic sign. It is another messianic sign, but Jesus' claim to forgive sin is more than just a messianic sign.

In Jewish thinking, even the Messiah could not forgive sins. God and God alone has that authority and right. So those first century Jews knew exactly what was going on.

If Jesus says he can forgive sins, then Jesus is saying that he is God. John Phillips said, Jesus knew that some of the scribes were in the crowd.

He knew, too, what their reaction would be when he declared the palsied man's sins to be forgiven. Sure enough, they mentally accused him of blasphemy, of attributing to himself the ability to do things that only God could do.

[19:24] But he had not done that just now. He had done that already in the cleansing of the leper and in the numerous other miracles that he had performed in Capernaum. We've seen that as we've gone through Mark so far.

But then he adds, it's typical of unbelief that the unbelief conveniently overlooks awkward facts. And that last sentence is soberingly accurate.

It is typical of unbelief that unbelief overlooks awkward facts. And the awkwardness of the scribes is just beginning.

We'll see that as we move to the next section of the passage. Jesus' words at the end of verse 5 lead us directly into that next section of text. And in verses 6-9, we see the hostile scribes.

So the hostile scribes is your second set of blanks. Let's start by looking at verses 6 and 7. Here are verses 6 and 7 again.

[20 : 25] Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?

We know from Luke's account of this event that the crowd included several Pharisees who were the primary guardians and advocates of the traditions and rituals that had permeated first century Judaism.

And remember, first century Judaism had lapsed into legalism. The term Pharisee means separated one and the Pharisees used that term to define the philosophy behind their movement. The people who joined the sect diligently avoided any interaction with Gentiles, tax collectors, or people whom they regarded as sinners. Even their attitude toward the common Jewish people was one of disdain and condescension.

They considered themselves to be the most holy of all Israelites, but their holiness was all external and superficial. It mainly consisted of adherence to their own man-made rules and regulations, stipulations that they had added through the years to the law of Moses.

[21 : 35] And within the sect, there were scribes also called lawyers in some places in Scripture. These were professional theologians and Old Testament scholars.

The scribes actually began back in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah when the Israelites returned to their homeland after the Babylonian captivity. An ancient Jewish tradition asserted that God gave the law to angels who gave it to Moses and Joshua who then gave it to the elders who gave it to the prophets who gave it to the scribes and then the scribes were to lead and teach in the synagogues. The scribes were responsible both to copy and preserve the scriptures as well as interpret them to instruct the people. Because there were no more Old Testament prophets after Malachi, the scribes fulfilled the foundational teaching role in Israel.

Scribes could be found in various Jewish sects such as the Sadducees and Essenes as well but most scribes in Jesus' day were associated with the Pharisees. And look at verse 6.

Mark reports that the scribes were sitting there. And he seems to imply that this is a standing room only crowd at this house but the scribes were sitting. They probably claimed the places of honor and took the posture of a tribunal to judge the ministry of Jesus.

[22 : 58] And they rendered a silent judgment in their hearts and that judgment was blasphemy. Blasphemy was a serious offense. In Leviticus chapter 24 verses 15 and 16 God specified the penalty for blasphemy.

And here are Leviticus 24 15 and 16. God is speaking to Moses here and God says and speak to the people of Israel saying whoever curses his God shall bear his sin.

Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord surely shall be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native when he blasphemes the name shall be put to death. These religious leaders had every right to investigate the ministry of this new teacher. The religious life of their nation was under their supervision. But they should have come with open minds and open hearts seeking truth instead of with critical minds seeking heresy.

Some of the negative attitude that had been present in Judea had now invaded Galilee and this was the beginning of the official opposition that ultimately led to our Lord's arrest and death.

[24 : 17] Jesus was now so popular that the Jewish leaders dared not ignore him. In fact, as we mentioned, they must have arrived early for the meeting because they were right at the scene of the action or perhaps Jesus even intentionally gave them the seats that they had.

The first century Jews had three levels of blasphemy. The first level was when a person was charged with blasphemy if he spoke evil of the law of God.

Stephen and Paul were wrongly accused of doing this. A second, more serious type of blasphemy occurred when a person spoke evil of God directly.

And a third form of blasphemy, even more heinous than the other two, took place when a sinful human claimed to possess divine authority and equality with God. For a mere mortal to act as if he were God was the most horrible offense of all and it was this form of blasphemy that the Jewish leaders charged Jesus with committing.

Eventually, they'd used the same accusations to justify his murder. While the scribes still were thinking that Jesus was committing blasphemy, they got a surprise that would have made them feel more awkward.

[25 : 32] Look at Mark chapter 2, verse 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?

Jesus, knowing what they were thinking, should have made them pause. This is another subtle indication that Jesus is God. Jesus then raised the stakes without waiting for a response from the scribes.

Look at verse 9. Jesus said, Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise, take up your bed, and walk?

Well, saying that someone's sins are forgiven obviously is easier. No human can prove whether another person's sins are forgiven.

However, testing whether a previously paralyzed person can walk is easy. So Jesus has set the stage for a showdown. So, so far, we've seen the helpless sinner and the hostile scribes.

[26 : 35] In Mark chapter 2, verses 10 through 12, we see the healing Savior. So the healing Savior is your last set of blanks. The narrative implies that once again, Jesus declined to wait for the scribes to answer his question.

Everybody already knew the answer to the question anyway, so Jesus had no need for the scribes to verbalize it. The scribes were some of the most esteemed religious leaders in Israel.

People looked up to the scribes. The scribes likely had never been challenged before like this.

Some of the scribes might have gone from thinking, who does this man think he is by claiming to be God to thinking, who does this man think he is by talking to me that way?

But as the scribes were continuing to sit there, probably shocked into silence, Jesus continues. So let's read verses 10 through 12 again. But 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, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

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.

[27 : 57] Think back again to what we've talked about in the introduction and throughout the lesson. Regardless of whether it was true or not, the people of Jesus' day, particularly the religious leaders, would have believed that the man's paralysis was caused by his sin.

Jesus used that line of reasoning to his advantage. Rightly or wrongly, the people would have been thinking, if Jesus can forgive sins like he claims, why isn't this man walking?

Jesus gave the crowd a stunning demonstration that he can forgive sins by giving them visual proof that they would have expected. And that's why the healing of the man's paralysis is secondary to the point that Jesus can forgive sins.

Jesus already had addressed the man's most important need by healing the man spiritually. Jesus performed the healing so that everyone would know that he had authority to forgive sins.

Notice that Jesus does not use the word ability. He doesn't wonder whether he can do it. but he uses authority and says that he's been authorized to do it.

[29 : 05] He's the divine son who does not act independently. He goes forth with the father's authority to accomplish the father's plan. The formerly paralyzed man's reaction matches what we would have expected.

Immediately upon hearing Jesus' words, the healed man picked up his stretcher and walked out. Luke 5.25 adds more detail about the response of the healed man.

And here is Luke 5.25. And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he'd been lying on and went home glorifying God.

Think about the timing of the events that we see in our passage tonight. Jesus purposely waited to heal the paralyzed man until after he declared his authority to forgive sins.

Disease and disability are consequences of living in a fallen world, meaning that sin's permeating effects are the root cause of all sickness and suffering. By healing the paralyzed man in demonstration of his own power over sin's effects, Jesus proved his authority over sin itself.

[30 : 16] The Lord thus performed the undeniable miracle of physical healing so that everyone watching would know that the Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins. The miracles are not the point, they're the pointers.

Jesus can do what no one else can do because he is God. The miracles just confirm the message and the message is, behold your God, he has come.

And this story in particular demonstrates that Jesus did not come merely to show the power of God but to bring the salvation of God. the man left carrying his bed but he no longer carried the burden of his sins on his back.

Listen to this quote from J.C. Ryle. J.C. Ryle said, who can doubt that to the end of his days this man would thank God for this paralysis.

Without it he probably would have lived and died in ignorance and never seen Christ at all. Without it he might have kept his sheep on the green hills of Galilee all his life long and never been brought to Christ and never heard the blessed words your sins are forgiven.

[31 : 29] This paralysis was indeed a blessing who can tell but it was the beginning of eternal life to his soul. We need to notice something else in Mark 2.10 that is significant.

Jesus affirmed his deity not only by forgiving the man's sins and healing the man's body but also by applying to himself the title Son of Man. This title is used 14 times in Mark's gospel and this is the first of those 14.

Twelve of those 14 references are found after Mark chapter 8 verse 29 when Peter confessed Jesus as the Christ of God. It was definitely a messianic title and the Jews would have interpreted it that way.

Jesus used this title about 80 times total in all the gospels combined. Listen to Daniel chapter 7 verses 13 and 14 you'll hear why the Jews would have interpreted Son of Man as a messianic reference.

So here are Daniel 7 verses 13 and 14 Daniel is describing one of his visions here and he says I saw in the night visions and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man and he came to the ancient of days and was presented before him and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples nations and languages should serve him his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away in his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

[33 : 15] Daniel's vision there refers to God the Father as ancient of days and the son of man obviously is the Messiah. by forgiving the paralyzed man's sin by reading the scribes thoughts and by healing the paralyzed man Jesus has provided three proofs in just tonight's passage that he is that Messiah.

More than that Jesus has provided proof that he is God. The Old Testament connects the son of man and authority and by this point in Mark you're probably starting to say I bet Isaiah has something to say about that and if you're thinking that you're right.

Isaiah 33 22 says the Lord is our king he will save us the spoils of his victory then will be divided even to the lame and the lame will partake that comes from Isaiah 33 23 in a verse we looked at earlier Isaiah 33 24 says and no inhabitant will say I am sick the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity Isaiah also says in 35 4 that God will come to save and as a result we see in 35 6 that the lame man will leap like a deer it's no accident then that Jesus healed the lame man he was making the people see the fulfillment of Isaiah 35 6 after the formerly paralyzed man walked out the crowd's reaction seems good on the surface after all look at Mark chapter 2 verse 12 again it says 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 sadly the reaction stops there people are supposed to see Jesus claiming to be the son of man with authority from God forgiving a lame man and causing them to suddenly cry out behold our God he has come to save us but there's amazement and astonishment but that's all we see we see no repentance or faith from this crowd if they really believed that Jesus could forgive sins they too would have been figuratively tearing the roof off and begging him for forgiveness but they don't they were awestruck and they glorified God but they still view Jesus just as a man to whom God had granted authority in spite of the obvious miracle and the unprecedented demonstration of divine power many remained unconvinced of Christ's deity they witnessed his supernatural works but they refused to believe in his divinity in John

John explains in 12:37 though he had performed so many signs before them they still did not believe in him remember the main idea Jesus initiates conflict with the religious leaders by announcing his

authority to forgive sin the scribes recognized this as a claim to be God here's another quote from J.C.

[36 : 32] Ryle he said let us consider how great must be the authority of him who has the power to forgive sins this is the thing that no one but God can do no angel in heaven no person on earth no church in council no minister of any denomination can take away from the sinner's conscience the load of guilt and give him peace with God they may point to the fountain open for all sin they may declare with authority whose sins God is willing to forgive but they cannot absolve by their own authority they cannot put away transgressions this is God's prerogative and he has put it in the hands of his son Jesus Christ Warren Wearsby said 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

Jason Meyer said this story implicitly pleads with us not to be like the scribes or the crowd and fall short of faith we should be like the paralyzed man and his friends first learn the lesson of this man Jesus goes beyond our obvious need to our ultimate need we need forgiveness and adoption into God's family more than we need anything else or anyone else this story is a stirring reminder that Jesus is both willing and able to forgive earlier we read a quote from J.C.

Ryle that talked about the healed man ultimately being grateful for his paralysis paralysis the paralytic received more than physical healing for his life on earth he received spiritual healing for his eternal life Ryle also said how many in every age can testify that this paralytic experience has been their own they have learned wisdom by affliction bereavements have proved mercies losses have proved real gains sicknesses have led them to the great physician of souls sent them to the bible shut out the world shown them their foolishness taught them to pray thousands can say like David it is good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees and that verse there is psalm 119 71 when you come to Jesus you always get more than you bargained for Jesus looks beyond the obvious need to the ultimate need paralysis will not send anyone to hell sin will send the people to hell the pardoning of sins is so much more than the healing of our ills you can get to heaven in spite of a sick body but you cannot get to heaven without a pardon

John MacArthur reminds us the words Jesus spoke to that paralyzed man two millennia ago are the same words he still speaks to all who come to him in genuine faith those words are your sins are forgiven the greatest benefit christianity offers to the world is the forgiveness of sins Jesus christ made forgiveness possible through his death on the cross he offers that forgiveness to all who are willing to prevent or to repent of their sins and believe in his name he offers that forgiveness to all who are willing to repent of their sins and believe in his name but here's the sobering side of MacArthur's statement the difference between those who look forward to eternal life in heaven and those who will experience everlasting punishment in hell is not a matter of personal godliness as other religions teach but is bound up entirely in one word forgiveness since all of sin both eternal destinations are inhabited by people who were sinners in this life only those in heaven were granted divine forgiveness and the accompanying imputed righteousness that is appropriated by grace through faith in

Jesus Christ simply stated every person's greatest need is the forgiveness sin and the greatest benefit of the gospel is its offer of divine pardon to those who believe then he says no other religion provides the means for full forgiveness consequently all other religions are actually collecting souls for hell during this advent season remember that Jesus came to pay the price for true believers sins and to allow us to be adopted into God's family and that adoption gives every believer the full rights and privileges that a son would have had in ancient times as Paul put it in Galatians chapter 4 verses 4 through 7 but when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons!

[41 : 53] And because you are sons God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying Abba Father so you are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through God let's pray Father we thank you for this reminder tonight that Jesus is more than just the Messiah although that would be worthy of worship in itself Jesus is the Messiah but he is also God and we thank you that you have sent him to earth to redeem sinners from their sins as we go through this Christmas season let us see that truth more and more and let us become more and more grateful for what Jesus has done for us in Jesus name we pray Amen