

Drop in Visitor, Part 2

Mark 2:1-12

ABC 3/13/22

How would you like it if you fell off a ladder, broke your leg, experienced great pain, were taken to the ER, & the doctor walked in, looked at you, & said, *Your sins are forgiven. Go home?* I'm willing to bet you'd rather he just fix your leg & relieve your pain, right? Jesus' words of forgiveness must have been puzzling to the paralytic, his friends, & the whole crowd in Mk 2:1-12. We began looking at this episode last week & made it through the 1st 5 vss. As we read this story, we expect the paralytic is looking for physical healing not the forgiveness of his sins. If this man was looking for his sins to be forgiven he'd have gone to Jerusalem to present a sin offering at the Temple. For Jesus to pronounce forgiveness of his sins was scandalous & it's meant to jolt us & all who were present that day. Let's read it again. 1-12

1. The Pessimism (6-7) Jesus was very popular, as we've seen, & has been attracting large crowds. Because of that, he'd attracted the attention of the Jewish religious leaders. 6-7

One of the scribes & Pharisees functions was to be the guardian of orthodoxy & deal with anyone who veered from it. It seems they'd sent out a scouting party to check up on Jesus. They came all the way from Judea & Jerusalem to check up on Jesus (5:17). Although the room was so crowded that most people were standing outside, these religious dignitaries had got a place seated inside. When Jesus says to the paralyzed man, **Son, your sins are forgiven**, the religious leaders are shocked, angry, & outraged. This declaration of forgiveness gave them what they were looking for so they could attack Him. They believe Jesus is showing contempt & irreverence toward God because He claims to do something only God can do. The Bible's concept of sin always relates to God as the primary One being sinned against, even sins that are directed at other people. For Jesus to forgive people of their sin would be like Him saying He was the One who'd been sinned against. & so the scribes think to themselves, **who can forgive sins but God alone?** (7) & they're correct. Let's say Tom, Dick, & I are talking. Tom punches Dick in the mouth. There's blood everywhere. I go to Tom & say, *Tom, I forgive you for punching Dick.* What's Dick going to say? *Nate, you can't forgive him. Only I can forgive him. He didn't wrong you; he wronged me!* Right? You can only

forgive a sin if it's against you. That's why, when Jesus looks at the man on the mat & says, **Your sins are forgiven**, He's clearly assuming the status of God for Himself. Forgiveness of sins is the exclusive right of God because every sin, even sins committed against one's neighbor, is ultimately against God.¹ That's why in David's adultery with Bathsheba & his murder of Uriah, he confesses to God, **Against You, You only, I have sinned** (Ps 51:4). By forgiving this man, Jesus is claiming to be God incarnate & was doing only what God Himself can do. The religious leaders realize He isn't just claiming to be a miracle worker, He's claiming to be Yahweh & they're furious about it. Every scribe knew the thinking of Judaism that said that no man, not even the Messiah, would have the authority to ultimately forgive people's sins. According to them, the Messiah would exterminate the godless in Israel, crush demonic power, & protect His people from the reign of sin, but the forgiveness of sins was never attributed to him.² That was the prerogative of God alone. For anyone but God to claim to forgive sin was blasphemy. Since, in their opinion, Jesus wasn't & couldn't be God, He was blaspheming. If they were right about who Jesus was, their reasoning was flawless. Their error was in not recognizing who Jesus really was, the Son of God who has authority to forgive sins.³ They understood that Jesus was claiming divinity. That's why they're so angry. Notice the phrase **this man** (7). That's a contemptuous response. They're expressing their disdain for Him & His words. Their major premise is that only God can forgive sins. Their minor premise is that **this man** claims to forgive sins. Therefore, Jesus is claiming to be God, which is blasphemy. Blasphemy was the most atrocious crime in Jewish culture. It was so serious it could bring the death penalty (Lv 24:16). The Jews defined 3 levels of blasphemy: 1) A person blasphemed God by speaking evil of His law, like they accused Stephen of at his stoning (Acts 6-7). 2) One blasphemed by slandering, speaking evil of, or cursing God (Ex 20:7). 3) One blasphemed when they assumed the rights & privileges of God & acted as if they were actually God. It was this form of blasphemy that they charged Jesus with committing (Jn 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:33) & they'd use these same accusations to justify His murder (Jn 19:7). Vs 7 ends with the truthful phrase, **who can forgive sins but God alone?**

¹ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel according to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, p 78

² William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, p 95

³ Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8, p 633

They were right. Ultimate forgiveness, the elimination of sin, must come from God. All sin is a rejection of His law so all sin is against Him. Therefore, only God can forgive sins. But their accusation of blasphemy wrongly assumed that Jesus was just a man, not God incarnate. By claiming authority to forgive sins, Jesus was either God or a blasphemer. There's no middle ground. Jesus couldn't have been a good man, a true prophet, or a great teacher if He were a blasphemer of God. But these hard-hearted legalists couldn't conceive that Jesus was actually God. Think of it: Here was God present with them & they missed it. In fact, they saw no need for forgiveness because they thought themselves to be righteous. They resented Jesus offering forgiveness, not only because they didn't believe He was God, but also because they considered it unjust for a person to be forgiven simply by asking for it instead of by earning it, as they thought they had done. The 2 great barriers to salvation have always been the refusal to recognize the need for it & the belief that it can be earned or deserved. The leaders' hearts were so hardened against Jesus, that every miraculous evidence of His divinity & messiah-ship drove them to deeper unbelief rather than to repentance. The atmosphere inside this house filled with people, proud leaders, & the paralytic is now hostile, & Jesus knows it. How does Jesus respond to their thoughts?

2. The Perception 8-9

They didn't speak but it was as if they had a cartoon speech bubble above their heads & Jesus could read their thoughts. There are no secrets with Him. Jn 2:25 tells us, Jesus **did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man**. Although the Scribes held their tongues here, they couldn't hide their hearts because the One who could read hearts was present. Vs 8 says, **Jesus, aware in His spirit**, meaning He instantly, internally detected their hostile reaction. He didn't need visible or audible evidence, but inwardly & intuitively He knew their reasonings. He counters their unspoken heart question with one of His own: **Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?** (8). They probably thought Jesus would merely heal this paralytic dropped in His lap. But He pronounces forgiveness, which rocks them & feeds their bias against Him. I love the fact that we only know what the scribes are thinking because Jesus omnisciently revealed to us what their thoughts were. Matthew's account adds that the leaders were thinking evil in their

hearts. An evil heart is a heart that plots against God. They're wanting to condemn & find fault with Jesus. These leaders weren't holy men but harsh & hateful men. Yet with great patience, Jesus poses a question meant to lead them to the right conclusion in vs 9. But notice Jesus didn't argue against their basic theological premise, that only God can forgive sins. Rather, He affirmed that truth. Jesus knew they were accusing Him of the blasphemy of claiming equality with God. That was His whole point. His claim to be able to forgive sins was nothing less than a claim that He was God.⁴ The question Jesus then asks them, **Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take up your pallet, & walk'?** (9) has been puzzled over for 2,000 years. At 1st glance, Jesus seems to be saying, *Anybody can say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' but not everybody can heal. To show you that I'm the Lord with authority to forgive sins, I will heal this man.* The apparent implication is it's a lot harder to heal somebody than to forgive somebody. But this is a profoundly puzzling question because it has more than one answer. Jesus is also saying: *My friends, it's going to be infinitely harder to bring about the forgiveness of sins than you can imagine. I'm not just a miracle worker; I'm the Savior. Any miracle worker can say, 'Take up your mat & walk,' but only the Savior of the world can say to a human being, 'All your sins are forgiven.'* From our perspective, it seems the easier of the 2 options would've been to say, **Your sins are forgiven**, because no one could verify whether sins were forgiven or not. But if He said, **get up, pick up your pallet & go home** (11), He'd put Himself on the spot & people would know immediately whether or not He had the power to heal. However, I don't think Jesus thought it was easier to say, **Your sins are forgiven**. In that culture, in the presence of His enemies, it would have been far easier for Jesus to say, **Get up & walk**. Jesus knew if He said, **Your sins are forgiven**, He was throwing down the gauntlet, because He was claiming divinity. Jesus certainly wasn't taking the easy way out. If He not only heals this man but forgives his sins as well, He's taking a decisive & irreversible step down the path to His death. Jesus wasn't taking the easy way out.⁵ With His question, Jesus proves He is God in their midst. **Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven"; or to say,**

⁴ John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p 105

⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Mark*, First Edition, St. &rew's Expository Commentary, p 40

“Get up, & pick up your pallet & walk”? (9). There are 2 major punches going on here. 1st, Jesus says, *If I can deal with the consequences & symptoms of sin, like paralysis, then I can forgive sins as well.* The religious leaders had seen irrefutable evidence of Jesus’s power to heal disease. Sin & disease are inseparable, just as sin & demons, sin & death, sin & disaster, & sin & the devil are inseparable. The One who brings God’s rule, the Messiah, will have to be able to deal with sin or else He couldn’t deal with the consequences of sin found in disease, death, demons, & disaster. & the One who can deal with the consequences of sin can certainly deal with sin itself, which He does on the cross. Why don’t the religious leaders answer the question of vs 9? Because the answer was obvious. Both healing & forgiveness of sins are impossible for men but both are equally possible for God. The point is, no one but God can heal disease with a word & no one but God could forgive sins with a word. Jesus can do both with divine ease. & since Jesus can do both, He is God. The 2nd major punch is that Jesus declares that saying something is easier than doing it. You’ve probably said something like, *Put up or shut up. Show me the money. Put your money where your mouth is. Fish or cut bait.* Notice in vs 9 the phrase, **to say**, is listed twice & it carries some emphasis. **Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are forgiven”; or to say, “Get up, & pick up your pallet & walk”?** Jesus is reminding the religious leaders, the crowd, the men on the roof, & the paralytic on the floor, that saying something is easier than doing it. It’s much easier to make a claim that can’t be verified than to make one that can be. The religious leaders had no visible way to verify the paralytic’s forgiveness but they were about to receive abundant evidence of his healing, which would force the conclusion that Jesus actually could & did forgive sins. I believe Jesus purposely waited to heal the man until after He declared His authority to forgive sins. Disease & disability are consequences of living in a fallen world, meaning that sin’s effects are the root cause of all sickness & suffering. By healing the paralyzed man, in demonstration of His power over sin’s effects, Jesus proved His authority over sin itself.

3. The Proclamation The credibility of Jesus’s entire ministry & message rests on the outcome of the commands He gives the paralytic. **10-11**

Jesus states very clearly the reason for this miracle. Vs 10 begins with **so that**, a purpose statement.

Here is my purpose, Jesus says. I will prove to you who I am, & that I can & do forgive sins. I'm doing this, not only to prove I have the ability but that I also have the right to do so as God Himself. In order to prove I have the authority to forgive sin you can't see I will do what only God can do & command a man to be healed with just a word, so you can see.

Jesus declares He presently, continually, & factually has the authority to forgive sins. That means Jesus has the capability & right to send away sins, erase our debt, & make us right with God. Think with me: Only God can forgive sins. God is in heaven, but God is also on earth in the person of Jesus. So Jesus can forgive sins on earth. How does this happen? Because Jesus is the **Son of Man**. Vs 10 says, **so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**. The words **authority on earth** are interesting. I think they can be taken 2 ways. 1st, Jesus is saying He had the power & right, while on earth, to forgive sins. He proved this several times as He forgave those who came to Him. Aren't you glad He has that power? If you need forgiveness today, you can come to Him & find the complete forgiveness you need (Jn 6:37; Col 2:13). 2nd, Jesus is saying that the place to receive forgiveness is here on earth. It will be too late to be forgiven when this life is over. If you expect to meet Jesus or St Peter at heaven's gate & have them weigh your good deeds against your bad ones & let you into Heaven that way, you're going to be eternally disappointed. If you need to be saved from your sins, if you need forgiveness (& you do), the time to come to Jesus is now. Jesus wanted to show that He, **the Son of Man**, had the **authority** to forgive sins. Jesus used the title **Son of Man** often because it was a Messianic title free from political & nationalistic sentiment. Jesus could have referred to Himself as *King* or *Christ*, but those titles, in the ears of His audience, sounded like *the One who will defeat the Romans*. **Son of Man** was His favorite designation of Himself. Thousands of pages & buckets of ink have been used to describe what the phrase, **Son of Man**, means. Briefly, Jesus is called both the **Son of God** & the **Son of Man** in the NT. Mark has already introduced Him as the **Son of God** (1:1). Here, Jesus introduced Himself as the **Son of Man**. The most frequent title for Jesus in the NT is **Christ**. The 2nd is **Lord**. #3 is **Son of Man**. However, it's far & away Jesus' favorite self-designation. **Son of Man** occurs more than 80x in the NT, & in every case except 2, Jesus used the title of Himself. Who is **the Son of Man**? Daniel describes the appearance & character of **the Son of Man** as a heavenly being appointed by the Ancient of Days (7:9), God the Father, to be the Lord of the earth & to receive the kingdom forever

(13–14). The **Son of Man**, having descended from heaven, returns there & is enthroned in glory. When Jesus called Himself the **Son of Man**, He was saying: *I've descended from heaven. I'm not from this earth.* This title is filled with theological significance concerning Jesus' deity & office as Messiah. That's why Jesus used it here; He wanted to show His divine authority to forgive sin. **Son of Man** is also the title describing Christ's humiliation. It describes God being born as a Baby, growing in obscurity, ministering as a Man, then offering Himself in the place of sinful mankind, paying the price as a Man for our sins upon the cross. Jesus is the **Son of Man**, the ultimate Man, the perfect Man who would die for mankind. The **Son of Man** is God's representative on earth. & it's this God/Man, Jesus, who can forgive sin on earth because He is the One who accomplishes salvation from sin by dying on the cross for the sins of His people. Our ultimate need, the paralytic's ultimate need, isn't to be rid of our problems but to be reconciled to our Maker. & this is what Jesus has come to do. If sin is ultimately the root of all our suffering, then what we need most is for Someone to solve that problem. We need someone with power & authority, not just over disease & demons but over sin & death. & Jesus is making it clear that He is that Person. The scribes were right, only God can forgive sins. Yet what they failed to see was that God, in human flesh, was standing in front of them. This is the good news of the gospel that God hasn't left sinners alone in a world of sin & suffering. God Himself has come to us. He's lived the life we cannot live, a life of perfect, sinless obedience to the Father. & then, though He had no sin for which to die, He chose to die on a cross for our sins as our Substitute. Jesus died for our sins. The good news keeps getting better because Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave in victory over sin & death. & He offers reconciliation to God for anyone, anywhere who repents & believes in Him. This is the gospel. Unfortunately, there are many places where a false gospel is proclaimed. They say if you believe in Jesus, you'll be healed of all your diseases; that if you trust in Jesus, you'll be free of sicknesses today. That is not the gospel. The gospel is much better news than that.⁶ & by the authority of God who was born Man, Jesus speaks to the paralytic, **I say to you...** He doesn't wave His arms, shout, hit the man's forehead, scream, pray, dance, name or claim, or burn incense. He merely speaks.

⁶ David Platt, *Paralysis & Forgiveness*, www.thegospelcoalition.org/conference_media/paralysis-and-forgiveness/

In front of everyone, to the crowded house full of people & those pressing in from outside, to the proud religious elites who'd come to entrap Him, to the 4 men peering down through the roof, Jesus gives the paralytic 3 simple commands. **I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet & go home** (11). Just like when God said in Gen 1:3, '**Let there be light,**' & **there was light**. God said to the unmoving paralytic laying in front of Him, *Rise up, take up, & be off*, & it was so. Do you see it? **Get up** is testing the man's faith. His faith would be shown by his obedience to the command, believing he could do as told. **Pick up your pallet** demanded prompt obedience, which follows faith. **& go home**, ordering him to be on his way implies immediately. As a resident of Capernaum, he'd be a walking witness to Jesus's authority to forgive sins. But how do we know this paralytic is really forgiven?

4. The Proof The man could give no proof of his having received forgiveness of his sins but he could show that he'd been healed. **12a**

Instantaneously, the paralyzed man was completely healed. There were no lingering effects of his disability, no rehabilitation, & no physical therapy. Instantly the paralyzed man was fully healed. How do we know? Because he 1) got up, & immediately 2) picked up the pallet, & 3) went out. These 3 acts provide undeniable evidence of his complete healing at the word of Jesus, proving His supernatural power to not only heal, but to forgive sins as well. & the once paralyzed man **went out in the sight of everyone**. The crowd, which couldn't be penetrated earlier, now parted to make room for him to walk through. Here's this man whom they all knew was genuinely paralyzed. & now, as he leaves, they see him walking. Some probably touched him, patted him on the back, hugged him, or gave him a fist bump. They all saw him. It was proved **in the sight of everyone**. A public testimony of Jesus's authority, which makes the unbelief of the religious leaders all the more inexcusable. The crowd knew this wasn't a fake healing, which caused...

5. The Praise The fact of pardon is announced in vs 5, questioned in vss 6-9, validated by the healing in vs 11, & now recognized by the crowd in **vs 12b**.

The result was 3-fold. 1st was amazement meaning ecstasy, astonishment, or a good type of confusion. Matthew says **they were awestruck** (9:8). Luke adds, **They were all struck with**

astonishment (5:26), describing the awestruck fear that comes from being exposed to the person, presence, & power of God.⁷ Picture this crowd in fearful wonder at what they've just seen. They can't contain themselves. 2nd, as a result, they were glorifying God. They give God recognition & honor Him for who He is & what He's done. They were praising God, honoring God, & thanking God for what they'd seen. Little did they realize that the God they were glorifying was actually standing in their presence. 3rd, they verbally declared at the end of vs 12, **We have never seen anything like this**. They were impressed by what they saw with their eyes, the physical, visible, external restoration. But sadly, no comment was made by anyone, in any of the gospels, about the forgiveness of sins which the healing actually proved. The faith of the paralytic & his friends on the roof must have caused a much deeper reaction than what we see from the crowd & certainly much different than the smug scribes. For most in the crowd, this response was a superficial faith. Though they were awestruck & though they glorified God, they still viewed Jesus as just a man to whom God had granted authority. In spite of the obvious miracle & the demonstration of divine power, most remained unconvinced of Jesus' deity. They witnessed His supernatural works, but they refused to believe in His divinity. As John explained, **But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him** (12:37; 1 Cor 1:22).⁸ But more important to today is, how will you respond? Will you respond superficially or will your response go much deeper? This account clearly proves Jesus is God. The religious leaders said only God can forgive sin, implying they thought Jesus believed He was God or that Jesus believed He could somehow do only what God could do. If anyone said or thought that of me or you, we'd immediately say, *I'm not God*. We'd deny it. But Jesus didn't deny it & by that He was owning & proving His deity. Jesus is all-powerful & has the might & right to merely speak a word to alter nature, heal a disease, cast out a demon, calm a storm, stop a disaster, prevent a pain, or forgive sin. Jesus is all-knowing. He knew their thoughts & He knows your thoughts, motives, & feelings. He knows your devotion, service, & love for Him. Jesus is all-wise. He knew by saying, **Son, your sins are forgiven**, He'd be

⁷ John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, pp 106–107

⁸ John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p 107

forcing a showdown with the religious leaders. He knows by allowing your trial, your sickness, your financial crisis, & your emotional pain that it will grow you as His child or force you to submit to His leadership. Or, if you reject Him like the scribes did, make your condemnation even more just. Jesus is trustworthy. He's deserving of our trust as He was of the faith of the 4 men & the paralytic. Jesus is patient. I don't know why He didn't immediately call down judgment on these arrogant religious leaders. Yet I'm so grateful He was patient with me, an arrogant sinner, just as much in rebellion to Him as those corrupt leaders. Jesus is forgiving. Only He has the right & authority to remove your sins permanently, so you can stand in God's presence now & forever in heaven. You must turn from sin in repentance & turn to Jesus in dependent faith. Jesus is eternal. The end result of salvation is eternal glorification when all believers will be freed from the presence, the consequences, & the effects of sin, forever in glorified bodies. Jesus is the One who helps us with our greatest need. Jesus possesses the authority to pronounce our sins forgiven because He is God & He's provided the means of forgiveness through His death, burial, & resurrection. Forgiveness isn't obtained by going to a priest, going to a church, or performing enough good deeds. Forgiveness only comes through Jesus. Therefore, never stop rejoicing in Jesus' forgiveness & always keep trusting in His victory over sin. Praise God every day we've been forgiven of our sin. & praise God every time someone else is forgiven of their sin. Heaven rejoices when a sinner repents & God forgives.

A passage like this reminds us that forgiveness of sins is our greatest problem & our greatest need. That needs to be our lens by which we watch the news & observe what's going on around us. Why the pain? Why the evil? Why the moral corruption? Because of sin. This is what the Bible teaches us & we need to run to the solution. The solution isn't found in government or politics. The solution isn't found in democracy. The solution isn't economic. The solution isn't found in being healthy. The solution is Jesus Christ. The solution is the Savior who offered Himself, who did the greater miracle, who did the harder work of offering Himself on the cross to take the punishment of your sin. That's the solution. We need to desperately cling to Him every day. If you haven't already, do it today. You don't want to walk out of here & be in a place where you're still separated from God,

deserving His wrath & punishment. Get right with God. He's made it simple & easy in His Son Jesus Christ. He paid the punishment for you. Put your whole life in faith & trust in the hope & the solution of Jesus Christ. Don't let go. Don't get distracted. Don't look for other solutions. Come to Jesus, His sinless life, atoning death, & victorious resurrection. This is Jesus, God in human flesh, with the authority to forgive sins. For all who trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, you can know cancer will not have the last word. Dementia will not have the last word. Paralysis will not have the last word. Parkinson's will not have the last word. Pain will not have the last word. Heart attacks, hospital rooms, & hospice won't have the last word. Death itself won't have the last word. Why? Because death has been defeated by **the Son of Man**. The good news of the gospel isn't that Jesus will heal you of all your sicknesses now. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus will forgive you of all of your sins forever. & forgiveness is God's greatest gift because it meets our greatest need. In announcing forgiveness to this paralytic, Jesus is announcing His coming cross. I love the way Paul talks about this in Col 2:

You were dead in your transgressions & the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, listen to this, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; & He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers & authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him (13-14).

That's the gospel. Jesus' miracles functioned as signs validating His claim that He possessed divine authority to forgive sinners. Jesus not only had the power to forgive sinners, He became the perfect sacrifice on which divine forgiveness is based. The words Jesus spoke to that paralyzed man 2,000 years ago are the same words He still speaks to all who come to Him in genuine faith, **your sins are forgiven**. Jesus made forgiveness possible through His death on the cross. He offers that forgiveness to all who are willing to repent of their sin & believe in His name (Rom 10:9-10).⁹ **For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, / say, whether things on earth or things in heaven (Col 1:19-20). PRAY**

⁹ John MacArthur, *Mark 1-8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, p 107