

## **Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man**

Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; **Luke 5:17-26**

On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, 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. And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” -he said to the man who was paralyzed- “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.” (English Standard Version – ESV)

### **Background:**

- Pharisees were located especially in Jerusalem and Judea; therefore, the “teachers of the law” mentioned by Luke are likely residents of Galilee. All Galilean villages had scribes schooled in Jewish law, who could execute legal documents and train children in the Law of Moses.

- The average Capernaum home may have allowed only about 50 persons standing (the span of the largest excavated homes from that city is just 18 feet). One gained access to the roof by an outside staircase, so these men could reach it unimpeded. The roof of a single-story Palestinian home was sturdy enough to walk on but was normally made of branches and rushes laid over the roof's beams and covered with dried mud, so one could easily dig through it.

- Luke changes this Palestinian roof structure to the flat roof of interlocking tiles more familiar to his own readers, as preachers today change details when retelling biblical stories to make them relevant to their hearers. For this reason, Luke does not mention their digging through the roof.

- Judaism believed that only God could forgive sins, but most Jews allowed that some of God's representatives could speak on God's behalf. The passive, “are forgiven,” could be interpreted this way. However, Jesus was not a priest, no one had offered sacrifice, and the scribes had heard no basis for the pronouncement of forgiveness, not even clear indication of repentance.

- Technically, “blasphemy” involved pronouncing the divine name or perhaps inviting people to follow other gods; less technically, it had to involve at least dishonoring God. Therefore, these legal scholars are mistaken in interpreting Jesus' words as blasphemy, even by their own rules.

- Some Jewish teachers accepted miracles as verification that a teacher was God's representative; others did not, if they disagreed with that particular teacher's interpretation of Scripture.

## Questions:

- + Why does Luke take note of the fact that “the power of the Lord was with him [Jesus] to heal”? Have you experienced the power of the Lord? If so, what happened, and how did you respond?
- + What obstacles did the men have to overcome in order to lay the paralyzed man before Jesus? What obstacle have you overcome through faith? What obstacle exceeds your faith, and why?
- + If Jesus forgave the man when he saw their faith, then how are faith and forgiveness related? For what sinful thought, word or deed do you need to trust God for His forgiveness right now?
- + Who are the scribes and Pharisees, and why do they accuse Jesus? How does Jesus respond? When you are accused by others, how do you respond or react? How should you respond?
- + Is the main point of this story Jesus’ power or authority to forgive sins? Explain your answer? In what ways do you submit to Jesus’ authority? In what ways do you not submit, and why?