

## What We Desperately Need from Jesus

In Mark 2:1-3:6 we enter a series of five stories in which Jesus encounters human conflict and criticism—and he does it all for our salvation. This first text in this series tells us about a truly remarkable encounter with Jesus.

### Mark 2:1-12

<sup>1</sup> And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup> Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup> 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? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’? <sup>10</sup> But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—<sup>11</sup> “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” <sup>12</sup> 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!”

### I. We Desperately Need the Forgiveness of Sins (vv.1-5)

There are many things we feel like we really need God to do for us: heal us of our diseases, help us with our boyfriend, enable us to do well on an exam, help us get the job we want, etc. The paralytic in this story, along with his friends, really felt that he desperately needed one thing from Jesus: the ability to walk; otherwise, he could not work, could not earn money, and could not provide for himself and his family. But Jesus saw something else far more important to this man: the ability to escape the wrath of God's judgment and to receive eternal life. When he saw their faith, therefore, he graciously said, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

This, too, is our most desperate need, and Jesus lovingly forgives us.

### II. We Desperately Need the Assurance of our Forgiveness (vv. 6-11)

Notice that the scribes immediately question Jesus in their hearts. We, too, are surrounded by smart people and religious leaders who question Jesus' ability to forgive simply by trusting in Him. Our assurance of Jesus' forgiveness is invaluable to our psyches. Most of the psychological disorders of our day stem from unresolved guilt in our lives. The great psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger, used to say that he could empty 75% of his psychiatric ward beds if he could simply convince his patients of one simple truth: "Your sins are forgiven!"

Jesus, Who knows every heart, challenges the leaders of his day with a classic "a fortiori" argument. Which is easier: to declare that a man's sins are forgiven (which could scientifically neither be proven or disproven) or to declare the man healed of his paralysis (which would be clearly proven to everyone in sight)? If He performed the more difficult, then we should be able to conclude that he did the easier, right? So Jesus commanded him to rise, pick up his mat, and walk home—and he did! Your sins are truly forgiven!

**III. We desperately need to be amazed by the grace of Jesus (v. 12)**

See how everyone was amazed; and, being amazed, they now glorified God. We badly need to be amazed by His love and power, because when we're not, we seek amazement through other means, which, although fine in themselves, become cheap, destructive substitutes: drugs, alcohol, learning, romance, success, shopping, traveling, etc. We need simply to gaze again upon the forgiving love of our Savior and respond with worship and service.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What did it cost Jesus to say to the paralytic and to you, "your sins are forgiven?"
2. How do we now know for sure that his forgiveness is real for us?
3. How do "guilt feelings" mess up our lives, especially our psychological and spiritual lives?
4. Why can we continue to sin against God and our neighbor but not be burdened with guilt? Why does our freedom from guilt not lead to continual, rampant sin?
5. How can we be continually amazed with Jesus in such a way that we remain excited and motivated to worship and serve Him?