

Mark: 2:1–12

From Catena Aurea:

1. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.
2. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.
3. And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.
4. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.
5. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.
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?
8. And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?
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?
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.
12. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

AUGUSTINE. (de Con. Evan. ii. 25) But Matthew writes this miracle as if it were done in the city of the Lord, whilst Mark places it in Capernaum, which would be more difficult of solution, if Matthew had also named Nazareth. But seeing that Galilee itself might be called the city of the Lord, who can doubt but that

the Lord did these things in His own city, since He did them in Capernaum, a city of Galilee; particularly as Capernaum was of such importance in Galilee as to be called its metropolis? Or else, Matthew passed by the things which were done after He came into His own city, until He came to Capernaum, and so adds on the story of the paralytic healed, subjoining, And, behold, they presented to him a man sick of the palsy, after he had said that He came into His own city.

THEOPHYLACT. He saw the faith of the sick man himself, since he would not have allowed himself to be carried, unless he had had faith to be healed.

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA. Now they accuse Him of blasphemy, anticipating the sentence of His death: for there was a command in the Law, that whosoever blasphemed should be put to death. And this charge they laid upon Him, because He claimed for Himself the divine power of remitting sins: wherefore it is added, Who can forgive sin, save God only? For the Judge of all alone has power to forgive sin.

THEOPHYLACT. But though their thoughts were laid bare, still they remain insensible, refusing to believe that He who knew their hearts could forgive sins, wherefore the Lord proves to them the cure of the soul by that of the body, shewing the invisible by the visible, that which is more difficult by that which is easier, although they did not look upon it as such. For the Pharisees thought it more difficult to heal the body, as being more open to view; but the soul more easy to cure, because the cure is invisible; so that they reasoned thus, Lo, He does not now cure the body, but heals the unseen soul; if He had had more power, He would at once have cured the body, and not have fled for refuge to the unseen world. The Saviour, therefore, shewing that He can do both, says, Which is the easier? as if He said, I indeed by the healing of the body, which is in reality more easy, but appears to you more difficult, will prove to you the health of the soul, which is really more difficult.

THEOPHYLACT. Again, He says, Take up thy bed, to prove the greater certainty of the miracle, shewing that it is not a mere illusion; and at the same time to shew that He not only healed, but gave strength; thus He not only turns away souls from sin, but gives them the power of working out the commandments.

CHRYSOSTOM. (non occ.) Further, He first healed by the remission of sins that which He had come to seek, that is, a soul, so that when they faithlessly doubted, then He might bring forward a work before them, and in this way His word might be confirmed by the work, and a hidden sign be proved by an open one, that is, the health of the soul by the healing of the body.

THEOPHYLACT. This is not however the paralytic, whose cure is related by John, (John 5) for he had no man with him, this one had four; he is cured in the pool of the sheep market, but this one in a house. It is the same man, however, whose cure is related by Matthew (Matt. 9) and Mark. But mystically, Christ is still in Capernaum, in the house of consolation.

THEOPHYLACT. If therefore I, having the powers of my mind unstrung, remain, whenever I attempt anything good without strength, as a palsied man, and if I be raised on high by the four Evangelists, and be brought to Christ, and there hear myself called son, then also are my sins quitted by me; for a man is called the son of God because he works the commandments.

THEOPHYLACT. But how should I be borne to Christ, if the roof be not opened. For the roof is the intellect, which is set above all those things which are within us; here it has much earth about it in the tiles which are made of clay, I mean, earthly things: but if these be taken away, the virtue of the intellect within us is freed from its load. After this let it be let down, that is, humbled. For it does not teach us to be puffed up, because our intellect has its load cleared away, but to be humbled still more.

THEOPHYLACT. It is necessary to take up also one's bed, that is the body, to the working of good. For then shall we be able to arrive at contemplation, so that our thoughts should say within us, never have we seen in this way before, that is never understood as we have done since we have been cured of the palsy; for he who is cleansed from sin, sees more purely.

From Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture:

2:7a It is Blasphemy!

The Scribes' Entanglement.

Chrysostom: They persecuted Jesus not only because he broke the Sabbath but also because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God, which is a far more drastic declaration. He confirmed this through his own actions.... The scribes themselves had devised this definition. They themselves had introduced the precept. They themselves had interpreted the law. But he proceeded to entangle them in their own words. In effect he said: It is you yourselves who have confessed that forgiveness of sins is given to God alone. The Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof 6.

2:7b Who Can Forgive Sins But God Alone?

Only God Forgives Sin.

Irenaeus: How can sins be rightly remitted unless the very One against whom one has sinned grants the pardon? Against Heresies 5.17.1.

The Ministry of Forgiveness.

Ambrose: In their ministry of the forgiveness of sin, pastors do not exercise the right of some independent power. For not in their own name but in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit do they forgive sins. They ask, the Godhead forgives. The service is enabled by humans, but the gift comes from the Power on high. The Holy Spirit 3.18.137.

2:8 Why Do You Question Thus in Your Hearts?

Discerning Secrets of the Heart.

Chrysostom: The scribes asserted that only God could forgive sins, yet Jesus not only forgave sins, but showed that he had also another power that belongs to God alone: the power to disclose the secrets of the heart. The Gospel of St. Matthew, Homily 29.1.

2:9 Which is Easier to Say?

Healing the Whole Person.

Clement of Alexandria: The physician's art, according to Democritus, heals the diseases of the body; wisdom frees the soul from its obsessions. But the good Instructor, Wisdom, who is the Word of the Father who assumed human flesh, cares for the whole nature of his creature. The all-sufficient Physician of humanity, the Savior, heals both body and soul conjointly. "Stand up," he commanded the paralytic; "take the bed on which you lie, and go home"; and immediately the paralytic received strength. Christ the Educator 1.4.

2:10 Authority on Earth

Acting upon His Own Authority.

Chrysostom: Whenever there was need to punish or to honor, to forgive sins or to make laws, Christ was fully authorized to do it. Whenever Christ had to do any of these much greater things, you will not characteristically find him praying or calling on his Father for assistance. All these things, as you discover in the text, he did on his own authority. On the Incomprehensible Nature of God, Homily 10.19.

2:11 Take Up Your Pallet

Reverse Your Relation with Sickness.

Peter Chrysologus: Take up your bed. Carry the very mat that once carried you. Change places, so that what was the proof of your sickness may now give testimony to your soundness. Your bed of pain becomes the sign of healing, its very weight the measure of the strength that has been restored to you. Homily 50:6.

The Charge to Perform an Act of Which Health Is a Necessary Condition.

Ambrose: He charged the man to perform an action of which health was the necessary condition, even while the patient was still praying for a remedy for his disease.... It was our Lord's custom to require of those whom he healed some response or duty to be done. On the Christian Faith 4.5.54–55.

Inward Paralysis.

Augustine: You have been a paralytic inwardly. You did not take charge of your bed. Your bed took charge of you. On the Psalms 41.4.