

# Mark 2 Commentary

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John Mark

## MARK: THE SERVANT JESUS

Click chart to enlarge  
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## THE LIFE OF CHRIST SHOWING COVERAGE BY MARK (SHADED AREA)

Click chart to enlarge  
Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

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**Mark 2:1** When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home.

NET Mark 2:1 Now after some days, when he returned to Capernaum, the news spread that he was at home.

GNT Mark 2:1 Κα εσελθ ν π λιν ες Καφαρναο μ δι μερ ν κο σθη τι ν ο κ σ τ ν.

NLT Mark 2:1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home.

KJV Mark 2:1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

ESV Mark 2:1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home.

NIV Mark 2:1 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.

ASV Mark 2:1 And when he entered again into Capernaum after some days, it was noised that he was in the house.

CSB Mark 2:1 When He entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that He was at home.

- **again:** Mk 1:45 Mt 9:1 Lu 5:18
- **and it:** Mk 7:24 Lu 18:35-38 Joh 4:47 Ac 2:6



Click Aerial View to Enlarge for Labels

## Parallel Passages

Mt. 9:1–8+ Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His own city (ONLY MARK CALLS IT **CAPERNAUM** = "HOME [BASE OF OPERATIONS](#)" SO TO SPEAK). 2 And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven." 3 And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes." 4 And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? 5 "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'? 6 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then He \*said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home." 7 And he got up and went home. 8 But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Lk 5:17+ (NOTE WORDS IN BOLD ARE NOT IN MARK'S VERSION) One day He was teaching; and **there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem**; and **the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing** 18 And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. 19 But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus. 20 Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." 21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" 22 But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts? 23 "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? 24 "But, so 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, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home." 25 Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. 26 They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

## JESUS BEGINS HIS SECOND TOUR OF CAPERNAUM

When He had come back to Capernaum several days afterward - Afterward refers to after the events between His previous

departure and return, days associated with the healing of the leper and His movement to "unpopulated areas." (Mark 1:40-45+) Matthew says "Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to **His own city** (Capernaum)." (Mt 9:1)

**Capernaum** - **Capernaum** (Kfar = village + Nahum = "Nahum's Village) was a **city of Galilee** (Lk 4:31+), in the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas on the border of his brother Philip's domain. ([map of Jesus' Ministry in Galilee](#)) and was 680 feet below sea level (cf Nazareth at 1200 ft above sea level so Nazareth to Capernaum is "straight downhill" so to speak), located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee and began Jesus' "headquarters" during His Galilean ministry. Mt 4:13+ tells us after "leaving Nazareth (BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF - READ ABOUT HIS RECEPTION AND REJECTION IN Lk 4:24-27, 28, 29+), He came and settled in **Capernaum**, which is by the sea, in the region of **Zebulun and Naphtali**. **Capernaum** was the largest city on the lake because it was a crossroads of a major trade routes. It had a customs tax office and a Roman garrison because it was a potential area of crime because there was so much action, so much trade, so much travel traffic. One modern source refers to **Capernaum** as "a ruined town in northern Israel, on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee." If you click the aerial view of Capernaum above, you will see all that is left of this city once the headquarters of the Light of the world. Why is this once prosperous city now in ruins? In Lk 10:15+ Jesus warned the city that because it had rejected the Light (Jesus actually lived there), "you, **Capernaum**, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!" In a parallel statement by Jesus in Matthew He warned "And you, **Capernaum**, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you." (Mt 11:23-24, cf Jn 1:11+, Mk 6:11) Jesus the **Light of the World** (Jn 1:4-9+, Jn 8:12, Jn 9:5) had resided in Capernaum and shed much spiritual light in the city, speaking the word with authority (Mk 1:22+), healing illness and casting out demons (Mk 1:34+) and yet for the most part there is only an occasional mention of belief (see this example in Mk 2:5-12). John spoke about the danger of rejecting the spiritual light of Jesus

So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the **Light** is among you. Walk while you have the **Light**, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 "While you have the **Light**, believe in the **Light**, so that you may become **sons of Light**." These things Jesus spoke (IN JERUSALEM), and He went away and hid Himself from them. 37 But though He had performed so many signs before them, **yet they were not believing in Him**. (Jn 12:35-37)

**THOUGHT** - The present ruins of the physical city of **Capernaum** ([See the remains of the synagogue where Jesus likely preached!](#)) are but a dim metaphorical picture of the spiritual doom that ultimately befell the souls of those who lived there and are now "**ruined**" forever in **Hades** and who have a future appointment to experience the **Second Death** when they are thrown into the **Lake of fire**, the place of eternal punishment in **Gehenna** (Rev 20:15+), "into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mt 8:12+), "where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." (Mk 9:48+). Dear reader, may God grant you a holy fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7+) and a proper fear of His righteous wrath and if you have not yet done so, that you **by grace** through faith (Eph 2:8-9+) receive Jesus as YOUR Savior, Redeemer and Lord. If you steadfastly refuse His offer of grace, one day the day of grace and the door of grace will be closed and you too will suffer the fate of Capernaum ([see note](#)), for you too are consciously choosing (**volitionally**) to continually reject the Light (Jn 3:19-21+, cf Jn 1:4-5+, Jn 8:12), even as that ancient city did! (read 2 Cor 6:2+, Acts 16:31+, Ro 10:9-10+) Jesus warned "**For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.**" (Jn 12:35-36)

**It was heard that He was at home** - Even without texting and email, the mouth to ear to mouth word that Jesus was in town spread rapidly. **At home** undoubtedly is a reference to Peter's home, which had become a **base of operations** which is a military term and apropos for Jesus was continually engaged in spiritual warfare with the powers of darkness battling for the lost souls of men! In Mt 9:1 Capernaum is referred to "His own city." (cf Mk 1:33+, Mk 3:20; Mk 9:33; Mk 10:10).

I love the way **Kent Hughes** sets the stage for the miracle in Capernaum - Alpine hikers have told me that when caught in a brewing storm, they have seen the hair of their fellow-hikers stand straight out from their heads like radiant crowns, while the metal frames of their backpacks glowed with an eerie neon-like blue light called "St. Elmo's Fire." The same phenomenon has been recorded by sailors from ancient times when they would see the tops of their ships' masts crowned with a ghostly aura of light. In all cases it means that the air is charged with electricity and that lightning is imminent. For the hiker it means it is time to discard the pack and take cover. I think this image conveys something of the atmosphere in Capernaum as described in our next text, Mark 2:1-12.

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**Craig Evans** on the sequence of events in the Synoptic Gospels - **Jesus has returned to Capernaum.**

In the Markan context the healing of the paralyzed man (or paralytic) follows the healing of the leper (Mark 1:40–45).

Luke agrees with this sequence (with his version of the leper story in Luke 5:12–6 following his version of the healing of the paralyzed man in Luke 5:17–26).

However, the Matthean sequence is different, with the healing of the paralyzed man (Matt. 9:1–8) following the healing of the demoniacs of Gadara (or Gerasa), which was considered in the section immediately above.

This lack of sequential or chronological agreement should occasion no concern, for much of the Gospel narrative is comprised of separate units of tradition that did not circulate in a widely agreed upon order. Indeed, even the early second-century church father Papias remarks that the evangelist Mark “wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said and or done by the Lord” (as quoted by Eusebius, Church History 3.39.15). ([Bible Knowledge Background Commentary](#))

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**Groups We See in Mark 2:1–12 By: Virgil Edwards**

**I. WE SEE THE HEARERS...**

Mark 2:2 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.

**II. WE SEE THE HELPLESS...**

Mark 2:3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

1. He could not get to Jesus
2. He was bedfast

**III. WE SEE THE HELPERS...**

Mark 2:3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

1. Prayer
2. Compassion
3. Faith
4. Determination

**IV. WE SEE THE HINDERS...**

Mark 2:4 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.

1. The scribes said, “What right did he have to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee.”

**V. WE SEE THE HEALER...**

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son thy sins be forgiven thee.

Mark 2:11 I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

**VI. WE SEE THE HARASSERS...**

Vs. 6–7 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only.

**VII. WE SEE THE HILARIOUS...**

Mark 2:12 They were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

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**Fabulous Friends Mark 2:1-12**

1. The Popular Master (Mark 2:1)
2. The Preached Message (Mark 2:2)
3. The Palsied Man (Mark 2:3b)
4. The Persistent Men (Mark 2:3a, 3c, 4)
5. The Prominent Moment (Mark 2:5a)
6. The Powerful Mandate (Mark 2:5b)
7. The Perplexing Mindset (Mark 2:6-7)
8. The Perceived Mutterings (Mark 2:8-9)
9. The Precious Miracle (Mark 2:10-12a)

## 10. The Praising Multitude (Mark 2:12b)

- Cantrell's Bible Commentary Snapshots – Mark.
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### **We Have Never Seen It on This Fashion By: Bob Marshall, Dalton, GA**

#### INTRODUCTION:

We are living in that day when religion has failed to meet the needs of society and are trying to blame Christianity. Religion seeks new fashions to present their social gospel. Here in our New Testament account is a new fashion of true evangelism that will work to bring souls to the Saviour.

#### I. THEY SET A NEW FASHION BY THEIR FAITH. (Mark 2:5)

1. They believed Christ was concerned about this man.
  - a. They set a pattern in faith of Christ's concern about helpless souls.
  - b. What do we believe about Christ's concern for helpless souls.
2. They believed Christ was power to help this helpless soul,
  - a. They had no faith in the man's ability to help himself.

#### II. THEY SET A NEW FASHION IN THEIR CONCERN.

1. Many had an unusual and common concern for this helpless man.
  - a. All were sorry this man was in his condition.
  - b. All wished this man could find help for his condition.
2. These men set a new fashion of compassion for this man.
  - a. They did not excuse themselves with just feeling sorry for man.

#### III. THEY SET A NEW FASHION IN THEIR EFFORTS. (Mark 2:3, 4).

1. The common effort was revealed by others.
  - a. They may have walked by and asked the man to go to meeting with them.
  - b. They might as well ask a mountain to go with them, (lost, helpless).
2. They were persistent in their efforts to get the man to Jesus.

#### IV. THEY SET A NEW FASHION IN RESULTS. (Mark 2:12).

1. The helpless man received a new fashion in his results.
  - a. Nothing has ever happened to him like this before.
  - b. He was forgiven of sin and made whole for the first time.
2. The religious crowd receive a new fashion in what they saw.
  - a. They had settled with just going and listening before.

#### CONCLUSION:

God gave us people that will dare be a fashion setter in faith, concern, efforts and results. Do the unusual if you are to win souls. The second mile awaits the one who will win souls.

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### **The Miracle of the Palsied Man By: Virgil Edwards**

#### INTRODUCTION:

We have here a threefold miracle:

1. A forgiving of sins. Mark 12:5
2. A reading of men's thoughts. Mark 12:6–8
3. The healing of palsy.

#### I. JESUS CONDESCENDS TO COME INTO THE HOUSE. Mark 12:1

1. Jesus fills the house when He comes in. Mark 12:2
2. He preached the word to them while in this house. Mark 12:2
3. He will come into the heart and house, if invited. Rev. 3:20

#### II. FOUR MEN BRING ANOTHER TO CHRIST. Mk 2:3, 4

1. They got together.
2. Each man carried his corner.
3. They met with difficulty. Mark 12:4
4. They tried a new way. Mark 12:4
5. We see what people can do when they try.

#### III. JESUS SAW THEIR FAITH. Mark 12:5

1. God honors faith.
2. They believed if they could get him to Jesus, He would do something for him.

3. They believed that if they would not give up, they would get him in.

#### **IV. JESUS FORGAVE HIM OF HIS SINS AND HEALED HIM.** Vs. 5, 10–11

1. Only God can forgive sins. Mark 12:7
2. He was healed immediately. Mark 12:12
3. No doubt he was glad he had been afflicted. Ps. 119:71

#### **V. HE TOOK UP HIS BED BEFORE THEM ALL** Mk 2:12

1. He went, to his own house. Matt. 9:7
2. We must keep on walking.

#### **VI. THE PEOPLE SAW STRANGE THINGS AND GOD RECEIVED THE GLORY.**

1. The man glorified God. Luke 5:25
  2. The people glorified God. Luke 5:26
  3. The people saw strange things. Luke 5:26
- 

### **“Advertising Jesus” Mark 2:1–12**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

These people were advertising for Jesus! We advertise the choir, the preacher, etc., but we need to advertise Jesus.

#### **I. A GREAT CROWD GATHERED.** (Mark 2:2)

When the church gets on fire, the world will come to watch it burn!

#### **II. THERE WAS PREACHING** (Mark 2:2)

The average church never hears a sermon on sin, separation, the devil, hell, worldliness!

#### **III. FOUR MEN HAD A REVIVAL.** (Mark 2:3)

They wanted to bring a fellow to God!

1. Love: It never fails!
2. Faith: Only Believe!
3. Prayer: It changes things!
4. Joy: “Unspeakable and full of Glory!”

#### **IV. THESE MEN WERE HELPERS.**

They were out doing something for Jesus!

#### **V. THEY BROUGHT THE HELPLESS.** (Mark 2:4)

This man could not help himself

#### **VI. THEY CAME IN CONTACT WITH THE HINDERERS** (Mark 2:4)

Too many were around!

#### **VII. THEY BROUGHT HIM TO THE GREAT HEALER.** (Mark 2:5)

Notice three things Jesus did for him:

1. He loved him:
  2. He loosed him from sin: (John 3:18)
  3. He lifted him.
- 

### **The Ten-Legged Man and the Quartet That Raised the Roof off the House**

By: Virgil Edwards, Box 501, Athens, GA

Mark 2:1–12

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The Helpless, Mk 2:3
2. The Helpers, Mk 2:3
3. The Hinders, Mk 2:4
4. The Healer, Mk 2:11

#### **I. CHRIST IS IN THE HOUSE—Mk 2:1**

1. How Christ can be in your home:
  - a. In your heart.
  - b. In the written Word.
  - c. In the Spirit.

#### **II. WHERE CHRIST IS DOING BUSINESS, PEOPLE USUALLY GATHER**

v. 2; Gen. 49:10

1. He preached the word unto them.

#### **III. THE PALSIED MAN, Mk 2:3**

1. This is a type of a sinner.
2. The bed speaks of helplessness and suffering.
3. The type of bed indicates he was very poor.
4. He was very much cast down. Mt. 9:2.

#### **IV. THE FOUR NEIGHBORS, Mk 2:3**

1. They got together, worked together
2. They had a great determination.
3. They had great faith, Mk 2:5; Mt. 9:29.
4. What if they had not tried to get this man to Christ?

#### **V. THE OPPOSITION**

1. The crowd, Mk 2:4
2. The Scribes, Mk 2:6–7
3. The man being sick.

#### **VI. THE GREAT SAVIOUR**

1. He received the man.
2. He honored their faith, Mk 2:5
3. Christ read the thoughts of the Scribes, Mk 2:8
4. Only God can forgive sins

#### **VII. THE UNUSUAL HAPPENINGS THAT DAY**

Vs. 12 They were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

### **James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose**

#### **Mark 2:1-12.**

Jesus does not always get into the house. There are some houses where the door is shut in His face (Rev. 3:20). Sometimes He comes in uninvited (Luke 24:36), but He always accepts the invitation to come in (Luke 24:29). "If any man open the door I will come in" (Rev. 3:20). As the air rushes in to fill the empty space, so does the grace of Christ press in at every opening in our hearts. "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." We note some fresh lessons here, that—

1. Jesus condescends to come into the house (v. 1). "Behold I stand at the door and knock." "He that inhabiteth eternity dwelleth with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15). The mighty God seeketh an entrance into our hearts that we might "sup with Him." He who was laid in a manger will not pass by the poor and needy.
2. Jesus fills the house when He comes in. "There was no room" (v. 2). There is no need for worldly entertainments to attract when Jesus comes in. When He comes in He brings a great company of new friends with Him. When the glory came into the temple it filled the house. He who is the fullness of the Godhead can surely fill up every desire and longing of the heart. Filled with the fullness of God.
3. When Jesus is in the house His presence cannot be hid (v. 1). We cannot separate influence from the presence of Christ any more than we can have the rose without its fragrance, gold without colour, or the sun without light. If Christ dwells in our hearts the love of Christ will flow abroad. When Jesus comes in He leaves the door open for others to follow, and that His words may be heard without.
4. Those who come to Jesus may meet with difficulties (v. 4). There was a crowd of hearers around the door. Hearers often stand in the way of seekers. Some are so stiff and selfish that they will not move an inch out of the old rut to allow a sinner to get to Christ. They are never out of their pew on Sunday, but they will not lift their little finger to save a soul. They will not enter themselves, nor suffer those who would.
5. Those who bring others to Jesus must not be afraid of new methods (v. 4). If you can't get them in as others have come, let them down through the roof. If you can't get them out at the gate, let them down over the wall in a basket. If they don't understand the word "believe," try the word "come." If they will not come in go out to them. But what would they say? Well, let them say. Although they should call you a roof-breaking fanatic, what of that if sin-sick souls are saved. This is the new fashion.
6. Some will never come to Christ unless they are brought (v. 3). If this sick man had not been carried to Jesus he certainly never would have been healed by Him. It takes four to bring a sinner to Jesus: (1) The Law of God. (2) The Spirit of God. (3) The Word of God. (4) The Servant of God.
7. When a man is really anxious to be saved he will not be ashamed to be helped. How often we have seen people blush and fidget when talked to about their need of salvation in the presence of others. It was like offering to run for a doctor to a man who believed

himself in good health. The man of Ethiopia was glad of direction because his soul was in deep concern (Acts 8:31), so was the jailer (Acts 16:30).

8. When a man is healed his life will show it (v. 12). No man can ever remain the same after coming into contact with Jesus Christ. The sun either softens or hardens, revives or withers. The bed on his back was evidence enough that a great change had been wrought. All whose sins are forgiven are called upon to glorify God in their body.

9. Christ is all sufficient for all who come to Him. He was all sufficient for the sick and palsied, all sufficient for the faith of those who brought him, all sufficient to read the hearts of the reasoning onlookers. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Is Jesus in your house?

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**Mark 2:2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them.**

NET Mark 2:2 So many gathered that there was no longer any room, not even by the door, and he preached the word to them.

GNT Mark 2:2 κα̅ συν̅ χθησαν̅ πολλο̅ στε̅ μηκ̅ τι̅ χωρε̅ ν̅ μηδ̅ τ̅ πρ̅ ς̅ τ̅ ν̅ θ̅ ραν̅, κα̅ λ̅ λει̅ α̅ το̅ ς̅ τ̅ ν̅ λ̅ γον̅.

NLT Mark 2:2 Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them,

KJV Mark 2:2 **And straightway** (bold only in [Textus Receptus](#)) 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.

ESV Mark 2:2 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.

NIV Mark 2:2 So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.

ASV Mark 2:2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, no, not even about the door: and he spake the word unto them.

CSB Mark 2:2 So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and He was speaking the message to them.

- **straightway:** (eutheos) **ONLY IN THE KJV** [Textus Receptus](#) - Mk 2:13 1:33,37,45 4:1,2 Lu 5:17 12:1
- **and he:** Mk 1:14 6:34 Ps 40:9 Mt 5:2 Lu 8:1,11 Ac 8:25 11:19 14:25 16:6 Ro 10:8 2Ti 4:2

**And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room - Many?** How many? We don't know but there were so many that the door was blocked, an important fact as the story unfolds.

**Gathered together** (assembled)([4863](#))([sunago](#) from **sun** = with + **ago** = to lead) means literally to lead together. To gather together persons for any of several reasons including worship, deliberation, festivity, battle, work, hospitality, or reconciliation. In this they came to see Jesus. It is interesting that this verb is the root of the word "synagogue," the place of Jewish worship and teaching. Of course, every place that Jesus was at would be a "true synagogue" teaching truth not traditions.

**Not even near the door** - The **door** of Peter's house (cf Mk 1:33). The residents of Capernaum had not forgotten that incredible day some time before when "the whole city had gathered at the door. And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons." (Mk 1:33-34+)

**And He was speaking the word to them - Speaking** ([laleo](#)) is in the [imperfect tense](#) - over and over. The **Word** ([logos](#)) which came with authority every time He spoke. What **word**? "repent and believe in the gospel." (Mk 1:14-15+ cf Mk 4:14, Mk 4:33) The parallel passage in Lk 5:17+ says **He was teaching** ([didasko](#)) also in the [imperfect tense](#). Who is **them**? Clearly there were many from Capernaum and surrounding regions. But Luke tells us that "**there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law** (KJV = "doctors of the law") **sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem.**"

**Mark 2:3 And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men.**

NET Mark 2:3 Some people came bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.

GNT Mark 2:3 κα̅ ρχονται̅ φ̅ ροντες̅ πρ̅ ς̅ α̅ τ̅ ν̅ παραλυτικ̅ ν̅ α̅ ρ̅ μενον̅ π̅ τεσσ̅ ρων̅.

NLT Mark 2:3 four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat.

KJV Mark 2:3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

ESV Mark 2:3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

NIV Mark 2:3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them.

ASV Mark 2:3 And they come, bringing unto him a man sick of the palsy, borne of four.

CSB Mark 2:3 Then they came to Him bringing a paralytic, carried by four men.

- **bringing:** Mt 9:1,2-8 Lu 5:18-26

## A POOR PARALYTIC WITH FOUR GREAT FRIENDS

### Related Passages:

Matthew 9:2+ And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven."

Luke 5:18-20+ And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him.

**And they came** - Who is they? Four men carrying another man.

**Spurgeon** has a message entitled [Carried by Four](#) - THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORKERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED. Yonder is a householder as yet unsaved: his wife has prayed for him long; her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed thee with a son, who with thee rejoices in the fear of God. Hast thou not two Christian daughters also? O ye four, take each a corner of this sick man's couch, and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Saviour. A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ; you are praying for your children; never cease from that supplication: pray on. Perhaps one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sabbath-school teacher will make a third; he will take one corner of the bed; and happy shall I be if I may join the blessed quaternion, and make the fourth. Perhaps, when home discipline, the school's teaching, and the minister's preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child. We now pass on to the second observation, that SOME CASES THUS TAKEN UP WILL NEED MUCH THOUGHT BEFORE THE DESIGN IS ACCOMPLISHED. They must get the sick man in somehow. To let him down through the roof was a device most strange and striking, but it only gives point to the remark which we have now to make here. If by any means we may save some, is our policy. Skin for skin, yea, all that we have is nothing comparable to a man's soul. When four true hearts are set upon the spiritual good of a sinner, their holy hunger will break through stone walls or house roofs. ([Carried by Four](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - We must admire several characteristics of these men, qualities that ought to mark us as "fishers of men." For one thing, they were deeply concerned about their friend and wanted to see him helped. They had the faith to believe that Jesus could and would meet his need. They did not simply "pray about it," but they put some feet to their prayers; and they did not permit the difficult circumstances to discourage them. They worked together and dared to do something different, and Jesus rewarded their efforts. How easy it would have been for them to say, "Well, there is no sense trying to get to Jesus today! Maybe we can come back tomorrow."

**Bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men** - These **four men** were "friends in need" who were proving to be "friends indeed." And remember unlike lepers, paralytics were not ostracized by society and did not need to cry "Unclean! Unclean!" The paralytic like all with severe disease/disability were stigmatized because of the false notion of the Jews that all such maladies were related to the person's sin, which of course is not true. Even His own disciples had bought into this false teaching and when they encountered a blind man John records that "His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" (Jn 9:2) Jesus answered them immediately declaring "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him." (Jn 9:3)

**Paralytic** ([3885](#)) (**paralutikos** from **paraluo** = to paralyze = verb in Lk 5:17-26 - **pará** = from + **lúō** = to loose) is one who is lame, crippled or paralyzed, disabled or weak of limb, usually in the feet or legs and unable to walk. KJV has "sick of the [palsy](#)."

**Paralutikos** - 10x in 9v - Matt. 4:24; Matt. 8:6; Matt. 9:2; Matt. 9:6; Mk. 2:3; Mk. 2:4; Mk. 2:5; Mk. 2:9; Mk. 2:10. Not found in Septuagint.

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**Illustration of a Friend** - A young boy, dirty and dressed in scruffy clothes, came into a Christian bookshop in an English village. His head reached just above the counter. He asked the shopkeeper, "How much are yer Bibles, mister?" The man pulled his cheapest Bible off the shelf, one with children's pictures, but the £1.5 in the boy's grubby hand was not enough.

"Hang on, I've got more money in my sock," the boy said. He sat down on the floor, pulled off a shoe and then a long, woolen sock.

"The Bible's not for me; it's for me mate. I want him to know Jesus like I do."

"You can have the Bible," the shopkeeper said. "Shall I rub the price off?" Putting his sock and shoe back on, the boy answered, "No, leave it on. I want me mate to know how much I like him." As he walked out the door with the Bible, he stopped, turned and said with a grin, "It's a good book, ain't it mister?"

By seeking to bring his friend to Jesus, that boy was being the best kind of friend in this world.

**To help our friends find forgiveness,  
we must bring them to Jesus  
Who has authority to forgive sins.**

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## **Bringing Our Friends to Jesus**

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5

Today's Scripture & Insight: Mark 2:1-12

During my childhood, one of the most feared diseases was polio, often called "infantile paralysis" because most of those infected were young children. Before a preventive vaccine was developed in the mid-1950s, some 20,000 people were paralyzed by polio and about 1,000 died from it each year in the United States alone.

In ancient times, paralysis was viewed as a permanent, hopeless condition. But one group of men believed Jesus could help their paralyzed friend. While Jesus was teaching in the village of Capernaum, four of the men carried the man to Him. When they couldn't reach Jesus because of the crowd, "they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on" (Mark 2:1-4).

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven' " (v. 5), followed by "Get up, take your mat and go home" (v. 11). How remarkable that in response to the faith of the men who brought their friend, Jesus forgave his sins and healed his incurable condition!

When someone we know is facing serious physical difficulty or a spiritual crisis, it is our privilege to join together in prayer, bringing our friends to Jesus—the only One who can meet their deepest needs. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries. Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You can make an impact today.

Reflect & Pray

Lord Jesus, we know that You can speak the words of eternal life and healing to people in great need. We bring them to You in prayer today.

Praying for others is a privilege—and a responsibility.

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## Play **Michael Smith's "[Friends are Friends Forever](#)"**

Packing up the dreams God planted  
In the fertile soil of you  
Can't believe the hopes He's granted  
Means a chapter in your life is through  
But we'll keep you close as always  
It won't even seem you've gone  
'Cause our hearts in big and small ways  
Will keep the love that keeps us strong

And friends are friends forever  
If the Lord's the Lord of them  
And a friend will not say never  
'Cause the welcome will not end  
Though it's hard to let you go  
In the Father's hands we know  
That a lifetime's not too long

To live as friends

With the faith and love God's given  
Springing from the hope we know  
We will pray the joy you'll live in  
Is the strength that now you show  
But we'll keep you close as always  
It won't even seem you've gone  
'Cause our hearts in big and small ways  
Will keep the love that keeps us strong

And friends are friends forever  
If the Lord's the Lord of them  
And a friend will not say never  
'Cause the welcome will not end  
Though it's hard to let you go  
In the Father's hands we know  
That a lifetime's not too long  
To live as friends

**Mark 2:4 Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.**

NET Mark 2:4 When they were not able to bring him in because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Jesus. Then, after tearing it out, they lowered the stretcher the paralytic was lying on.

GNT Mark 2:4 κα μ̄ δυν̄ μ̄νοι προσεν̄γκαῑ ᾱτ̄ δῑ τ̄ν̄ χ̄λον̄ πεστ̄ γασαν̄ τ̄ν̄ στ̄ γην̄ ποῡ ν̄, κᾱ ξορ̄ ξαντες̄ χαλ̄σι τ̄ν̄ κρ̄ βαττων̄ ποῡ παραλυτικ̄ς κατ̄κειτο̄.

NLT Mark 2:4 They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus.

KJV Mark 2:4 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.

ESV Mark 2:4 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.

NIV Mark 2:4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on.

ASV Mark 2:4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed whereon the sick of the palsy lay.

CSB Mark 2:4 Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above where He was. And when they had broken through, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying.

- **they removed:** Dt 22:8 Lu 5:19

[Click to enlarge](#)

## FOUR GREAT FRIENDS WITH GREAT DETERMINATION

### Related Passages:

Matthew 9:2+ And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven."

Luke 5:19+ But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus.

**Determination** describes devotion of one's full strength and concentrated attention to a task, certainly an apt description of these four friends! This passage could also be entitled "Where There is a Will, There is a Way!"

**Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd**- These four men had faith, but their faith was not mystical but practical! Why do I say that? They believed Jesus had the power to cure their friend, but they exerted considerable effort to bring him to Jesus! Vicarious faith is a "working faith." It almost sounds unorthodox for faith alone saves, but the faith that saves also works as in this illustration. Luke 5:18-19 says "they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him. But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd." Mark 2:2 explains that **"there was no longer room, not even near the door."**

[Click to Enlarge](#)

**They removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening**- Now don't miss this -- Jesus is teaching! And you think you've experienced distractions when you are preaching or teaching! This one has to beat them all! See schematic above from Faithlife.com (Logos) which shows flat roof and mud/straw matrix of a typical first century house in Israel.

**Marvin Vincent's** comments on **dug an opening** - Lit., scooped it out. Very graphic and true to fact. A modern roof would be untiled or unshingled; but an oriental roof would have to be dug to make such an opening as was required. A composition of mortar, tar, ashes, and sand is spread upon the roofs, and rolled hard, and grass grows in the crevices. On the houses of the poor in the country the grass grows more freely, and goats may be seen on the roofs cropping it. In some cases, as in this, stone slabs are laid across the joists. See Luke 5:19, where it is said they let him down through the tiles; so that they would be obliged, not only to dig through the grass and earth, but also to pry up the tiles. Compare Ps. 129:6.

**They let down the pallet ([krabattos](#)) on which the paralytic ([paralutikos](#)) was lying** - The house must have had an outside stairway to allow them to get the man on the roof. Imagine this scene! Luke says Jesus **was teaching** (Lk 5:17+) and all of a sudden the rafters start shaking. Some in the room probably thought it was another miracle, and in fact it was preparation for one. This miracle would be greater than the physical healings they had seen Jesus perform, because this miracle would result in soul healing, the greatest need of the paralyzed man and all men from all paralyzed by the fall of Adam! We are all cripples in need of Christ!

Luke 5:19+ says "they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus."

Matthew 9:2 just says "they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed."

**Barclay** on a typical house in that day - The Palestinian house was flat-roofed. The roof had only the slightest tilt, sufficient to make the rain water run off. It was composed of beams laid from wall to wall and quite a short distance apart. The space between the beams was filled with close packed twigs, compacted together with mortar and then marled over. It was the easiest thing in the world to take out the packing between two beams. In fact coffins were very often taken in and out of a house via the roof.

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Mark 2:1–12 The Paralytic And His Persistent Friends

November 22, 1963, is a date remembered by most people as the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Students of history will remember that two renowned authors passed away just about an hour before Kennedy and within minutes of each other: C. S. Lewis and Aldous Huxley. All three deaths were noteworthy, but one attracted far more publicity than the others.

In our reading today, we find three miraculous works by Jesus that happened at this house in Capernaum. Usually only one of these gets the most attention, so we will try to examine all three today and see how they are connected.

To modern audiences, the most familiar aspect of this story might be the act of the man's friends, lowering him down through an opening they made in the roof. Their act of faith precipitated an astounding miracle: Jesus telling the paralytic that his sins were forgiven—and then instructing him to take up his mat and walk (vv. 5, 9).

Jesus knew the thoughts of the teachers of the law who were in attendance, that they were silently appalled at His statement of forgiveness. So Jesus Himself asks the question, "Which is easier?" The question implies that anyone can walk around saying they offer forgiveness of sins. Jesus went beyond pronouncement to proof: the paralyzed man now walked. The eyewitnesses to this event had a choice. They could be upset because Jesus had demonstrated that He had the power to forgive sins, or they could believe.

Jesus demonstrated that He could forgive sins, know the private thoughts of others, and heal the paralyzed man to full strength (v.

12). As the Son of God, Jesus didn't have to try any harder to know a man's thoughts than He did to heal paralysis. But knowing a thought is momentary. Healing a malady is temporary. The forgiveness of sins? That's eternal. Jesus offered the man—and all the eyewitnesses present—the opportunity to be forgiven through belief in Him.

#### Apply the Word

Jesus saw the faith of the man and his friends and said, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (v. 5). You may never have witnessed a paralytic lowered through a ceiling or healed with mere words, but if you have faith in Christ, you are an eyewitness to His greatest miracle: the redemption of a sinner. Whatever stress or worry you may face, find rest in that truth and praise Jesus for His power to heal, to know, and to save..

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### Wholeness Of Life

Read: Mark 2:1-12

Son, your sins are forgiven you. . . . I say to you, arise. —Mark 2:5,11

Social worker Margaret Sangster told her colleagues about seeing a young boy in an urban ghetto who appeared little more than a bit of twisted human flesh. He had been struck by a car several months earlier and had not received proper medical attention.

Although he was not a part of her caseload, she took the boy to an orthopedist, who performed surgery on his legs. Two years later the boy walked into Sangster's office without crutches. His recovery was complete. Margaret recalled that as the two embraced, she thought, If I accomplish nothing else in my life, I have made a real difference with at least this one!

Sangster then told her colleagues, "This was all several years ago now. Where do you think that boy is today?" They suggested that he might be a teacher, a physician, or a social worker. With deep emotion, she responded, "No, he's in the penitentiary for one of the foulest crimes a human can commit." Then she said, "I was instrumental in teaching him how to walk again, but there was no one to teach him where to walk."

Our mission is to point people to Jesus. Only through Him can those with broken bodies, broken dreams, broken homes, and broken hearts experience wholeness of life. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, help us to tell of Your love for mankind—  
A love for the sin-sick, the broken, the blind;  
And help them to see by the way that we live  
The wholeness of life that You long to give.  
—DJD

Only Jesus can give wholeness of life to a broken world.

### Mark 2:5 And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven.

NET Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

GNT Mark 2:5 καὶ ὃν ἑσοῦεν πστιν ατν λγειτ παραλυτικ, τ κνον, φ εντα σου α μαρτ αι.

NLT Mark 2:5 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

KJV Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

ESV Mark 2:5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

NIV Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

ASV Mark 2:5 And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.

CSB Mark 2:5 Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

- **And Jesus seeing their faith:** Ge 22:12 Joh 2:25 Ac 11:23 14:9 Eph 2:8 1Th 1:3,4 Jas 2:18-22
- **said to the paralytic:** Mk 2:9,10 Isa 53:11 Mt 9:2 Lu 5:20 7:47-50 Ac 5:31 2Co 2:10 Col 3:13
- **Son:** Mk 5:34 Mt 9:22 Lu 8:48
- **sins:** Job 33:17-26 Ps 32:1-5 90:7-9 103:3 Isa 38:17 Joh 5:14 1Co 11:30 Jas 5:15



## FOUR FRIENDS WITH VICARIOUS FAITH

### Related Passages:

Matthew 9:2+ And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your sins are forgiven."

Luke 5:20+ Seeing their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."

**Samuel Chadwick** writes "By "vicarious" we mean something done for and instead of another. It is substitutionary. The vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ means that Christ suffered in our stead, and died for our sins. So there is a faith that is exercised in behalf of another, and is accepted for another." ([See his full sermon below](#))

As Richards says "Persistent faith moves us to overcome every obstacle and come to Jesus. After that everything is up to Him." (Bible Reader's Companion)

**And Jesus seeing their faith** - Who is "their?" This seems to be all 5 men (Mark 2:3 says four men carried the paralyzed man). Not only does Jesus see their faith, but He sees the greater need! They all had confidence in the power and willingness of Jesus to heal this desperate case. Their actions were the visible evidence of their faith. The faith referred to here was evidenced by the strenuous actions of the men. The aggressive, persistent effort of the paralytic's friends was visible evidence of their faith in Christ to heal. "What a repair bill Peter must have had when it came to replacing the torn-up roof." (Wuest)

**THOUGHT** - THESE 4 HAD VICARIOUS FAITH (SEE [ADDITIONAL NOTE BELOW](#)) -- BUT WHAT IS VICARIOUS FAITH? Obviously we as believers cannot take others to Heaven with us based solely on our faith. Each soul must express his or her own personal faith in Jesus. So what is vicarious faith as seen in these 4 men whose faith resulted in another man being brought to Jesus? Simply this -- they believed Jesus could heal their paralyzed friend if they could get him to Jesus. And the result of their vicarious faith was the expression of personal faith by the paralytic. **How is this vicarious faith manifested today?** When we bring them to Jesus - by sharing His Gospel, by bringing them to church and then going out for lunch to discuss what they heard, by praying for their soul, etc. When we pray for others to believe in Jesus is that not vicarious faith. I prayed for my 2 youngest children for 20 years before they surrendered to Jesus! My father prayed for me for 20 years before I believed!

Here are thoughts from **A B Bruce** on Lk 5:17-26+ (the parallel of Mark 2:1ff). He writes "We have here a distinct recognition of the value of intercessory prayer, or, if I may so express myself, of vicarious faith. God, we learn therefore, hears prayers of believing men offered up not for themselves but for others. (1) This doctrine is Scriptural. Abraham, Moses, &c. (2). This doctrine is reasonable. It can give a good account of itself before the bar of philosophy. It is a wise, God-worthy policy to encourage men to pray, live, and even die for one another, in the assurance that they pray not, live not, die not in vain. (3). The duty arising out of the foregoing doctrine is plain. It is without ceasing to desire and to pray for the well-being, spiritual and temporal, of all men, specially of those whose case Providence brings closest home to us. (Read the following passages and see if you can discern the principle of "vicarious faith." - Mk 5:25-34; Mk 7:24-30; Mk 10:46-52; Mt 8:5-13. And then practice "vicarious faith."

**Spurgeon** - Christ has eyes with which he can see faith. You and I cannot see it; but he can: "When he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins be forgiven thee." This was going to the very root of his disease. Jesus knew what the man really ailed; he was palsied in spirit as well as in body, and Christ removed the root of his disease by forgiving his sin.

**Morris** - It was not the faith of the palsied man, but the faith of His friends that prompted Jesus to heal the man. However, the man must have exercised repentance and faith as well, for Jesus to forgive his sins. Significantly, he was immediately "glorifying God" after his cure (Luke 5:25; see Matthew 9:6).

**Robertson on their faith** - The faith of the four men and of the man himself. There is no reason for excluding his faith. They all had confidence in the power and willingness of Jesus to heal this desperate case.

**Hiebert** - the extraordinary, ardent, persistent action of the four in getting the man to Jesus was visible evidence of their faith in His ability to heal. It proved the living nature of their faith.

**Donald English** - "In view of the circumstances it seems more likely that the ill man also had faith, bearing in mind all that he went through simply to be where he was." (The Message of Mark)

**John MacArthur** - The statement seeing their faith seems to indicate more than just a belief in Jesus' ability to

heal (cf. John 2:23–24). The forgiveness that the Lord granted indicates a genuine, repentant faith. This man (along with his friends) must have believed that Jesus was the One who offered salvation to those who repent (Mk 1:15). (MNTC-Mk)

**Brooks** - Probably the reference is to the faith of the four who went to such lengths to get the paralytic before Jesus, although the faith of the paralytic himself should not be excluded. (NAC)

**Hendriksen** - though the five did not **talk**, they **trusted!** And that was what really mattered. The confidence of the five touched the very heart of Jesus, who now, in accents tender yet firm, said to the paralytic, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” It was definitely the faith of the five that caused these words to flow from the Savior’s lips. For corroborating passages, showing how very important Jesus regarded faith to be, see Luke 7:9, 10; 8:48, 50; 17:19; 18:42; and see also Heb. 11:32 f.

**R C H Lenski** - The faith that Jesus saw manifested itself plainly enough. It was more than the ordinary faith which sought help of Jesus; it was a faith that was strong, persistent, inventive enough to discover the most unusual way of placing the sick man before Jesus. Why “their faith” should exclude faith on the part of the paralytic, as some assert, is hard to see. Surely, his friends did not bring him against his will, and, surely, he must have consented to be lowered through the roof. It is true, Jesus healed some who had no faith at the moment and waited for faith to follow the healing. But it is strange to find that commentators deny this man faith and yet let Jesus remit his sins. Where in all the Scriptures is remission ever obtained without faith? Moreover, some commentators voice the claim that faith must precede healing. But they contradict themselves in this instance: this man is healed without first having faith. Instead of ruling out the faith of the paralytic we must really place his faith ahead of that of his friends. They may have had faith only in the power of Jesus to heal miraculously because they had seen him do this. But this paralytic felt that he suffered from a greater ailment than paralysis and thus came to Jesus with the burden of his sins. Not a word is uttered by the paralytic or by his friends. More eloquent than words is the prostrate form lowered through the ceiling to the feet of Jesus and interrupting his teaching in the packed house.

**James Edwards** - The first mention of faith (2:5) in Mark significantly links it with acting rather than with knowing or feeling. We know nothing of the beliefs of the four friends of the paralytic except that they take action, including circumventing crowds and removing roofs to ensure that their charge is brought to Jesus. Faith is first and foremost not knowledge about Jesus but active trust that Jesus is sufficient for one’s deepest and most heartfelt needs. The question whether “their faith” includes the paralytic’s faith is not addressed in the relevant Gospel texts (Matt 9:2//Mark 2:5//Luke 5:20). On the one hand, it is difficult to imagine the four porters bringing the paralytic to Jesus against his will; surely, as Lagrange notes, it would be a rare case that a person with paralysis would not hope to be healed of the malady. Nevertheless, the plural pronoun (“their faith”) includes the faith of the porters, and this should not wholly surprise us. (PNTC)

**R T France** - Here we have no record of a verbal expression of faith, but the action of the man’s friends is sufficient to indicate their confidence in Jesus’ healing power (based already on ample evidence, 1:32–34), and their determination to draw on it for their friend’s benefit. (NIGTC)

**Robert Stein** - The **faith** of the paralytic and the men was manifested by their “**works**,” i.e., their removal of the tiles to lower the paralytic. A favorite expression of Luke was “your faith has ‘saved’ you” (cf. Lk 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42). For the tie between faith and miracles, cf. Lk 7:9, 50; 8:25, 40, 50; 17:5, 6, 19; 18:42.

**G Campbell Morgan** - “**Jesus seeing their faith.**” That is the statement which first arrests attention on reading the story. Details are not given here, beyond that of the **faith** with which these men came. (Mark) tells us that they broke up the roof, and let the sick man down into the midst. The fact here standing out is, that “**He saw their faith.**” There has been a good deal of speculation as to whose **faith** is referred to, but of one thing we may be perfectly sure, it was not only the faith of the men who brought him. “**Their faith**” demands some other interpretation; it demands the faith of the man, as well as the faith of the men who brought him, because Christ said to him, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” It would appear that our Lord saw that in his heart there was a desire for something deeper than physical healing; and that he was conscious that physical disability was the result of his own sin (THIS MAY BE TRUE AND MANY COMMENTATOR’S MAKE SIMILAR STATEMENTS - HERE IS THE POINT - THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY THAT THE MAN’S PARALYSIS WAS THE RESULT OF SIN - WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL ADDING TO THE TEXT WHAT IS NOT IN THE TEXT); and therefore with a great tenderness, in words thrilling with the music of the evangel He had come to create, He said to him, in effect: “Be of good cheer I am able to deal with the deepest matter; thy sins are forgiven.” That word was a response to faith. And yet, while we believe there was faith in the heart of the man himself, **we must not miss the important fact here that there is such a thing as vicarious faith. It is possible to help a man’s faith.**



“Jesus seeing their faith.”

**Craig Evans on seeing their faith** - In what sense does Jesus see their faith? In the other healing stories in Mark where faith is mentioned (cf. Mark 5:25–34; Mk 5:21–24, 35–43; 10:46–52) we read of people who overcome obstacles or in some sense take pains to approach Jesus. The episode of the paralyzed man fits this pattern and in fact is the first example of it. What is the object of their faith? Given the context, where the preaching of the word is mentioned, we should probably assume that their faith consists of belief in the message that Jesus proclaims. Of course, belief in the message entails belief in the messenger. But we should not read into their faith an element of christology (i.e., that Jesus is God’s son, Israel’s Messiah, or the Savior of the world). Rather, they believe that the kingdom of God approaches and that the proclaimer of the kingdom is able to make the presence of the awaited kingdom felt in tangible ways. Jesus had blessed others with healing. Surely, they reason, he can heal their paralyzed friend. (Ibid)

**Barclay on seeing their faith** - When Jesus saw **their faith**—the eager faith of those who stopped at nothing to bring their friend to Jesus won his cure. It still happens. (i) There are those who are saved by the faith of their parents (**ED**: He means because the children were led to Jesus by their parents' faith, their examples of faithful living for Christ. The children were saved because they repented and believed in Jesus Christ - there is no other way to be saved!). Carlyle used to say that still across the years there came his mother’s voice to him, “Trust in God and do the right.” (**ED**: I would change that slightly to be more specific because of Acts 4:12+ - "Trust in **the Lord Jesus Christ** and do the right enabled by the Spirit of Christ.") When Augustine was living a reckless and immoral life his devout mother came to ask the help of a Christian bishop. “It is impossible,” he said, “that the child of such prayers and tears should perish.” Many of us would gladly witness that we owe all that we are and ever will be to the faith of godly parents.

**Faith** (4102)(**pistis**) as it relates to God, is the conviction that God exists and is the Creator and Ruler of all things well as the Provider and Bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. As faith relates to Christ in this specific context it represents a strong conviction that Jesus could meet the needs of the paralytic, for similar healings had already occurred. This is the first mention of **pistis** in Mark’s Gospel

## THE SHOCKING STATEMENT

To some ears Jesus' words would be **shocking**, but to other ears they would be **salvific**!

**THOUGHT** - Have you heard these words dear reader? Perhaps you are a believer and you are continually reminded of some heinous sin/failure you had before you came to Christ. If so, may the Spirit use Jesus' words to this lame man, and your ears be opened and your heart be receptive to hear and assimilate the glorious, grace filled words "Son/daughter, your sins are forgiven!" How can Jesus make such a claim? While He had not yet borne the sins of men on Himself on the Cross (1 Pe 2:24+, 2 Cor 5:21+), He knew that His word **Tetestelai** (It is finished! Paid in full!) would resound and resonate not only into the future but into the past, so that all who ever believed in His death in their place for their sins would experience the forgiveness of sins forever and ever. Amen

**Said to the paralytic** (see **paralutikos**) "**Son, your sins are forgiven** - **Lenski** = "Dismissed are thy sins!" Imagine the 4 friends watching from the roof above -- they were blessed with a ring side seat to history! Won't it be fun talking with them in Heaven? And you've gotta love Jesus! The others in the room see this man's physical paralysis, but Jesus sees his spiritual paralysis, and forgoes the less vital physical healing, for the more critical spiritual "healing". Oh, to have eyes to see others as Jesus sees them! Let it be Lord. Amen!

Mt 9:2+ adds that Jesus said "**Take courage** (**tharseo**) **son**." Luke 5:20+ says **Friend** instead of **son**. This is the first time in Matthew that Jesus directly declares a person to be **forgiven**. When Jesus said **your** (singular) **sins are forgiven** imagine the reaction of the religious "super elite" - their legalistic, hypocritical, evil **stingers** would have "popped up" so to speak, vibrating like **scorpions** ready to inject their deadly venom (25 species are known to be able to kill humans)! While their theology was largely corrupt, this much was orthodox, for they knew that only God could forgive sins. But notice the striking irony. The ones that were suffering from the more deadly unseen paralysis were the Pharisees, not the man on the cot. They were paralyzed by their critical spirit, their lack of love, their inability to show compassion and worst of all their hard-hearted unbelief. Indeed, the scribes and pharisees were spiritual cripples, and without faith in **Christ the Healer**, their "paralysis" would take them to perdition, while a forgiven paralytic would pass on to paradise! Amazing irony! Amazing grace! And the verb **are forgiven** is in the **present tense**, indicating his sins were continually **forgiven**. The very One pronouncing this forgiveness, would a few years later become the very One who would assure continual forgiveness by becoming the Lamb of God Who **takes away** (**present tense**) the sin of the world (Jn 1:29+).

I heartily agree with **R C H Lenski's** comment as one of the most accurate and honest regarding the relationship between the man's

sin and his paralysis because Lenski's comment stays within the "boundaries" of a literal reading of this text (and many good expositors venture outside those boundaries which is another reason we each must conduct our own inductive study before we allow ourselves to be biased by the commentaries! see [inductive Bible study](#)) - "The conclusion is hasty that this man's ailment was the direct result of his sinful life. Paralysis is so common in those who live the most careful lives that even from this angle the conclusion is unwarranted. In John 5:14 we have a notable case; in John 9:3 one that is entirely different. As regards the paralytic we can assume only that his paralysis brought all his ordinary sinfulness to mind just as every sickness and misfortune tell us that we are indeed nothing but sinners. To assume more in this case calls for a plain intimation in the text. The Christian rule of charity holds good also in exegesis, namely that we should not make any man worse than the facts demand." (ISMG)

**COMMENT** - When you compare Lk 5:20+ where Jesus declared "**Friend, your sins are forgiven you,**" the same verb [aphiemi](#) is used as in Mark 2:5, Matthew 9:2+, and Luke 5:20+. In Luke's version forgiven is in the [perfect tense](#) (see [more below](#)) which indicates the abiding state of the forgiveness, in essence the permanence of divine forgiveness! Once Jesus forgives a person's sins, He does not take that declaration back and "un-forgive" a forgiven person. Once forgiven by Jesus, forever forgiven!

Jesus' words **are forgiven** are in the [present tense](#), which **A T Robertson** says refers to as the [aoristic present](#) which is used of an action or event coincident in time with the act of speaking, and conceived of as a simple event. Most frequently the action denoted by the verb is identical with the act of speaking itself, or takes place in that act. **Chamblin** adds that **are forgiven** is in the "[present](#) indicative in the [passive voice](#), signaling that the **sins are forgiven** as the words are uttered (a so-called '**instantaneous present**'), and that God is the one who forgives (a [divine passive](#))." (Mentor Commentary-Matthew) Stated another way the [present tense](#) here indicates that his sins were forgiven then and there, at that very moment! The [passive voice](#) (in all three synoptic accounts) indicates the power to forgive the sins of the paralytic came from without, ultimately from God ([divine passive](#)). The very One pronouncing this forgiveness, would a few years later become the very One who would assure forever forgiveness by becoming the Lamb of God Who **takes away** ([present tense](#)) the sin of the world (Jn 1:29+).

Note that in Lk 5:20+ **forgiven** is in the [perfect tense](#) which supports the truth of eternal security (see [Eternal security](#)). Once you are **truly** saved, you cannot lose your salvation! The [present tense](#) in Mark 2:5 and Matthew 9:2+ is good, but the [perfect tense](#) in Lk 5:20+ gives an added degree of certainty to the popular phrase "**Once Saved, Always Saved.**" (which of course assumes that the person making this declaration is genuinely saved and not simply relying on a verbal **profession** they made many years earlier but instead have experienced a true **possession** of Christ (Col 1:27b+) and His Spirit (Ro 8:9+)!

**Evans** comments - The Servant of Isaiah 52:13–53:12+, Who in [the Aramaic version \(i.e., the Targum\)](#) is understood to be the Messiah, "shall beseech concerning their (the people's) sins ... he will beseech concerning the sins of man, and to the rebels it shall be forgiven for him" (Tg. Isa. 53:11–12). (Ibid) (See also the note below)

The boldface text is the translation of the Jewish Publications Society and the normal text is the Targum translated by Driver en Neubauer.

**JPS - Isaiah 53:11 Of the travail of his soul he shall see to the full, even My servant, who by his knowledge did justify the Righteous One to the many, and their iniquities he did bear.**

**Targum** - Isaiah 53:11. From the subjection of the nations he will deliver their souls, they shall look upon the punishment of those that hate them, and be satisfied with the spoil of their kings; by his wisdom he will hold the guiltless free from guilt, in order to bring many into subjection to the law; and for their sins he will intercede.

**JPS - Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the mighty; because he bared his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.**

**Targum** - Isaiah 53:12. Then will I divide for him the spoil of many peoples, and the possessions of strong cities shall he divide as prey, because he delivered up his soul to death, and made the rebellious subject to the Law: he shall intercede for many sins, and the rebellious for his sake shall be forgiven

The man had need for **physical healing** but Jesus saw his greater need for **spiritual healing**, the need of all men whether physically fit or lame! Jesus' statement was considered blasphemy, since it was clearly understood to be a claim of being equal with God. The application of this story for us today is clear - To help our friends find forgiveness, we must bring them to Jesus who has authority to forgive sins. **Forgiven** means once and for all time - see Ps 103:12; Isa 1:18; 55:6, 7; Jer 31:34; Mic 7:19; Jn 1:29. In the OT Nathan the prophet said to David "The LORD also has taken away your sin; you shall not die." (2 Sa 12:13). Notice

that in contrast to Nathan who said Jehovah forgave his sins, Jesus personally forgives their sins! He is clearly saying indirectly that He in fact is Jehovah and that He was exerting divine authority!

Jesus' statement could signify that this man's paralysis was a result of sin, but one cannot be dogmatic. Sin induced disease was a common thought among the Jews but John 9:1–3 shows in that case Jesus rejected this line of reasoning regarding every illness.

John 9:1-3 As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

**Ryrie** adds in his note on Php 2:30 - Epaphroditus was dangerously ill from overwork. Sickness may also be due to specific sin (1 Cor 11:30) or to prevent sin (2 Cor 12:7) or to test (Job. 2:7) or to display the glory of God (John 9:2), and because of demons (Acts 5:16). Of course, sickness, for whatever reason, ultimately is related to our fallen humanity.

To be sure all sickness and paralysis (whether spiritual or physical) is ultimately the result of Adam's fall and the entrance of the corrupting influence of sin into the world (Ge 2:17).

**Sins** (266)(**hamartia**) literally conveys the idea of missing the mark as when hunting with a bow and arrow (in Homer some hundred times of a warrior hurling his spear but missing his foe). Later **hamartia** came to mean missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. **Hamartia** in the Bible signifies a departure from God's holy, perfect standard of what is right in word or deed (righteous). It pictures the idea of missing His appointed goal (His will) which results in a deviation from what is pleasing to Him. In short, sin is conceived as a missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is the Triune God Himself. As **Martin Luther** put it "*Sin is essentially a departure from God.*"

**Are forgiven** (863)(**aphiemi**) from **apo** = prefix implies separation + from **apo** = prefix implies separation + **hiemi** = send; cf **aphesis**) conveys the basic idea of an action which causes separation (e.g. Mk 1:18+ = "left their nets"; Mk 1:20+ = "they left their father Zebedee"; Mt 1:34+ = "the fever left her") and means depart or to send from one's self, to hurl away, to put away (sadly used of a man hurling away his wife, so to speak - Mk 10:2, 4+). **Aphiemi** conveys the basic idea of bringing about total detachment from a previous condition, a wonderful picture when we think of God forgiving our sins! God does not simply overlook our sins, but He actually wipes out the sins themselves (cf Ps 32:1 Ps 103:12 Isa 38:17 Isa 43:25, Isa 44:22 Mic 7:18,19 Acts 3:19,20)! In one secular writing we read "let the pot drop" (aphiemi) which gives us a vivid picture of what we are to do when we forgive others! Don't bury the pot with the handle showing! From this early literal use the word came to mean leave or let go. Here the **Son of Man**, God incarnate, sends away the sins of the paralytic healing him spiritually. Don't bury the pot with the handle showing! The Gospel of Mark frequently uses **aphiemi** - Mk. 1:18; Mk. 1:20; Mk. 1:31; Mk. 1:34; Mk. 2:5; Mk. 2:7; Mk. 2:9; Mk. 2:10; Mk. 3:28; Mk. 4:12; Mk. 4:36; Mk. 5:19; Mk. 5:37; Mk. 7:8; Mk. 7:12; Mk. 7:27; Mk. 8:13; Mk. 10:14; Mk. 10:28; Mk. 10:29; Mk. 11:6; Mk. 11:16; Mk. 11:25; Mk. 11:26; Mk. 12:12; Mk. 12:19; Mk. 12:20; Mk. 12:22; Mk. 13:2; Mk. 13:34; Mk. 14:6; Mk. 14:50; Mk. 15:36; Mk. 15:37

**COMMENT** - When you compare Lk 5:20+ where Jesus declared "**Friend, your sins are forgiven you,**" the same verb **aphiemi** is used as in Mark 2:5+ and Matthew 9:2, but there is a difference in tense which is worth noting. In Luke 5:20+ **forgiven** (**aphiemi**) is in the **perfect tense** which indicates the abiding state of the forgiveness, in essence the permanence of divine forgiveness! Once Jesus forgives a person of their sins, He does not take that declaration back and "un-forgive" a forgiven person. Once forgiven by Jesus, forever forgiven! As an aside **forgiven** in the **perfect tense** supports the truth of eternal security (see discussion of **Eternal security**), the assurance of your salvation. Once you are **truly** saved, you cannot lose salvation (a truth seen even with the verb tense in Lk 5:20!) The **present tense** in Mark 2:5 and Matthew 9:2 is good, but the **perfect tense** in Lk 5:20+ gives an added degree of certainty to the popular phrase "**Once Saved, Always Saved.**" (which of course assumes that the person making this declaration is genuinely saved and not simply relying on a verbal **profession** they made many years earlier but instead have experienced a true **possession** of Christ (Col 1:27<sub>b+</sub>) and His Spirit (Ro 8:9<sub>+</sub>)!

**MacArthur on forgiveness** - **Forgiveness** is both mankind's greatest need, and God's most important gift—and the only means for blessing in this life and eternal life in heaven. Jesus Christ came into the world to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21; cf. 26:28), and "through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43; cf. 5:31; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 1:14; 2:13–14; 3:13; 1 John 1:9; 2:12; Rev. 1:5). Forgiveness is the distinctive message of the Christian proclamation (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 13:38). But forgiveness has always been the offer of redemption, so it is also the message of the Old

Testament. After Adam and Eve sinned, “the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Gen. 3:21). Killing animals to provide those garments pictured the ultimate sacrifice of Messiah, whose death would cover the shame and guilt of sin. The Lord described Himself to Moses as “the Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin” (Ex. 34:6–7; cf. Num. 14:18). Nehemiah 9:17 calls Him a “God of forgiveness.” In Psalm 65:3 David wrote, “Iniquities prevail against me; as for our transgressions, You forgive them,” while in 86:5, he declared, “For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.” In Psalm 103:12, David depicted the extensiveness of God’s forgiveness when he noted that “as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” In Ps 130:3–4, the psalmist expressed his confidence in God’s forgiveness: “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Speaking of the promised forgiveness in the New covenant, God declared, “I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34). Micah joyously exclaimed, “Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?” (Mic. 7:18; cf. Isa. 55:7). The Old Testament likens God’s forgiveness to His casting sins behind His back (Isa. 38:17), wiping them out (Isa. 43:25; cf. 1:18; 44:22), trampling them under His feet (Mic. 7:19), and burying them in the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19). (Luke Commentary)

**R C H Lenski** on forgiveness - This is the great **aphesis**, “dismissal” or “remission,” of which the Scriptures speak so constantly. In the entire Bible no sweeter word meets the sinner’s eye. The sins are sent away from the sinner so completely that they shall never be found again, to the depth of the sea (Micah 7:10+), are blotted out so as to be removed from the record (Isa. 43:25); are removed from the sinner as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12+). This is what we usually call “forgiveness,” and stronger descriptions of it cannot be found. Only God is able to send our sins away in this manner... The healing that follows furnishes the clearest evidence for the deity of Jesus: as God he forgives sins and proves it by the miracle. (ISMG)

**Wuest** has an excellent note on **forgive (aphiemi)** - “Be forgiven” is the translation (A.V.) of *aphiēmi* ( φημι). Moulton and Milligan say that the uses of *aphiēmi* ( φημι) start from the etymological sense “throw.” They give an illustration of its use in the papyri, “let the pot drop.” From this primitive physical meaning may be derived the common meaning “leave, let go.” Another instance of its use in koine (κοινε) Greek is in the words “waived the extra fifty percent,” which usage is seen in Matthew 18:27, and which idea leads to the general idea of forgiveness. Still another instance of its use is found in the Rosetta stone, in the words “total remission” of certain taxes. Thayer gives for *aphiēmi* ( φημι), “to send from one’s self, to send away, to let go or give up a debt, to remit, forgive.” Our word “forgive” does not, as commonly used, give an adequate picture of this Greek word. We say that we have forgiven some one who has wronged us. By that we mean that any feeling of animosity we may have had, has changed to one of renewed friendliness and affection. We do not hold the wrong done us against the person anymore. But so far as the act itself is concerned, we cannot do anything about it. It has been done, and it cannot be removed from the one who committed the wrong. But this word *aphiēmi* ( φημι) includes within its content of meaning, the act of dealing with the act of wrong doing in such a way that the sinner who appropriates the Lord Jesus as Saviour, has his sins put away, and in two ways. First, they are put away on a judicial basis by the out-poured blood of Christ. He paid the penalty the broken law required, and thus satisfied divine justice. Second, on the basis of that, God removes the guilt of that sin from the believing sinner and bestows a positive righteousness, Jesus Christ Himself, in whom this person stands justified forever This is what is meant by Bible forgiveness in the case of God and a believing sinner. “Be forgiven” (A.V.) is present indicative in the Greek text and states a fact. “Are forgiven” is the correct rendering.

**TSK** - The Jews believed that not only death but all disease was the consequence of sin. "There is no death without sin, nor any chastisement without iniquity;" and that "no diseased person could be healed of his disease till his sins were blotted out." Our Lord, therefore, as usual, appeals to their received opinions, and asserts his high dignity, by first forgiving the sins, and then healing the body of the paralytic.

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Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of surprising candor in television, Marghanita Laski, one of our well-known secular humanists and novelists, said, "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me."

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**Steven Cole** - Sometimes a severe problem—a health problem, an emotional problem, a family problem, a financial catastrophe—can be the best thing in the world for us. Later, this man would have looked back on his paralysis and thanked God for it, because if he had never been paralyzed, he never would have begged his friends to carry him to Jesus. He never would have heard those words, “Your sins are forgiven.” With the psalmist, he could say, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep Your word” (Ps.

119:67). Jesus wasn't necessarily implying that the man's paralysis was the direct result of his sins. It may have been. In opposition to the rabbis of His day, Jesus taught that while all suffering is due to the fall of the human race into sin, not all suffering is due to specific sin on the part of the individual (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-3). But Jesus knew that the main need of every sinner is not to get our health or emotional or financial or whatever problems solved. Those problems should drive us to seek God. When we do that, it becomes clear that our main problem is our alienation from Him due to our sins. Thus forgiveness of sins is our main need. ([Helping Our Friends Find Forgiveness](#))

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**Mattoon** - A childhood accident caused poet Elizabeth Barrett to lead a life of semi-invalidism before she married Robert Browning in 1846. There's more to the story. In her youth, Elizabeth had been watched over by her tyrannical father. When she and Robert were married, their wedding was held in secret because of her father's disapproval. After the wedding, the Brownings sailed for Italy, where they lived for the rest of their lives. But even though her parents had disowned her, Elizabeth never gave up on the relationship. Almost weekly she wrote them letters. Not once did they reply. After 10 years, she received a large box in the mail. Inside, Elizabeth found all of her letters; not one had been opened! Today those letters are among the most beautiful in classical English literature. Had her parents only read a few of them, their relationship with Elizabeth might have been restored. If people would only take time to read the Bible, and such verses as listed above, they could realize how much the Lord loves them. They would restore the relationship with the Lord that their sin has ruined by seeking Christ's forgiveness and cleansing.

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## CONVICTING WORD

When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." —Mark 2:5

A young man with no regard for God travelled to a big city and began a life of partying and spending the money he had earned while working. One night he staggered to his hotel room and slept until late the next day. When he awoke, he saw a small book on a nightstand near his bed and picked it up. It was the gospel of Mark. Disgusted, he threw it on the floor.

That evening the book had once again been laid beside the bed. When he saw it in the same place the third day he decided to read it. He found the book so interesting he couldn't lay it aside. He later testified, "I learned that the Son of God said to a paralysed man, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' and praised a poor widow for giving her last two coins. I was impressed when Jesus took little children in His arms and blessed them. And then, in spite of the unjust way He was treated, He went to the cross to save sinners. When I read why He died, I saw my own guilt and found peace in believing." From that day forward he became a different man and spent many years giving copies of the book of Mark to others.

We too must reach as many as possible with the convicting Word. The gospel is truly powerful. By Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

THE GOSPEL IS SENT TO BREAK HARD HEARTS AND TO HEAL BROKEN ONES.

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## Bringing Our Friends to Jesus

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5

Today's Scripture & Insight: Mark 2:1-12

During my childhood, one of the most feared diseases was polio, often called "infantile paralysis" because most of those infected were young children. Before a preventive vaccine was developed in the mid-1950s, some 20,000 people were paralyzed by polio and about 1,000 died from it each year in the United States alone.

In ancient times, paralysis was viewed as a permanent, hopeless condition. But one group of men believed Jesus could help their paralyzed friend. While Jesus was teaching in the village of Capernaum, four of the men carried the man to Him. When they couldn't reach Jesus because of the crowd, "they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on" (Mark 2:1-4).

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven' " (v. 5), followed by "Get up, take your mat and go home" (v. 11). How remarkable that in response to the faith of the men who brought their friend, Jesus forgave his sins and healed his incurable condition!

When someone we know is facing serious physical difficulty or a spiritual crisis, it is our privilege to join together in prayer, bringing our friends to Jesus—the only One who can meet their deepest needs. David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray



Lord Jesus, we know that You can speak the words of eternal life and healing to people in great need. We bring them to You in prayer today.

Praying for others is a privilege—and a responsibility.

## EXCURSUS ON VICARIOUS FAITH

**EDITORIAL NOTE - CAUTION** - HERE IS A DEFINITION OF "VICARIOUS FAITH" FROM "NELSONS' NEW CHRISTIAN DICTIONARY" -

"Doctrine that one might have faith on behalf of another, as for example, parents on behalf of their children or a spouse on behalf of a mate."

THIS DEFINITION COULD BE MISCONSTRUED! PARENTS MIGHT LEGITIMATELY HAVE FAITH "ON BEHALF OF THEIR CHILDREN" (ESPECIALLY AS EXPRESSED IN PRAYING FOR THEM), ETC, BUT THAT IN **NO WAY REPLACES THE ABSOLUTE NEED OF THAT CHILD TO EXERCISE PERSONAL FAITH IN JESUS** FOR IT TO BE CREDITED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THEIR ACCOUNT! IN OTHER WORDS A PARENT'S FAITH CANNOT BE "TRANPOSED" TO AN INFANT TO JUSTIFY "INFANT BAPTISM." AS AN ASIDE, PERSONALLY I BELIEVE INFANTS WHO DIE AS INFANTS GO TO HEAVEN, BUT THAT IS IN NO WAY RELATED TO THE **VICARIOUS FAITH** OF THEIR PARENTS!

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### Sermon by Samuel Chadwick - VICARIOUS FAITH

"And Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven."—S. Mark 2:5.

The healing of the man sick of the palsy is an instance of **vicarious faith**. By "**vicarious**" we mean something done for and instead of another. It is substitutionary. The vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ means that Christ suffered in our stead, and died for our sins. So there is a faith that is exercised in behalf of another, and is accepted for another. This palsied man received both the forgiveness of his sins and the healing of his body, through the faith of the men who brought him. It was not simply a co-operation of their faith with his, it was accepted instead of his. There may have been an element of faith in the man himself, but there is no mention of it (**ED: I DISAGREE SLIGHT AND THINK THE PARALYTICS OBEDIENCE AND GLORYING WERE CLEAR EVIDENCE OF HIS FAITH**), and the emphasis is laid on the faith of the men who carried him to the feet of Jesus (**ED: I WOULD AGREE GIVEN THAT ALL THREE SYNOPTIC ACCOUNTS MENTION THIS DETAIL**). **Seeing their faith**, He saith, not to them, but "unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven."

**When a vital principle has been discovered at any given point of the Scriptures, it is wonderful how it is afterwards seen to be in every part.** (ED: HAS THIS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE? IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE IN A NUMBER OF PRINCIPLES, [ESPECIALLY OUR NEED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT TO OBEY EVERY ONE OF THE NT COMMANDS TO BELIEVERS](#)). **Men are sometimes reproached for finding the Gospel in Genesis and Holiness in Leviticus, but they find them there because they are everywhere. So it is with vicarious faith. That which seemed to be an exception is discovered to be a law of the Kingdom. Of the twenty-four miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels, at least seven were healed entirely through the faith of others. It is not simply the faith of the strong coming to the help of the weak, but a faith prevailing for the helpless apart from any faith of their own.**

### I. INSTANCES OF VICARIOUS FAITH

**Recall the more conspicuous instances of the vicarious exercise of faith, and see how true this is.**

There came to Jesus in Capernaum "a centurion beseeching Him and saying, Lord, my servant lieth in the house sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And He saith unto him, I will come and heal him." (Mt 8:5-13+) The thought of such condescension overwhelmed the Centurion, and he protested that he was not worthy to receive Him under his roof, and argued from his own authority that it was not necessary He should come. If He would only say the word, his servant would be healed. Jesus marvelled, and declared that He had not found a faith so great, even in Israel; and turning to the Centurion, He said, "Go, thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And the servant was healed in that hour." Whose faith healed him? Not the servant's, but his master's. Not a word is said about the faith of the man who was healed. It is attributed entirely to the faith

exercised vicariously for him.

On another occasion there came from Capernaum to Cana of Galilee a nobleman whose child was sick, and he besought Jesus "that He would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death." (John 4:46-53, 54+) Instead of yielding at once as in the case of the Centurion, He began to reprove the spirit that cannot believe except it see signs and wonders. Impatient of delay, and too distressed to be interested in abstract discussions, the father of the dying child burst into an impassioned appeal: "Lord, come down ere my child die." There was no moment to be lost. Twenty-five miles had to be travelled, and even now it may be too late. He did not conceive healing to be possible without contact. Neither the passionate appeal nor the journey was necessary, and "Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way, thy son liveth." The astonished father "believed the word that Jesus spake unto him, and went his way." He rested upon the bare word of Jesus, but as he went "his way" he found the word confirmed by the testimony of his servants, who declared the child to have been healed at the very hour the word was spoken and believed. Whose faith saved the child? That son was healed entirely through the faith of the father vicariously exercised twenty-five miles away.

There is another instance where a father's faith prevailed for an only child. In the incident at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus threw back the healing of the demoniac boy upon the faith of the father. It was not a question of Christ's power but of the father's faith. "Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." (Mk 9:24-27+) Then Jesus took the lad by the hand and lifted him up, healed. Whose faith saved the lad? Not his own, not the disciples', but his father's.

Still more striking is the faith of the Greek woman in the district of Tyre and Sidon. Jesus had withdrawn into that region that He might escape from the persistent persecution of His adversaries.\* He wanted to be quiet, and requested that no one should be told of His presence: but He could not be hid. A woman whose daughter was grievously afflicted discovered Him. She threw herself at His feet, and cried, beseeching Him to cast the evil spirit out of her daughter. "But He answered her not a word." (Mt 15:22-28) He never treated any other person as He treated this woman. She got up and followed Him, pleading as she went, till the disciples begged Him to grant her request and send her away. His silence had been bad enough, but His speech was still more discouraging, for He said, "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." Again she fell at His feet, and looking up into His face poured out her soul in one of the shortest prayers ever uttered, "Lord help me." Speaking directly to her for the first time, He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Such a remark would have silenced most people and sent them home offended, but her woman's wit turned it into an argument, and prevailed. She answered Him, "Yea, Lord: even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour." When she got home, she found her daughter lying peacefully upon the bed, and the evil spirit gone out of her. Whose faith had brought her healing? It came, not through any faith of her own, but in response to the mighty faith of her mother.

**Thus we have the faith of a master prevailing for the healing of a servant, the faith of fathers exercised to the healing of sons, the faith of a mother triumphing for her daughter, and the faith of four friends blessed to the healing of a fifth; in every instance efaith working vicariously to the healing of another.**

**This vicarious faith is not confined to miracles of healing.** It runs through all the New Testament, and is a recognised law in the Kingdom of grace. It lies at the very foundation of all intercession. Take one example: "Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him." (James 5:14-15+) Whatever difficulties the passage may present with regard to Divine healing it gives a plain direction and embodies a Divine principle. **It is an example of the vicarious operation of faith in prayer.** A number of praying men come together to pray over a brother in need, and the prayer of faith brings both healing and forgiveness to the man for whom prayer is made. Nothing is said about the faith of the sick man. His exercise of faith is in sending for the elders. It is the faith of the men that pray that raises him up.

**These are all examples of the one great truth that faith may be vicariously exercised, so as to bring blessing into the life of others who may themselves be destitute of faith.**

## II. THE OPERATIONS OF VICARIOUS FAITH

Vicariously faith begins by making the needs of another its own. Fellowship of woe precedes vicariousness in faith. The affliction of the child is the continual grief of the parent. "If Thou canst do anything for us," was the plea of the distracted father. "Have mercy on me," was the cry of the mother whose daughter was grievously

vexed with a devil; and when it seemed as though her request would be denied, the identification of the intercessor with the sufferer becomes more manifest in the petition, "Lord, help me." The mother suffered in her child before she could believe for her deliverance. Such faith is possible only to burdened hearts. The Sinless One carried away the world's sin by taking it unto Himself. He was made sin for us. He "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases," and His people enter into the fellowship of His sufferings in the work of salvation. There is but one way of salvation, as there is but one Name by which men can be saved. The followers of Christ in their measure become the vicarious bearers of the world's sorrow and shame. In Zechariah's vision the High Priest stood before the Lord clothed with the filthy garments of Israel. Satan rebuked him; but Joshua had taken the sins of the people upon himself, and borne them upon his own soul into the presence of Jehovah. Vicarious faith begins in vicarious sorrow and vicarious shame. The sins of others become a personal burden, and the sorrows of others a personal grief, before faith vicariously pleads and claims. When the soul travails faith prevails.

**VICARIOUS FAITH IN THE WORK OF SALVATION.** When Jesus saw the faith of the men who brought their palsied friend, He did not begin by commanding the sick man to take up his bed and walk, but by announcing the forgiveness of his sins. "**Seeing their faith, He saith to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.**" However startling it may seem, this man received the forgiveness of his sins through the faith of others. Is that heresy? Is not personal faith the one essential condition of salvation? Has it not been told us from the beginning that no man can believe another into the Kingdom of Grace? It is true no man can be saved by proxy, but it is also true we are saved vicariously. Just as this palsied man was personally assured of forgiveness through the faith of the friends who brought him to Jesus, so every saved soul is brought to the personal knowledge of salvation through the faith of others working on his behalf. The vicarious operation of faith is not exceptional in salvation, but general, if not universal. If some one had not believed for us, it is not likely we should ever have believed for ourselves. We were prayed for before we began to pray for ourselves. The Christian is begotten of God through the travail of some believing soul. There is a human as well as a Divine element in the process of soul-birth, and every man's salvation begins in the faith of another.

Experience everywhere bears witness to the vicarious operation of faith. The processes of generation are shrouded in mystery, and there are many children of God who cannot trace their experience of regeneration to any definite occasion or influence. Such Christians are to be congratulated, for as a rule the beginnings of spiritual life with them are among the unrecognised and forgotten influences of childhood. People, however, who come to the knowledge of God in maturer years, are able to trace their spiritual lineage, and to point out the influences that brought them into the Kingdom. The Apostles speak of those who owe to them their own souls, because they were begotten of them in the Gospel. So it is still. We are brought into the experience of Saving Grace through the faith exercised for us. It is because we were believingly brought to the feet of Christ by those who believed for the salvation of our souls, we are saved.

How manifest this is in leading penitent souls to the Saviour! Take any case of a degraded sinner, such as every revival brings into the Inquiry Room. For a season the Church has sought those who live regardless of its existence, and whenever they are earnestly sought they come. The Gospel, faithfully and believingly preached, reveals the darkness of the heart, conscience strikes terror into the soul, or tender entreaty awakens thoughts of other days. A Christian worker with a gentle hand seeks to lead the wanderer back to God, but is answered with a wail of despair: "No, I am too bad; I might have been a Christian once, but it is too late now; you do not know all about me or you would not ask me. No, I am lost, it is too late, too late; I am too bad." What is the answer to such a cry? It is nothing less than believing for the soul that has no faith for itself. The promises are spread forth, the assurances of the Gospel repeated, and the believer stakes his own honour and God's on the possibility of immediate and complete salvation. Persistent despair is met with insistent faith until it yields to hope, and the soul tremblingly stretches out its hands to God. Personal faith brings salvation, but it leans hard upon the strength of the faith that is vicarious. The curse of sin is its despair, and unless those who believe in God go down into the depths, and take hold of hopeless and helpless men and women with a mighty faith, they will perish in their sins.

**Vicarious faith never despairs.** It seeks desperate cases, and delights to bring the palsied and devil-possessed to the feet of Christ. The saddest thing in Christian workers is that they despair so soon. Whole areas are regarded as hopeless, and are abandoned for more favourable districts. Individuals are given up and left alone because it is thought to be useless to seek their salvation. Until the Church has an undaunted and unquenchable faith in the possibility of every man's salvation, and is prepared to go down to the depths and believe men back to God, it will neither raise the dead nor cast out devils. So long as the peril of the unsaved is not felt to be a burden, and the possibility of their salvation a certainty, devils will defy the hosts of the Lord. I



once asked a man who had been a notorious sinner what led him first to believe it possible for him to be a good man. "Well," said he, "Sister believed it, and told me God could do it, so I came to believe it too." How like the Samaritans, who believed on Christ because of the word of the woman who testified, and then believed because they had seen and heard for themselves. "And they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Some time ago an evangelist was engaged to conduct mission services in a godless little town in the West. The minister, in whose Church the services were to be held, wrote him a doleful account of the irreligion and wickedness of the place. He had no hope that they would be able to do much, but assured him they would stand by him to the utmost of their power. The missionary began his work by making a tour of the public houses on the Saturday night. In some he sang, in others he spoke cheerily, and invited them to the services. He was guest in the home of one of the leading business places of the town. The family seemed to consist of a woman and her daughter. One day as he sat at tea he asked his hostess if she were a widow. She replied, "No, I wish I was," and proceeded to tell him the sad story of drunkenness, debauchery, and cruelty that had cursed their home for five and twenty years.

When she had finished, he asked, "Do you pray for him?" "No," she said; "I have given up, it is no use." Turning to the daughter, he asked her the same question, and she said, "No, I never pray for my father." "Then," he said, "if you don't, I must. If I pray for him, will you say Amen?" Reluctantly they agreed. The three knelt there and then at the table and the missionary poured out his soul in earnest prayer for the lost soul of that house. When he had finished, there was no Amen. He prayed again, and there was no response. He prayed a third time, until their hearts melted in the conscious presence of God, and a subdued Amen was heard. They parted in silence. That night the wretched husband could not sleep. Within four days he came drunk to the service, and before the end of the mission was mightily saved. The miracle of his conversion filled the town with wonder, for he had been notorious in his sin. Whose faith saved him? His relatives had given him up. The Church had abandoned him. He had long despaired of himself. Whose faith prevailed on his behalf?

### **III. VICARIOUS FAITH IS THE FOUNDATION OF ALL PREVAILING INTERCESSION**

How often the Apostle Paul entreats the prayers of his spiritual children! In one place he is confronted with a closed door, and is forbidden to preach the Gospel to souls that are perishing, and he requests the prayers of God's people that the door may be opened. In another case there is an open door, but there are many adversaries, and he asks them to pray that the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. What is such prayer but the vicarious operation of faith? Churches at his request pray and believe in his behalf. They believe, and it comes to pass.

The power of such prayer may be gathered from the promise of Christ to His people. "Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven." Could any promise be more absolute? And yet the condition expressed in the agreement of two disciples goes deeper than at first appears. There is nothing arbitrary or mechanical in the conception. It is more than a mere contract; it is an agreement of soul. The word in the Greek means "to sound together like the answering note in musical instruments." A note struck on the piano will call forth a response from whatever is tuned to the same pitch. In wireless telegraphy, the sound wave travels through the ether till it meets its answering note that can read its mystery, and receive its message. Such agreement assumes that the two have been brought into harmony by a common intelligence for a common purpose. We cannot pray and believe to order. Neither faith nor prayer is at the bidding of authority. We cannot believe merely because we are told we ought to believe, and that we shall be damned if we do not. Faith is possible only where the truth finds an answering note in the soul. Neither is there anything arbitrary in prayer. It is possible to pray only as the Spirit inspires in the soul correspondence to the will of God. He awakens the desire, creates the hunger, and directs the petition. When two souls are yielded to His absolute control, they find themselves in harmony with each other because both are in obedience to His will. Soul answers soul, sympathetic hearts find themselves in agreement, and together they plead at the Father's throne. To such agreement the promise never fails. Volumes might be written of the wonders wrought in answer to the united prayers of souls unified by the Holy Ghost, and not one case can be found where such prayer has been offered in vain.

One such occasion I can never forget. At the Southport Convention of 1896 the leaders met under the shadow of a great sorrow. Its President had been ill for most of the year, and had come to the Convention in great bodily weakness. He had completely lost his voice, and had not spoken in anything more than a whisper for months. Doctors with one consent declared he could never preach again. At one of the daily meetings of the speakers for prayer, without any arrangement or request, the prayers centred in the President. With one

consent prayer was made that he might be restored, and that his voice might return. Within twenty-four hours he addressed an assembly of nearly two thousand people, and has continued to preach unto this day.

The wonderful revivals that have swept over the earth from time to time have been traced to a similar fellowship of prayer. Believers simultaneously burdened with the sins of the Church and the world have been drawn together, and agreed to give themselves to earnest intercession for the revival of God's work. The great revival in Ireland began with a few young men meeting early in the morning for prayer, because they felt the unutterable burden of perishing souls. In South Africa two young men left a Church one Sunday night full of grief because sinners were not converted. They sobbed out their burdened souls before God, and agreed to meet daily for prayer. The spirit of prayer spread among the people, and hundreds of souls were turned to God. The Church, of which I was the first pastor, was built in answer to the continual prayer of a few people, and God brought a lonely widow more than twelve thousand miles to build it. Vicarious faith! It moves Omnipotence for the blessing and salvation of people who may be at the ends of the earth.

The Centurion's child was healed twenty-five miles away in the hour his father prayed. Whatever the explanation of the mystery of prayer, such coincidences are common in the lives of people who pray. Testimonies innumerable are borne to this twofold operation of the Spirit. At one place a soul in need pleading at the throne of grace, in another, a person ignorant of the need prompted to supply it. People moved to rise in the night or retire in the day to pray for others, have found afterwards that such persons were in special peril or in urgent need. There is not a follower of Christ who lives under the guidance of the Spirit, who has not experience of such blessings brought vicariously to others.

Faith reaches the perfection of its power in vicarious exercise. It seems in its concern for others to attain a Divine quality and to command Divine power. So long as it is centred upon personal interests it is held in leash, but when it gets away from self, and is baptized with the God-like spirit of vicariousness, it rises to the fulness of its power, and commands the resources of the Eternal.

Doubtless some will say, surely there are limitations to this faith. If by limitations is meant conditions, then there are limitations. That for which faith is exercised must be in the will of God, and must be assured to the soul by the Spirit of God. The God who spake the promise and gives the faith understands all the mystery of the human will and the operation of natural law. The operation of Divine Sovereignty and the freedom of the human will are not irreconcilable to the wisdom of God. Our responsibility is not in the explanation of mystery, but in obedience to obligation and privilege. It is God's part to explain; it is ours to obey. The one thing common in all the examples where vicarious faith availed is the absence of resistance on the part of those who received the blessing. When men cease to resist and consent to receive, faith's triumph is achieved. How far the Spirit can influence the will, where lies the exact limit of man's freedom and God's power, no man can tell, but of this we are assured, that God never fails to fulfil a promise sealed to the faith of His child.

#### **IV. THE LESSONS OF THE INCIDENT TO CHRISTIAN WORKERS**

The story of the man sick of the palsy abounds in valuable suggestions to those who are seeking to bring the hopeless and helpless to Jesus. Their work was beset with difficulties, as such work always is, and to watch their faith overcome them will do much to direct zeal and sustain faith. The first difficulty was with the man. He was palsied and unable to walk. If ever he was to be brought, he would have to be carried. One man's sympathy, determination, and faith were unequal to the task. What was impossible to one was possible to the united effort of four. One man's interest secured the help of three more. Faith binds men and unites their powers for a common purpose. Instead of brooding over the indifference and unbelief of the many, it seeks the fellowship and co-operation of those like-minded; instead of spending itself in criticism, it girds itself for its appointed task. It does not wait for the consent and applause of men, neither does it exhaust itself in discussion and scheming; it sees the work and does it, leaving others to discuss and criticise. Faith works, and vicarious faith works as well as believes for the blessing and salvation of others.

The real difficulties of these four men began when they got their man to the Church door. When they reached the house where Jesus was the way was blocked; and in many places it is still blocked. The difficulty is not to get the harlot, the social leper, and the outcast to come where Jesus is, but to get the people who are gathered about His Name to receive them. The house to which they came was blocked because it was full, but there are many Churches empty enough inside, that are blocked in the door-way against the disreputable. The sinner's way to Christ is often blocked by good people—people who are interested in the Master's word and zealous for the Master's Name; people who pray earnestly for the salvation of men, and yet hinder their coming. In many places the greatest hindrance to Christian work is in Christian people. To be opposed from

within is a severe trial to earnest faith. When you have succeeded in getting the man to come, and instead of being welcomed he is snubbed, it takes a more than ordinary supply of grace to be cheerful and civil. What is the use of praying and toiling to find the lost, while there are people in the Churches who would rather see them damned than let them share their pew? It is because the Church whines over the lost and scorns them, that the world refuses to believe its hypocrisies, and treats it with open contempt.

What is the duty of the earnest worker in the presence of such a spirit? Follow the example of these men. They stuck to their task. Any weakling can resign; the man of faith holds on. Such men stiffen their backbone and hold their tongue. Do not argue with people that do nothing but sit and criticise. Keep your mind on your task and your eye on the Master. If one way fails, go quietly round and try another. Exhaust every ordinary and legitimate method to get your man to Christ. When all the ordinary ways have been proved impossible then make a new one. Tear up the roof, make a new departure; never mind tradition and criticism; do something costly, disturbing, and startling, rather than let souls laid upon your heart go down to perdition. Love is inventive, and faith persistent. The Church is saved by the irregularities of its men of faith. The Pharisees were angry but Christ was pleased. He commended their faith and honoured it. Others would have admired their courage, applauded their inventiveness, praised their perseverance, and commended the social and economic value of their work, but the thing that was precious to Jesus was their faith. The man who brings men in faith to Christ wins the approval of God. Every problem of human life finds its solution there. Healing follows forgiveness, and individual regeneration is the only way to social salvation.

What a reward these men had! They saw the man they had brought made happy and strong. The man they had brought with his back on his bed went out with his bed on his back praising and glorifying God. He was a happy man that day, but his happiness was as nothing to the happiness of the men who had believed for him and brought him. Christ had vindicated their faith, and set His seal upon the methods others had condemned. That was great cause for rejoicing; but greater still was the joy of saving a brother. He who saves a soul drinks the very wine of God. We never know what the joy of the Lord is like till we have brought a lost soul to the feet of Jesus. Personal faith brings personal salvation, but vicarious faith brings salvation to others; and in this also it is more blessed to give than to receive. The supreme test of faith is not its personal benefit but its vicarious power.

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#### C H Spurgeon on VICARIOUS FAITH - (from his comments on Mt 4:23-25)

Take care that you bring your relatives to Christ on the arms of your faith. Faith is that which puts strength into prayer. The reason why we do not receive the answer to our supplications is, because we do not believe we shall be heard. You remember my sermon the other sabbath morning from the text, "Whatsoever things ye shall desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them and ye shall have them." If you can exercise faith for a dead soul, that dead soul shall be quickened and receive faith itself. If you can look to Christ with the eye of faith for a (spiritually) blind soul, that blind soul shall have sight given it and it shall see. **There is a wonderful power in vicarious faith—faith for another.**

Not that any one of you can be saved without faith yourself; but that when another believes for you and on your account, and quotes the promise before God for you, you may be unconscious of it, but God hears and answers that faith, and breathes on your soul, and **gives you faith to believe** in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**I do not think Christians exercise enough of this power. They are so busy with faith about their troubles, faith about their sins, faith about their personal experience, that they have not time to exercise that faith for another. Oh but surely that gift (OF FAITH) was never bestowed upon us for our own use merely, but for other people.**

Try it, Christian man; try it, Christian woman; see whether God is not as good as your faith when your faith is exercised concerning the soul of your poor neighbour, of your poor drunken kinsman, or of some poor soul who thus far has defied every effort to reclaim him from the error of his ways.

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#### John Daniel Jones - The Healing of the Paralytic - Part 1

IT is a striking thing that in this story of the healing of the paralytic the sufferer himself plays a very small part. It would, perhaps, scarcely be true to say he was entirely passive; for Christ could not have spoken to him as He did had there not been some kind of faith and wistful longing in his soul. At the same time, it is quite obvious that the main interest of the story gathers, not around the paralytic, but around his four friends and our blessed Lord. The story is so replete with points that claim our notice, that, we had better, in this chapter,

confine ourselves to a study of the four friends and their action.

## 1. What true and genuine friends these men were!

Theirs was no fair-weather friendship. They stood by their friend in his hour of need and deep distress. That is the badge and sign of a true friendship—it bears the strain of misfortune and reverse. “I call you not servants ... but ... friends,” said Jesus to His disciples (John 15:15). And in another verse we find the reason why our Lord bestowed this honourable title upon them. “Ye are they,” He said, “which have continued with Me in My temptations” (Luke 22:28).

At the commencement of His career Christ had multitudes of admirers and followers. But as trials came thronging in, and as opposition deepened, these people turned their backs upon Him and deserted Him in shoals. But amid the wholesale desertion of the crowds the apostles remained staunch and true; and their loyalty to their Master in His day of trouble proved the genuineness of their friendship. For it was just on the eve of the Cross and Passion that Christ gave them that honourable name. “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. No longer do I call you servants, but I have called you friends.” And these four men had the same claim to that honourable title. They continued with their friend in the time of his trouble and distress.

Notice, too, how they fulfilled the highest office of friendship. They had heard of Christ’s power, and they determined they would carry their friend to Him. They were ready to do anything to bring back health and vigour to his wasted and stricken frame. And that is again a mark of a genuine friendship—it always seeks the good of the loved one. It is always plotting and scheming for the well-being of the friend. That was how John Robinson, the beloved pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers, was described by one of his flock. “He ever sought our good, both body and soul.” That was a true friendship.

And as man’s good, both body and soul, is best secured by union with Christ, this follows, that the highest office of friendship is to do what these four men did, bring the friend to Jesus. When Andrew found Messiah, he hurried off to seek his brother Simon. “He brought him unto Jesus.” What a friend he was to his brother that day! “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, we have found Him” (John 1:45, R.V.). What a friend Philip was to Nathanael that day! Are we friends of that type?

## 2. What magnificent faith these friends had! It was faith that was not daunted by difficulties.

It was not an easy task to bring their friend to Jesus, but they persevered, in spite of all obstacles, and their faith won the blessing. “Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven.” (2:5, R.V.). There are difficulties still in the way of bringing friends to Christ. The crowd of engagements and cares and pleasures, and the opposition of so-called society, they are all hindrances in the way—but a true faith perseveres. Monica wept and entreated and prayed for years, but at last she saw Augustine her son at the Saviour’s feet. “In due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9.)

**Theirs was a vicarious faith.** “Jesus seeing their faith saith unto the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven.” He blessed the sick man for the faith of the four devoted friends. We often talk of vicarious sacrifice. **But here is vicarious faith!** That people receive large and rich blessing on account of the faith of others, is not theory, but fact. The Bible is full of it. For the sake of ten righteous men God would have spared Sodom. The Lord blessed the house of Potiphar for Joseph’s sake. God saved the whole ship-load of people because His servant Paul was on board. And so still, God blesses the world for the sake of His faithful servants who are in it. He blesses the house for the sake of a saintly mother. He blesses this man and that for the sake of a godly friend, just as He forgives and saves the world for the sake of a Holy Christ.

Here is encouragement to make our faith a real help to others. Are we doing this?

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Below is an excerpt from [Fuel for Pilgrims](#) blog post which address the powerful truth of **vicarious faith** as described in Mark 2:1-12

There is a certain gung-ho, never-say-die, can-do attitude expressed by these men. They were going to bring their friend to Jesus, no matter what. When polite coughing and “excuse me’s” failed to get them access to the room in which Jesus was teaching, they tried elbowing their way in. When that failed they just came up with a plan B – tear a hole in the roof – real bloke-y genius! The idea of politely waiting outside, just standing in line until Jesus had finished, never even occurred to them! They were men of action, impatient and somewhat reckless and no one dared stop them – they were on a mission!

Yet, the thing that most struck me in this story, something I had never noticed before was in the following verse. The faith that brings help and healing to this poor, suffering, paralysed man is not his own but his friends'. It is **their faith**, on his behalf, that releases Jesus' healing power into the man's situation. The implications of this, for the Christian life and for Christian mission are massive. By our prayers we can stand before God on behalf of those who cannot, will not or do not know how to pray for themselves. In some mysterious way, we can by our faith, make up for the lack of faith in our friends. (**EDITORIAL COMMENT: ULTIMATELY THOUGH THEY MUST EXPRESS FAITH AS EVEN THIS PARALYTIC MAN, FOR WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD - Hebrews 11:6±**).

We see several miracles in the life of Jesus that seem to fall into this category. When Jesus responds to someone's faith by healing a third party – the Centurion and his servant (Matthew 8:5-13+), Jairus and his daughter (Mark 5:21-43+), even the resurrections of Lazarus and the Widow of Nain's son must also fall into this category for a dead person obviously cannot have faith for himself!

It struck me that this reality about faith also has significant implications for the communal dimension of Christian discipleship. For all of us will go through times, periods, situations when our own faith fails. At these times we can be carried along and supported by the faith of our Christian brothers and sisters. When we are struggling – when we are being tempted to the limit of our strength, in danger of falling – the faith of our families and friends can uphold us, sustain us and keep us on track. We see this ministry of vicarious faith exemplified in the life of Job -

"His sons used to hold feasts in their homes on their birthdays, and they would invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When a period of feasting had run its course, Job would make arrangements for them to be purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, "Perhaps my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." This was Job's regular custom." (Job 1:4-5NIV)

It seemed that Job worried that in the full swing of 'rich kids, having fun', things might get out of hand. His children's standards of behaviour and conversation might slip and some mistakes might be made. So Job 'stands in the gap' for his kids, he asks God to forgive them any sins and restore them to Himself. As I thought about this subject I was powerfully struck by the strong implications it has to nullify any spiritual pride in my life. For none of us, looking back over our lives, can know for certain that our safe passage through times of struggle and temptation was the result of our own faith in God, or merely God's gracious response to the faith of those around us, friends who prayed for us and stood in the gap before God for us. We may well discover in the life to come, that many of those times when we proudly thought we had won a great victory, we were merely, like the paralysed man in the story, being carried along by our friends.

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## **VICARIOUS FAITH - from Church Pulpit Commentary - no author given**

'And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.' ST. MARK 2:3

JUST as every human disease was a symbol of the moral condition of the soul, so every miracle Jesus wrought on the body was a token of what He would do for the soul.

**I. The faith of the bearers.**—It was impossible for the four men who bore the paralytic to come nigh to Jesus, Who was standing in the inner court of the house, which was covered with an awning, or else under the interior gallery surrounding this court, the roof of which was a thin tiling. No matter which; the bearers were resolved that their stricken friend should, somehow or other, face Jesus; so, having ascended the staircase or ladder outside, they uncovered the roof, whether awning or tiling, and let down the little couch whereon the sick man lay. Jesus was struck with their practical sympathy; for had they not brought him he had been a paralytic to the day of his death; but it was their faith in the Lord's power and willingness to restore the sick man to health and strength that most impressed Him; nay, it was this which secured all they desired.

**II. The condition of the man.**—That he had palsy of an extreme kind is evident from the fact of his lying on a bed and being borne by others. It was a case of complete paralysis of motion. Throughout the whole narrative our Lord connects sin with suffering. If sin were destroyed the professions of surgery and medicine would be unnecessary; 'the body would,' as Bishop Wordsworth observes, 'enjoy angelic health and beauty.' Christ, by His omniscience, saw the agony of the man's soul as certainly as He saw the faith of the men who brought him for healing. He saw, too, how he was hoping and clinging to Him.

**III. The mercy of the Saviour.**—'He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.' Certain bystanders said within themselves, 'Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?' They knew that God only could forgive sins; but they did not know that 'this man' was very God. He saw their accusation, and said to them, 'Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 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? 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 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.' The man, who before could not use hand or foot, arose—implying partial use of the lower muscles of the body; then he took up his bed, whatever it was, pallet or blanket—implying the vigorous use of the higher muscles; and, lastly, he departed to his house—implying the continuous use of all his muscular powers. His recovery of soul and body was complete. What a contrast is he now to what he was before! Well in body; happy in soul. Oh, the blessedness of such a salvation!—these are known only by the forgiven (Ps. 32:1; 103:1–5).

**Illustration** - 'The sick man was "borne of four," and could not have reached Jesus without this help. Palsy is not so painful as cancer, nor so loathsome as leprosy, nor so fatal as cholera; but it is a disease which renders the patient eminently helpless. There are persons affected with spiritual palsy who never fall into glaring sins, and yet remain inert and without the power of religious decision. It is vain to expect such people to "turn to Christ." It is the mission of the Church to bring to Christ those who are too helpless in spiritual indifference to seek Him of their own accord.'

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## **The Faith That Wins By: L. G. Curtis**

Matthew 15:28

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In this brief story, we get a graphic picture of "The Faith That Wins."

From this incident, we may draw four facts concerning the faith that really wins. "The Faith That Wins" is—

#### **I. A VISUALIZING FAITH**

1. Her spiritual perception enabled her to know who Jesus was. He was revealed to the eyes of her faith. She was unlearned in the religion of Israel, yet she addressed Jesus, "O Lord, Thou Son of David" (v. 22).

#### **II. A VICARIOUS FAITH**

"Vicarious means to take another's place."

1. The mother came to Jesus for her daughter. Her daughter was not able to come. She was vexed with a devil (v. 22). We are responsible for those who are morally diseased, and dead in trespasses and sin.

2. The mother took her daughter's place before Jesus in prayer.

3. Our faith for them will not save them, but through prayer our faith will help to bring them within reach of Jesus, and help them to believe. It is only when we feel the burden and weight of the sins of others, that we are able to take their place before the Lord in prayer.

#### **III. A VIGOROUS FAITH**

1. In its plea. This mother's plea was clear and to the point. She states the case as it is without reservation. She said in substance, "The Devil is her trouble." All too often, we are not honest; we try to make excuses for those for whom we pray.

#### **IV. A VICTORIOUS FAITH**

1. She won over her difficulties. She could have easily become impatient and given up. We will always encounter difficulties when we go to prayer. What are some of your common difficulties?

2. She won over the Devil. The Devil puts up a fight when we become interested in the lives and souls of others. He will do his best to keep us off our knees.

3. She won deliverance for her daughter from the power of the Evil One.

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## **Why Did They Bring the Man to Jesus? By: B. B. Caldwell**

Mark 2:12

### **I. THEY KNEW WHERE HIS ONLY HOPE LAY v. 3**

1. Jesus is only hope.
2. Jesus is the answer to all our needs.
3. Wasted no time on substitutes.
4. Never stopped until they got him to Jesus.

### **II. THEY WERE WILLING TO DO UNUSUAL v. 4**

1. Tearing up roofs is expensive.
2. Tearing up roofs is embarrassing.
3. How much is your friends' soul worth? Mark 8:36

### **III. THEY WERE WILLING TO WORK TOGETHER Mk 2:3**

1. No one had to be boss.
2. Willing to agree on methods.
3. Had no grudges to alienate each other.

#### IV. WHO WERE THESE FOUR MEN?

1. Leper who had been cleansed.
2. Blind man who had received his sight.
3. Lame man who had been made to walk.
4. Dead man who had been raised from dead.
5. All four men had had an experience with Jesus and He had made them whole.

#### V. THEIR FAITH SAVED HIM FROM HIS SICKNESS AND SINS Mk 2:5

1. **Vicarious faith**—Matt. 15.
2. Vicarious repentance—Deut. 32:36.
3. Vicarious praying.
4. Vicarious mourning.
5. Vicarious confessing of sins. Dan. 9:8–10.

#### VI. THEY GLORIFIED GOD Mk 2:12

1. Speak well of.
2. Praise Lord.
3. Give thanks unto God.
4. Give glory unto God.

### Mark 2:6 But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts

NET Mark 2:6 Now some of the experts in the law were sitting there, turning these things over in their minds:

GNT Mark 2:6 σαν ὁ πινες τ ν γραμματων κε καθ μενοι κα διαλογιζ μενοι ν τα ς καρδ αις α τ ν,

NLT Mark 2:6 But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves,

KJV Mark 2:6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

ESV Mark 2:6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts,

NIV Mark 2:6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves,

ASV Mark 2:6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

CSB Mark 2:6 But some of the scribes were sitting there, thinking to themselves:

- **reasoning**: Mk 8:17 Mt 16:7,8 Lu 5:21,22 2Co 10:5

#### Parallel Passages

Mt. 9:3+ And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes."

Lk 5:17, 21 + One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing....21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

**But some of the scribes** (first used Mk 1:22+) **were sitting there** - Note that Luke 5:21+ has both groups **scribes and the Pharisees** (and notice where they had come from in Lk 5:17). Note also that Mark has **SOME** not **ALL** which would suggest not all of the scribes had this critical thought about Jesus.

**A T Robertson** comments that "These scribes and Pharisees were there to cause trouble, to pick flaws in the teaching and conduct of Jesus. His popularity and power had aroused their jealousy. There is no evidence that they spoke aloud the murmur in their hearts, "within themselves" (Matt. 9:3). It was not necessary, for their looks gave them away and Jesus knew their thoughts (Matt. 9:4) and perceived their reasoning (Luke 5:22). Instantly Jesus recognized it in his own spirit (Mark 2:8 "Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit"). The Master at once recognizes the hostile atmosphere in the house. The debate (dialogizomenoi) in their hearts was written on their faces. No sound had come, but feeling did." (Word Pictures)

**Scribes** (1122)(**grammateus** from **grapho** = to write) was one skilled in Jewish law and theology scribe, expert, scholar (Mt 2.4). **Grammateus** also referred to a chief executive officer of a governmental entity such as a town official secretary, town clerk (Acts 19.35). Jesus gives a long rebuke including **8 WOES** primarily to

the Scribes and Pharisees which should be read to help understand how this group of Jewish religious men functioned (See Mt 23:1-39, 13, 14, 15, 16, etc). Most sources consider the **lawyers** (nomikos - meaning one skilled in the Mosaic law) to be scribes specialized in the jurisprudence of the Law of Moses. Finally the scribes in Lk 5:17 (nomdidaskalos) were teachers of the Jewish law who were equal to the lawyers and scribes. In the Septuagint grammateus frequently used for a political officer who assisted kings or magistrates by keeping written accounts of public acts and occurrences or royal revenues (2 Ki 12:10) (See [Brown-Driver-Briggs definition of saphar](#)).

**And reasoning in their hearts** - **ESV** has "questioning." They should have been praising God in their hearts! While they did not verbalize their critical, judgmental thoughts, those thoughts were important, because the heart is the essence of who we are of what kind of person we are. As Pr 23:7KJV says "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Given the importance of the heart Pr 4:23 commands us "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." Sadly, these men had failed to watch over their hearts and out of them flowed in effect springs of death in their legalistic, works righteousness teachings that would keep men from the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the hearts of the scribes (and Pharisees in Lk 5:21+) were hardened to spiritual truth a state which even angered Jesus, Mark 3:5 recording "After looking around at them with anger, **grieved at their hardness of heart**, He \*said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored." See several heart issues in Mark Mk 6:52; Mk 8:17; Mk 11:23; Mk 12:30, 33; Eph. 1:18; Eph 3:17; Phil. 1:7; 1 Tim1:5)

**Reasoning** (Thought, speculation, disputing, doubts) (1260)([dialogizomai](#) c f [dialogismos](#) from **d i a** = intensifies meaning + [logizomai](#) - to reason, reckon, consider. English "[dialogue](#)" conversation between two or more) means to consider, reason or reckon thoroughly, to think through, to [deliberate](#) by reflection. "To bring together different reasons."

**Hearts** (2588)([kardia](#)) does not refer to the physical organ (over 800 mentions and none refer to the physical organ!) but is always used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center of human life. The heart is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect, emotions, and will. No outward obedience is of the slightest value unless the heart turns to God. Heart in effect describes our "**control center**" (to make a play on the "[air traffic control center](#)" at the airport which carefully guards and guides what flies in and what flies out. How applicable to our "hearts" which are so prone to wander!). **Kardia** refers to the the [affective](#) center of our being wherein lies the capacity of moral preference and volitional desire. The **kardia** generates thoughts that make the decisions which the mind works out. In other words, our logic flows out of our heart-decisions and not vice versa. Gleason Archer called the **kardia**, the "desire-producer that makes us tick" for it is the place where our "desire-decisions" occur, and which establish who we really are.

**THOUGHT** - WHO ARE YOU? HAVE YOU HAD A HEART CHECK UP RECENTLY? We are assiduous to do this medically, but woefully lax in doing it spiritually (beloved, I speak from experience!). At regeneration God reverses the spiritual atherosclerosis of our old sinful heart by giving us a total heart transplant! Daily confession and repentance are thereafter necessary to avoid "spiritual atherosclerosis" and gradual, subtle hardening (and becoming cold to the things of God) of our heart! (Practice daily "preventative maintenance" = 1 Jn 1:9+, Pr 28:13+).

#### Related Resources:

- Torrey's Topic - [Scribes](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Scribes](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Scribe](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Scribes](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Scribes](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Scribe Scribes](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Scribe Scribes](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Scribes](#)
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Scribes](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Scribes](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Scribes](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Scribe](#)

**Mark 2:7 "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"**



NET Mark 2:7 "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

GNT Mark 2:7 Τ ο τος ο τως λαλε ; βλασφημε · τ ς δ ναται φι ναι μαρτ ας ε μ ε ς θε ς;

NLT Mark 2:7 "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

KJV Mark 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

ESV Mark 2:7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

NIV Mark 2:7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

ASV Mark 2:7 Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God?

CSB Mark 2:7 "Why does He speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

- **speak:** Mk 14:64 Mt 9:3 26:65 Joh 10:33,36
- **who:** Job 14:4 Ps 130:4 Isa 43:25 Da 9:9 Mic 7:18 Lu 5:21 7:49 Joh 20:20-23

### Related Passages:

Mt. 9:3+ And some of the scribes said to themselves, "This fellow blasphemes."

Lk 5:21+ The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

**Why does this man speak that way?** - Instead of joy there was judgment in the hearts of these legalistic leaders. Notice their somewhat derogatory reference to Jesus as **this man**. and in Matthew 9:3+ they used a similar derogatory term **'this fellow.'** Mk 2:7NIV renders it "this fellow" which helps bring out their contemptuous tone.

**He is blaspheming** - This is what they were reasoning in their hearts. They did not speak these words out loud. Their assessment would have been correct if He were not God incarnate. The importance of this fact is that they knew that blasphemy was punishable by death (Lev. 24:10-23+; Nu 15:30–31) Their "logic" was that Jesus had assumed a prerogative given only to God Himself and thus committed the highest level of blasphemy (see MacArthur below)! **Blasphemy** was a frequent charge leveled against Jesus (Mk 14:64; Jn 5:18; Jn 10:33, 36) and would eventually become the basis of Jesus' conviction and crucifixion. The religious leaders thought they had him trapped in a crime that carried the death penalty!

Jesus would repeat this "crime" of declaring **'Your sins are forgiven'** in Luke 7:48–49+ (as He was dining with one of the Pharisees).

This Man **blasphemes!** This would be a true judgment about anyone but God incarnate, for only the One who has been sinned against has the prerogative to forgive. Jesus' words to the man were therefore an unequivocal claim of divine authority.

**John MacArthur** explains that "**Blasphemy** was the most heinous crime in Jewish thought, since it was a direct affront to the person of God. They defined three levels of blasphemy. **First**, one blasphemed God by speaking evil of His law, as Stephen (Acts 6:13) and Paul (Acts 21:27–28) were falsely accused of doing. A more **serious** form of blasphemy was to slander, speak evil of, or curse God Himself (Lev. 24:10–16; cf. Ex. 20:7). But the **ultimate** form of blasphemy was to assume the rights and prerogatives of God; to usurp the role of God and act as if one were God. It was this third and most severe type of blasphemy that the scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of (cf. John 5:18; 8:58–59; 10:33; 19:7)." (Luke Commentary)

**He is blaspheming** (present tense)(987)(**blasphemeo** from **blapto** = hinder, injure, hurt + **pheme** = report, rumor, fame from **phemí** = to speak; see study of verb form **blasphemeo**) means literally **to speak to harm** and in general therefore means to bring into ill repute, to speak verbal abuse against someone which denotes the very worst type of slander. To **defame** which means to harm the reputation of by libel or slander. In Scripture, blaspheming refers to intentional and overt defilement of the divine name, and so is any abusive speech or action directed against God, especially against the majesty, nature and power of God. The scribes are (correctly) reasoning that Jesus is taking for Himself a right that is reserved for God alone!

It is notable that this first charge finally became the fatal charge for in Mark 14:61-64 we read "But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" 62 And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." 63 Tearing his clothes, the high priest \*said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? 64 "You have heard the **blasphemy**; how does it seem to you?" **And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death.**"

**Johann Bengel** adds that "Blasphemy is committed when (1.) things unworthy of God are attributed to Him; (2.) things worthy of God are denied to Him; (3.) when the incommunicable attributes of God are attributed to others."

**Edwards** - Forgiveness of sins remains everywhere the exclusive right of God." The reason is that in every sin, even in sins committed ostensibly only against one's neighbor, God is the party most offended. Thus in his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, David, who in one affair breaks at least three and perhaps four of the Ten Commandments, confesses to God, " 'against you, you only, have I sinned' " (Ps 51:4+). (PNTC-Mk)

**R C H Lenski** - Finally the irrefutable proof for their indictment: "Who is able to dismiss sins except one, God?" The self-evident answer is true beyond question. This they had learned well from their Old Testament. Their blind mistake was that they considered Jesus a mere man in spite of all the evidence they had received to the contrary. To be sure, for a mere man to pretend to remit sins would be one of the worst forms of blasphemy.(ISMG)

**Who can forgive (aphiemi) sins (hamartia) but God alone?** - A good question which is a good start that soon deteriorates into great grumbling. Who has the power or ability to forgive sins? Only **can** (has the inherent power) to send away one's sins. Indeed remission of sins was a divine prerogative as taught repeatedly in the Old Testament (Ex. 34:6-9; Ps. 103:12; Ps 130:4, Isa 43:25; Isa 44:22; Isa 55:6, 7; Jer. 31:34; Da 9:9, Mic. 7:18-19). So this was an excellent question and was like throwing Jesus a softball pitch. This is surely why He said be forgiven rather than be healed.

**THOUGHT** - While ultimately God alone can forgive sins against Himself, remove the guilt caused by those sins and declare that the guilt is actually removed, we a On the other hand there is a sense in which we can forgive others and in fact we are commanded to do so when we earnestly resolve not to take revenge but instead to love the one who has injured us, to promote his welfare, and never again to bring up the past (Matt. 6:12, 15; 18:21; Luke 6:37; Eph. 4:32;

**Can** (1410)(**dunamai**) means to be able or capable of doing something, in this case speaking of the continual (**present tense**) ability to forgive sins.

**Mark 2:8 Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, "Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts**

NET Mark 2:8 Now immediately, when Jesus realized in his spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts, he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?"

GNT Mark 2:8 κα εθς πιγνος ησοστ πνεματι ατο πι οτως διαλογ ζονται ν αυτος λγει ατος, Τ τατα διαλογ ζεσθε ν τας καρδαις μ ν;

NLT Mark 2:8 Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts?"

KJV Mark 2:8 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?

ESV Mark 2:8 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?"

NIV Mark 2:8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?"

ASV Mark 2:8 And straightway Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

CSB Mark 2:8 Right away Jesus understood in His spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?"

- **when:** 1Ch 29:17 Mt 9:4 Lu 5:22 6:8 7:39,40 Joh 2:24,25 6:64 21:17 Heb 4:13 Rev 2:23
- **Why:** Mk 7:21 Ps 139:2 Pr 15:26 24:9 Isa 55:7 Eze 38:10 Lu 24:38 Ac 5:3 Ac 8:22

**HOSTILITY HIDDEN  
IN THEIR HEARTS**

## Related Passages:

Mt. 9:4+ And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking **evil** in your hearts?"

Lk 5:22+ But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?"

**Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves** - Jesus **immediately** perceived that there had just occurred a monumental clash between the Kingdom of darkness (the scribes being sons of darkness) and the Kingdom of light (Jesus being the Light - Jn 8:12) regarding the deity of Jesus. Jesus knew full well that He had exercised the prerogative of God in forgiving the paralytic's sins and so He now proceeds to justify His action and His indirect claim of Deity by healing the man. **Aware in His Spirit** - this implies "superhuman" awareness! (see Mk 8:12+, Jn 2:25+)

**Immediately** (2117)(**euthus**) as **adverb** to mean immediately, right away, at once. **Euthus** is a key word in the Gospel of Mark - Mk. 1:3; Mk. 1:10; Mk. 1:12; Mk. 1:18; Mk. 1:20; Mk. 1:21; Mk. 1:23; Mk. 1:28; Mk. 1:29; Mk. 1:30; Mk. 1:42; Mk. 1:43; Mk. 2:8; Mk. 2:12; Mk. 3:6; Mk. 4:5; Mk. 4:15; Mk. 4:16; Mk. 4:17; Mk. 4:29; Mk. 5:2; Mk. 5:29; Mk. 5:30; Mk. 5:42; Mk. 6:25; Mk. 6:27; Mk. 6:45; Mk. 6:50; Mk. 6:54; Mk. 7:25; Mk. 8:10; Mk. 9:15; Mk. 9:20; Mk. 9:24; Mk. 10:52; Mk. 11:2; Mk. 11:3; Mk. 14:43; Mk. 14:45; Mk. 14:72; Mk. 15:1

**Aware** (recognizing, understanding) (1921)(**epiginosko** from **epí** = upon intensifies + **ginosko** = to know) means that Jesus knew fully, with certainty. He had definite information about their **reasoning** in their hearts.

**R C H Lenski** - Jesus used his omniscience in this case; see John 2:24, 25+. As his office and work required Jesus used his divine attributes; but not beyond that. Thus with stunning directness Jesus confronts these Jews with their own thoughts. He thus gave them evidence that he was not a mere man who was arrogating divine prerogatives to himself in a blasphemous manner. Mark uses "these things" to indicate their reasonings, but Matthew writes "wicked things," (Mt. 9:4+ = **evil**) which characterizes their moral character. "These things" were the blind product of their hatred and the desire to destroy Jesus in any way that might prove feasible. We must look well to our inner motives, for these are the vicious factors and not merely what they produce.

**Edwards** - Jesus not only knows the sins of the paralytic, but he also knows the hearts of the scribes. The scribes have nothing to say to the man's physical or spiritual condition. Jesus has something to say to both, but what he says causes the scribes the gravest possible offense. (PNTC-Mk)

**Said to them, "Why are you reasoning** (see [dialogizomai](#)) **about these things in your hearts** (see [kardia](#)) - Jesus confronts His adversaries with a pointed [counterquestion](#), which was a well-known rhetorical device in Rabbinic debates (cf Mk 3:4, Mk 11:30, Mk 12:37) Matthew 9:4+ adds ""**Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?**" where the Greek word for **evil** (poneros) speaks of active evil with a desire to harm. With this question Jesus rebukes them for their evil and false allegations. Jesus frequently taught by asking questions. Ponder this one -- the scribes (and Pharisees) knew that they had not verbalized their thoughts (**reasoning**) and yet this Man knew their thoughts perfectly! This was like a "preview" of coming attractions. The fact that Jesus had "read their **reasoning**" should have been a major clue that He was not a mere Man! Sadly, when hearts are hard, truth cannot penetrate. How often have I shared the Truth of Jesus with folks and they in essence say "Don't confuse me with the facts! What about all the folks who call themselves Jesus followers on Sunday and live like the devil the other 6 days of the week?"

**Mark 2:9 "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say, **Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk**'"**

NET Mark 2:9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up, take your stretcher, and walk'?

GNT Mark 2:9 τ σπιν ε κοπ τερον, ε πε ν τ παραλυτικ , φ εντα σου α μαρτ αι, ε πε ν, γειρε κα ρον τ ν κρ βαττ ν σου κα περιπ τει;

NLT Mark 2:9 Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'?

KJV Mark 2:9 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?

ESV Mark 2:9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'?

NIV Mark 2:9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?

ASV Mark 2:9 Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

CSB Mark 2:9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, pick up your mat, and walk'?

- **Which is easier** Mt 9:5 Lu 5:22-25
- **Your sins are forgiven:** Mk 2:5

## CHRIST CHALLENGES HIS CRITICS

### Related Passages:

Mt. 9:5+ "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'?"

Lk 5:23+ "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven you,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'?"

**Which is easier** - It is obviously **easier** to say, '**Your sins** (see [hamartia](#)) **are forgiven** (see [aphiemi](#)) **sins**,' since the validity of that statement cannot be tested -- No human can prove that such a thing actually occurred since it is invisible. Commanding a paralytic to walk would be far more difficult, because the actions of the paralytic would immediately verify the effect of the command.

**R C H Lenski** - Both words evidently require the identical power of God. No other answer is possible. As God alone can remit sins, so he alone can restore a paralytic on the instant.

**To say to the paralytic** (see [paralutikos](#)), '**Your sins are forgiven**' or to say, '**Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk**' - The answer is so self-evident that from this text it appears Jesus did not even give them a chance to voice an answer! He immediately moved on to answer His question not with words but with works! **Walk** is in the [present imperative](#) = keeping on walking. If the religious leaders were honest (which they were not), this would have addressed their concerns.

### Mark 2:10 "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--He said to the paralytic

NET Mark 2:10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"-- he said to the paralytic--

GNT Mark 2:10 να ὁ ἐδτε τι ξουσα χει υ ς το νθρ που φι ναι μαρτ ας π τ ς γ ς λ γει τ παραλυτικ ,

NLT Mark 2:10 So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said,

KJV Mark 2:10 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,)

ESV Mark 2:10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"-- he said to the paralytic--

NIV Mark 2:10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic,

ASV Mark 2:10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy),

CSB Mark 2:10 But so you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins," He told the paralytic,

- Da 7:13,14 Mt 9:6-8 16:13 Joh 5:20-27 Ac 5:31 1Ti 1:13-16

### Related Passages:

Mt. 9:5-6+ "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'?" 6 "But so that you

may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—then He \*said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your bed and go home.”

Lk 5:24+ “But, so 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, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”

**But so that you may know that**- NLT has "So I will prove to you." Jesus gave the challenge and apparently does not give His opponents time to answer, but presents the purpose for the question. He wanted them to **know** ([eido](#)) this truth beyond a shadow of doubt. Normally "seeing is believing" but that would not prove true in the case of these hard-hearted religious leaders!

**R C H Lenski** - Jesus has done the one act, forgiven the paralytic's sins. The effect of this act is invisible—no one saw the sins piled up on the man's soul, and no man saw that mass of sin vanish into nothingness from his soul. Jesus now follows with the second act, he heals the paralytic. The effect is instantly visible to all—they see the man rise, take up his pallet, and walk away, not only free of paralysis but restored to perfect health and strength, all this in an instant. The act which the eyes are able to see verifies the other act which no eyes can see. As the one is wrought by the *ξουσία*, “the authority,” “the right and might” of him who is God, so is the other. For both are done by Jesus, not in and by the name of another, but in his own person, by the divine *ξουσία* that resides in himself. “In order that you may see” in an actual ocular demonstration is thus fulfilled to the very letter. (ISMG)

**TECHNICAL COMMENT** - The first half of v. 10—“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—is usually understood to be addressed to the scribes. In that case the words "he said to the paralytic" constitute a parenthesis to explain that the following words are addressed not to the teachers of the law but to the paralytic. The change of addressee seems awkward; but, if this is the correct interpretation, presumably Jesus indicated his change by some sort of gesture. **Another possibility is to take the entire verse as addressed to Mark's readers.** This would not only solve the problem of awkwardness stated above but also the theological one of so early a public use of the title "Son of Man" (for a discussion of "Son of Man," cf. remarks at Mk 8:31). In Mark's Gospel the use of this title seems to be reserved until after the crucial incident of Mk 8:29. (Walter W Wessel - Expositor's Bible Commentary)

**The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive** (see [aphiemi](#)) **sins** (see [hamartia](#)) - Only twice in Mark is Jesus accused of blasphemy, and both times Jesus identifies himself as the **Son of Man** (cf Mk 14:61, 62, 63, 64). **Son of Man** had been used once in the OT as a prophecy of the Messiah “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a **Son of Man** (GOD THE SON) was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days (GOD THE FATHER) and was presented before Him. (Da 7:13+) Assuming that the title "Son of Man" was spoken to the religious leaders (BUT SEE TECHNICAL NOTE ABOVE), these Jewish leaders would have (or at least should have) understood the Messianic claim that Jesus was making in using this title. The miracle would in turn authenticate His claim, because healing the lame was known to be associated with the time of the Messiah (see [examples of passages below](#)). As alluded to above in the "TECHNICAL NOTE" apart from the uses of **Son of Man** in Mk 2:10 and Mk 2:28, this title is not used again in until Peter's confession of Jesus as “the Christ” in Mk 8:29. After that **Son of Man** occurs much more frequently (Mk. 8:31; Mk. 8:38; Mk. 9:9; Mk. 9:12; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:33; Mk. 10:45; Mk. 13:26; Mk. 14:21; Mk. 14:41; Mk. 14:62)

**Edwards** - It is noteworthy that Jesus chooses “Son of Man” to designate his offices as God's Son. He does not speak of his vocation in the first person, that is, “That is the way I do things,” but in the third person, which thereby designates his humiliation, suffering, and exaltation as God's ordained way. (PNTC-Mk)

**Son of Man** was Jesus' favorite description of Himself and is used in 84 verses, the majority referring to Jesus. By using the phrase **Son of Man** Jesus demonstrates His compassionate willingness to identify with fallen mankind as He specifically declared in Mark 10:45 stating that “even the **Son of Man** did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,” in Luke adding “the **Son of Man** has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10+) By using this unusual title for himself, Jesus made people think carefully about who he was and what his mission involved (John 12:34; John 13:31-32). Occasionally Jesus used the title “Son of God” (Mt. 27:43; Lk 22:70; Jn 5:25; 9:35; 10:36; 11:4)

**Authority** (1849)([exousia](#)) in simple terms means Jesus has both the right to do this and the might to send sins away! Luke uses **exousia** to refer to Jesus' message (Lk 4:32, not like the scribes - Mt 7:29), to His authority over the world of the demons (Lk 4:36), to Jesus' delegation of His authority to the 12 disciples (Lk 9:1, cf Lk 10:19), to Jesus' authority to cast into hell (Lk 12:5, cf Mt 25:41), to Jesus' promise to believers to have authority over cities (Lk 19:17) (probably during the [Millennium](#) - MacArthur agrees noting this refers to “believers’ responsibility and rule under Christ in His future kingdom - cf. 2 Ti 2:12; Rev 1:6±; Rev 5:10±; Rev 20:4, 6±).

**He said to the paralytic** (see [paralutikos](#)) - If the scribes and Pharisees had really understood and believed their own OT Scriptures,

this miracle was a giant finger pointing to Jesus as their long expected Messiah. For example

Isaiah 35:5; 6+ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. 6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

Isaiah 61:1+ The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners;

**Evans** - The link between sin and sickness, forgiveness and restoration of health, is well illustrated in a later rabbinic saying: "A sick man does not recover from his sickness until all his sins are forgiven him, as it is written, 'Who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases' [Ps. 103:3]" (b. Ned. 41a = "I.17 A. R. Alexandri in the name of R. Hiyya bar Abba, "A sick person does not recover from his ailment before all of his sins are forgiven: 'Who forgives all your sins, who heals all your diseases' (Ps. 103:3)."). It is also worth noting that in the Aramaic paraphrase of Isaiah (i.e., the Targum) the Suffering Servant of Isa. 52:13–53:12 is understood in messianic terms and is understood as one through whom Israel's sins can be forgiven. A few phrases are instructive: "... in that we attach ourselves to his words our sins will be forgiven us ... before the Lord it was a pleasure to forgive the sins of us all for his sake ... he shall beseech concerning their sins ... yet he will beseech concerning the sins of many, and to the rebels it shall be forgiven for him" (Tg. Isa. 53:5, 6, 11, 12)....The Roman emperor was also understood to have the power to forgive sins: "Thine age, O Caesar, has brought back fertile crops to the fields ... has wiped away our sins and revived the ancient virtues ... and the fame and majesty of our empire were spread from the sun's bed in the west to the east. As long as Caesar is the guardian of the state, neither civil dissension nor violence shall banish peace" (Horace, Odes 4.15, emphasis added). (Ibid)

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## The Cure

Read: Mark 2:1-12

The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins. —Mark 2:10

A man with a nagging cough tried all the over-the-counter remedies he could find, but none worked. Finally he went to a doctor, who quickly discovered that he was suffering from pneumonia. The man was trying to ease the symptoms when what he needed was a cure. The doctor treated the deeper, more serious problem and in a short time the cough was gone.

When Jesus was in Capernaum, a large crowd came to the home where He was staying (Mk. 2:1-2). As He was teaching, some men made an opening in the roof and lowered a paralyzed man on a mat. Jesus initially responded not by healing the man but by saying, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (v.5). The deepest need of the man was not physical but spiritual. Then, to show His authority to forgive, Jesus healed the man and sent him on his way—not only with legs that moved but with a heart that was forgiven (v.12).

The world is full of pain and problems. It's tempting to spend a lot of time and resources to treat the surface symptoms and feel that we have done our part. Like Jesus, however, we need to deal with the heart issues. We need to tell people that their sins can be forgiven through faith in Christ. The gospel holds the cure for our deepest need. David C. Egener ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The Great Physician holds the cure  
That kills the virus of our sin;  
It's by His own atoning blood  
That we're made whole and pure within.  
—DJD

Sin is the disease, Christ is the cure.

**Mark 2:11 "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."**

NET Mark 2:11 "I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher, and go home."

GNT Mark 2:11 Σο λ γω, γειρε ρον τ ν κρ βαττ ν σου κα παγε ε ς τ ν ο κ ν σου.

NLT Mark 2:11 "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

KJV Mark 2:11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.



ESV Mark 2:11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."

NIV Mark 2:11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

ASV Mark 2:11 I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house.

CSB Mark 2:11 "I tell you: get up, pick up your mat, and go home."

- Mk 1:41 Joh 5:8-10 6:63

## THE MORE DIFFICULT COMMAND TO OBEY

### Related Passages:

Mt. 9:6+ "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—then He said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your bed and go home."

Lk 5:25+ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. 26 They were all struck with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today."

**I say to you, get up (egeiro), pick up (airo) your pallet and go (hupago) home** - Jesus gives 3 commands **Get up** and **go** both in the [present imperative](#) and pick up in the [aorist imperative](#) (Just do it!). Notice that Jesus does not ask him to struggle to arise or to grab a hand by which he would be helped to arise and limp out on his way, but simply to arise, carry the pallet that he himself had been carried in on and move out, nothing short of a miracle!

**THOUGHT** - How could he obey? Only by the power of the Spirit Who enabled him. [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

**Pallet (2895)(krabattos)** means a mattress, pallet, a light bed used as a poor man's bed, cot for one person, which was relatively small and portable. It could refer to a cot or stretcher on which a sick person might be carried. Krabattos is not used in the New Testament to describe the couches on which guests would recline at a dinner. **Zodhiates** says "It denotes a simple kind of bed such as the ancients used to rest on at noon." (Ibid) In a secular use BDAG records "Midas himself took up the pallet on which he had been carried, made his departure, and went back to the field." **Krabattos** - 11x in 11v - bedridden\*(1), pallet(8), pallets(2). - Mk. 2:4; Mk. 2:9; Mk. 2:11; Mk. 2:12; Mk. 6:55; Jn. 5:8; Jn. 5:9; Jn. 5:10; Jn. 5:11; Acts 5:15; Acts 9:33. Not found in the Septuagint.

**Vincent on pallet** - The pallet (krabattos different word from Luke's "stretcher" - klinidion = a small couch). One of Mark's Latin words, grabatus, and condemned by the grammarians as inelegant. A rude pallet, merely a thickly padded quilt or mat, held at the corners, and requiring no cords to let it down. They could easily reach the roof by the steps on the outside, as the roof is low (**Ed**: some say only 6 feet); or they could have gone into an adjoining house and passed along the roofs. Some suppose that the crowd was assembled in an upper chamber, which sometimes extended over the whole area of the house. It is not possible accurately to reproduce the details of the scene. Dr. Thomson says that Jesus probably stood in the lewan or reception-room, a hall which is entered from the court or street by an open arch; or he may have taken his stand in the covered court in front of the house itself, which usually has open arches on three sides, and the crowd was around and in front of him.

I like what **John Butler** said commenting on Christ's instructions - **First**, the **rising** part. "*Arise.*" Christ is in the rising business. He lifts men. Sin lowers men. Preachers and churches need to lift the standard rather than lower it through compromise. **Second**, the **rolling** part. "*Take up thy bed.*" This was not a wooden bed like our beds but more of a roll that was stretched out. Thus the precept was not without responsibility for the healed one. **Third**, the **returning** part. "*Go unto thine house.*" Not a glamorous command, but one that said we are to live our Christianity in the home. No one would know better the greatness of his healing than those in his own home, who knew full well his paralytic condition. Thus the best testimony of the healing would be in the home, not on the stage in public. (Analytical Bible Expositor – Matthew)

**Spurgeon** WHEREVER OUR LORD WORKS THE DOUBLE MIRACLE, IT WILL BE APPARENT. The man's healing was proved by his obedience. Openly to all onlookers an active obedience became indisputable proof of the poor creature's restoration. Notice, our Lord bade him rise — he rose; he had no power to do so except that power which comes with Divine commands. He did his Lord's

bidding, and he did it accurately, in detail, at once, and most cheerfully. Oh! how cheerfully; none can tell but those in like case restored. So, the true sign of pardoned sin, and of paralysis removed from the heart, is obedience. ([Carried by Four](#))

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## All Rise

Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house. —Mark 2:11

Today's Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

When I asked my husband to buy eggs on his way home so I could make cornbread for supper, he said, "I've got something better than cornbread." Coming from Jay, that was a surprising statement. But I learned what he meant when he walked into the house and handed me a fresh loaf of homemade cinnamon bread. A label on the wrapper said, "Thanks for the dough. We kneaded it." The bread was made by Sue Kehr and given as a "thank you" for a donation to a youth organization.

Sue started making bread after she had to quit her job as a nurse because of a head injury. Instead of letting circumstances pull her down when she could no longer help people in her usual ways, Sue rose to the challenge and created a unique expression of gratitude. She now makes and gives away delicious homemade bread to ministries that can then distribute the loaves to others.

Although Sue did not receive complete physical healing like the paralytic Jesus healed (Mark 2), she did rise up and cause many to be amazed at the work of God in her life.

God has something for each of us to do, despite our limitations. Rise up and ask what He might want to do through you. By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

### Reflect & Pray

When God asks you to lay aside  
Some cherished work you loved to do,  
Accept His choice of someone else  
And let Him give new work to you.  
—Fasick

Step up to the tasks and do what God asks.

**Mark 2:12 And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."**

NET Mark 2:12 And immediately the man stood up, took his stretcher, and went out in front of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

GNT Mark 2:12 καὶ γρηγορῶς ἐθίσε τὸ κρεβάτιον ἔλθεν μπροσθεν πάντων, ὥστε ἐστασθαι πάντας καὶ δοξάζειν τὸ θεὸν λέγοντας· τί οὕτως οὐδὲ ποτε εἶδομεν.

NLT Mark 2:12 And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"

KJV Mark 2:12 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.

ESV Mark 2:12 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!"

NIV Mark 2:12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

ASV Mark 2:12 And he arose, and straightway 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.

CSB Mark 2:12 Immediately he got up, picked up the mat, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

- so that they were all amazed: Mk 1:27 Mt 9:8 12:23 Lu 7:16



- **were glorifying God:** Mt 15:31 Lu 5:26 13:13 17:15 Ac 4:21
- **We have never seen anything like this:** Mt 9:33 Joh 7:31 9:32

## IMMEDIATE OBEDIENCE AND AMAZEMENT

### Related Passages:

Mt 9:7+ And he got up and went home. 8 But when the crowds saw this, they were awestruck, and **glorified God, who had given such authority**

Luke 5:25+ Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.

**And he got up and immediately** (see [euthus](#)) **picked up (airo) the pallet (krabattos)** - He **immediately** (one of Mark's favorite words [euthus](#)) put his faith into action and obeyed the Lord's commands. The three commands are matched by the three instantaneous effects. Mark it down that just as smoke must come out of the chimney to prove there is a fire in the fireplace, so too faith that obeys demonstrates that it is true, saving faith. Mark it well - faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone!

**THOUGHT** - This note repeats the [thought above](#) because this principle is so important and is not well understood by many believers. The paralytic's obedient response is a perfect illustration of the principle that what God commands, He enables! And this applies to all of His commands, none of which could be fulfilled without the empowering presence of His Spirit.

**And went out in the sight of (emprosthen) everyone - In the sight** (Lk 5:25+ is similar) attests to the reality of this miracle, one which occurred in a public place before the eyes of all present (O, to have been there that day!) One writer says "He did the miracle which they could see that they might know that he had done the other one that they could not see." **In the sight of everyone** would include the skeptical, critical leaders! This unequivocal healing unequivocally authenticated Jesus' declaration of forgiveness. So just as **healing** followed Jesus charge to "Get up," so too did **forgiveness** occur when He declared "your sins are forgiven!" Did this miracle result in belief in Jesus? None of the 3 synoptic accounts make any mention of belief, except **BEFORE** the miracle the four men who carried the man (**Jesus seeing their faith** - Mk 2:5) and the paralyzed man (whose faith was evidenced by his obedience)! For these hard hearted skeptical scribes (and pharisees) the old saying was not to prove true that "Seeing is believing." The saw and yet did not believe!

**THOUGHT** - Those who argue that Jesus never claimed to be God ignore this passage. Forgiving and healing are equally impossible for man, equally easy for God.

**So that** - Term of purpose or result, in this case the latter. The walking miracle stimulated the Jewish audience to give glory to God.

**They were all amazed and were glorifying God** - What a contrast with the grouching Scribes in Mark 2:7! **All** is interesting -- does this include the religious leaders? **Amazed** is in the [present tense](#) indicating they continued in this state. **Glorifying (doxazo)** is also in the [present tense](#) indicating he was continually praising God - a good pattern for all of us to emulate! Giving glory to God was often the (appropriate) reaction when someone was healed (cf. Lk 13:13; Lk 17:15; Lk 18:43). **Bock** adds that "Luke often notes that with the saving action of God, there comes gratitude and joy (Luke 2:20; 4:15; 5:26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43; 23:47 [at the cross!]; Acts 4:21; 11:15-18; 21:20). God's saving work brings a song to one's heart." (Ibid) Mark speaks of everyone glorifying God while Luke records that the healed paralytic "**went home glorifying God**" (Luke 5:25+) in addition to all the crowd "**glorifying God**" (Lk 5:26+).

**Amazed** (astonished, astounded, besides one's self) (1839)([existemi](#) from **ek** = out + **hístemi** = to stand) literally means to stand out from or to stand outside oneself (to be beside oneself). All NT uses of [existemi](#) are related in some way to the human mind. Richards "suggests astonishment mixed with anxiety, stimulated by extraordinary events that cannot be explained." Mark's uses - Mk. 2:12; Mk. 3:21; Mk. 5:42; Mk. 6:51

"To **"glorify"** God means to give glory to Him. The word *glory* as related to God in the Old Testament bears with it the idea of greatness of splendor. In the New Testament, the word translated "glory" means "dignity, honor, praise and worship." Putting the two together, we find that glorifying God means to acknowledge His greatness and give Him honor by praising and worshiping Him, primarily because He, and He alone, deserves to be praised, honored and worshipped. [God's glory](#) is the essence of His nature, and we give glory to Him by recognizing that essence." (See full article [What does it mean to glorify God?](#))

**NET Note** - Joy at God's work is also a key theme in Luke: Luke 2:20; 4:15; 5:26; 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 18:43;

**Spurgeon on glorifying God** - ALL THIS TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD. Those four men had been the indirect means of bringing much honour to God and much glory to Jesus, and they, I doubt not, glorified God in their very hearts on the housetop. Happy men to have been of so much service to their bedridden friend! When a man is saved his whole manhood glorifies God; he becomes instinct with a new-born life which glows in every part of him, spirit, soul, and body. But who next glorified God? The text does not say so, but we feel sure that his family did, for he went to his own house. Well, but it did not end there. A wife and family utter but a part of the glad chorus of praise, though a very melodious part. There are other adoring hearts who unite in glorifying the healing Lord. The disciples, who were around the Saviour, they glorified God too. And there was glory brought to God, even by the common people who stood around. We must, one and all, do the same. ([Carried by Four](#))

**Saying, "We have never seen anything like this"** - Of course not, because God had not been in their presence before (nor for over 400 years)! Luke 5:26+ adds that "they were filled with fear, saying, "We have seen remarkable things today." This is somewhat surprising, as the residents of Capernaum had witnessed Jesus performing miracles. What was different about this miracle was the association with the forgiveness of sins. As Evans says "They had witnessed the efforts of other healers and exorcists, who with varying degrees of success brought relief to some, but they had never before seen the kind of power at work in Jesus." (Ibid)

Excursus: Five Questions We Always Ask of Every Text (in section on Mark 2:5-12)

### **What does this text teach me about God?**

If the Bible is, in fact, God's revelation of Himself in written form, then we should first be concerned not with what it teaches about us but primarily with what it teaches us about Him. In this text we can surely say that only God can forgive our sins. Jesus, the religious leaders, and even the crowds clearly understood that. We can also say that God is compassionate to those wounded by sin. Jesus did not leave the man paralyzed or in sin. He healed him both physically and spiritually. Finally, we see that God honors all who come to Him in faith.

### **What does this text teach me about sinful humanity?**

When studying Scripture, we must take into account that we are created in the glorious image of God, but that image is marred by sin. This text shows that our greatest need is not physical healing but spiritual forgiveness. It also teaches that those who are the most religious are often the most judgmental. The scribes and Pharisees exhibit this truth throughout the Gospels. We also see that sometimes, though not always, physical maladies and personal sin are related.

### **What does this text teach me about Jesus Christ?**

He is the crux of the entire Bible, so we must ask how this text relates to His person, work, and teaching. Mark reveals Jesus as God—who knows our hearts, who forgives our sins, and who heals our diseases. Ultimately He is the Son of Man who fulfills the glorious vision of Daniel 7:13-14, who has all authority in heaven and earth.

### **What does God want me to know?**

In other words, what truths are there in this passage that I need to learn? Here we learn that we need the ministry of the Word. God's Word spoken into our heart is what He uses to transform our lives. Also, we need to flee to Jesus and Jesus only for the forgiveness of sins. Finally, God wants us to know that Jesus can forgive sins because He is God.

### **What does God want me to do?**

How does this text change the way I live? Mark reveals here that God wants us to act on our faith, just as these men did. He also wants us to glorify Him for all He does for us in Jesus. Indeed, worship is the only appropriate response to the work of God in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. (Exalting Jesus in Mark)

### **Amazing!**

All were amazed and glorified God. —Mark 2:12

Today's Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

When Jesus healed a paralytic as proof of His authority to forgive the man's sins, the people who witnessed the event were amazed, and they "glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'" (Mark 2:12). More than a dozen times in the gospel of Mark, we read accounts of people reacting in a similar way to the words and works of Jesus.

The word translated as “amazed” or “astonished” carries the meaning of “being thrown into a state of surprise or fear, or both.” We may sometimes feel that way when we encounter Jesus Christ as we read God’s Word. Like the disciples, we may be amazed when we read of Jesus saying, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” (10:23). So often we think that having lots of money would solve all our problems.

Those who saw a man delivered from a legion of demons reacted with amazement (5:20). But why? Did they think he was beyond God’s power to save? Do we feel the same way when God saves certain people?

Jesus is not bound by our limitations or expectations. He speaks and acts with authority and wisdom far beyond ours. With reverence and awe, let’s hear Jesus’ words and look for the transforming touch of His mighty hand. David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

I bow, O Lord, before Your throne  
In awed humility  
When I reflect on who You are  
And all You’ve done for me.  
—Sper

Never measure God’s unlimited power by your limited expectations.

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**Miracles in Mark** - Some think that Mark pours scorn on the miraculous and encourages faith in the powerless Jesus of the passion instead of the miracle-working Jesus of his earlier chapters. However, Mark uses miracles to interpret the passion (Mark 15:33, 38; 16:1–8) and to encapsulate (Mark 9:26–27) as well as adumbrate (Mark 6:41; 8:6) Jesus’ self-giving death. Mark gives so much space to Jesus as a spectacularly powerful miracle worker whose clothes, touch and words bring healing or raise the dead (Mark 5:41–42) that he can hardly regard the miracles as less significant than, or separable from, the self-giving weakness described in the passion narrative. Further, in his portrait of the ministry of Jesus (Mark 1:21–32) Mark establishes the primacy of his miracles in relation to his teaching and other activities. The primary function of the miracles in Mark is to be the principal means of revealing the identity of Jesus (\*cf. Mark 1:21–28) as ‘of God’ (Mark 1:24), ‘Son of God’ (Mark 5:7), one empowered by the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:22–30), the Messiah (Mark 8:22–30), one acting for God (Mark 2:1–12) and as God himself, uniquely present and active (Mark 6:47–52). Therefore the miracles, encapsulating the whole of Jesus’ ministry, bring eschatological salvation. In so far as the disciples are called to emulate the ministry of Jesus, the miracle stories also provide models for ministry (Mark 9:14–29). However, the miracles are not unequivocal heavenly signs, but parabolic. They provoke hostility and criticism as well as acclamation. Faith is required in order to understand the miracle worker’s identity and the purpose of the miracles. As ‘parables’, the miracles (especially the exorcisms) represent and are in themselves the destruction and plundering of Satan’s kingdom and the realizing of God’s kingdom (Mark 3:27). Thus Mark indicates that Jesus’ ministry involves a conflict, with Satan and the religious leaders; this reaches its climax in the passion. Faith or prayer (Mk 11:24), personal or vicarious, is so integral to Jesus’ healing of the sick that, apart from the exorcism narratives, there is no healing story that does not include some expression of trust in Jesus’ willingness or ability to perform miracles either before, during or after the healing. The miracles are an encouragement, a summons or demand to repentance and faith, to be with Jesus, to follow him, or to serve him, on the basis of the eschatological salvation they offer. The virtual absence of miracle stories after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem allows full rein to the hints of the theme of Jesus’ self-giving expressed in the earlier miracle stories. Jesus the powerful miracle worker chooses to offer himself, powerless, into the hands of the authorities in order to die ‘for many’ (Mk 10:45).

(New Dictionary of Biblical Theology)

**Mark 2:13 And He went out again by the seashore; and all the people were coming to Him, and He was teaching them.**

NET Mark 2:13 Jesus went out again by the sea. The whole crowd came to him, and he taught them.

GNT Mark 2:13 Κα ξ λθεν π λιν παρ τ ν θ λασσαν· κα π ς χλος ρχετο πρ ς α τ ν, κα δ δασκεν α το ς.

NLT Mark 2:13 Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him.

KJV Mark 2:13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

ESV Mark 2:13 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching

them.

NIV Mark 2:13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

ASV Mark 2:13 And he went forth again by the sea side; and all the multitude resorted unto him, and he taught them.

CSB Mark 2:13 Then Jesus went out again beside the sea. The whole crowd was coming to Him, and He taught them.

- **by the seashore:** Mt 9:9 13:1
- **and all the people were coming to Him:** Mk 2:2 3:7,8,20,21 4:1 Pr 1:20-22 Lu 19:48 21:38

#### Parallel Passages: Words in Bold are not found in Mark's account

Mt. 9:9–13+ As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called **Matthew**, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He \*said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 10 Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your **Teacher** eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But **go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,'** for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Lk 5:27–32+ (Words in Bold are not in Mark's account) After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "Follow Me." 28 And he **left everything behind**, and got up and began to follow Him. 29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes **began grumbling at His disciples**, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?" 31 And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. 32 "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners **to repentance.**"

**And He went out again by the seashore** - As **Robertson** says this is "A pretty picture of Jesus walking by the sea and a walk that Jesus loved." (Mark 1:16+). And notice again that Jesus' walk was filled with purpose for this is where "He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen." (Mt. 4:18+, cf Mark 1:16+) **Went by** is in the [present tense](#) which pictures Jesus, a Spirit filled Man, "passing by" but always on the lookout for opportunities to do good and to [redeem the time](#).

**THOUGHT** - O, to have this Spirit enabled mindset to see people and places and circumstances as opportunities rather than as hindrances, nuisances or irritations (which is my usual response!). It is worth noting the interesting derivation of the English word opportunity from the Latin "**ob portu**." In ancient times before modern harbors, ships had to wait for the timing of the tide before they could make it safely to port. Thus "OB PORTU," described the ship waiting "FOR PORT," ready to seize the crucial moment when it could ride the tide into safe harbor. The captain knew that if he missed the passing tide, the ship would have to wait for another tide to come in. I am firmly convinced that God gives each believer many "ob portu's", but we must be spiritually wise and Spirit filled in order to see and seize them as did our Lord Jesus. As Charles Swindoll said "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities (ob portu's) brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." Shakespeare's famous line from Julius Caesar conveys the same thought: "There is a tide in the affairs of men (an "ob portu"), Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat; And we must take the current when it serves, Or lose our ventures."

**And all the people were coming to Him** - **Coming** is the picturesque [imperfect tense](#) which depicts a stream of souls coming to Jesus, one after another they come! This gives us a graphic picture of the crowd swelling in size. Jesus' reputation had spread and He was the main attraction for **all the people** (**all** is probably a hyperbole - but certainly a great number). Would it be true today in cities and towns all across America (and the world) that Jesus would be the main attraction and **all the people** would be **coming to Him**! Let it be Lord. Amen!

**And He was teaching them** - Jesus always had time for the common people and almost always made use of the time in some eternally profitable way, in this case by **teaching**. **Teaching** (**didasko**) is also in the [imperfect tense](#), picturing Jesus teaching them one thing after another. Again Jesus is showing us that in our short time on earth we must be diligent about redeeming the precious

moments we have left! Jesus openness to the common people was in marked contrast to the judgmental, exclusivistic attitudes of the prideful Jewish religious leaders.

**John MacArthur** writes that **didasko** "refers to the passing on of information-often, but not necessarily, in a formal setting. It focused on content, with the purpose of discovering the truth-contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about of various ideas and opinions was the primary concern (see Acts 17:21+). Synagogue teaching, as illustrated by that of Jesus, was basically expository. Scripture was read and explained section by section, often verse by verse....In all the various forms, the root meaning carries with it the idea of systematic teaching or systematic training. It is the word that is used to refer to a choir director who trains a choir over a long period of rehearsals until they are able to perform. [Matthew Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**Teaching** is distinguished from preaching, the latter emphasizing the proclamation of the Gospel to the non-Christian world. **Teaching** of [sound](#) doctrine is vital to stability of one's faith and spiritual growth and stability of one's faith, this vital role being clearly validated by our Lord Jesus Christ who was called **Rabbi** or **Teacher** more than any other name -- in fact the some 45 of the 58 NT uses of the Greek word for teacher (**didaskalos**) are used of Jesus (most of these referring to public teaching). In addition 47 of 97 occurrences of **didasko** are used in the Gospels to describe the activity of Jesus.

**Mark 2:14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he got up and followed Him.**

NET Mark 2:14 As he went along, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax booth. "Follow me," he said to him. And he got up and followed him.

GNT Mark 2:14 κα̅ πα̅ρ γων̅ ε̅ δ̅εν̅ Λ̅ευ̅ υ̅ τ̅ υ̅ το̅ λ̅φ̅α̅ ου̅ καθ̅ με̅νον̅ π̅ τ̅ τελ̅ νιον̅, κα̅ λ̅ γ̅ει̅ α̅ τ̅, κ̅ολο̅ θ̅ει̅ μοι̅. κα̅ ν̅αστ̅ ς̅ κ̅ολο̅ θ̅η̅σεν̅ α̅ τ̅.

NLT Mark 2:14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.

KJV Mark 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

ESV Mark 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

NIV Mark 2:14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

ASV Mark 2:14 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the place of toll, and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him.

CSB Mark 2:14 Then, moving on, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and He said to him, "Follow Me!" So he got up and followed Him.

- **He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus:** Mk 3:18 Mt 9:9 Lu 5:27
- **Alphaeus:** Mk 3:18 Lu 6:15 Ac 1:13
- **Follow me:** Mk 1:17-20 Mt 4:19-22

## A DESPISED TAX COLLECTOR FOLLOWS JESUS

### Parallel Passages

Mt. 9:9–13+ As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called **Matthew**, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He \*said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. 10 Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your **Teacher** eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But **go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE**



**COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,** for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Lk 5:27–32+ (Words in Bold are not in Mark's account) After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” 28 And he **left everything behind**, and got up and began to follow Him. 29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes **began grumbling at His disciples**, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” 31 And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. 32 “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners **to repentance.**”

Edwards entitles v13-17 "the scandal of grace."

Tax collectors like Matthew were despised by the Jews because they were a symbol of their subjugation to the Roman government (with whom they were regarded as collaborators against their fellow Jews and thus were regarded as "traitors"), they had significant contact with the "Gentile dogs," and were patently dishonest, not hesitating to "shake down" their fellow Jews and practice out and out extortion! Unfortunately for the Jews the tax collectors did have the force of Roman soldiers behind them to make people pay taxes. They were usually lumped by Jews into the derogatory category of "**sinners (hamartolos)**." Some rabbinic writings even compared them to murderers and robbers (Mishnah Nedarim 3:4; b. Bava Qamma 113a). Apparently tax collectors like Levi had to bid for the right to make collections, but then they would add a so-called "surcharge," which typically was where the abuse occurred (cf Lk 3:13+, Lk 19:8+). Lane observes that ""When a Jew entered the customs service he was regarded as an outcast from society: he was disqualified as a judge or a witness in a court session, was excommunicated from the synagogue, and in the eyes of the community his disgrace extended to his family." (Commentary on Mark) As Spurgeon so aptly phrases it Matthew ""was at this time busy **taking**, but he was called to a work that was essentially **giving.**"

**As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth - Passed by** is [present tense](#) which more vividly depicts Jesus in motion walking along the seashore (as specified in Mk 2:13+). This **tax booth** would have been in the jurisdiction of [Herod Antipas](#), who was the ultimate recipient of a (major) portion of the taxes collected.

While Mark does not state **Levi** (means "companion") is a tax collector, clearly he was by location and according to Lk 5:27+. I can't resist a pun that **Levi** had to [levy](#) a tax on goods that passed by his toll booth! **Levi** was a famous name was first used in Genesis - "She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named **Levi.**" (Ge 29:34). Levi's father's name was **Alphaeus**, but do not confuse this with Matthew 10:3 and Mk 3:18 mention James the son of **Alphaeus**. This James, is often called **James the Less** to distinguish him from James the brother of John. There is no evidence that he was the brother of **Levi**, for this fact would probably have been mentioned, as it was in the case of Peter and Andrew (Mt 4:18+), and of James and John. (Mt 4:21+)

**Background** - The messianic Jewish writer **Alfred Edersheim** has an interesting note on the call of Matthew - It is in the light of what we have just learned concerning the Rabbinic views of forgiveness and repentance that the call of Levi-Matthew must be read, if we would perceive its full meaning ([Here is what Edersheim wrote as background for the call of Levi-Matthew](#)). There is no need to suppose that it took place immediately on the cure of the paralytic. On the contrary, the more circumstantial account of St. Mark implies, that some time had intervened. If our suggestion be correct, that it was winter when the paralytic was healed at Capernaum, we may suppose it to have been the early spring-time of that favoured district, when Jesus 'went forth again by the seaside.' And with this, as we shall see, best agrees the succession of after-events. (Life and Times of the Messiah)

**Related Resource:**

- [Who was Matthew in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**And He said to him, "Follow Me!"** - This is essentially Jesus' official call of discipleship as in Mk 1:17+ where Jesus saw Andrew and his brother Simon (Peter) casting a net in the sea and commanded them "**Follow** Me, and I will make you become fishers of men" and "Immediately they left their nets and followed Him." (Mk 1:18+) Jesus addresses a despised tax collector which would seem to be a most unlikely person to receive such a call. But God is not partial and Jesus the God-Man shows He has open arms and an open mind regarding sinners of all genre! Is this not good news for all of us! When He calls we need to answer (Have you heard His voice? I love Michael Card's song [I Heard The Voice Of Jesus Say](#)).

**Follow** (NLT paraphrases it "Follow me and be my disciple")(190)(**akoloutheo** from **a** = expresses union with, likeness + **keleuthos** = a road, way) means to walk the same road (Ponder that simple definition dear believer - Am I willing to walk the same road as Jesus?) Literally to follow (like the crowds followed Jesus BUT they were not truly committed to him. E.g., see Jn 6:66) and in a figurative sense to follow Jesus as a

disciple. **Akoloutheo** in Mark - Mk. 1:18; Mk. 2:14; Mk. 2:15; Mk. 3:7; Mk. 5:24; Mk. 6:1; Mk. 8:34; Mk. 9:38; Mk. 10:21; Mk. 10:28; Mk. 10:32; Mk. 10:52; Mk. 11:9; Mk. 14:13; Mk. 14:54; Mk. 15:41

**Bob Utley** writes "It must be remembered that the rabbis called disciples to bind themselves to the Law, but Jesus called these men to bind themselves to Him. Jesus, not human performance of Mosaic rules (i.e. the Talmud), is the way of salvation. Repentance is not a turning back to the Mosaic Law, but a turning to Jesus, YHWH's Messiah. Jesus did not reject the Law, but put Himself in its traditional place and as its only proper interpretation (cf. Matt. 5:17–48). Salvation is a person, not just a creed or the performance of a code. This issue is basically the reason Jesus came into purposeful conflict with the religious leaders."

**R C H Lenski** - The call to attach himself permanently to Jesus involved no small financial loss, yet it made good that loss with infinite spiritual gain. Levi was perhaps the last of the Twelve to be called. The fact that one of them should be selected from the despised class of the publicans is highly significant.

Jesus gives the command in the [present active imperative](#) which calls for Levi to continually make the choice to follow Him.

Below are most of the calls by Jesus for men to follow Him, the verbs in red being in the present imperative calling for discipleship to be their lifestyle. Follow in Mt 4:19 and Mk 1:17 is aorist imperative meaning something like do this now, do not delay....

Matthew 4:19 And He said to them, '**Follow Me**, and I will make you fishers of men.'

Matthew 8:22 But Jesus said to him, '**Follow Me**, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.'

Matthew 9:9 As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "**Follow Me!**" And he got up and **followed** Him.

Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and **follow Me**."

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, **Follow Me**."

Mark 1:17 And Jesus said to them, '**Follow Me**, and I will make you become fishers of men.'

Mark 2:14 As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "**Follow Me!**" And he got up and **followed** Him.

Mark 8:34 And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and **Follow Me**."

Mark 10:21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, **Follow Me**."

Luke 5:27 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, "**Follow Me**."

Luke 5:10-11 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and **followed Him**.

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and **follow Me**."

Luke 9:59 And He said to another, '**Follow Me**.' But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."

Luke 18:22 When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, **Follow Me**."

John 1:43 The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "**Follow Me**."

John 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they **follow Me**;

John 12:26 "If anyone serves Me, he must **Follow Me**; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.



John 13:36 Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot **follow Me** now; but you will follow later."

John 21:19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "**Follow Me!**"

John 21:22 Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You **follow Me!**"

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, don't miss this! Whatever your sin or shame, Jesus is calling you to come to Him and follow Him, today and into eternity! may you join with Chris Tomlin and say (sing) "[I will follow you, Jesus!](#)"

Where you go, I'll go  
Where you stay, I'll stay  
When you move, I'll move  
I will follow...

All your ways are good  
All your ways are sure  
I will trust in you alone  
Higher than my side  
High above my life  
I will trust in you alone

Where you go, I'll go  
Where you stay, I'll stay  
When you move, I'll move  
I will follow you  
Who you love, I'll love  
How you serve I'll serve  
If this life I lose, I will follow you  
I will follow you

Light unto the world  
Light unto my life  
I will live for you alone  
You're the one I seek  
Knowing I will find  
All I need in you alone, in you alone

In you there's life everlasting  
In you there's freedom for my soul  
In you there joy, unending joy  
and I will follow

**And he got up and followed Him** - Jesus gave a personal call and it called for a personal response which Levi gave. If Jesus is calling you, you need to respond personally and without procrastination. What if Matthew had delayed his response or placed "qualifiers" on the call. Others did answer Jesus with an "asterisk" attached (a qualification, or "small print" so to speak), Matthew recording "Another of the disciples said to Him, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father."(Mt 8:21) To which Jesus responded "to him, "**Follow Me**, and allow the dead to bury their own dead." (Mt 8:22). If Jesus calls, our response should be immediate. No hesitation. No procrastination. Mark loves immediate action and it is clear here that Matthew responded immediately to Jesus' call, giving all of us an example to follow when Jesus calls. Not only did he respond immediately but he responded wholeheartedly, Luke recording "he left everything behind (HOW MUCH?), and got up and began to follow Him." (Lk 5:28+)

**THOUGHT** - For some of you this may be the first call, the call to salvation by grace through faith, but for others who have known Him for a while it may be a call to follow Him down a path that you did not expect He would be calling you to traverse. When the sheep hear His voice, the sheep must [Follow the leader](#), just like we did when we played that game as little children, but of course now the game is not child's play but is the serious game of life with significant consequences in this life and the one to come! Father by your Spirit give us ears to hear when Jesus calls. Amen

Matthew's theme song could have been the old **Amy Grant song** (one of the first songs I heard after I began to follow Jesus in 1984) [I Have Decided](#)...

I have decided  
I'm gonna live like a believer  
Turn my back on the deceiver  
I'm gonna live what I believe  
I have decided  
Being good is just a fable  
I just can't, cause I'm not able  
I'm gonna leave it to the Lord

There's a wealth of things that I profess  
I said that I believed  
But deep inside, I never changed  
I guess I'd been deceived  
Cause a voice inside kept telling me  
That I'd change by and by  
but the Spirit made it clear to me  
That kind of life's a lie

So forget the game of being good  
And your self-righteous pain  
Cause the only good inside your heart  
Is the good that Jesus brings  
When the world begins to see you change  
Don't expect them to applaud  
Just keep your eyes on Him and tell yourself  
I've become the work of God

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**Alfred Edersheim - DOCTRINE OF FORGIVENESS IN CONTRAST TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST—THE CALL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES (Matt. 9:9–13; Mark 2:13–17; Luke 5:27–32; Matt. 10:2–4; Mark 3:13–19; Luke 6:12–19.)**

IN two things chiefly does the fundamental difference appear between Christianity and all other religious systems, notably Rabbinism. And in these two things, therefore, lies the main characteristic of Christ's work; or, taking a wider view, the fundamental idea of all religions. Subjectively, they concern sin and the sinner; or, to put it objectively, the forgiveness of sin and the welcome to the sinner. But Rabbinism, and every other system down to modern humanitarianism—if it rises so high in its idea of God as to reach that of sin, which is its shadow—can only generally point to God for the forgiveness of sin. What here is merely an abstraction, has become a concrete reality in Christ. He speaks forgiveness on earth, because He is its embodiment. As regards the second idea, that of the sinner, all other systems know of no welcome to him till, by some means (inward or outward), he have ceased to be a sinner and become a penitent. They would first make him a penitent, and then bid him welcome to God; Christ first welcomes him to God, and so makes him a penitent. The one demands, the other imparts life. And so Christ is the Physician, Whom they that are in health need not, but they that are sick. And so Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners—not to repentance, as our common text erroneously puts it in St. Matthew 9:13, and St. Mark 2:17, but to Himself, to the Kingdom; and this is the beginning of repentance.

Thus it is that Jesus, when His teaching becomes distinctive from that of Judaism, puts these two points in the foreground: the one at the cure of the paralytic, the other in the call of Levi-Matthew. And this, also, further explains His miracles of healing as for the higher presentation of Himself as the Great Physician, while it gives some insight into the nexus of these two events, and explains their chronological succession. It was fitting that at the very outset, when Rabbinism followed and challenged Jesus with hostile intent, these two spiritual facts should be brought out, and that, not in a controversial, but in a positive and practical manner. For, as these two questions of sin and of the possible relation of the sinner to God are the great burden of the soul in its upward striving after God, so the answer to them forms the substance of all religions. Indeed, all the cumbrous observances of Rabbinism—its whole law—were only an attempted answer to the question: How can a man be just with God?

But, as Rabbinism stood self-confessedly silent and powerless as regarded the forgiveness of sins, so it had emphatically no word of welcome or help for the sinner. The very term 'Pharisee,' or 'separated one,' implied the exclusion of sinners. With this the whole character of Pharisaism accorded; perhaps, we should have said, that of Rabbinism, since the Sadducean would here agree with the Pharisaic Rabbi. The contempt and avoidance of the unlearned, which was so characteristic of the system, arose not from mere pride of knowledge, but from the thought that, as 'the Law' was the glory and privilege of Israel—indeed, the object for which the

world was created and preserved—ignorance of it was culpable. Thus, the unlearned blasphemed his Creator, and missed or perverted his own destiny. It was a principle, that ‘the ignorant cannot be pious.’ On the principles of Rabbinism, there was logic in all this, and reason also, though sadly perverted. The yoke of ‘the Kingdom of God’ was the high destiny of every true Israelite. Only, to them it lay in external, not internal conformity to the Law of God: ‘in meat and drink,’ not ‘in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.’ True, they also perceived, that ‘sins of thought’ and purpose, though uncommitted, were ‘more grievous than even sins of outward deed;’ but only in this sense, that each outward sin was traceable to inward dereliction or denial of the Law—‘no man sinneth, unless the spirit of error has first entered into him.’<sup>b</sup> On this ground the punishment of infidelity or apostasy in the next world was endless, while that of actual transgressions was limited in duration. <sup>2</sup>

As ‘righteousness came by the Law,’ so also return to it on the part of the sinner. Hence, although Rabbinism had no welcome to the sinner, it was unceasing in its call to repentance and in extolling its merits. All the prophets had prophesied only of repentance. The last pages of the Tractate on the Day of Atonement are full of praises of repentance. It not only averted punishment and prolonged life, but brought good, even the final redemption to Israel and the world at large. It surpassed the observance of all the commandments, and was as meritorious as if one had restored the Temple and Altar, and offered all sacrifices.<sup>b</sup> One hour of penitence and good works outweighed the whole world to come. These are only a few of the extravagant statements by which Rabbinism extolled repentance. But, when more closely examined, we find that this repentance, as preceding the free welcome of invitation to the sinner, was only another form of work-righteousness. This is, at any rate, one meaning of the saying which conjoined the Law and repentance, and represented them as preceding the Creation.<sup>c</sup> Another would seem derived from a kind of Manichæan view of sin. According to it, God Himself was really the author of the Yetser ha Ra, or evil impulse (‘the law in our members’), for which, indeed, there was an absolute necessity, if the world was to continue.<sup>d</sup> Hence, ‘the penitent’ was really ‘the great one,’ since his strong nature had more in it of the ‘evil impulse,’ and the conquest of it by the penitent was really of greater merit than abstinence from sin.<sup>e</sup> Thus it came, that the true penitent really occupied a higher place—‘stood where the perfectly righteous could not stand.’ There is then both work and merit in penitence; and we can understand, how ‘the gate of penitence is open, even when that of prayer is shut,’<sup>g</sup> and that these two sentences are not only consistent, but almost cover each other—that the Messianic deliverance would come, if all Israel did righteousness, and, again, if all Israel repented for only one day;<sup>i</sup> or, to put it otherwise—if Israel were all saints, or all sinners.

We have already touched the point where, as regards repentance, as formerly in regard to forgiveness, the teaching of Christ is in absolute and fundamental contrariety to that of the Rabbis. According to Jesus Christ, when we have done all, we are to feel that we are but unprofitable servants. According to the Rabbis, as St. Paul puts it, ‘righteousness cometh by the Law;’ and, when it is lost, the Law alone can restore life; while, according to Christian teaching, it only bringeth death. Thus there was, at the very foundation of religious life, absolute contrariety between Jesus and His contemporaries. Whence, if not from heaven, came a doctrine so novel as that which Jesus made the basis of His Kingdom?

In one respect, indeed, the Rabbinic view was in some measure derived from the Old Testament, though by an external and, therefore, false interpretation of its teaching. In the Old Testament, also, ‘repentance’ was Teshubhah (תשובה), ‘return;’ while, in the New Testament, it is ‘change of mind’ (μετάνοια). It would not be fair here to argue, that the common expression for repenting was ‘to do penitence’ (עשה תשובה), since by its side we frequently meet that other: ‘to return in penitence’ (שוב בתשובה). Indeed, other terms for repentance also occur. Thus Tohu (תהו) means repentance in the sense of regret; Charatah, perhaps, more in that of a change of mind; while Teyubha or Teshubhah is the return of repentance. Yet, according to the very common Rabbinic expression, there is a ‘gate of repentance’ (שער תשובה, תיובא) through which a man must enter, and, even if Charatah be the sorrowing change of mind, it is at most only that gate. Thus, after all, there is more in the ‘doing of penitence’ than appears at first sight. In point of fact, the full meaning of repentance as Teshubhah, or ‘return,’ is only realised, when a man has returned from dereliction to observance of the Law. Then, sins of purpose are looked upon as if they had been unintentional—nay, they become even virtuous actions.

We are not now speaking of the forgiveness of sins. In truth, Rabbinism knew nothing of a forgiveness of sin, free and unconditional, unless in the case of those who had not the power of doing anything for their atonement. Even in the passage which extols most the freeness and the benefits of repentance (the last pages of the Tractate on the Day of Atonement), there is the most painful discussion about sins great and small, about repentance from fear or from love, about sins against commands or against prohibitions; and, in what cases repentance averted, or else only deferred, judgment, leaving final expiation to be wrought by other means. These were personal sufferings, death,<sup>c</sup> or the Day of Atonement. Besides these, there were always the ‘merits of the fathers;’<sup>e</sup> or, perhaps, some one good work done; or, at any rate, the brief period of purgatorial pain, which might open the gate of mercy. These are the so-called ‘advocates’ (Peraqlitin, פּרַקְלִיטִין) of the penitent sinner. In a classical passage on the subject, repentance is viewed in its bearing on four different spiritual<sup>1</sup> conditions, which are supposed to be respectively referred to in Jer. 3:22; Lev. 16:30; Is. 22:14; and Ps. 89:32. The first of these refers to a breach of a command, with immediate and persistent cry for forgiveness, which is at once granted. The second is that of a breach of a prohibition, when, besides repentance, the Day of Atonement is required. The third is that of purposed sin, on which death or cutting off had been threatened, when, besides repentance and the Day of Atonement, sufferings are required; while in open profanation of the Name of God, only death can make

final atonement.

But the nature of repentance has yet to be more fully explained. Its gate is sorrow and shame. In that sense repentance may be the work of a moment, 'as in the twinkling of an eye,'<sup>d</sup> and a life's sins may obtain mercy by the tears and prayers of a few minutes' repentance. <sup>2</sup> To this also refers the beautiful saying, that all which rendered a sacrifice unfit for the altar, such as that it was broken, fitted the penitent for acceptance, since 'the sacrifices of God were a broken and contrite heart.' By the side of what may be called contrition, Jewish theology places confession (Viddui, וִידּוּי). This was deemed so integral a part of repentance, that those about to be executed, or to die,<sup>h</sup> were admonished to it. Achan of old had thus obtained pardon. But in the case of the living all this could only be regarded as repentance in the sense of being its preparation or beginning. Even if it were Charatah, or regret at the past, it would not yet be Teshubhah, or return to God; and even if it changed purposed into unintentional sin, arrested judgment, and stayed or banished its Angel, it would still leave a man without those works which are not only his real destiny and merit heaven, but constitute true repentance. For, as sin is ultimately dereliction of the Law, beginning within, so repentance is ultimately return to the Law. In this sense there is a higher and meritorious confession, which not only owns sin but God, and is therefore an inward return to Him. So Adam, when he saw the penitence of Cain, burst into this Psalm, 'It is a good thing to confess<sup>1</sup> unto the Lord.' <sup>2</sup> Manasseh, when in trouble, called upon God and was heard, although it is added, that this was only done in order to prove that the door of repentance was open to all. Indeed, the Angels had closed the windows of Heaven against his prayers, but God opened a place for their entrance beneath His throne of glory.<sup>d</sup> Similarly, even Pharaoh, who, according to Jewish tradition, made in the Red Sea confession of God, was preserved, became king of Nineveh, and so brought the Ninevites to true repentance, which verily consisted not merely in sackcloth and fasting, but in restitution, so that every one who had stolen a beam pulled down his whole palace to restore it.<sup>f</sup>

But, after all, inward repentance only arrested the decrees of justice. That which really put the penitent into right relationship with God was good deeds. The term must here be taken in its widest sense. Fasting is meritorious in a threefold sense: as the expression of humiliation, as an offering to God, similar to, but better than the fat of sacrifices on the altar,<sup>i</sup> and as preventing further sins by chastening and keeping under the body. A similar view must be taken of self-inflicted penances.<sup>m</sup> On the other hand, there was restitution to those who had been wronged—as a woman once put it to her husband, to the surrender of one's 'girdle.'<sup>n</sup> Nay, it must be of even more than was due in strict law.<sup>o</sup> To this must be added public acknowledgment of public sins. If a person had sinned in one direction, he must not only avoid it for the future, but aim at doing all the more in the opposite direction, or of overcoming sin in the same circumstances of temptation.<sup>6</sup> Beyond all this were the really good works, whether occupation with the Law or outward deeds, which constituted perfect repentance. Thus we read,<sup>b</sup> that every time Israel gave alms or did any kindness, they made in this world great peace, and procured great Paracletes between Israel and their Father in Heaven. Still farther, we are told what a sinner must do who would be pardoned. If he had been accustomed daily to read one column in the Bible, let him read two; if to learn one chapter in the Mishnah, let him learn two. But if he be not learned enough to do either, let him become an administrator for the congregation, or a public distributor of alms. Nay, so far was the doctrine of external merit carried, that to be buried in the land of Israel was supposed to ensure forgiveness of sins.<sup>d</sup> This may, finally, be illustrated by an instance, which also throws some light on the parable of Dives in Hades. Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish had in early life been the associate of two robbers. But he repented, 'returned to his God with all his heart, with fasting and prayer, was early and late before God, and busied himself with the Torah (Law) and the commandments.' Then both he and his former companions died, when they saw him in glory, while themselves were in the lowest hell. And when they reminded God, that with Him there was no regard of persons, He pointed to the Rabbi's penitence and their own impenitence. On this they asked for respite, that they might 'do great penitence,' when they were told that there was no space for repentance after death. This is farther enforced by a parable to the effect, that a man, who is going into the wilderness, must provide himself with bread and water while in the inhabited country, if he would not perish in the desert.

**Thus, in one and another respect, Rabbinic teaching about the need of repentance runs close to that of the Bible. But the vital difference between Rabbinism and the Gospel lies in this: that whereas Jesus Christ freely invited all sinners, whatever their past, assuring them of welcome and grace, the last word of Rabbinism is only despair, and a kind of Pessimism.** For, it is expressly and repeatedly declared in the case of certain sins, and, characteristically, of heresy, that, even if a man genuinely and truly repented, he must expect immediately to die—indeed, his death would be the evidence that his repentance was genuine, since, though such a sinner might turn from his evil, it would be impossible for him, if he lived, to lay hold on the good, and to do it. - **It is in the light of what we have just learned concerning the Rabbinic views of forgiveness and repentance that the call of Levi-Matthew must be read, if we would perceive its full meaning.**

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## Follow Me

It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Mark 2:17

Today's Scripture & Insight: Mark 2:13-17 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

Health clubs offer many different programs for those who want to lose weight and stay healthy. One fitness center caters only to those who want to lose at least 50 pounds and develop a healthy lifestyle. One member says that she quit her previous fitness club

because she felt the slim and fit people were staring at her and judging her out-of-shape body. She now works out 5 days a week and is achieving healthy weight loss in a positive and welcoming environment.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came to call the spiritually unfit to follow Him. Levi was one such person. Jesus saw him sitting in his tax collector's booth and said, "Follow me" (Mark 2:14). His words captured Levi's heart, and he followed Jesus. Tax collectors were often greedy and dishonest in their dealings and were considered religiously unclean. When the religious leaders saw Jesus having dinner at Levi's house with other tax collectors, they asked, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (2:16). Jesus replied, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (2:17).

Jesus came to save sinners, which includes all of us. He loves us, welcomes us into His presence, and calls us to follow Him. As we walk with Him, we grow more and more spiritually fit. By: Marvin Williams ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

#### Reflect & Pray

Read Acts 9:10-19 and see how one man obeyed God and welcomed someone who was considered spiritually unfit. What were the results? How can you reach out to those who need the Savior? How can you help your church become a more welcoming place for the spiritually unfit?

Jesus' arms of welcome are always open.

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#### Jesus' Team

He . . . saw a tax collector named Levi . . . . And He said to him, "Follow Me." —Luke 5:27 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

In 2002 the Oakland Athletics built a winning baseball team in an unorthodox way. They had lost three top players after 2001, and the team didn't have money to sign any stars. So Oakland's general manager, Billy Beane, used some often-neglected statistics to assemble a group of lesser-known players either "past their prime" or seen by other teams as not skilled enough. That ragtag team ran off a 20-game winning streak on the way to winning their division and 103 games.

This reminds me a little of the way Jesus put together His "team" of disciples. He included rough Galilean fishermen, a zealot, and even a despised tax collector named Levi (Matthew). This reminds me that "God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (1 Cor. 1:27). God used those dedicated men (minus Judas) to ignite a movement that affected the world so dramatically it has never been the same.

There's a lesson here for us. Sometimes we seek out the familiar, the influential, and the rich. And we tend to ignore people with less status or those with physical limitations.

Jesus put some of society's less desirable people on His team—treating everyone the same. With the Spirit's power and guidance, we too can honor all people equally. By David Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

In Jesus Christ we all are equal,  
For God's Spirit makes us one;  
As we give each other honor,  
We give glory to His Son.  
—Fitzhugh

There are no unimportant people in the body of Christ.

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#### Leader Or Follower?

[Jesus] said to him, "Follow Me." —Luke 5:27 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

A close friend asked Gandhi, "If you admire Christ so much, why don't you become a Christian?" It is said that he replied, "When I meet a Christian who is a follower of Christ, I may consider it."

But isn't that what a Christian is supposed to be—a follower of Christ? Joe Stowell, former president of Moody Bible Institute, wrote in *Following Christ*: "Many of us live out our faith as though [Christ] exists to follow us. We come to believe that Christ exists to satisfy our demands. . . . This disguised form of self-serving religion sets Christ up as just one more commodity in life that will enhance and empower our dreams."

When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, He meant that He would do the leading and directing; they would do the following (Luke 5:27). Like the disciples, we must give up our will, obey Him, and choose to “lose” our lives for Him (17:33).

Without too much thought, this might sound simple. But in reality, it is impossible to do on our own. Only by choosing each day to let go of our own plans and by trusting the Holy Spirit’s leading can we cooperate with His work in us.

This is God’s way of teaching us to become His submissive followers instead of the leader. By Anne Cetas [Our Daily Bread](#).  
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Because Christ is the One who holds  
The key to all our needs,  
We can release what we hold dear  
To follow where He leads.  
—Sper

To lead others to Jesus, you must first learn to follow Him.

**Mark 2:15 And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.**

NET Mark 2:15 As Jesus was having a meal in Levi's home, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

GNT Mark 2:15 Κα γινεται κατακεισθαι ατν ντ οκ ατο , κα πολλο τελ ναι κα μαρτωλο συναν κειντο τ ησο κα το ς μαθητα ς ατο · σαν γρ πολλο κα κολο θουν ατ .

NLT Mark 2:15 Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.)

KJV Mark 2:15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

ESV Mark 2:15 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

NIV Mark 2:15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

ASV Mark 2:15 And it came to pass, that he was sitting at meat in his house, and many publicans and sinners sat down with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him.

CSB Mark 2:15 While He was reclining at the table in Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were also guests with Jesus and His disciples, because there were many who were following Him.

- Mt 9:10,11 21:31,32 Lu 5:29,30 6:17 15:1



[Click to enlarge](#)

## Parallel Passages

Matthew 9:10+ Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

Luke 5:29+ And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.

## TRANSFORMATION LEADS TO CELEBRATION!

**And it happened that He was reclining at the table in his house** - The words "at the table" are not in Greek but are suggested by the context. If they were reclining, this suggests a fairly prolonged meal, time for considerable conversation between Jesus and the sinners! And remember that in the first century breaking bread with someone was a sign of social acceptance and friendship which is why the Pharisees were so outraged! Lk 5:29+ says it was Matthew's **house**. Also only Luke (see above) tells us Matthew (who was now a disciple of Jesus) "gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people." This would suggest that Matthew had a large house (text says there were "many tax collectors and sinners") and gives us some idea of the significance of the statement in Lk 5:28 that "he left everything behind" when he began to follow Jesus! While most of us have not left everything material behind when we began to follow Jesus, we have left our old life behind, a life we lived in the kingdom of darkness, a life dominated by sin, Satan and the fallen world system (read about our "kingdom transfer" in Col 1:13-14+)! You have left that behind haven't you? If not read 2 Cor 13:5+. And of course we are not speaking of perfection but the general direction of your life now as a follower of Jesus in His glorious kingdom of light. It is notable that another tax collector named Zaccheus also threw a big banquet after he was saved. Jesus and the guests would most likely have reclined on their left elbow around a low horseshoe-shaped table such as that shown below with their feet behind them

**Lenski on and it happened** - The introductory formula καὶ γένητο is Hebraistic and comes into the New Testament through the LXX. Mark uses it only twice. It ushers in an important occurrence.

**THOUGHT** - I remember when I was first born again at age 39. I was so excited about Jesus that I told all my relatives about Him. Some became so irritated that they told me if I continued to speak of Jesus they did not want me to come see them again. There is a point of application here -- Levi a tax collector exposed his fellow despised tax collectors to Jesus and not just one or two but the text says "many." When Jesus calls us we should show our gratitude by telling others about Him. Each of us as followers of Jesus has our own unique sphere of influence and for many in that sphere we may be their only significant contact with Jesus! Are you willing to be salty salt (Mt 5:13+, cf Col 4:3-6+)? Are you letting your light shine (Mt 5:14-15+, Mt 5:16+)? Have you opened your home like Matthew to the outcasts of society in order that you might introduce them to Jesus? Or at least are you opening your home to your circle of friends so that you can introduce them to your best Friend?

**Reclining** (2621) ([katakeimai](#) from *katá* = down + *keímai* = lie outstretched) means to lie down and in this context to recline on a couch at a dinner table and thus to dine or eat a meal (Mk 2:15; 14:3; Lk 5:29; Lk 7:37; 1 Cor 8:10). **ESV Study Bible on reclining** - In formal dining, guests reclined on a couch that stretched around three sides of a room. The host took the center seat at a U-shaped series of low tables, surrounded by the most honored guests on either side, with the guests' heads reclining toward the tables and their feet toward the wall. **NET Note on reclining** - 1st century middle eastern meals were not eaten while sitting at a table, but while reclining on one's side on the floor with the head closest to the low table and the feet farthest away. Notice that the depiction of the meal is not accurate as it shows Jesus and guests sitting at a table and makes the point that many paintings of Biblical scenes, while beautiful, are not Scripturally accurate. The point is never get your theology from art work (and that includes many modern songs and older hymns which are not always theologically accurate and/or Scripturally sound!)

[Click picture to enlarge](#)  
[Click here for further explanation](#)

**And many tax collectors and sinners** (NLT - "disreputable sinners") **were dining with Jesus and His disciples for there were many of them and they were following Him** - We could subtitle this passage "dining with the dregs" of society, the outcasts, the scum (Mk 2:16NLT)! This must have been quite a scene and gives us a vivid illustration of Jesus as a friend of sinners and because they recognized their acceptance by this righteous Man (in contrast to their rejection by the self-righteous Jewish religious leaders!) **many were following** ([akoloutheo](#) and in [imperfect tense](#) pictures a continual [retinue](#) of [riff-raff](#)) **Him**. While they were **following** Jesus, it seems unlikely that they were **following** in the same sense of Matthew who had forsaken everything to follow Jesus. Not everyone who followed Jesus was a true disciple like Matthew. John tells us about many who followed as **disciples** but in the final analysis proved not to be true followers like Matthew. John writes "As a result of this (What? See the context Jn 6:61, 62, 63, 64, 65) many of His **disciples** withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." (John 6:66). **MacArthur** explains John 6:66 commenting that "Sadly, but predictably, **as a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore**. Abandoning any further pretense of being His followers, they deserted Him and joined the scoffers who had rejected



Jesus outright. Ek toutou (as a result of this) could also be translated "from this time." Both translations are correct. The false disciples permanently abandoned Jesus after this point as a result of His teaching in the sermon in general (especially John 6:48–58), and His condemnation of their unbelief in particular (Jn 6:64). "What they wanted, he would not give; what he offered, they would not receive" (F. F. Bruce, The Gospel of John [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 164)." (John Commentary)

**Tax collectors** (KJV = publicans) ([5057](#))(see [telones](#))

**Sinners** ([268](#))(see [hamartolos](#))

**Disciples** ([3101](#))([mathetes](#)) from [manthano](#) = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math* = thought accompanied by endeavor". English = "*mathematics*") describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of the teacher. By itself **mathetes** itself does not mean the followers were believers, for is used of superficial followers of Jesus as well as of genuine believers (cf Jn 6:66). Typically in the Jewish world, a disciple would voluntarily join a school or otherwise seek out a master rabbi; however, Jesus seeks out and chooses those whom he wants as his disciples (Mk 1:17; 2:14; Lk 5:1–11; cf. Mt 4:18–21). **NIDNTT** adds that "A man is called a mathētēs when he binds himself to someone else in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. He may be an apprentice in a trade, a student of medicine, or a member of a philosophical school. One can only be a mathētēs in the company of a [didaskalos](#), a master or teacher, to whom the mathētēs since the days of the Sophists generally had to pay a fee. An obvious exception to this is when mathētēs refers to spiritual dependence on a thinker long since dead."

**Mathetes in Mark** (this is the first use in Mark's Gospel) - Mk. 2:15; Mk. 2:16; Mk. 2:18; Mk. 2:23; Mk. 3:7; Mk. 3:9; Mk. 4:34; Mk. 5:31; Mk. 6:1; Mk. 6:29; Mk. 6:35; Mk. 6:41; Mk. 6:45; Mk. 7:2; Mk. 7:5; Mk. 7:17; Mk. 8:1; Mk. 8:4; Mk. 8:6; Mk. 8:10; Mk. 8:27; Mk. 8:33; Mk. 8:34; Mk. 9:14; Mk. 9:18; Mk. 9:28; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:10; Mk. 10:13; Mk. 10:23; Mk. 10:24; Mk. 10:46; Mk. 11:1; Mk. 11:14; Mk. 12:43; Mk. 13:1; Mk. 14:12; Mk. 14:13; Mk. 14:14; Mk. 14:16; Mk. 14:32; Mk. 16:7

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## Jesus Friend of Sinners

by Casting Crowns

Jesus, friend of sinners, we have strayed so far away  
We cut down people in your name but the sword was never ours to swing  
Jesus, friend of sinners, the truth's become so hard to see  
The world is on their way to You but they're tripping over me  
Always looking around but never looking up I'm so double minded  
A plank eyed saint with dirty hands and a heart divided

Oh Jesus, friend of sinners  
Open our eyes to the world at the end of our pointing fingers  
Let our hearts be led by mercy  
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors  
Oh Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks yours

Yeah

Jesus, friend of sinners, the one who's writing in the sand  
Make the righteous turn away and the stones fall from their hands  
Help us to remember we are all the least of thieves  
Let the memory of Your mercy bring Your people to their knees  
No one knows what we're for only against when we judge the wounded  
What if we put down our signs crossed over the lines and loved like You did

Oh Jesus, friend of sinners  
Open our eyes to world at the end of our pointing fingers  
Let our hearts be led by mercy  
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors  
Oh Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks yours

You love every lost cause; you reach for the outcast

For the leper and the lame; they're the reason that You came  
Lord I was that lost cause and I was the outcast  
But you died for sinners just like me, a grateful leper at Your feet

'Cause You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever  
You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever  
You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever  
You are good, You are good and Your love endures forever

Oh Jesus, friend of sinners  
Open our eyes to world at the end of our pointing fingers  
Let our hearts be led by mercy  
Help us reach with open hearts and open doors  
Oh Jesus, friend of sinners, break our hearts for what breaks Yours

And I was the lost 'cause and I was the outcast  
Yeah  
You died for sinners just like me, a grateful leper at Your feet

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## Cross The Divide

As [Jesus] was dining in Levi's house, . . . many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus. —  
Mark 2:15

Today's Scripture: Mark 2:13-17 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

Two young men with mischief on their minds approached a missionary's outreach bus parked in a downtown area of a German city.

The missionaries were there to offer refreshments as a way to open up conversations about Christ. The two visitors, wearing skull-and-crossbones bandannas, were there to offer trouble.

But the missionaries didn't respond to the ruffians as they expected. The Christians welcomed them warmly and engaged them in discussion. Surprised, the guys hung around long enough to hear the gospel. One trusted Jesus that day. The other, the next day.

Those two young men and the missionaries who reached them were light-years apart culturally. The guys were German; the missionaries, American. The guys were involved in a culture of darkness and death; the missionaries were shining the light. The cultural divide was crossed with cookies and nonjudgmental love.

Look at the people around you. How can you show those on the other side of the cultural fence unconditional, unquestioning love? How can you cross the divide and help them see that Jesus' love knows no boundaries? By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Cross the divide.

Take Christ to the culture—

even if it doesn't look anything like yours.

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## Making Friends

Many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples. —Mark 2:15

Today's Scripture: Mark 2:13-17 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

A letter from a friend described the adjustments that his son and daughter-in-law were facing as young missionaries in a country long resistant to the gospel of Christ. "After some rough early going," he wrote, "they are getting used to not having modern conveniences and are falling in love with the people."

A photo showed the couple's 2-year-old-son Wesley and a waiter in a restaurant, both grinning widely as they shared a moment of friendship. My friend commented, "Ever smiling, Wesley makes friends wherever he goes." That got me to thinking. Making friends and loving people is the key to sharing the gospel wherever we are, because that's what Jesus did.

Some religious leaders were surprised when Jesus openly associated with people they considered undesirable. They said to His disciples, "How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mark 2:16). Yet Jesus was known as the friend of sinners. He said, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Mk 2:17).

A loving heart and a friendly smile go a long way to communicate the love of Christ to the people we meet each day. May they say of us, as they did of little Wesley, "Ever smiling, he makes friends wherever he goes." By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Reflect & Pray

To the lost is where Christ went,  
Revealing grace from God above;  
To lost sinners we've been sent  
To be their friends, to share God's love.  
—Fitzhugh

Loving the lost is the first step in leading them to Christ.

**Mark 2:16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"**

NET Mark 2:16 When the experts in the law and the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

GNT Mark 2:16 κα ο γραμματες τ ν Φαρισαων δ ντες τι σθ ει μετ τ ν μαρτων ν κα τελων ν λεγον το ς μαθητα ς α το , τι μετ τ ν τελων ν κα μαρτων ν σθ ει;

NLT Mark 2:16 But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum? "

KJV Mark 2:16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

ESV Mark 2:16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

NIV Mark 2:16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

ASV Mark 2:16 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with the sinners and publicans, said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?

CSB Mark 2:16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked His disciples, "Why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

- **Why is He eating:** Mk 2:7 Isa 65:5 Lu 15:2-7 18:11 19:7,10 1Co 2:15 Heb 12:3
- **tax collectors and sinners:** Mt 18:17

### Parallel Passages

Matthew 9:11+ When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"

Luke 5:30+ The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?"

## JESUS' MISSION FIELD SINNERS, THE DREGS OF SOCIETY!

Jesus' mission statement was ""For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk 19:10+)

**When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors-** The religious leaders were watching but they were not joining in the meal. The phrase **scribes of the Pharisees** simply describes men within the sect of **the Pharisees** who were **scribes** or "lawyers" (cf. Lk 10:25), men who were professional theologians and OT scholars who traced their history back to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when the Israelites returned to their homeland after the Babylonian captivity. Luke

5:30+ has a somewhat similar phrase "the Pharisees and their scribes." "An ancient Jewish tradition asserted that God gave the law to angels, who gave it to Moses and Joshua, who gave it to the elders, who gave it to the prophets, who gave it to the **scribes** in order to lead and teach in the synagogues. The **scribes** were responsible both to copy and preserve the Scriptures, as well as interpret them in order 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 or Essenes), but most **scribes** in Jesus' day were associated with **the Pharisees.**" (MacArthur - Mark 2)

**Pharisees** ("the separated ones")([5330](#))(**pharisaios**) is transliterated from the Hebrew **parash** ([06567](#) - to separate) from Aramaic word **peras** ([06537](#)) ("Peres" in Da 5:28-note), signifying to separate, owing to a different manner of life from that of the general public. Their righteousness was not the result of the transformation of the heart by God but was an external, hypocritical righteousness consisting of nothing more than rule keeping, judgmentalism, and outward show. As noted above most of the scribes came from the sect of the Pharisees. It follows that not all all Pharisees were scribes.

**Sinners** ([268](#))(**hamartolos** from **hamartáno** = deviate, miss the mark which some lexicons say is from **a** = negative + **meiromai** = attain -- not to attain, not to arrive at the goal) is an adjective (e.g., "*that through the commandment sin might become utterly **sinful***" - see Ro 7:13+) that is often used as a noun (as in this verse and Ro 5:19+) to describe those who are continually erring from the way, constantly missing God's mark, living in opposition to His good and acceptable and perfect will, missing His holy purpose for their lives. **Hodge** adds that the "word **sinners** expresses the idea of moral wickedness and consequent exposure to divine displeasure." ([Commentary on Romans](#))

**Tax collectors** (KJV = publicans) ([5057](#))(**telones** from **telos** = tax + **onéomai** = to buy) means a reaper of the taxes or customs, tax-collector, one who pays to the government a certain sum for the privilege of collecting the taxes and customs of a district. The public revenues of the Greeks and Romans were usually farmed out. Among the latter, the purchasers were chiefly of the equestrian order and were distinguished as being of a higher class because they rode horses, or they were at least persons of wealth and rank like Zacchaeus who is called the chief tax collector (architelones [[754](#)] in Lu 19:2). These farmers also had subcontractors or employed agents who collected the taxes and customs at the gates of cities, in seaports, on public ways and bridges. These, too, were called **telomnai** (pl.), publicans, or eklégontes (n.f.), (ek [1537], out of, + légo [3004], in its original sense meaning to collect), those who collected out of the people. Such publicans in countries subject to the Roman Empire were the objects of hatred and detestation so that none but persons of worthless character were likely to be found in this employment. While **tax collectors** were hated by the Jews, it was not a crime to be a tax collector. The crime was to in defrauding and extorting the people which usually "went with the territory!" When the tax collectors came to John the Baptist to be baptized, it is notable that he did not tell them to quit their jobs but he told them to "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." (Lk 3:13+). Jesus Himself affirmed the propriety and legality of paying taxes when He commanded "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Lk 20:25+).

**They said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?"** - Luke 5:30+ adds that "The Pharisees and their scribes began **grumbling** at His disciples." where **grumbling** (gogguzo) is in the [imperfect tense](#), which indicates that they were doing this over and over and over - grumble, grumble, grumble! You never grumble like that do you? **NLT** is quite vivid paraphrasing it as "Why does your teacher eat with such **scum**?" **Eating** in the [present tense](#) by which they are implying this was Jesus regular routine (and in fact it was). As noted Jewish tax collectors were so despised that their name was virtually synonymous with **sinners**. The Pharisees had their own (false) definition of **sinners** as those who did not obey their legalistic Pharisaic interpretations of the law, to which they added many traditions which were like heavy burdens.

**MacArthur** astutely observes that "Ironically, their judgmental attitudes exposed the true nature of their hypocritical religion. They arrogantly considered themselves to be spiritually whole, when in reality they were spiritually blind and destitute. Many of those they condemned as sinners were, in fact, the ones who had received God's gift of salvation through faith in Christ. Devoid of grace, the Pharisees clung to a spiritually dead system of superficial legalism. In response, Jesus rejected their self-righteous apostasy and focused instead on people who humbly recognized their sin and repented of it." (Ibid)

**Disciples** ([3101](#))(**mathetes** from **manthano** = to learn which Vine says is "from a root *math*, indicating thought accompanied by endeavor". English = "*mathematics*"; cf [matheteuo - make disciples](#)) describes a person who learns from another by instruction, whether formal or informal. Discipleship includes the idea of one who intentionally learns by inquiry and observation (cf [inductive Bible study](#)) and thus **mathetes** is more than a mere pupil. A **mathetes** describes an adherent of a teacher. As **followers** of Jesus we are to be, first of all, **learners**. We are to learn from Him by listening to Him, learn the truth that will set us free (John 8:32) and keep us from error. But we are also to learn from Him by looking at Him- learn how to live a life of beauty and

blessing.

**Mark's uses of mathetes** - Mk. 2:15; Mk. 2:16; Mk. 2:18; Mk. 2:23; Mk. 3:7; Mk. 3:9; Mk. 4:34; Mk. 5:31; Mk. 6:1; Mk. 6:29; Mk. 6:35; Mk. 6:41; Mk. 6:45; Mk. 7:2; Mk. 7:5; Mk. 7:17; Mk. 8:1; Mk. 8:4; Mk. 8:6; Mk. 8:10; Mk. 8:27; Mk. 8:33; Mk. 8:34; Mk. 9:14; Mk. 9:18; Mk. 9:28; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:10; Mk. 10:13; Mk. 10:23; Mk. 10:24; Mk. 10:46; Mk. 11:1; Mk. 11:14; Mk. 12:43; Mk. 13:1; Mk. 14:12; Mk. 14:13; Mk. 14:14; Mk. 14:16; Mk. 14:32; Mk. 16:7;

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**Gene Brooks** applies this verse to our lives: Many Christians have been criticized for the very thing Jesus was attacked for: associating with the wrong kind of people. The problem is that while we are to separate from evil, we are also to call sinners to repentance. Jesus' way of doing this was not to shout at sinners from a distance, but spend time with them. Because we cannot tell what another person's motives are, we must not criticize fellow believers just for associating with them. Another myth we believe is that "I will be criticized or embarrassed if people do not respond." BUT – Levi was so happy about being a follower of Jesus that he had a party and invited everyone, especially those who needed Jesus. AND – He was criticized BUT . . . Jesus was the focus of the party. Sinners confessed their sins and received forgiveness. New believers met others followers of Jesus and were established in their faith. Matthew grew spiritually. The critics were silenced.

Is God calling you to do what Levi did, to introduce those with whom you have a relationship to Jesus? Here's how you can do what Levi did, and invite people to your home:

- i. Look around and identify your friends, co-workers, neighbors, fellow students, and family who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord. Write their names down.
- ii. Look up and pray every day for each person you have listed.
- iii. Look out for opportunities to build your relationship with these people.
- iv. Look forward to your Party. Invite every person on your list. Prepare your own 3 minute story of how you came to know Jesus as Lord. Have your Party and invite them to follow Jesus!
- v. Look after those who gave their lives to Jesus Christ. Help them grow in their faith. Invite them to church. Give them a Bible and show them how you talk to God. ([Levi's Party](#))

**Mark 2:17 And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "it is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."**

NET Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard this he said to them, "Those who are healthy don't need a physician, but those who are sick do. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

GNT Mark 2:17 κακοσασ ησο ς λγει α το ς [τι] Ο χρε αν χουσι ο σχοντες ατρο λλ ο κακ ς χοντες ο κ λθον καλσαι δικα ους λλ μαρτωλο ς.

NLT Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor-- sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

KJV Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

ESV Mark 2:17 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

NIV Mark 2:17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

ASV Mark 2:17 And when Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

CSB Mark 2:17 When Jesus heard this, He told them, "Those who are well don't need a doctor, but the sick do need one. I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

- **it is not those who are healthy.** Mt 9:12,13 Lu 5:31,32 15:7,29 16:15 Joh 9:34,40
- **I did not come to call:** Isa 1:18 55:7 Mt 18:11 Lu 15:10 19:10 Ac 20:21 26:20 Ro 5:6-8,20,21 1Co 6:9-11 1Ti 1:15,16 Tit 2:14

**Parallel Passages:**

Matthew 9:12+ But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13 **"But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,'** for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Luke 5:31+ And Jesus answered and said to them, "It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. 32 "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

## JESUS' STINGING REBUKE

**And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "it is not those who are healthy who need a physician-** Another one of Jesus' puzzling statements, which makes no sense who do not have spiritual ears to hear and understand. Only the Holy Spirit can "illuminate" these paradoxical statements. Unsaved (deceived and foolish) minds hear this utterly profound truth as if it were utter foolishness! Of course in a literal sense a sick person know they are sick. Of course, Jesus as He often does, uses common experiences to speak spiritual truths. And so these soul who recognizes he or she is spiritual sick (with a virus called "sin") will manifest a humble, open, honest heart, a heart that is willing and ready to repent and rest by grace through faith in the Great Physician, Jesus, our [Jehovah Rapha](#).

**Lenski** - Mark and Luke omit the admonition: **"But go and learn what this means, Mercy I want and not sacrifice."** But all three evangelists have recorded: **"I did not come to call righteous men but sinners"** For the figurative language about the sick and the physician Jesus now substitutes the literal. He thus continues the [argumentum ad hominem](#). He takes these scribes at their own estimate that they are indeed **"righteous men"**—then they, of course, do not need him. His business is only with "sinners," the **unrighteous**, to give them the **true righteousness**. But the very way in which the argument is put shatters the supposition that these Pharisaic scribes are really δίκαιοι (righteous), able to stand before God's judgment bar. In Luke 16:15+ Jesus tells the Pharisees: "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God." (ISMG)

**THOUGHT** - Have you come to that place in your life where you knew you were desperately sin sick and in need of soul cleansing that can only be found in Jesus the Great Physician? Jesus is ever calling as in Mt 11:28-30+

**Come** to Me, all who are weary (OF YOUR SIN) and heavy-laden (WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR SIN), and I will give you rest. 29 **Take** My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. 30 "For (TERM OF EXPLANATION) My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

**Healthy** (present tense)(2480)([ischuo](#)) speaks as being in possession of one's physical powers and thus to be in good health or be healthy.

**Need** (5532)([chreia](#) from [chraomai](#) = to use, make use of or [chreos](#) = a debt) means a necessity, what is needed or the occasion of need.

**But those who are sick** - Jesus is not speaking of literal physical sickness, but spiritual sickness (literally spiritual death - Eph 2:1+) from the "sin" virus (I am an infectious disease specialist) that every man or woman born in Adam has contracted, for Paul writes " just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so **death spread to all men**, because all sinned." (Ro 5:12+). **Those who are sick** sense their need for salvation. There is a very important principle here, for unless a person is conscious of the fact that he is under the "bad news" of divine condemnation, he is not likely to hear with ears of faith the "good news" of divine redemption! This is where many so called conversion fall short for they fail to present the dread dilemma and doom of an unsaved sinner and instead say "Just believe in Jesus. He has a wonderful plan for your life." And both of these latter statements are true, but only if a person repents of their sin and believes in Jesus. Otherwise it is only a superficial profession without a genuine profession and without a genuine personal relationship with Jesus Christ (See Jesus' sobering words of warning regarding sham professions - Mt 7:21-23+). The Pharisees saw the notorious sinners at the banquet as untouchable outcasts and not as those who were spiritually sick and in desperate need of a touch from Jesus! Jesus is exposing their calloused hearts devoid of compassion for these "sick" sinners and also underscoring the spiritual blindness of the deceived Pharisees who thought they were spiritually healthy and had no need to seek the **Great Physician!** Beloved, the Gospel is not "good news" until we understand and accept the "bad news" that we are spiritually sick, spiritual dead (Eph 2:1+), and in Adam (Ro 5:12+) are doomed to suffer [eternal punishment!](#)



**THOUGHT** - I am a physician, and when I was still in practice, I knew that it was critical to make the correct diagnosis in order to administer the correct treatment/medicine. Spiritually speaking, if the diagnosis is "bad news" then the treatment which is necessary is the "good news" of the Gospel. Most of humanity although spiritually sick fails to receive the correct "diagnosis" of their eternally fatal sickness ("bad news") and because of that delusion, they see no need for spiritual healing found only in the "good news" (Ro 1:16+) which in turn is found only in the Name of one "Physician," Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12+). They are like the "ninety-nine (SELF) righteous persons who (FELT THEY) need no repentance." (Lk 15:7+)

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT** - "Jesus did not consider these people "rejects," even though they had been excommunicated by the religious leaders. Matthew's friends were patients who needed a physician, and Jesus was that **Physician**. We have already seen that **sin** may be compared to sickness and **forgiveness** to having your health restored. Now we see that our **Saviour** may be compared to a **physician**: He comes to us in our need; He makes a perfect diagnosis; He provides a final and complete cure; and He pays the bill! What a physician! But there are three kinds of "patients" whom Jesus cannot heal of their sin sickness: **(1)** those who do not know about Him; **(2)** those who know about Him but refuse to trust Him; and **(3)** those who will not admit that they need Him. The scribes and Pharisees were in that third category, as are all self-righteous sinners today. Unless we admit that we are sinners, deserving of God's judgment, we cannot be saved. Jesus saves only sinners (Luke 19:10+). In Jesus' day, as in the days of the prophets, there were those who claimed to bring spiritual healing to the people, but whose remedies were ineffective. Jeremiah rebuked the priests and false prophets of his day because they were worthless physicians who gave only a false hope to the nation. "They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace'; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14) ""They heal the brokenness of the daughter of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace." (Jer 8:11). They applied their weak medicines to the surface symptoms and did not get down deep into the basic problem—the sinful heart ("The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick" - Jer. 17:9). We must beware of such worthless physicians today." (Wiersbe - BEC)

**Hendriksen** - When He associates on intimate terms with people of low reputation He does not do this as a hobnobber, a comrade in evil, "birds of a feather flocking together," but as a Physician, one who, without in any way becoming contaminated with the diseases of his patients, must get very close to them in order that He may heal them! Moreover, it is especially the Pharisees who should be able to understand this. Are not they the very people who regard themselves as being healthy, and all others as being sick? (BNTC-Mt)

## **THE INVITATION TO SALVATION IS GIVEN TO SINNERS**

**I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners**- Jesus is plainly stating that He did not come for the self-righteous (those who considered themselves "worthy"), but for those who recognize that they are unworthy, in desperate need of spiritual help and recognize they have no righteous standing before a holy God (cf Isa 64:6). In a word, Jesus came to save those who know and acknowledge they are **sinners**, for it is only this group who recognizes their need for the Savior! This statement is in all three synoptic gospels, which is not surprising as this is the reason Jesus came to earth. This was (and is) His MISSION, His PURPOSE. Luke adds repentance and so it reads "sinners to repentance." (Lk 5:32+) In Matthew 9:13 Jesus quoted the OT prophet Hosea declaring to these religious bigots "But go and **learn** (rabbinic expression which rebuke foolish ignorance) what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13+)

**Bob Utley** points out that "Jesus uses proverbial statements often in His teaching (cf. Mark 2:17, 21, 22, 27; Mark 3:27; Mark 4:21, 22, 25; Mk 7:15; Mark 8:35, 36, 37; Mark 9:40, 50; Mark 10:25, 27, 31, 43–44). No one is more blind than those who think they see!"

**Righteous** (1342)(**dikaiois** from **dike** = right, just) defines that which is in accordance with high standards of rectitude. It is that which is in right relation to another and so in reference to persons defines the one who is morally and ethically righteous, upright or just. The meaning of the root word **dike** is based on the assumption that men expect a certain standard of behavior and if this is not attained judgment may result. It follows that the basic meaning of the adjective **dikaiois** describes that which is proper, right, fitting, fair, righteous, just (acting or being in conformity with what is morally upright or good). From a forensic or legal viewpoint **dikaiois** refers to one who is law-abiding (doing all that law or justice requires), honest and good in behavior and from a religious viewpoint one who is rightly related to God. Those who are truly **righteous** have God's verdict in their favor; they are acquitted and pronounced **just**.



## Jesus! What a Friend for Sinners

by J. Wilbur Chapman (1910)

[Play beautiful version from Matthew Smith](#)

Jesus! What a Friend for sinners! Jesus! Lover of my soul!  
Friends may fail me, foes assail me, He, my Savior, makes me whole.

Jesus! What a Strength in weakness! Let me hide myself in Him;  
Tempted, tried, and sometimes failing, He, my Strength, my vict'ry wins.

Jesus! What a Help in sorrow! While the billows o'er me roll,  
Even when my heart is breaking, He, my Comfort, helps my soul.

Jesus! What a Guide and Keeper! While the tempest still is high,  
Storms about me, night o'ertakes me, He, my Pilot, hears my cry.

Jesus! I do now receive Him, More than all in Him I find,  
He hath granted me forgiveness, I am His, and He is mine.

### Refrain

Hallelujah! What a Savior! Hallelujah! What a Friend!  
Saving, helping, keeping, loving, He is with me to the end.

---

**ILLUSTRATION** - A businessman well known for his ruthlessness once announced to writer Mark Twain, "Before I die I mean to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I will climb Mount Sinai and read the 10 Commandments aloud at the top." "I have a better idea," replied Twain. "You could stay in Boston and keep them." Twain was rebuking this man's hypocrisy and self-righteousness and stressed his need to start "walking" the truth instead of just "talking" about it. The attitude of self-righteousness was not the case with some of the tax collectors who realized they were sinners and needed to be saved from their sins. Christ was calling sinners to repentance and continues to do so today. If you want to march to the drum beat of the Lord, you will need to change your attitude about the Lord, about yourself, and the needs of others. God wants us to implement into our lives His way of living. (Mattoon )

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### Diagnosis And Cure

Read: Matthew 9:1-13

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. —Matthew 9:12

One of my favorite stories concerns the old country doctor who gave his patient a thorough examination, scratched his head in bewilderment, and asked, "Have you had this before?" When the patient answered, "Yes," the doctor wrinkled his brow and said, "Well, you've got it again."

There's nothing quite so frustrating as a problem that defies diagnosis. What a relief it is to find a skilled practitioner who can say with confidence, "This is your problem and this treatment will help."

Jesus Christ always correctly identified the condition of anyone who came to Him for help. From physically blind Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46-52) to spiritually blind Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-21+), Jesus put His finger on the person's true need and offered an opportunity to trust Him for the solution.

Nineteenth-century hymn writer Oscar Clute celebrated this truth in a very personal way as he wrote:

#### [Come and rejoice with me,](#)

I, once so sick at heart,  
Have met with One who knows my case,  
And knows the healing art.

Jesus Christ is the Great Physician. Whatever our need or difficulty, He invites us to seek Him, believe His diagnosis, accept His prescription, and place ourselves in His wise and loving care. Will you do that with your life today? By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

#### [Come and rejoice with me,](#)

I, once so sick at heart,  
Have met with One who knows my case,

And knows the healing art.

Jesus is the master of diagnosis and cure.

---

### **Come As You Are**

Read: Luke 5:27-32

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance. —Luke 5:32 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

There's a story about an artist who wanted to paint a picture of the prodigal son (described by Jesus in Luke 15:11-32). He saw an unkempt beggar on the street and asked him to come to his studio and pose.

The man showed up the next day, but he was neatly shaven and clean. When the artist saw him, he exclaimed, "Oh no, I can't use you as you are now!"

God asks us to come to Him just as we are, admitting that we are sinners who deserve nothing but judgment. This is humbling, but it is the only way we can receive the forgiveness Christ paid for on the cross and be accepted and used by God.

The scribes and Pharisees were scrupulous lawkeepers. They thought God was pleased with them because they were all "cleaned up." So when they saw Jesus eating with people who had bad reputations, they complained. But Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Lk. 5:32). This was a rebuke to their self-righteous attitude. They needed to admit their sin. Then Jesus could receive them too.

If you need to be saved or to be restored to fellowship, repent and come to Jesus just as you are! He will forgive your sin and make you righteous. By Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sinners are the only people who can be saved.

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### **An Eye-Opener**

Read: Matthew 9:9-13

Go and learn what this means: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice.. —Matthew 9:13 (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

A man left his house for church one Sunday just as his neighbor was loading his golf clubs into his car. "Henry," the neighbor called, "come play golf with me today." Henry answered firmly, "I always go to church on the Lord's Day."

After a pause the golfer said, "You know, Henry, I've often wondered about your church and I really admire your faithfulness. But I've invited you to play golf with me seven or eight times, and you've never once invited me to go to church with you."

What an eye-opener! To all the "Henrys" in today's church, Jesus gives the same challenge He gave to the Pharisees: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Mt. 9:13). In other words, He wants us to show mercy and love to those who need salvation, not just go through the motions of our own religious beliefs. Jesus further explained His mercy by saying, "I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (v.13).

Consider the destiny of people without Christ. Let this stir you to a compassion greater than your comfortable routine or your fear of rejection. Pray for several people or families near you and ask God to love them through you. And, without nagging, invite them to church. By Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We need to see through Jesus' eyes

Our neighbors who are lost;

For then we will reach out to them,

Regardless of the cost.

—Sper

We are to be channels of God's truth, not reservoirs.

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## A Fresh Start

Read: Luke 5:17-26

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. —Luke 5:31+ (cf Lk 5:27-32, Mk 2:13-17, Mt 9:9-13)

In many countries, health laws prohibit reselling or reusing old mattresses. Only landfills will take them. Tim Keenan tackled the problem and today his business employs a dozen people to extract the individual components of metal, fabric, and foam in old mattresses for recycling. But that's only part of the story. Journalist Bill Vogrin wrote, "Of all the items Keenan recycles . . . it's the people that may be his biggest success" (The Gazette, Colorado Springs). Keenan hires men from halfway houses and homeless shelters, giving them a job and a second chance. He says, "We take guys nobody else wants."

Luke 5:17-26 tells how Jesus healed the body and the soul of a paralyzed man. Following that miraculous event, Levi answered Jesus' call to follow Him and then invited his fellow tax collectors and friends to a banquet in honor of the Lord (Lk 5:27-29+). When some people accused Jesus of associating with undesirables (Lk 5:30), He reminded them that healthy people don't need a doctor—adding, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Lk 5:32).

To everyone who feels like a "throwaway" headed for the landfill of life, Jesus opens His arms of love and offers a fresh beginning. That's why He came! By David McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The power of God can turn a heart  
From evil and the power of sin;  
The love of God can change a life  
And make it new and cleansed within.  
—Fasick

Salvation is receiving a new life.  
(Christ our life! Col 3:4+)

**INSIGHT:** The religious leaders accused Jesus of blasphemy for claiming divine attributes for Himself (Luke 5:21+). Blasphemy is showing contempt or a lack of reverence for God or something sacred (v.20). A violation of the third commandment, it was punishable by death (Lev. 24:15-16+).

### Mark 2:18 John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

NET Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. So they came to Jesus and said, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples don't fast?"

GNT Mark 2:18 Κα σαν ο μαθητα ω ννου κα ο Φαρισα οι νηστε οντες. κα ρχονται κα λ γουσιν α τ , Δι τ ο μαθητα ω ννου κα ο μαθητα τ ν Φαρισα ων νηστε ουσιν, ο δ σο μαθητα ο νηστε ουσιν;

NLT Mark 2:18 Once when John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting, some people came to Jesus and asked, "Why don't your disciples fast like John's disciples and the Pharisees do?"

KJV Mark 2:18 And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

ESV Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?"

NIV Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

ASV Mark 2:18 And John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting: and they come and say unto him, Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

CSB Mark 2:18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. People came and asked Him, "Why do John's disciples and the Pharisees' disciples fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

- **John's disciples:** Mt 9:14-17 Lu 5:33-39
- **Why do John's disciples:** Mt 6:16,18 23:5 Lu 18:12 Ro 10:3

**Parallel Passages** Mt. 9:14–17; Mk 2:18–22; Lk 5:33–39

Matthew 9:14+ Then the disciples of John came to Him, asking, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

Luke 5:33+ And they said to Him, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink."

Another way to look at Mark 2:18-22 is three illustrations using pairs of things that do not mix, all pointing out that the old way of Judaism does not mix with the new way of the Gospel.

1. First Illustration -- Feasting and Fasting (Mk 2:18-20)
2. Second Illustration -- New patch on Old garment (Mk 2:21)
3. Third Illustration -- New/old Wine in new/old wineskins (Mk 2:22)

### JESUS' DISCIPLES NOT FASTING BUT FEASTING

**Evans** points out that "Controversy over Jesus' teaching and style of ministry is growing. He provoked controversy when he healed the paralyzed man and assured him that his sins were forgiven (Mark 2:1–12). Jesus provoked more controversy when he was observed eating with sinners (Mark 2:15–17). He and his disciples now face criticism for not fasting, a criticism that has been accentuated by falling right on the heels of the dinner party in the previous passage. Sabbath controversies will follow (in Mark 2:23–28 and 3:1–6)." (BKBC)

Jesus' response to their question is that the NEW way (His way) and the OLD way (the way of John and the Pharisees) simply do not mix. And so in Mark 2:18-22 Jesus gives three illustrations which depict the contrast between the NEW and the OLD, the NEW represented by the coming of God's kingdom inaugurated by Jesus (Lk 16:16) and the OLD represented by the religion of Judaism practiced by the Pharisees. (1) First Illustration -- Feasting and Fasting (Mk 2:18-20) (2) Second Illustration -- New patch on Old garment (Mk 2:21) (3) Third Illustration -- New/old Wine in new/old wineskins (Mk 2:22)

**John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting** - **Were** is in the [imperfect tense](#) and **fasting** in [present tense](#) vividly depicting fasting as their frequent/habitual practice which fits with Luke's description that they "**often** (occurring at frequent intervals) **fast** and offer prayers." (Lk 5:33+) Only Luke mentions "offer prayers." The point is that the disciples "made a practice of fasting." The zealous Jews fasted twice a week on Monday and Thursday (cf Lk 18:12+) . **John's disciples** refers to those men who followed John the Baptist. While we cannot be dogmatic, this event seems to logically follow the preceding description of the banquet at Matthew's house, where the disciples of Jesus were eating and clearly not fasting. This context would be a perfect [segue](#) leading to the question of why Jesus' disciples not fast? Luke's parallel version also suggests that their question follows the banquet. In other words, immediately after Jesus' declaration in Lk 5:32+ "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" Luke writes "**And they said to Him**, "The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink." (Lk 5:33+). Some have proposed that the banquet at Matthew's house occurred on one of the weekly fast days which were usually the second and fifth days of the week for the stricter Jews. If that is the case, it helps explain why they immediately question Jesus about why His disciples were not fasting.

**Disciples** (3101) see note on [mathetes](#)

All three synoptic accounts include the fact that **the Pharisees were fasting**, which is very important in interpreting this section. As we have seen, the Pharisees were practicing a religion of ritual, a religion of externals, a religion based on law, a religion of works aimed at fostering self-righteousness, all of this diametrically in contrast to the "religion" which Jesus brought, which was one of relationship (with God), of internals (heart change) , of grace (not law), and of faith in Jesus with [imputation](#) of His righteousness. The Pharisees practice was "bad news," while Jesus introduced a "religion" of "good news." One is reminded of the statement in Hebrews 8:13+ "When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." The ritualistic practices of the Pharisees were about to disappear!

It might seem surprising to see **the disciples of John** on the same side as **the Pharisees** in criticizing Jesus. Why do I say that? Clearly John was no favorite of the Pharisees, for he had sternly castigated the Pharisees calling them a "brood of vipers" (Mt 3:7+), commanding them to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance," (M 3:8+) and not to think they were safe from hell because they had

Abraham as their physical father (Mt 3:9+)! And yet here we see these two somewhat **discordant** groups of disciples seem to be "**strange bed-fellows**" so to speak! Even though John's ministry was preparatory for Jesus' ministry, it was still different from that of Jesus, as Jesus Himself alludes to declaring that "John **came neither eating nor drinking**, and they say, 'He has a demon!' 19 "The Son of Man **came eating and drinking**, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." (Mt 11:18-19) **Craig Blomberg** explains this difference between John and Jesus this way noting that "Preparation for the Messiah's coming required repentance and a certain austerity, but now the time for joy has arrived. Neither the Pharisees nor John's disciples were wrong in fasting as a prelude to the reception of spiritual blessings, but now those blessings are present. Jesus' inauguration of the kingdom stimulates celebration and rejoicing, as at wedding festivities." (NAC)

**And they came and said to Him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast -**

**Robertson on John's disciples** - These learners (mathētai) or **disciples** of John had missed the spirit of their leader when they here lined up with the Pharisees against Jesus. But there was no real congeniality between the formalism of the Pharisees and the asceticism of John the Baptist. The Pharisees hated John who had denounced them as broods of vipers.....Later we shall see Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, who bitterly detested each other, making common cause against Jesus Christ. So today we find various hostile groups combining against our Lord and Saviour.

**A T Robertson** adds an interesting thought on why John's disciples were **colluding** with those of the Pharisees - "John was languishing in prison and they perhaps were blaming Jesus for doing nothing about it. At any rate John would not have gone to Levi's feast on one of the Jewish fast-days. "The strict asceticism of the Baptist (Mt 11:18) and of the Pharisaic rabbis (Luke 18:12) was imitated by their disciples" (McNeile)." (Word Pictures)

**NET Note** on the practice of fasting in Jesus' day - John's disciples and the Pharisees followed typical practices with regard to fasting and prayer.

**Fast** (3522) (**nesteuo** from **ne-** = not + **esthio** = to eat) means to abstain from food (and sometimes drink) for a certain length of time and in the NT most often done for religious reasons. One idea is that fasting was done to express dependence on God and submission to His will. Others say fasting was done as a mark of religious commitment and devotion or as an expression of repentance for sins. Fasting was also connected with mourning or grieving (Septuagint of 2 Sa 12:16). Some see fasting as a "weakening" of the body in order to "strengthen" the spirit, which sounds good but can easily evolve into a fleshly, self-centered "work" (see Mt 6:18+) rather than an act of genuine self-less devotion. Clearly, we can strengthen our spirit in other ways, most importantly by regular, daily intake of God Word of truth (Mt 4:4, cf Heb 13:9)! In Jesus' day zealous Jews fasted twice a week on Monday and Thursday (cf Lk 18:12+). Jesus discussed fasting in Mt 6:16-18+ but He did not command fasting. Jews sometimes fasted as a result of personal loss, sometimes as an expression of repentance, sometimes as preparation for prayer, and sometimes merely as a meritorious act. The only biblically prescribed fast was on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29, 31, cf Lev 23:26-32; Nu 29:7-11), although other fasts grew up late in the OT period (Zech 7:5; Zech 8:19). So important was fasting for ancient Jews that an entire tractate of the Mishna, Taanith, was devoted to it. Today fasting is a matter of Christian freedom, not obligation. Therefore Didache 8.1 (early second century) is wrong in insisting that Christians fast on Wednesdays and Fridays instead of Mondays and Thursdays (like the Jews).

#### **Related Resources:**

- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Fast, Fasting](#) - recommended article by Eugene Merrill
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Fasting](#)
- [Christian fasting - what does the Bible say? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Fast](#)
- American Tract Society [Fasting](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Fast](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Fasting](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Fasting \(2\)](#) [Fasting](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Fasting](#) [Fast](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Fasts](#)

- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Fast, Fasting Fast](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Fast](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Fasting](#)
- [Fasting](#) - Article by Archibald Alexander
- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Fasting](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Fasts and Feasts Fast: Fasting Feasts, and Fasts](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Fasts](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Fasting and Fast-Days](#)
- [How to fast—what does the Bible say? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why don't Christians fast the same as Muslims? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why did Jesus fast? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What are the different types of fasting? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is Ramadan? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is Tisha B'Av?](#)

**Warren Wiersbe** sees four pictures of Jesus' ministry described in all three synoptic Gospels -

- (1) As the **Physician**, He came to bring spiritual health to sick sinners. (Mt 9:12-13+, Mk 2:17+, Lk 5:31-32+)
- (2) As the **Bridegroom**, He came to give spiritual joy. The Christian life is a feast, not a funeral. (Mt 9:14-16+, Mk 2:18-20+, Lk 5:33-35+)
- (3) The illustration of the **cloth** reminds us that He came to bring spiritual wholeness; He did not come to "patch us up" and then let us fall apart. (Mt 9:16+, Mk 2:21+, Lk 5:36+)
- (4) The image of the **wineskins** teaches that He gives spiritual fullness. Jewish religion was a worn-out wineskin that would burst if filled with the new wine of the Gospel. Jesus did not come to renovate Moses or even mix Law and grace. He came with new life! (Mt 9:17+, Mk 2:22+, Lk 5:37-39+) (BEC)

**Mark 2:19 And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.**

NET Mark 2:19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they do not fast.

GNT Mark 2:19 κα ε πεν α το ς η σο ς, Μ δ νανται ο υ ο το νυμφ νο ς ν νυμφ ο ς μετ α τ ν σπι νη στε ει ν; σ ο ν χ ρ ν ο ν χ ο υ σ ι ν τ ν νυμφ ο ν μετ α τ ν ο δ νανται νη στε ει ν.

NLT Mark 2:19 Jesus replied, "Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. They can't fast while the groom is with them.

KJV Mark 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

ESV Mark 2:19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

NIV Mark 2:19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.

ASV Mark 2:19 And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.

CSB Mark 2:19 Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the groom is with them, can they? As long as they have the groom with them, they cannot fast.

- **Can:** Ge 29:22 Jdg 14:10,11 Ps 45:14 Song 6:8 Mt 25:1-10

**Parallel Passages** Mt. 9:14–17; Mk 2:18–22; Lk 5:33–39



Matthew 9:15+ And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Luke 5:34+ And Jesus said to them, "You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? 35 "But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."

**Guzik** emphasizes that "A wedding feast was the most vivid picture of joy and happiness in that culture. During the weeklong wedding feast it was understood that joy was more important than conformity to religious rituals. If any ceremonial observance would detract from the joy of a wedding feast, it was not required. Jesus said that His followers should have this kind of happiness. Basically, they thought Jesus was too happy. When was the last time you were accused of being too cheerful or too happy? According to Pate, there was a popular rabbinic text called the Scroll of Fasting, and in it was a custom that said that fasting was forbidden on certain specified days devoted to joyous celebration of Israel's blessings from God. Jesus appealed to this kind of thinking." (Enduring Word)

**And Jesus said to them, "While the bridegroom is with them, the attendants of the bridegroom cannot fast, can they?"** - Matthew has "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn" instead of fast, clearly linking this fasting to mourning. Jesus answers their question with a rhetorical question, which clearly expects a negative reply. How absurd would it be for **the attendants of the bridegroom** to fast while the celebration is ongoing! The **attendants of the bridegroom** is literally "the sons of the bride-chamber." In those days a wedding would usually last seven days, and the bridegroom would choose his best friends as attendants to be responsible for the festivities. Matthew substitutes **mourn** for fast, in recording Jesus' question "The attendants of the bridegroom **cannot mourn** as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they?" (Mt 9:15+). This would indicate that the fasting the critics are referring to was associated with mourning. This helps make sense of Jesus' reply as if He is saying during the joyful time of a marriage ceremony you can't expect the attendants to fast and mourn!

**A T Robertson** on **attendants of the bridegroom** (KJV = "**the sons of the bridechamber**") - Not merely the groomsmen, but the guests also, the paranymphs (paranymphoi of the old Greek). Jesus here adopts the Baptist's own metaphor (John 3:29), changing the **friend of the bridegroom** (ho philos tou numphiou) to **sons of the bridechamber....**Mourning does not suit the wedding feast. Mark, Matthew, and Luke all give the three parables (bridegroom, unfilled cloth, new wineskins) illustrating and defending the conduct of Jesus in feasting with Levi on a Jewish fast-day. Luke 5:36 calls these **parables**. Jesus here seems **iconoclastic** to the **ecclesiastics** and revolutionary in emphasis on the spiritual instead of the ritualistic and ceremonial....(in another note) Hebrew idiom for the wedding guests, "the friends of the bridegroom and all the sons of the bride-chamber" (Tos. Berak. ii. 10)

**Marvin Vincent** adds that "In Judea there were two groomsmen, one for the bridegroom, the other for his bride. Before marriage they acted as intermediaries between the couple; at the wedding they offered gifts, waited upon the the bride and bridegroom, and attended them to the bridal chamber. It was the duty of the friend of the bridegroom to present him to his bride, after marriage to maintain proper terms between the parties, and especially to defend the bride's good fame. The Rabbinical writings speak of Moses as the friend of the bridegroom who leads out the bride to meet Jehovah at Sinai (Ex 19:17); and describe Michael and Gabriel as acting as the friends of the bridegroom to our first parents, when the Almighty himself took the cup of blessing and spoke the benediction. John the Baptist represents himself as standing in the same relation to Jesus."

**EXPLANATORY NOTES** - It helps to understand the marriage customs of that day. After the wedding, there was a week long marriage feast. As long as the bridegroom was there, there was much celebrating. That was not a time for mourning. This is Kingdom imagery. The one who is bringing in the kingdom, the Messiah, is here! ([Keathley - Parabolic Sayings](#))

**STEPS IN JEWISH MARRIAGE CEREMONY - Charles Ryrie** - Jewish marriage included a number of steps: first, betrothal (which involved the prospective groom's traveling from his father's house to the home of the prospective bride, paying the purchase price, and thus establishing the marriage covenant); second, the groom's returning to his father's house (which meant remaining separate from his bride for 12 months, during which time he prepared the living accommodations for his wife in his father's house); third, the groom's coming for his bride at a time not known exactly to her; fourth, his return with her to the groom's father's house to consummate the marriage and **to celebrate the wedding feast for the next seven days** (during which the bride remained closeted in her bridal chamber). (Come Quickly, Lord Jesus)

**STEPS IN JEWISH MARRIAGE CEREMONY - Arnold Fruchtenbaum** - First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price. The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day. The second step, which occurred a year or more



after the first step, was the fetching of the bride. The bridegroom would go to the home of the bride in order to bring her to his home. In connection with this step, two other things should be noted. First, it was the father of the groom who determined the timing. Second, prior to the groom's leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode. This was followed by the third step, the wedding ceremony, to which a few would be invited. Prior to the wedding ceremony, the bride underwent a ritual immersion for ritual cleansing. **The fourth step, the marriage feast, would follow and could last for as many as seven days.** Many many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony. In the Marriage of the Lamb all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident. (Footsteps of Messiah)

**Bridegroom** (in phrase "attendants of the bridegroom")(3567)(**numphon**) is a wedding hall, the place where the wedding ceremonies are held (Mt 22:10) or a bridal chamber, as the place where the marriage is consummated, the chamber containing the bridal bed. The bridal chamber in which the marriage bed was prepared, usually in the house of the bridegroom where the bride was brought in procession (See [Jewish Wedding Analogy](#)). In the present passage it refers to the friends of the bridegroom whose duty it was to provide and care for whatever pertained to the bridal chamber, i. e. whatever was needed for the due celebration of the nuptials in the bridal chamber. Found only 4x in NT - bridegroom(3), wedding hall(1). - Matt. 9:15; Matt. 22:10; Mk. 2:19; Lk. 5:34. No uses in the Septuagint.

**So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.** - Jesus depicts Himself as the Bridegroom. Cannot fast is absolute negative (ou) which literally reads "the absolutely cannot fast." For **fast** see note above on [nesteuo](#).

**The bridegroom** (the actual individual)(3566)(**numphios**) is distinct from "the sons of the bride-chamber" and here is the actual spouse, the one newly married. In classical Greek numphios carries the meaning of "bridegroom," "betrothed," and "young husband." In Homer's Iliad it refers to "one lately married" (cf. *Liddell-Scott*). In addition to the singular form the plural numphiois is used to signify the "bridal pair" (e.g., Euripides [Fifth Century B.C.]). Also, numphios is used adjectivally with the meaning "bridal."

**Numphios** - 12x - Matt. 9:15; Matt. 25:1; Matt. 25:5; Matt. 25:6; Matt. 25:10; Mk. 2:19; Mk. 2:20; Lk. 5:34; Lk. 5:35; Jn. 2:9; Jn. 3:29; Rev. 18:23

**Numphios** in Septuagint - Jdg. 15:6; Jdg. 19:5; Neh. 13:28; Ps. 19:5; Isa. 61:10; Isa. 62:5; Jer. 7:34; Jer. 16:9; Jer. 25:10; Jer. 33:11; Joel 2:16;

**Gilbrant** - In the Septuagint numphios is translated as "bridegroom" and is used both literally and figuratively. Literally, Jeremiah spoke of the coming conditions of Israel and how, along with other occurrences, the voice of the "bridegroom" would be heard no more ([Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; 25:10](#)). Later, when speaking of the return and restoration of Israel from her captivity, the picture is used of the voice of the "bridegroom" again being heard in the land. Symbolically, the implication is that of the loss and eventual regaining of joy by a people who had disobeyed God, who had repented, and who then were restored. Figuratively, numphios is used with regard to the relationship between God and the nation of Israel. Isaiah 61:10 and Isa 62:5 picture God as a numphios, "bridegroom." In this relationship Israel is God's bride. A prominent theme throughout these passages is that of the joy which is present in the relationship. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Gilbrant** on NT - In the New Testament the various referents found in the classical writings (e.g., "young husband") and the Septuagint (e.g., "son-in-law") are absent. Only "bridegroom" is carried into the New Testament. However, this usage is primarily a reflection of the Jewish customs and concepts. The use of numphios in the New Testament is relatively rare, being found primarily in the Gospels and once in Revelation. In the New Testament numphios is used both literally and figuratively. In John 2:9 and Revelation 18:23 numphios literally denotes "bridegroom." In John 3:29 the "bridegroom" is called aside by the master of the banquet in order to comment on the quality of the wine. In Revelation 18:23—at the fall of Babylon—the voice of the "bridegroom" will be heard no more in the city. Figuratively, the two numphios usages (Matthew 9:15 with parallel passages and Matthew 25:1-13) offer a fulfillment of an Old Testament concept in the New Testament. However, the Old Testament references of the bride and bridegroom are to Israel and God (Isaiah 62:5), whereas the New Testament uses this imagery in referring to the community of believers and Christ. This use of "bridegroom" as it relates to the Messiah is unique to the New Testament. Surrounding the imagery of the "bridegroom" are other important aspects that further study brings into focus. In John 3:29 reference is made to ho philos tou numphiou, "the friend of the bridegroom," who played a key role in the marriage picture. Further imagery of this concept of Christ as the "bridegroom" and the Church as the "bride" is found in the writings of Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:2 and

Ephesians 5:22-32. Although numphios is not specifically found in these passages the picture is clearly one of the marriage relationship. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary).

**CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM OF THE CHURCH** - Regarding the term **bridegroom** it should be noted **bridegroom** is never used as a messianic title either in the OT or in the Rabbinical writings. The point is that Jesus did not use **bridegroom** as a specific messianic claim. The reference to Jesus as the Church's Bridegroom is strictly a NT concept which Jesus introducing in this passage as a reference to Himself especially in this context in which the next verse describes the time when the Bridegroom would be taken away. The parallel passages in Matthew and Mark present the same picture (Mt. 9:15; Mk 2:19–20). In addition John the Baptist also uses a similar analogy in John 3:29 declaring "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full." Finally, in the Revelation, the Church is depicted as the bride of Christ which of course implies Christ is the Bridegroom. For example, John writes ""Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." (Rev 19:7+; see also Rev 21:2, 9; Rev 22:17).

**Mark 2:20 "But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.**

NET Mark 2:20 But the days are coming when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and at that time they will fast.

GNT Mark 2:20 λε σονται ο μ ραι των παρθ π α τ ν νυμφ ος, κα τ τε νηστε σουσι ν κ ε ν τ μ ρ .

NLT Mark 2:20 But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.

KJV Mark 2:20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

ESV Mark 2:20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

NIV Mark 2:20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

ASV Mark 2:20 But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast in that day.

CSB Mark 2:20 But the time will come when the groom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.

- **the bridegroom:** Ps 45:11 Song 3:11 Isa 54:5 62:5 Joh 3:29 2Co 11:2 Rev 19:7 21:9
- **be taken:** Zec 13:7 Mt 26:31 Joh 7:33,34 12:8 13:33 16:7,28 17:11,13 Ac 1:9 3:21
- **and then they will fast:** Ac 13:2,3 14:23 1Co 7:5 2Co 6:5 11:27

**Parallel Passages** Mt. 9:14–17; Mk 2:18–22; Lk 5:33–39

Matthew 9:15+ And Jesus said to them, "The attendants of the bridegroom cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.

Luke 5:35+ "But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days."

## **GROOM'S GOING FOLLOWED BY FASTING**

**But** (de) term of contrast. Now Jesus changes direction so to speak and in so doing actually gives them a prophecy picturing His crucifixion and also probably His ascension as both events were in a sense His being **taken away from them**.

**The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them** - **The days** is not specified as to when they will occur but it would prove to be in the next 3 years. As noted Jesus is making a reference to His crucifixion and this is the first time He does this in Mark's Gospel. The disciples did not initially understand Christ's predictions of His suffering and death and even later they still did not completely understand, Mark recording...

For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." But **they did not understand this statement**, and they were afraid to ask Him. (Mk 9:31-32).

OLD WAY	NEW WAY
Law	Grace
"Bad News"	Good News
Mourning	Rejoicing
Self-righteousness by self-effort	Divine righteousness by God's grace
Denied sinners in need of repentance	Preached sinners needed repentance from sin
Proud of religion before men	Humble before God
External Ceremony	Internal Transformation
Loved applause of men	Provision of approval of God
Dead Ritual	Dynamic Relationship
Promoted legalistic system	Provided salvation by grace

**MacArthur** sums up this section - Jesus' point to His questioners was simply this: Judaism at its most devout level, as exemplified by the scribes and Pharisees, was completely out of touch with God's plan of salvation. They were mourning when they should have been rejoicing, because they had rejected Jesus the Savior and clung to their own rules and regulations to earn salvation. Consequently, they had nothing in common with Him. They were consumed with self-righteousness; He preached divine grace. They denied they were sinners; He preached repentance from sin. They were proud of their religiosity; He preached humility. They embraced external ceremony and tradition; He preached a transformed heart. They loved the applause of men; He offered the approval of God. They had dead ritual; He offered a dynamic relationship. They promoted a system; He provided salvation.

**Taken away** (522)(**apairo** from from **apo** = from + **airo** = to take away) means to lift off, carry off, take away, to remove from, snatched away. **Apairo** conveys the idea of a sudden, violent removal. Ellis says the verb means "to take away, implying rejection and violent death." Only uses are in Jesus' description of the Bridegroom taken away! - Matt. 9:15; Mk. 2:20; Lk. 5:35. This verb was prophetic of the Crucifixion and Ascension.

**Apairo in the Septuagint**- Gen. 12:9; 13:11; 26:21-22; 33:12,17; 35:16; 37:17; 46:1; Exod. 12:37; 16:1; 17:1; Num. 9:17-18,20-23; 14:25; 20:22; 21:4,10,12-13; 22:1; 33:3,5ff,41ff; Deut. 1:7,19; 2:1,13,24; 10:6-7,11; Jos. 3:1,3,14; 9:17; Jdg. 5:4; 18:11; 1 Ki. 20:9; 2 Ki. 3:27; 19:8,36; Ps. 78:26,52; Ezek. 10:4; Nah. 3:18

**And then they will fast in that day** - When is "then?" The disciples' celebration would come to an abrupt end when the bridegroom is **taken away**, when Jesus is crucified (cf. Isa. 53:8+). How will they react? They will **"fast"** with mourning **in those days** (cf Mt 9:14-15 where **"fast...mourn...fast"** are paralleled).

On the night before His death, Jesus told His disciples in the Upper Room:

Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament (MOURNING WHEN HE WAS CRUCIFIED), but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy (JOYFUL WHEN HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD). Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you. (Jn 16:20-22)

**Mark 2:21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results.**

NET Mark 2:21 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; otherwise, the patch pulls away

from it, the new from the old, and the tear becomes worse.

GNT Mark 2:21 ο δε ς π βλημα κους γν φου πιρ ππει π μ τιον παλαι ν· ε δ μ , α ρει τ π λ ρωμα π α το τ καιν ν το παλαιο κα χε ρον σχ σμα γ νετ αι.

NLT Mark 2:21 "Besides, who would patch old clothing with new cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.

KJV Mark 2:21 No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

ESV Mark 2:21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.

NIV Mark 2:21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.

ASV Mark 2:21 No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment: else that which should fill it up taketh from it, the new from the old, and a worse rent is made.

CSB Mark 2:21 No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new patch pulls away from the old cloth, and a worse tear is made.

- **sews:** Ps 103:13-15 Isa 57:16 1Co 10:13
- **new** Mt 9:16

#### Parallel Passages Mk 2:18–22—Mt. 9:14–17; Lk 5:33–39

Matthew 9:16+ "But no one puts a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and a worse tear results.

Luke 5:36+ And He was also telling them a parable: "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.

### PARABLE OF PATCHES

Only Luke 5:36+ says that Jesus "was also telling them a **parable** ([parabole](#))."

**Wiersbe** - Jesus taught two important lessons about His ministry: (1) He came to save sinners, not to call the religious; and (2) He came to bring gladness and not sadness. The third lesson is this: He came to introduce the new, not to patch up the old. (BEC)

**James Brooks** sums up Mark 2:21-22 - The twin parables here teach the incompatibility of the old (scribal Judaism) and the new (Christianity). Judaism is the old garment and the old wineskin. Christianity is the new garment (implied), the new wineskin, and the new wine (on the last cf. John 2:1–11, especially v. 10). The point is not that the "old" is wrong or evil but that its time has passed. As Acts shows, the Twelve were slow to learn this truth. (NAC-Mark)

**No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment** - This was common knowledge. One might say Judaism was "worn out" ([palaio](#)) and in need of something brand new ([kainos](#)), the Gospel.

**Old** ([3820](#))([palaio](#) from [pálai](#) = in the past, long ago) antique, not recent, not new, old in the sense of worn out and decrepit. (see discussion of [old self = old man](#) -- "**old** self" in Ro 6:6+, Eph. 4:22+ and Col. 3:9+) **Palaio** means in existence for a long time, and in a number of contexts conveys the sense of being obsolete, antiquated or outworn. Worn out from use is the idea in the synoptic parallel parables in Mt 9:16, 17 Mk 2:21, Lk 5:36. [Palaio](#) is used in 2 Cor 3:14 to describe the "**Old** covenant." The related verb [palaioo](#) is used in Hebrews 8:13 to describe the Old Covenant "**becoming obsolete** ([palaioo](#))." See [MacArthur's note](#) as how this parable relates to the Old Covenant.

**Garment** ([2440](#))([himation](#)) describes a garment of any sort, but especially an outer garment. The **himation** was something thrown over the inner tunic (chiton) and in secular Greek was sometimes used for the Roman toga. In the present context, while Jesus is referring to a literal **garment**, He is using the **garment** as an illustration of a spiritual truth. That truth is that the **old garment** of Judaism had become corrupted ("[moth-eaten](#)" so to speak) by numerous non-biblical interpretations and traditions of men (cf Lk

15:6+, Mt 23:4, 23, Lk 11:46+, Acts 15:10+) and was worn out, "spiritually [threadbare](#)," so to speak! In other words, a "gospel patch" was neither compatible with the **old garment**, nor would it be able to repair the **old garment** of [hackneyed](#) Judaism. Jesus did not come to reform ritualistic Judaism but to replace it and clothe the men with "*garments of salvation*", representing not their self-righteous works (as in Judaism) but His righteousness (Isa 61:10+, Ro 3:22+), for as Paul wrote "all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Gal 3:27+).

**Otherwise the patch pulls away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear results-** Jesus explains why putting a patch of new material on an old garment would be foolish. Luke's version is slightly different reading "No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment." (Lk 5:36+) This was common sense truth which everyone understood. Jesus is saying, "I didn't come to patch up the old religious system. I came to do something entirely new." (Courson) Jesus did not come to improve the old system of Judaism but to renounce and radically replace it. His new way had nothing to do with the old way, and the old way had nothing to do with His new way. He was not bringing a better version of Pharisaism or rabbinicalism but was bringing good news of a completely new way of believing, thinking, and living. "The **old garment** is the legalistic system of rabbinic tradition that had obscured the law of God (cf. Mt. 15:3-6). Jesus was not interested in mending the religion of the Pharisees. The good news of salvation by grace through faith in Him could not be combined with the works-righteousness of Judaism." (MacArthur)

**New** (2537) ([kainos](#)) refers to that which is new kind (unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of). It relates to being not previously present. **Vine** adds that **kainos** "denotes "new," of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not "new" in time, recent (Greek = "[neos](#)"), but "new" as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old Mark uses **kainos** again in Mk 2:22 to describe "new wine." Mt 9:17 uses **kainos** to describe "fresh (*kainos*) wineskins." For more discussion of the distinction from another Greek word for new ([neos](#)) see [New - Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#).

Notice that Luke 5:36 is slightly different than Matthew and Mark's version for Luke speaks of damage to two garments, new and old writing "No one tears a piece of cloth from a **new garment** and puts it on an **old garment**; otherwise he will both **tear the new**, and the piece from the **new will not match the old**" As **Vincent** says "In Matthew and Mark there is only a single damage, that, namely, to the **old garment**, the rent in which is enlarged. In Luke the damage is twofold; first, in injuring the **new garment** by cutting out a piece; and second, in making the **old garment** appear patched, instead of widening the rent, as in Matthew and Mark." **Stein** comments on another difference in Luke's version which places emphasis in the analogy on "the **new garment** and **new wine**, for the term "new" appears seven times in Luke 5:36–38 compared to only four times in the Markan parallel. Thus in Luke the emphasis falls on the "newness" of the kingdom brought by Jesus, whereas in Mark it falls on the tearing of the old garment. For Luke, to patch the old with the new not only did not help the old but, more importantly, tore apart the new." (NAC-Luke)

**Craig Evans** - Both figures (old and new cloth; old and new wineskins) underscore the incompatibility of the (old) age of John and the (new) age of Jesus. Up until the close of John's preaching, it was an era of mourning, fasting, preparation. With the presence of Jesus, it is now an era of celebration. Jesus' conduct (no fasting; rather, eating and drinking with sinners) cannot be made to fit within the context of the Baptist's earlier ministry of austerity, any more than a new piece of cloth can repair an old garment, or new wine can be placed in old wineskins. (BKBC-Mt-Lk)

**Constable** - Judaism had become old, and Jesus was going to set up a new form of God's kingdom on earth that would be similar to a new garment. A garment symbolized the covering of man's sinful condition in Old Testament usage (**ED**: compare the New Garment of Salvation below). The Jews were to lay aside the old garment of the Mosaic dispensation and put on the new of the messianic age. (Expository Notes)

### Garments of Salvation

Genesis 3:21+ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.

Isaiah 61:10+ I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Gal 3:27+, For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Ro 13:14+ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

**MacArthur** - Repairing an old tunic with a piece of new, unshrunk fabric would be ill-advised. Not only would the new cloth not match the faded color of the old (cf. Luke 5:36), it would shrink when washed and pull the garment, causing it to tear. Our Lord's point was that His gospel of repentance and forgiveness from sin could not be patched into the legalistic traditionalism of Pharisaic Judaism. The true gospel cannot be successfully attached to the tattered garment of superficial religion worn so proudly by the scribes and Pharisees. Apostate Judaism's rituals and ceremonies were like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6); they were beyond repair. Jesus

did not come with a message to patch up their old system. He came to totally replace it. **It is important to note that the old garment to which Jesus alludes is neither the Mosaic law nor the Old Testament as a whole.** Jesus did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (Mt. 5:17-19<sup>+</sup>). Moreover, the apostle Paul explains that the law of God is righteous and good (Ro 7:12,16<sup>+</sup>). The Jewish leaders had added their own rabbinic stipulations and traditions to God's law to the degree that Judaism had more to do with keeping extra-biblical prescriptions than with honoring divine requirements. (Mark Commentary)

**Pulls away** (142)(airo) literally means to lift up something (Mt 17:27) and to carry it (Lxx - Ge 44:1, Ex 25:28 = the Ark). In the first Septuagint use of airo in Ge 35:2 Jacob told his household "Put away (airo) the foreign gods." As an aside this is the same verb used by John the Baptist when he made the famous declaration - "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away (airo) the sin of the world!" (John 1:29+) Luke uses a different verb schizo (split, rend, divide) in his version of this parable (Lk 5:36+). Mark has already used this same verb in its literal sense in the story of the paralytic who Jesus healed physically and spiritually (Mk 2:3, 9, 11, 12).

**Worse** (5501)(cheiron irregular comparative of kakós =bad) is an adjective used to compare degrees of evil, such as worsening spiritual or physical condition. It means inferior to another in quality or condition or desirability. Less satisfactory than something else. Cheiron means worse, inferior in rank, dignity, goodness, excellence, or condition (Matt. 9:16; 12:45; 27:64; Mark 2:21; 5:26; Luke 11:26; 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Tim. 3:13; 2 Pet. 2:20). More grievous, more severe as spoken of punishment and so in Hebrews 10:29 cheiron illustrates the severity of punishment for those who continue to sin deliberately after having accepted Christ.

**Cheiron** - severer(1), worse(10). Matt. 9:16; Matt. 12:45; Matt. 27:64; Mk. 2:21; Mk. 5:26; Lk. 11:26; Jn. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Tim. 3:13; Heb. 10:29; 2 Pet. 2:20. Used over 400x in the Septuagint (uses only from the Pentateuch) - Gen. 19:19; Gen. 24:50; Gen. 26:29; Gen. 44:34; Gen. 48:16; Gen. 50:15; Exod. 5:19; Num. 14:23; Num. 32:11; Num. 32:23; Deut. 1:39; Deut. 29:21; Deut. 30:15; Deut. 31:17; Deut. 31:29; Deut.

**Tear** (4978)(schisma from schizo = to cleave, split) literally a split, a rift, and in a garment a tear or rent. Figuratively, of doctrinal differences and divided loyalties within a group schism, division of opinion, discord (Jn 7.43; 1Co 12.25)

**Schisma** in NT - division(4), divisions(2), tear(2). Mt. 9:16; Mk. 2:21; Jn. 7:43; Jn. 9:16; Jn. 10:19; 1 Co. 1:10; 1 Co. 11:18; 1 Co. 12:25. No uses in the Septuagint.

**Mark 2:22 "No one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well; but one puts new wine into fresh wineskins."**

NET Mark 2:22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins; otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins will be destroyed. Instead new wine is poured into new wineskins."

GNT Mark 2:22 κα ο δε ς β λλει ο νον ν ον ε ς σκο ς παλαιο ς· ε δ μ , ξει ο νος το ς σκο ς κα ο νος π λλυται κα ο σκο · λλ ο νον ν ον ε ς σκο ς καινο ς.

NLT Mark 2:22 "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the wine would burst the wineskins, and the wine and the skins would both be lost. New wine calls for new wineskins."

KJV Mark 2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

ESV Mark 2:22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins-- and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

NIV Mark 2:22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins."

ASV Mark 2:22 And no man putteth new wine into old wineskins; else the wine will burst the skins, and the wine perisheth, and the skins: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins.

CSB Mark 2:22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost as well as the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

- will burst the skins: Jos 9:4,13 Job 32:19 Ps 119:80,83 Mt 9:17 Lu 5:37,38



Matthew 9:17+ “Nor do people put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst, and the wine pours out and the wineskins are ruined; but they put new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Luke 5:37+ “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. 38 “But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. 39 “And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’”

## HOW TO WASTE NEW WINE

**Rodney Cooper** - It is interesting to note that in each case (Mk 2:21 and Mk 2:22) something is destroyed. God does not just mend our hearts; he gives us brand new ones. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26+). He gives us a new nature, and we are new creatures in Christ. To try to put this kind of life into old, legalistic systems is to destroy the new life. This teaching anticipates Paul’s teaching that Christianity is not an extension of Judaism. Judaism cannot contain it. Jewish laws are not binding upon Christians. Paul took up this topic with enthusiasm in Galatians. The old order regulated behavior with rules; the new order regulates by relationship. Jesus did not come to reform Judaism, as the prophets before him had. He came to introduce a new entity, the church. (HNTC-Mk)

**Constable** - Judaism had also become rigid and inflexible because of the traditions that had encrusted it, like old goatskins that contained wine. Jesus’ kingdom could not operate within those constraints. It would be a new and more flexible vehicle for bringing joy (wine) to humanity. (Expository Notes)

**No one puts new wine (oinos) into old (palaios) wineskins (akso) otherwise the wine (oinos) will burst the skins, and the wine is lost and the skins as well** - The wineskins were usually goatskins with the rough part inside and new wine would ferment and crack the dried-up old skins. The question is what do **new wine** and **old wineskins** symbolize. The **old wineskins** are Judaism including all the added rules and regulations over the centuries. The **new wine** represents in essence Christianity, the new way to approach God. Jesus was saying that the **old wineskins** of ritualistic, legalistic Judaism could not contain His **new wine** of the Gospel of grace (Acts 20:24+). Legalism does not mix beneficially with grace, and only results in ruin. Jesus **“wine”** would result in formation of a new entity, the church, which would bring Jew and Gentile together in one new body (Ephesians 2:16+).

**But one puts new wine (oinos) into fresh wineskins** - Luke’s version adds “And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’”(Lk 5:39+) Matthew 9:17+ adds the phrase **“and both are preserved (suntereo).”**

**Wiersbe** sums up Jesus’ teaching on **new wine** - Jesus came to usher in the new, not to unite with the old. The Mosaic economy was decaying, getting old, and ready to vanish away (Heb. 8:13). Jesus would establish a New Covenant in His blood (Luke 22:19–20). The Law would be written on human hearts, not on stones (2 Cor. 3:1–3; Heb. 10:15–18); and the indwelling Holy Spirit would enable God’s people to fulfill the righteousness of the Law (Rom. 8:1–4). By using this illustration, Jesus refuted once and for all the popular idea of a compromising “world religion.” Well-meaning but spiritually blind leaders have suggested that we take “the best” from each religion, blend it with what is “best” in the Christian faith, and thus manufacture a synthetic faith that would be acceptable to everybody. But the Christian faith is exclusive in character; it will not accept any other faith as its equal or its superior. “There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Salvation is not a partial patching up of one’s life; it is a whole new robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10; 2 Cor. 5:21). The Christian life is not a mixing of the old and the new; rather, it is a fulfillment of the old in the new. There are two ways to destroy a thing: you can smash it, or you can permit it to fulfill itself. An acorn, for example, can be smashed with a hammer, or it can be planted and allowed to grow into an oak. In both instances, the destruction of the acorn is accomplished; but in the second instance, the acorn is destroyed by being fulfilled. Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, types, and demands of the Law of Moses. The Law was ended at Calvary when the perfect sacrifice was once offered for the sins of the world (Heb. 8–10). When you trust Jesus Christ, you become part of a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and there are always new experiences of grace and glory. How tragic when people hold on to dead religious tradition when they could lay hold of living spiritual truth. Why cherish the shadows when the reality has come? (Heb. 10:1ff) In Jesus Christ we have the fulfillment of all that God promised (2 Cor. 1:20). (Borrow [Be diligent](#))

**NET Note** explains “The meaning of the saying **new wine** into new (“FRESH”) **wineskins** is that the presence and teaching of Jesus was something **new** and signaled the passing of the **old**. It could not be confined within the **old** religion of Judaism, but involved the inauguration and consummation of the kingdom of God.”

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**Wine** ([3631](#))(oinos - for more discussion of wine see [oinos](#)) means [wine](#) and is translated that way in all 32 uses in the NT with most having the literal meaning of wine for drink. **Oinos** describes recently pressed grape juice, either ready for fermentation or just



having begun to ferment. The mention of the bursting of the wineskins (Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22; Lk 5:37), implies [fermentation](#) (see [bubbling of fermentation](#)). [Distillation](#) had not yet been developed, so wine could only achieve a certain level of alcoholic content, and it was always consumed with meals watered-down. The alcoholic content was a necessary [antiseptic](#) in the water of that day which was not always [potable](#) like modern treated drinking water. In a very clear spiritual analogy Paul compares being drunk with wine with being filled with (controlled by, "drunk with") the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18+).

**Old** (3820) see note on [palaios](#)

**Wineskins** (779)([akso](#)) refers to an animal skin that forms a bag, usually for holding and dispensing wine or other liquids. Akso gives us the word ascidium, botanical term for pitcher-shaped plants or leaves. Wineskins were dehaired skins of small animals, such as goats, which were sewn together to hold water (Gen 21:15), milk (Judg 4:19), and wine (Josh 9:4, 13). [See picture and description](#) of ancient "skin bottle." See also [ancient bottles](#). In the NT akso is used only in Jesus illustrations of new and old wine in Matt. 9:17; Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:37; Lk. 5:38

**Burst** (4486)([rhegnumi](#)) means to cause to separate abruptly and in this context meaning to burst from internal fermentation, usually suddenly and with force.

**Lost** (622)([apollumi](#) from **apo** = away from or wholly + [olethros](#) = state of utter ruin) basically describes that which is no longer usable for its intended purpose. Sadly this word describes every soul who rejects salvation by grace through faith in Christ (cf Mt 10:28 = **destroy**; Mt 16:25 = **will lose**; etc). They will **NOT** be [annihilated](#) (contrary to what even some "evangelical" teachers say)! They will exist forever and forever be unable to fulfill the purpose for which they were created which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever!

**New** (3501)([neos](#)) signifies new **in respect to time** (contrast [kainos](#) = new in respect to quality) and describes that which has recently come into existence but for a relatively short time. **Neos** means recent in time, and **kainos** means a new kind. The Messianic kingdom would be **new** both in **time** and in **kind**.

**Fresh** (2537)([kainos](#)) refers to that which is new kind (unprecedented, novel, uncommon, unheard of). It relates to being not previously present. **Vine** adds that **kainos** "denotes "new," of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not "new" in time, recent (Greek = "[neos](#)"), but "new" as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old. Mark uses **kainos** again in Mk 2:22 to describe "**new** wine." Mt 9:17 uses **kainos** to describe "**fresh** (kainos) wineskins." For more discussion of the distinction from another Greek word for **new** ([neos](#)) see [New - Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#).

**Mark 2:23 And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain.**

NET Mark 2:23 Jesus was going through the grain fields on a Sabbath, and his disciples began to pick some heads of wheat as they made their way.

GNT Mark 2:23 Κα γ νετο α τ ν ν το ς σ β β α σ ι ν πα ρ α π ο ρ ε ε σ θ α ι δι τ ν σ π ο ρ μ ω ν, κα ο μαθητα α το ρ ξ α ν τ ο δ ν ποιε ν τ λ λ ο ν τ ε ς το ς σ τ χ υ α ς.

NLT Mark 2:23 One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grainfields, his disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat.

KJV Mark 2:23 And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.

ESV Mark 2:23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

NIV Mark 2:23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.

ASV Mark 2:23 And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears.

CSB Mark 2:23 On the Sabbath He was going through the grainfields, and His disciples began to make their way picking some heads of grain.

- **And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields:** Mt 12:1-8 Lu 6:1-5

- **picking the heads of grain:** Dt 23:24,25

#### **Parallel Passages** Mk 2:23–28—Mt. 12:1–8; Lk 6:1–5

Matthew 12:1+ At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

Luke 6:1+ Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain.

Fruiting Heads of Wheat

### **IT JUST HAPPENED TO HAPPEN!**

It is interesting that Mark only records 5 **SABBATH SCENES** (Mk 1:21-28, Mk 2:23-28, Mk 3:1-6, Mk 6:2-5, Mk 16:1 "When the Sabbath was over" = the resurrection) and Matthew only 3 **SABBATH SCENES** (Mt 12:1-8, Mt 12:9-14, Mt 28:1 "after the Sabbath" = the resurrection). When one compares Luke's account, he records SEVEN SABBATH SCENES (including the resurrection). For a more complete discussion of these **SABBATH SCENES** see commentary on Luke 6:1ff.

**And it happened** - As discussed in the these **SABBATH SCENES** in the commentary on Luke 6, this grainfield happening is Jesus' third **SABBATH SCENE**. Notice the phrase **And it happened**, which is found in the NAS translation. The NJB has "it happened that." The KJV and ASV are similar with "And it came to pass." Most of the other translations (NET, ESV, NIV, CSB NRS, miss this phrase (it happened) which is in a sense a "time phrase." The Greek reads literally "And it came to pass." Here is the point of making such a fuss over this phrase -- one can read **and it happened** and miss the fact that things don't just "happen" by chance. Jesus and His disciples weren't in the grainfields by chance. They were not hungry by chance. The Pharisees were not watching by chance. God is sovereign and every "note" of this arrangement is orchestrated by our Great and Mighty God. God is in control of everything that happened to Jesus and is in control of everything that happens in our lives beloved. So let's do a short side-trip on HAPPEN.

First note that we get the English verb **happen** from the word **hap** and the [Webster's first entry](#) is "to occur by chance." We commonly hear the phrase "it just so happened." Here our English mindset gives us an incorrect meaning of these opening words. They did not happen by chance. Not one thing Jesus did was by accident or chance and this **SABBATH SCENE** encounter was no exception. This was a divinely ordained confrontation of the traditions of the pseudo-pious Pharisees and the truth of the Lord of the Sabbath, also known in other contexts as Lord of the [Sabaoth](#) (of the armies of Heaven)! Matthew's parallel passage (Mt 12:1+) uses the Greek word [kairos](#) for **time** which speaks of an opportune time, much like our "window of opportunity." In other words, miss the **time** and you miss the "opportunity." (cf See Paul's exhortation for believers to [Redeem the Time](#)). Jesus was a Man on mission and did not miss opportunities (and as aside remember we are called to "imitate Him" - 1 Cor 11:1+, 1 Jn 2:6+, 1 Pe 2:21+. See [Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#) - How are you doing regarding your divine allotment of [kairos](#) moments! Don't waste your divine "allotment" of opportunities for they may never occur again! Benjamin Franklin said "[early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise](#)" especially in regard to redeeming the time - are you going to bed early that you might wake up early and be ready to redeem the opportunities God gives you EVERY day?)

In this case of course the "**opportunity**" was the right place, the right day, and the right actors, so that the stage was set for another confrontation between the Pharisees and Jesus (cf Luke's record of Jesus' first confrontation with religionists and note the time phrase "**one day**" reflecting once again [God's providence](#) - Lk 5:17-21+ - See another grainfield [Providential Happening that changed the life of Ruth the Moabitess](#)). It was the right "season" ([kairos](#)) for a "perfect storm" ordained by God Who is [sovereign](#) over His creation (including storms!), even allowing the creation (in this case the Pharisees) to question their Creator (Jesus)! Notice the irony here for the Hebrew word **Sabbath** means rest, but it is only by believing in the Person of Jesus that one can find true **rest** (cf Mt 11:28-30+). These Pharisees were in fact "*restless*," for they found no true spiritual rest in their plethora of external religious observances! Just as Jesus had taught in the Sermon on the Mount, keeping of *external* laws (much less man-made non-Biblical traditions) could never bring true **rest internally** (and *eternally*) and righteousness that pleases God (compare Jesus' way in Mt 5:6+ versus the Pharisees' way in Mt 5:20+), for true righteousness comes from the heart of the one who places his or her faith in Christ Jesus our Rest! (cf Ro 10:9-10+). Have you entered His perfect rest by grace through faith in the Lord of the Sabbath (Rest)? Play Kari Jobe's "[Be Still My Soul - In You I Rest](#)."

**That He was passing through the grainfields ([sporimos](#)) on the Sabbath ([sabbaton](#))** - When Israel came out of their bondage in Egypt, God had given them the Sabbath Day (Ex. 20:8–11; Neh. 9:14) and it was to be a special sign between the nation and Jehovah. God intended the Sabbath Day to be a **blessing** but the Pharisees had turned it into a **burden**. That is always the rotten fruit (pun intended) of legalism! The Jews did not call it "legalism" but used a euphemistic word "tradition," which sounds innocuous and even somewhat "patriotic." If you were a good Jew, you would want to keep the "traditions." The trouble was that the traditions added men's imperfect precepts to God's perfect, holy precepts, and the result was like "oil and water" which do not mix!

**THOUGHT** - Legalism in any form negates the freedom believers have in Christ for legalism counteracts grace which is the "air" a believer needs to breathe to live in freedom. Legalism steals God's blessings and replaces them with burdens. Are you practicing legalism in your Christian life? This can be very subtle to very overt, but both will snuff out the power of grace in our lives. Do you have a list of things to do which you would consider "spiritual" (like a morning quiet time) and if you don't accomplish them for some reason you feel guilty or feel like God won't bless you that day? If so, you have fallen into the subtle trap of legalism. One of the best passages in the Bible to use to check our motives and actions in the spiritual life is Paul's rhetorical question "Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal 3:3+). Paul's point of course is that keeping rules will not [progressively sanctify](#) you. It will not transform you from glory to glory (cf 2 Cor 3:18+). It will not make you more and more like Jesus, but actually make you less like Jesus, for He was the [antithesis](#) of a legalist. We need a daily reminder, that we began this "race of grace" by faith and we are to daily run by faith, not by keeping rules! Ray Stedman has an excellent message on [Legalism](#). The best way to defeat the legalistic tendency of our fallen flesh is to walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the (legalistic) desires of the flesh (see commentary on Gal 5:16).

**And His disciples ([mathetes](#) - learners) began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain - Make and Picking** are both in the [present tense](#) describing this as their continuous action. They were walking and picking and presumably eating. **Picking ([tillo](#))** in classical Greek it was used of pulling out hair or feathers, which gives us a good picture of what the action of the disciples.

**On a Sabbath** - This phrase **on a Sabbath** is found in Matt. 12:2; Matt. 24:20; Lk. 6:1; Lk. 14:5. Click here for lengthy discussion of the Sabbath in the commentary on Leviticus 23:3. **Robertson** reminds us that this is Jesus' second Sabbath confrontation in the Gospel of Luke - The first was Luke 4:31-41. There was another in John 5:1-47. See [word study](#) on the Hebrew word for **Sabbath (07676)** which is [sabbat](#) which derives from the verb [shabath \(07673\)](#) meaning to desist (from exertion), cease (see this use of the verb in Ge 8:22, Jer 31:36+), rest (first used of God resting in Creation - Ge 2:2-3), repose, cease from labor. So here the noun form **sabbat** means intermission, the Sabbath (day), the day of rest, the holy seventh day; a week, the sacred 7th year, a sabbatical year. It was not until the giving of the Law at Mt Sinai that the keeping of the Sabbath became a part of the law and a sign of God's covenant relationship with His people (Ex 20:8-11 Ex 31:12-17).

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**Grainfields (4702)** ([sporimos](#) from [speiro](#) = to sow) is an adjective (in neuter plural = *tá spórima*) which pertains to being sown and thus means sown fields, fields of growing grain (Three times in the NT = Mt. 12:1; Mark 2:23; Luke 6:1 and in the Septuagint only in Gen. 1:29 - twice and Lev. 11:37). The grain is most likely either wheat or barley and since it was ripe enough to eat, this event probably occurred in either spring or summer.

**Sabbath (4521)** ([sabbaton](#) from [shabath - 07673](#) = to cease from work, intermission - see note on [shabath](#)) in this context refers to the seventh day of the week, held sacred by the Jews (Mt 12:8; Mk 2:27f; Lk 6:7, 9; Jn 5:9f, 18; Acts 1:12; 13:27, 44) The Sabbath day (Sabbath is from a verb meaning "to cease, ""to desist," or "to rest" cf. Ge. 2:2) was given to the Jews after they came out of Egypt (Ex. 20:8-11; Neh. 9:14) and was a special sign between Jehovah and His chosen people (Ex 31:13-17). It was to be a day of rest, refreshment, and worship for God's people. It was also a covenant sign indicative of Jehovah's authority in the nation of Israel. No other nation was given a Sabbath (cf Ps 147:19-20). When Israel kept the Sabbath, they showed the pagan nations that they were a distinctive people and were subject to their God. Keeping Sabbath was in a sense a way of demonstrating Israel's trust in God, trusting that He would honor their labors with fruit. We may plant the seeds and water them, but it is God who gives the increase (1 Cor 3:6). But the Jews had begun to cherish the Sabbath as a religious ritual. Jesus is in a sense "declaring war" on the religious establishment which worshiped the Sabbath but not necessarily the God of the Sabbath.

**Picking (5089)** ([tillo](#)) means to pluck, to pull, to pull out commonly used to describe the action of picking or plucking something such as grass or heads of grain. Tillo was used in medicine to pull out hairs. This verb is incorporated in the name of a disorder known as [trichotillomania](#) in which people compulsively pull out their hair. Uses only in the synoptic accounts in Matt. 12:1; Mk. 2:23; Lk. 6:1. **Liddell-Scott** has other meanings in classic Greek - to tear one's hair in sorrow for any one, metaphorically to pluck, vex, annoy. Three times in the Septuagint - Ezra 9:3 ("pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard" - in great distress), Isa 18:7, Da 7:4.

**Heads** (4719)(**stachus**) describes the the fruiting spike of a cereal grain, head or ear (of grain). It also means (not used this way in NT) the flower of the aromatic plant [spikenard](#), shaped like a head of grain. **Louw-Nida** says **stachus** refers to "the dense spiky cluster in which the seeds of grain such as wheat and barley grow (restricted in NT contexts to references to wheat)" In Romans 16:9 it is a proper name of a man Stachys. L-S says that in classic Greek it could refer generally to a [scion](#), child, progeny. This noun is frequently used in the Septuagint and in Greek literature denoting an "ear of corn (grain)." Stachus is used repeatedly in the Septuagint in the prophecy God gave to Joseph about the "seven **ears of grain**." (Ge 41:5) that resulted in him being elevated to the position of power in Egypt second only to Pharaoh. This is the word used in the providential meeting of Boaz and Ruth "And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Please let me go to the field and glean among the **ears of grain** after one in whose sight I may find favor." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."" (Ru 2:2). It is used in Dt 23:25 "When you enter your neighbor's standing **grain**, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain."

**Stachus** NT uses - Matt. 12:1; Mk. 2:23; Mk 4:28 (twice), Lk. 6:1, Ro 16:9 - head(2), heads(2), heads of grain(1).

**Stachus** in Septuagint - Gen. 41:5; Gen. 41:6; Gen. 41:7; Gen. 41:22; Gen. 41:23; Gen. 41:24; Gen. 41:26; Gen. 41:27; Exod. 22:6; Deut. 23:25; Jdg. 12:6; Jdg. 15:5; Ruth 2:2; Job 24:24; Isa. 17:5

### Mark 2:24 The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

NET Mark 2:24 So the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is against the law on the Sabbath?"

GNT Mark 2:24 κα ο Φαρισαοι λεγον α τ , δε τ ποιο σιν το ς σ ββασιν ο κ ξεστιν;

NLT Mark 2:24 But the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?"

KJV Mark 2:24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

ESV Mark 2:24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

NIV Mark 2:24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

ASV Mark 2:24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

CSB Mark 2:24 The Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

- **why are they doing:** Mk 2:7,16 Mt 7:3-5 15:2,3 23:23,24 Heb 12:3
- **what is not lawful on the Sabbath:** Ex 20:10 31:15 35:2,3 Nu 15:32-36 Ne 13:15-22 Isa 56:2,4,6 Isa 58:13 Jer 17:20-27

**Parallel Passages** Mk 2:23–28—Mt. 12:1–8; Lk 6:1–5

Matthew 12:2+ But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, "Look, **Your disciples** do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

Luke 6:2+ But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do **you** do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

**The Pharisees** ([pharisaios](#)) **were saying to Him** - What were the Pharisees even doing out in the field? Clearly the implication is that they were looking for Sabbath violations! His disciples were picking but Jesus gets "picked on" by the Pharisees for He was their "target." Note that in Luke's parallel they address the disciples, while Matthew and Mark record they addressed Jesus Himself.

**Look** - The verb **Look** is a command in the [aorist imperative](#). In this context, it conveys a sense of [condescending rebuke](#). Do this now Jesus! **Pay attention!** is the idea! If they only knew they were commanding the Commander in Chief! They are so deceived by their pride and legalism that they don't even realize that they are addressing this to the Lord of the Sabbath, the One Who sovereign reigns over the Sabbath! Mark it down, pride and deception often are also garbed in [pretension](#).

**Why are they doing what is not lawful** ([exesti](#)) **on the Sabbath** - These legalists pose a question which is really a veiled (perhaps not so veiled) accusation! **Not** ([ou](#)) signifies absolute negation. There was absolutely no room in the heart of the Pharisees for making an exception, even if someone was starving! The legalists had made their own rules many of which were utterly ridiculous but all of which made keeping them a great burden. It is fascinating that men's rules were far more difficult and detailed than God's

rules! See MacArthur's description ([below](#)) of some of their outlandish rules! If the Pharisees' were alive today, their theme song would likely be Tevye's "[Tradition](#)" in Fiddler on the Roof, a good song but a bad practice. In effect the Pharisees were accusing Jesus' disciples of [reaping](#) (picking the grain), [threshing](#) (rubbing the husks together to separate the chaff from the grain), and [winnowing](#) (throwing the husks away), and thus preparing food! Is this not absurd?

Jesus was in effect declaring open war on the Jewish traditions laden with legalism, and in this present case, He knew full well that what He was allowing His disciples to do would "[get the goat](#)" of the strict Pharisees who were following along just waiting for Him to make a mistake so they could pounce on Him. And now they felt they had their opportunity to attack. They thought to themselves that "We've got Him now. His men have broken our **tradition**."

**THOUGHT** - In their deception the Pharisees thought they were worshipping God by keeping all of their rules, when in fact they were thoroughly displeasing to God! That's what "religion" without relationship will do. And we can fall into the same trap today, thinking if we go to church on Sunday, that is what God wants us to do. In part that may be true but it is so easy to come to church and miss Jesus by a mile, because we fall into the deception that our "**tradition**" will make us acceptable to God. The basic principle of 1 Sa 15:22 still applies ""Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams." God wants our hearts. David affirms this principle writing "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." (Ps 51:17+) The Pharisees were not broken in spirit, but prideful in spirit and that is why they failed to recognize the Lord of the Sabbath, even brazenly accusing Him of breaking the Sabbath! Beware of religious **traditions** (rituals)!

Messianic Jewish writer **Alfred Edersheim** explains why in the eyes of the Pharisees what the disciples were doing was **not lawful on the Sabbath** - On any ordinary day this would have been lawful; but on the Sabbath it involved, according to the Rabbinic statutes, at least two sins, viz., plucking the ears, which was reaping, and rubbing them in their hands (Luke 6:1), which was sifting, grinding, or fanning. The Talmud says: 'In case a woman rolls wheat to remove the husks, it is considered as sifting; if she rubs the heads of wheat, it is regarded as threshing; if she cleans off the side-adherencies, it is sifting out fruit; if she bruises the ears, it is grinding; if she throws them up in her hand, it is winnowing'" ([Life and Times of Jesus](#))

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**Pharisees** ([5330](#))([pharisaïos](#)) is transliterated from Hebrew **parash** ([06567](#) - to separate) which is from an Aramaic word **peras** ([06537](#)) ("Peres" in Da 5:28-[note](#)), signifying to separate, owing to a different manner of life from that of the general public. After the resettling of the Jewish people in Judea on their return from the Babylonian captivity, there were two religious groups among them. One party contented themselves with following only what was written in the Law of Moses. These were called **Zadikim**, the (so-called) "righteous one." The other group added the constitutions and traditions of the elders, as well as other rigorous observances, to the Law and voluntarily complied with them. They were called **Chasidim** or the pious, who beyond the legal requirements of ritual and ethical Jewish observance in daily life. From the Zadikim the sects of the **Sadducees** and **Karaites** were derived. From the Chasidim were derived the **Pharisees** and the **Essenes**. In 1 Macc 2:42RSV, among the persons who joined Mattathias against Antiochus IV (Epiphanes), about 167 b.c., are named the Asideans (Asidaíoi), who are described as voluntarily devoted to the law. The Asideans are mentioned also in 1 Macc 7:13RSV; 2 Macc14:6RSV. In the time of our Lord, the **Pharisees** were the separatists of their day, as well as the principal sect among the Jews. The Pharisees considered themselves much holier than the common people (Lk 18:11, 12+). They wore special garments to distinguish themselves from others (See [Edersheim's description](#)). **PRINCIPLE TENETS OF PHARISEES:** In opposition to the Sadducees, the Pharisees maintained the existence of angels and spirits and the doctrine of the resurrection (Acts 23:8+), which the Sadducees denied (Mt 22:23; Mk 12:18; Lu 20:27+). The Pharisees made everything dependent upon God and fate (see [Josephus, The Jewish Wars, ii.8.14](#) - scroll down). However, they did not deny the role of the human will in affecting events (see [Josephus, Antiquities, xviii.1.3](#)). They prided themselves on their **ZEAL FOR TRADITION:** The Pharisees distinguished themselves with their zeal for the traditions of the elders, which they erroneously taught was derived from the same fountain as the written Word itself (LIKE SOME RELIGIONS DO TODAY PLACING PRONOUNCEMENTS OF MERE MEN ON THE SAME PEDESTAL AS PROCLAMATIONS OF THE HOLY GOD!), claiming both to have been delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai (Mt 15:1-6; Mk 7:3-5). See also [paradosis](#) ([3862](#)), tradition, and [éntalma](#) ([1778](#)), a religious precept versus [entole](#) ([1785](#)), commandment. (See more detailed notes from William Barclay) [Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#) has an excellent summary of Pharisees.

**Pharisees in the Gospel of Mark** - Mk. 2:16; Mk. 2:18; Mk. 2:24; Mk. 3:6; Mk. 7:1; Mk. 7:3; Mk. 7:5; Mk. 8:11; Mk. 8:15; Mk. 10:2; Mk. 12:13;

**Lawful** ([1832](#))([exesti](#) from from **ek** = out + **eimí** = to be) is an impersonal verb, signifying "it is permitted, it is lawful" (or interrogatively, "is it lawful?"). Exesti occurs most frequently in the synoptic Gospels and the Acts, especially in Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees over His actions (and those of His disciples) on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:2; 12:4; 12:10; 12:12, etc). **BDAG** - 1. to be authorized for the doing of something - it is right, is authorized, is permitted, is proper. 2. to be within the range of possibility, it is



m. **Šabbat 7.2** This passage from the [Mishnah](#), if at all representative of the kinds of prohibitions in Jesus' day, reveals the strictness with which the commandment "to keep the Sabbath holy" was understood.

- A. The generative categories of acts of labor [prohibited on the Sabbath] are forty less one:
- B. (1) he who sews, (2) ploughs, (3) reaps, (4) binds sheaves, (5) threshes, (6) winnows, (7) selects [fit from unfit produce or crops], (8) grinds, (9) sifts, (10) kneads, (11) bakes;
- C. (12) who shears wool, (13) washes it, (14) beats it, (15) dyes it;
- D. (16) spins, (17) weaves,
- E. (18) makes two loops, (19) weaves two threads, (20) separates two threads;
- F. (21) ties, (22) unties,
- G. (23) sews two stitches, (24) tears in order to sew two stitches;
- H. (25) he who traps a deer, (26) slaughters it, (27) flays it, (28) salts it, (29) curds its hide, (30) scrapes it, and (31) cuts it up;
- I. (32) he who writes two letters, (33) erases two letters in order to write two letters;
- J. (34) he who builds, (35) tears down;
- K. (36) he who puts out a fire, (37) kindles a fire;
- L. (38) he who hits with a hammer; (39) he who transports an object from one domain to another—
- M. lo, these are the forty generative acts of labor less one.

**THOUGHT:** The Pharisees as usual were "[splitting hairs](#)." Stated another way the Pharisees were [straining out gnats and swallowing camels](#) as Jesus accused them of in Mt 23:24 declaring "**You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!**" Jesus was saying that the Pharisees picked out the smallest and least points to focus on (which in fact were not even God's commandments but men's additions - see the "addition" in "[B.\(1\)](#)" above), while completely ignoring the most important matters, like [compassion](#) (they could care less that Jesus' disciples were hungry!). Jesus uses [hyperbole](#) imagining someone about to take a drink of water from a cup, noticing that there is a tiny [gnat \(pix\)](#) in it, and straining the water to remove the gnat and then drinks the water, never noticing that there was a [camel](#) floating in the cup (so to speak of course!) Jesus makes the point rather dramatically that the religious leaders were focusing on lesser matters written by fallen men, while completely ignoring the more important matters of the holy God! Isn't that what our [flesh](#) is so prone to do! We all have a bit of "Pharisee" in us from time to time. Lord, deliver us by Your Spirit and the Law of the LORD which is perfect reviving our souls. In Jesus Name. Amen (Ps 19:7<sup>±</sup>).

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**John MacArthur** on the endless number of Sabbath rules - "The **Talmud devotes twenty-four chapters to Sabbath regulations**, describing in painfully exhaustive detail what was and was not permitted to be done. The result was a ridiculously complex system of external behavior restraints—so much so that one rabbi spent two and a half years studying just one of the twenty-four chapters! For example, traveling more than 3,000 feet from home was forbidden. But if one had placed food at the 3,000 foot point before the Sabbath, that point would then be considered a home, since there was food there, and allow another 3,000 feet of travel. Similarly, a piece of wood or a rope placed across the end of a narrow street or alley constituted a doorway. That could then be considered the front door of one's house, and permit the 3,000 feet of travel to begin there. There were also regulations about carrying items. Something lifted up in a public place could only be set down in a private place, and vice versa. An object tossed into the air could be caught with the same hand, but if it was caught with the other hand, it would be a Sabbath violation. If a person had reached out to pick up food when the Sabbath began, the food had to be dropped; to bring the arm back while holding the food would be to carry a burden on the Sabbath. It was forbidden to carry anything heavier than a dried fig (though something weighing half as much could be carried two times). A tailor could not carry his needle, a scribe his pen, or a student his books. Only enough ink to write two letters (of the alphabet) could be carried. A letter could not be sent, not even with a non-Jew. Clothes could not be examined or shaken out before being put on because an insect might be killed in the process, which would be work. No fire could be lit, or put out. Cold water could be poured into warm water, but not warm into cold. An egg could not be cooked, not even by placing it in hot sand during the summer. Nothing could be sold or bought. Bathing was forbidden, lest water be spilled on the floor and wash it. Moving a chair was not allowed, since it might make a rut in a dirt floor, which was too much like plowing. Women were forbidden to look in a mirror, since if they saw a white hair, they might be tempted to pull it out. Other forbidden things included sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, grinding, kneading, baking, shearing, washing, beating, dyeing, or spinning wool, tying or untying a knot, catching, killing, or skinning a deer, salting its meat, or preparing its skin....It was to people crushed by the unbearable burden (Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46; Acts 15:10) of manmade, legalistic regulations that the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and

you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30-note). (See [Luke Commentary](#))

**Mark 2:25 And He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry;**

NET Mark 2:25 He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry—

GNT Mark 2:25 κα λ γει α το ς, Ο δ ποτε ν γνωτε τ πο ησεν Δαυ δ τε χρε αν σχεν κα πε νασεν α τ ς κα ο μετ α το ,

NLT Mark 2:25 Jesus said to them, "Haven't you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry?

KJV Mark 2:25 And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?

ESV Mark 2:25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him:

NIV Mark 2:25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need?

ASV Mark 2:25 And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he, and they that were with him?

CSB Mark 2:25 He said to them, "Have you never read what David and those who were with him did when he was in need and hungry--

- **Have you never read:** Mk 12:20,26 Mt 19:4 21:16,42 22:31 Lu 10:26
- **what David did when he was in need** 1Sa 21:3-6

**Parallel Passages** Mk 2:23–28—Mt. 12:1–8; Lk 6:1–5

Matthew 12:3+ But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,

Luke 6:3+ And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him

## **JESUS DEFENSE: THE OLD TESTAMENT!**

**And He said to them** - Jesus ever the perfect "Defense Attorney" answers their question with a question of His own.

**Have you never read** - Stop right there! Can you imagine the hair standing up the back the necks of these self-righteous Pharisees at these first words from Jesus! You can hear them mumbling to themselves "How dare Him question our knowledge of the Bible. We are the experts in Israel! Doesn't He know who we really are?" Of course He did in fact know who they **REALLY WERE!** They were consummate religious actors, hypercritical hypocrites, men who were "like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." (Mt 23:27).

**What David did when he was in need and he and his companions became hungry** - In defense of His disciples, and ultimately of Himself for their accusations ultimately were aimed at Him, He reminds them of David, the most beloved of all Israel's kings. In so doing he is using this OT example to show that the spirit of the law takes priority over the letter of the law

**What David did** - The context is that David had fled from King Saul who was opposed to David and tried to kill him (1 Sa 20:31–33). David went into hiding as a fugitive, taking a few men with him and while in the wilderness, they became hungry. One fact that is not found in the following account is that the priest Ahimelech sought the Lord's approval as we learn from the spy Doeg the Edomite's account in 1 Sa 22:10 stating that Ahimelech "inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." Ahimelech came to understand that the preservation of David's life was more important than the ceremonial regulations concerning consecrated bread! In short, the priest discerned the spirit of the law, not just the letter of the law! He is a



good example for all us to emulate. Here is the story to which Jesus refers...

Then David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest (THIS TEXT DOES NOT SAY SPECIFICALLY IT WAS THE SABBATH); and Ahimelech came trembling to meet David and said to him, "Why are you alone and no one with you?" 2 David said to Ahimelech the priest, "The king has commissioned me with a matter and has said to me, 'Let no one know anything about the matter on which I am sending you and with which I have commissioned you; and I have directed the young men to a certain place.' (NOTE THAT DAVID ACTUALLY DECEIVES AHIMELECH - HE HAD NOT BEEN COMMISSIONED BY SAUL! - AND HIS LIE ULTIMATELY LED TO THE DEATH OF THE PRIESTS - 1 Sa 22:9-18! WE LEARN IN 1 Sa 22:10 THAT AHIMELECH HAD INQUIRED OF THE LORD WHO GAVE HIM PERMISSION TO GIVE THE BREAD TO DAVID) 3 "Now therefore, what do you have on hand? Give me five loaves of bread, or whatever can be found." 4 The priest answered David and said, "There is no ordinary bread on hand, but there is consecrated bread; if only the young men have kept themselves from women." 5 David answered the priest and said to him, "Surely women have been kept from us as previously when I set out and the vessels of the young men were holy, though it was an ordinary journey; how much more then today will their vessels be holy?" 6 So the priest gave him consecrated bread; for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence which was removed from before the LORD, in order to put hot bread in its place when it was taken away (See Leviticus 24:5-9+, cf Ex. 25:23-30). (1 Sa 21:1-6)

**Comment** - Notice that David broke a definite law given by Moses, for the consecrated bread was meant to be eaten only by the priests (Lev. 24:5-9), but Jesus' disciples had violated only a **man-made** rule!

**Mark 2:26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests, and he also gave it to those who were with him?"**

NET Mark 2:26 how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the sacred bread, which is against the law for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to his companions?"

GNT Mark 2:26 π ς ε σ λθεν ε ς τ ν ο κον το θεο π βιαθ ρ ρχιερ ως κα το ς ρτους τ ς προθ σεως φαγεν, ο ς ο κ ξεσπιν φαγε ν ε μ το ς ερε ς, κα δωκεν κα το ς σ ν α τ ο σιν;

NLT Mark 2:26 He went into the house of God (during the days when Abiathar was high priest) and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions."

KJV Mark 2:26 How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

ESV Mark 2:26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?"

NIV Mark 2:26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

ASV Mark 2:26 How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him?

CSB Mark 2:26 how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest and ate the sacred bread-- which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests-- and also gave some to his companions?"

- **Abiathar** 1Sa 22:20-22 23:6,9 2Sa 8:17 15:24,29,35 20:25 1 Ki 1:7 1 Ki 2:22,26,27 4:4
- **which is not lawful** Ex 29:32,33 Lev 24:5-9

**Parallel Passages** Mk 2:23–28—Mt. 12:1–8; Lk 6:1–5

Matthew 12:4+ how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? 5 "Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? 6 "But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here. 7 "But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION (MERCY), AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

**Lenski on mercy and sacrifice** - "If you had known" is a climax to the two questions, "Did you not read?" Jesus quotes Hos. 6:6 (as in 9:13). "**Mercy**," *eleos*, is pity and sympathy for anyone in distress (Mt 5:7; Luke 6:36); Thusia is a **sacrifice** sent up in smoke, also the act of bringing **sacrifice**. As between the two, God wants the former. While he himself has ordered **sacrifice**, **sacrifice** alone could never satisfy him. God wanted the **sacrifice** of a true heart, one full of **mercy**, for instance, toward hungry fellow men, and corresponding acts for God's sake. Jesus is not speaking of mere humanitarian pity, nor of merciful actions inspired by the law. The **mercy** that Hosea refers to **comes from the gospel**, which fills also the Old Testament. **It is born of the new life kindled by this gospel** And so this **mercy** is known by the inner experience of having it and of putting it to delightful practice. When the Pharisees condemned the disciples, who were utterly guiltless, **having transgressed not even a ceremonial law, they revealed that Hos. 6:6 (and every other gospel word similar to that) was foreign territory to them.** Men's actions reveal what affinity they have for God's Word and how they meet or fail to meet what God really wants. (ISMG)

Luke 6:4+ how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?"

#### Priests Changing Showbread each Sabbath

The drawing depicts the priests removing the old consecrated bread and replacing with the new consecrated bread on the Sabbath. The priests were then allowed to eat the old consecrated bread.

**J Vernon McGee** - Our Lord did not insist that they had not broken the Sabbath; He refused to argue the issue with them. He cited an incident in the life of David where he had definitely broken the Mosaic Law and was justified. His point was that the letter of the Law was not to be imposed when it wrought hardship upon one of God's servants. Obviously the disciples were hungry. It cost them something to follow Jesus. (See [Thru the Bible](#))

**Lenski** - What did David do in his need? He went into "the House of God," which, however, does not mean into the Holy Place or Sanctuary of the Tabernacle but into the courts, where he might freely go; compare Ps. 122. The *ἄρτοι τῆς προθέσεως*, "the breads of the setting forth" or the showbread, were twelve loaves, each made of about 6¼ pounds of flour and set forth in two rows on a gold-covered table in the Holy Place every Sabbath Day; and when they were removed they were to be eaten only by the priests, Lev. 24:5-9. The bread that David received was not that which was at the time lying in the Holy Place but some that had been removed after having served its sacred purpose. It was God's own law that made it "unlawful" for any persons but priests to eat this bread; it was not merely a rabbinical dictum such as the Pharisees brought against Jesus to condemn the plucking of a few ears of grain. Jesus overtops the charge of the Pharisees. He proves by David's own example that even the divine ceremonial law was not intended to be absolute in its application. The rabbinical refinements are disregarded as being unworthy of notice. God cares more for the right spiritual condition of the heart than for the outward observance of his own ceremonial regulations. The argument is overwhelming. David's hunger sets aside even a divine regulation—shall not the hunger of the disciples set aside mere rabbinical notions? (See [The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel](#))

**how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the consecrated([prothesis](#)) bread which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests And he also gave it to those who were with him** - This **bread** was in the Holy Place (the room that led through the veil into the Holy of holies, where the Shekinah Glory was abiding indicating God's presence) and the priests were allowed to eat the **bread** when they replaced it with new **bread** each Sabbath.

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**Consecrated** (shewbread, showbread) ([4286](#))([prothesis](#) from *protithemai* = set before oneself to be looked at) is literally placing before and so it describes the setting forth of something in view, in this context obviously referring to the bread to be placed in the Holy Place. And so it refers to the [shewbread](#) ("loaves of presentation") in the Tabernacle and later the Temple which is as it were "exposed before God". The bread before the **Presence** of the Lord consisted of twelve loaves of wheat bread offered every Sabbath (12 = number of the tribes of Israel) and arranged in two rows on the table before the Holy of Holies and to remain there for seven days. This bread was changed for fresh loaves every sabbath. The old loaves were eaten by the priests (Ex 25:30; 1 Sa 21:6).

**Simon Kistemaker** adds that the **Bread of the Presence** "symbolized the constant fellowship of the people with their God, receiving their bread from Him, eating with Him, being consecrated to Him, and gratefully acknowledging their indebtedness to Him by means of this offering." (See [BNTC-Mt](#)) (**Related:** [What was the bread of the Presence](#))

**Lawful** ([1832](#))(*exesti* from from *ek* = out + *eimi* = to be) is an impersonal verb, signifying "it is permitted, it is lawful" (or interrogatively, "is it lawful?"). *Exesti* occurs most frequently in the synoptic Gospels and the Acts, especially in Jesus' conflicts with the Pharisees over His actions (and those of His disciples) on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:2; 12:4; 12:10; 12:12, etc).

### ABIATHAR OR AHIMELECH?

In Mark we read that Jesus said that Abiathar was priest when David received and ate some of the bread of the Presence from the tabernacle. In terms of the point that Jesus is making it really does not matter who was priest, for the issue is the breaking of the rule about a layperson eating consecrated bread and its application to Jesus' disciples breaking the sabbath regulations. However, when we look up the incident in 1 Samuel 21:1-6, the text reads "**Ahimelech**" rather than "**Abiathar**." Was Jesus mistaken? Surely the Pharisees would have caught the error?

The first point to note is that Abiathar and Ahimelech are son and father. The son, Abiathar, first appears in 1 Samuel 22:20 as the one son of Ahimelech who escaped when Saul slaughtered the priests of Nob and their families for having helped David. Abiathar then remains with David and later serves as high priest during his reign. It looks like the son has been switched with the father.

The second thing we should look at is the textual tradition. There is no evidence that this switch is a textual error. It is true that the Western text does omit the priest's name, but none of the other textual traditions do, and the Western text does sometimes correct or add to the text in various books. When the Western text's reading remains unsupported by other textual traditions, it is not taken as very weighty. **In fact, the Western text actually follows the other Synoptics, for Matthew 12:4 and Luke 6:4 both drop this offending name. Thus there appears to be solid evidence that Mark wrote "Abiathar."**

There have been attempts to solve the problem by arguing that "in the days of Abiathar the high priest" should be understood to mean "In the section [of Samuel] entitled 'Abiathar,'" since this section explains how Abiathar joined David (and there were no chapter and verse numbers for citing Scripture in Jesus' day). However, if that is what it means, Mark found a most awkward way of expressing it. To mean this, the Greek phrase with "Abiathar" in it should have been placed in Mark 2:25 right after "Have you never read?"

Likewise some argue that the phrase means "when Abiathar who became high priest was alive." However, if this was what were intended (if Jesus had forgotten the name of Abiathar's father or thought his listeners would not recognize it), a phrase like "in the days of the father of Abiathar the high priest" or "in the childhood of Abiathar the high priest" would have expressed the thought clearly. The phrase as it stands would express such an idea so unclearly and awkwardly that it is unlikely that it means this.

What, then, are the possibilities? First, we can be fairly certain that Mark is not covering up the Pharisaic response to an error Jesus made. If Mark had been aware of such a problem, he would have omitted the whole story or changed the name rather than simply omitted the Pharisaic response. Mark probably did not see any other problem with this passage than the issue of Jesus' defending his disciples' breaking the sabbath regulations.

Second, if Mark did not see the problem, he did not see it for one of three reasons: (1) he actually wrote Ahimelech and the more familiar name crept into the text at a very early stage, perhaps as an error in the first copying (often texts were read aloud to scribes making copies, so an oral substitution of the more familiar name for the less familiar would be quite possible), or (2) he received the story as it is and did not himself realize that there was a problem with it (in the latter case, we do not know if Jesus actually said "Abiathar" or if he said "Ahimelech" and the more familiar Abiathar was substituted in the course of oral transmission), or (3) his view of historical accuracy was not bothered by such an issue, since the main point is not affected by it. Whatever the case, Mark apparently did not realize that there was a problem.

**The truth is that this is one of the problems in Scripture for which we do not have a fully satisfactory solution.** We do not have Mark's original edition to check which name was in it, nor do we have Mark here to question about his state of mind. We do not have a tape recording of the preaching of Peter (thought by many to be the source of Mark) to see if he was using the right or the wrong name. While many ancient historians would not have been bothered by such an innocuous slip, it did seem to bother Matthew and Luke, so we cannot be sure that it would not have bothered Mark. Thus we can either arbitrarily select one of the speculative solutions mentioned in the previous paragraph, perhaps choosing the one which pleases us the best, or we can say, "We honestly don't know what the answer is to this problem, nor are we likely to ever know." In that case, this verse makes plain that our knowledge is always partial so that our trust remains in God rather than in what we know.

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### [Gleason Archer - go to page 367 in Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties](#) - Who was high priest when David ate the showbread—Abiathar or Ahimelech?

Mark 2:26 quotes Jesus as asking His hearers whether they had never read what David did, when he and his men were hungry and entered the sanctuary at Nob to beg for food, in the time of Abiathar the high priest (1 Sam. 21:1-6). As a matter of fact, however, it was with Abiathar's father, Ahimelech, that David had dealings; for Ahimelech was really the high priest at the time of that episode.

Did Jesus err when He referred to the wrong high priest? A careful examination of Mark 2:26 reveals that Christ did not actually imply that Abiathar was already high priest at the time of David's visit. He simply said, "Epi Abiathar archiereōs," which means "in the time of Abiathar the high priest." As things turned out, bloody King Saul soon had Ahimelech and the entire priestly community of Nob massacred by Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 22:18–19); and Abiathar the son of Ahimelech was the only one fortunate enough to escape. He fled to join David (v. 20) and served as his priest all through David's years of wandering and exile. Naturally he was appointed high priest by David after David became king, and he shared the high priesthood with Zadok, Saul's appointee, until David's death. Under these circumstances it was perfectly proper to refer to Abiathar as the high priest—even though his appointment as such came somewhat later, after the incident at Nob—just as it would be proper to introduce an anecdote by saying, "Now when King David was a shepherd boy," even though David was not actually a king at the time he was a shepherd boy.

According to W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957], p. 286), epi with the genitive simply means "in the time of"; and that is the meaning that applies in Mark 2:26 (the same construction as Acts 11:28 ["in the time of Claudius"] and Heb. 1:2 ["in the time of the last of these days"] (ep' eschatou tōn hēmerōn toutōn)). The episode did happen "in the time of" Abiathar; he was not only alive but actually present when the event took place, and he very shortly afterward became high priest as a result of Saul's murdering his father, Ahimelech. If Jesus' words are interpreted in the way he meant them, there is absolutely no variance with historical fact.

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#### Related Resource:

- [What was the bread of the Presence \(Exodus 25:30\)? | GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Mark 2:27 Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

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NET Mark 2:27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath.

GNT Mark 2:27 κα λεγεν α το ς, Τ σ ββατον δι τ ν νθρωπον γ νετο κα ο χ νθρωπος δι τ σ ββατον·

NLT Mark 2:27 Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath.

KJV Mark 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

ESV Mark 2:27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

NIV Mark 2:27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

ASV Mark 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

CSB Mark 2:27 Then He told them, "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

- Ex 23:12 De 5:14 Ne 9:13,14 Isa 58:13 Eze 20:12,20 Lu 6:9 Joh 7:23 1Co 3:21,22 2Co 4:15 Col 2:16

**Parallel Passages** - Matthew and Luke do not have a parallel for this passage.

### A DAY MEANT FOR BLESSING BECAME A BURDEN

**Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath** - This statement is found only in Mark's version. What is Jesus saying? He is saying that God made the Sabbath to give men a time to rest. By the addition of all their minute rules and regulations ([see here](#)), the Jewish "sages" had in effect made the Sabbath the "master" over men. The Jews instead of enjoying the Sabbath as a day of rest, now had to work even harder than ever to make sure they did not break any of the many Sabbath regulations. They had to be cautious about what they did, where they went, how far they went, and on and on. It must have been a heavy mental burden on all who tried to comply with the non-Biblical regulations. In short Jesus is saying the Sabbath was made to be a  **blessing**  for man, but the plethora of non-Biblical rules had turned the day into an **onerous burden**. It is interesting that in our modern culture many often dread Monday, but given the burden of the Sabbath, one cannot help but believe most of Jews would say "T.G.I.M" (Thank God it's Monday!)

**Lenski** has an excellent comment - The principle back of all that God ordered in his law regarding the Sabbath was that it might be a blessing for man. This day afforded man physical rest and, still more important, time to attend to his spiritual needs. But the Jews

had inverted this. They treated man as if he had been created for the purpose of keeping the Sabbath laws. The Sabbath had to be kept, no matter how man fared, whereas God intended that man should be blessed—by the Sabbath, of course, but, if necessary, even at the expense of the Sabbath. (ISMG)

**Kistemaker** adds that "The sabbath was instituted to be a blessing for man: to keep him healthy, to make him happy, and to render him holy. Man was not created to be the sabbath's slave." (BNTC)

The Jews themselves recognized the burden of the Sabbath writing "the rules about the Sabbath...are as mountains hanging by a hair, for [teaching of] Scripture [thereon] is scanty and the rules many" (m. Hag. 1:8)."

### Mark 2:28 "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

NET Mark 2:28 For this reason the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

GNT Mark 2:28 στε κ ρ ι ς σ π ι ν υ ς τ ο ν θ ρ που κα το σαββ του.

NLT Mark 2:28 So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!"

KJV Mark 2:28 Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

ESV Mark 2:28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

NIV Mark 2:28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

ASV Mark 2:28 so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.

CSB Mark 2:28 Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- Mk 3:4 Mt 12:8 Lu 6:5 13:15,16 Joh 5:9-11,17 9:5-11,14,16 Eph 1:22 Rev 1:10

**Parallel Passages** Mk 2:23–28—Mt. 12:1–8; Lk 6:1–5

Matthew 12:8+ "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Luke 6:5+ And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

## JESUS LORD OF THE SABBATH

Why is Jesus making this statement which is found in each synoptic account? Remember He is still addressing the accusation of the Pharisees that His disciples broke the Sabbath law. Since Jesus is the **Lord of the Sabbath**, He alone has the authority to interpret the law. He is saying that He is sovereign ruler or master over the Sabbath day. He is the master of this day for He as Creator made it (Ge 2:1-3, cf Col 1:16+). His Lordship trumps the man-made rules of the Jews! We do not have to guess whether the Pharisees "caught" Jesus' allusion to the fact that He was God! Their violent response and desire to destroy Him (Lk 6:11+, cf Mt 12:14+, Mark 3:6+)

**So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath**- Notice that the word **Lord** is placed at the beginning of the Greek sentence to give strong emphasis to His Lordship. **Son of Man** is clearly a Messianic title. He had used this same Name in Mark 2:10+ where He had first forgiven the lame man's sins and then authenticated His authority to forgive sins by healing him declaring "But so 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, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." (Mk 2:10-11+, cf Mt 9:6+). In that passage He left no doubt that He was not just claiming to be God, but that He was in fact God, for no mere man could heal a lame man. So the Pharisees were aware of the significance of His use of the term **Son of Man** in this passage. He was saying in essence "I am God and I am the Lord of the Sabbath!" And because of Who Jesus is He could determine what the rules for Sabbath observance should be! The implication also is that as the One Who instituted the Sabbath, He knows the correct meaning of the Sabbath. To reiterate, it would have been impossible for the Pharisees to miss Jesus' clear declaration of divinity and the One having authority over the Sabbath! The hearts of the Pharisees are enraged by now and it will soon come to a head in Mark 3:6+ where they conspire over "how they might destroy Him."

**Son of Man** - this name is used of Jesus in Daniel 7:13+ and is used repeatedly by Mark - Mk. 2:10; Mk. 2:28; Mk. 8:31; Mk. 8:38; Mk. 9:9; Mk. 9:12; Mk. 9:31; Mk. 10:33; Mk. 10:45; Mk. 13:26; Mk. 14:21; Mk. 14:41; Mk. 14:62 (**Related:** [What does it mean that Jesus is the Son of Man?](#) [What does it mean that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath?](#))

**Lord** (master, owner)(2962)(**kurios** from **kuros** = might or power, related to **kuroo** = to give authority) primarily means the possessor, owner, master, the supreme one, the one who is sovereign over the Sabbath, so revered by the religious Jews. The tragic irony is that the Jews venerated the Day and violated the "Day Star" (2 Pe 1:19KJV+) the very One Who at His return will be recognized even by those who pierced Him (Rev 1:7+) as the "bright and morning star" (Rev 2:28+; Rev 22:16+)!

**Robertson** comments on the addition of **EVEN** in Mark 2:28 writing that "Mark, Matthew (Matthew 12:8), and Luke (Luke 6:5) all give this as a climax in the five reasons given by Christ on the occasion for the conduct of the disciples, but Mark has the little word "**even**" (kai) not in the others, showing that Jesus knew that He was making a great claim as the Son of Man, the Representative Man, the Messiah looked at from His human interest, to lordship (kurios) even of the Sabbath. He was not the slave of the Sabbath, but the Master of it. "**Even** of the Sabbath, so invaluable in your eyes. Lord, not to abolish, but to interpret and keep in its own place, and give it a new name" (Bruce).