

Jesus' Power over Sin

Scripture: Matthew 9:1–8

Code: 2262

INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

The Lord said, "...thy sins be forgiven thee" to a paralytic in Matthew 9:2. That phrase forms the theme of this particular passage, which is Jesus' power over sin. That power, seen in Jesus authority to forgive, is the most distinctive message that Christianity has to proclaim. The reality that sin can be forgiven is the heart of the Christian message. Although the Christian faith has many virtues and a myriad of applications, the most essential message that God ever gave is that sinful man can know the fullness of forgiveness. That is what we learn from the healing of the paralytic in Matthew 9.

A. Surveying the Strategy of Matthew

1. Presenting the Identity of Jesus

Matthew has been focusing on various miracles of our Lord in chapters 8 and 9 that are intended to present the deity of Jesus Christ, and His role as the Messiah of Israel. In other words, Matthew records a series of miracles not only to prove that Jesus is God, but to show Jesus fulfilling Messianic prophecies and expectations, so that Israel would know that He was the Messiah and would introduce the Kingdom of God to the world. For that reason, there is an Old Testament character to the kind of miracles that Matthew selects under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2. Presenting the Ability of Jesus

Jesus' ability over the following is the thrust of the second triad of miracles in Matthew 8 and 9:

a. Over the Physical Realm The first miracle of that second set was when Jesus stilled the storm. It fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies that predicted the Messiah would set up a Kingdom and overpower the curse in the physical world. For example, Isaiah 30:23- 24 talks about how there will be an abundance of rain and crops will flourish in ways never known since before the fall. Isaiah 35:1-7 talks about the desert blossoming like a rose. Similar evidences of physical restoration are seen in Isaiah 41:17-18; 51:3; 55:13; Joel 3:18; and Ezekiel 36:29- 38. Animals that have been natural enemies will no longer be so. Life will lengthen, for if a person dies at a hundred years of age, he will be considered to have died young.

b. Over the Supernatural Realm The Old Testament also speaks of a time when Satan will bring his great hosts against the people of God and be defeated. We find in Zechariah 3:1-2; Daniel 7:24-27; Daniel 8:23-25; and Daniel 11:36-12:3 that Satan wants to oppress the people of God and ultimately will send the demon forces and Antichrist to fight against God's people. Therefore, the Messiah must be able to overpower the supernatural world of demons and Satan himself, which is precisely what Matthew seeks to prove in showing that Jesus casts out demons.

c. Over the Spiritual Realm The Old Testament also tells us that the Kingdom will be marked by forgiveness in such passages as Ezekiel 36; Isaiah 33:24; 40:1-2; and 44:21-22. And here in Matthew 9:1-8 we find that the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh, is able to forgive sin. Thus, Christ will establish the Kingdom of God in the earth and throughout eternity. So those are not random miracles; they purposefully point to His power and the fulfillment of Old Testament promises. In fact, the accuracy of their fulfillment is so specific that it makes the unbelief and rejection of the Pharisees all the more unbelievable and heinous.

B. Setting the Scene of the Miracle

The setting for the third miracle of the second section begins in verse 1: "And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city." We don't know how much time lapses between the

end of chapter 8 and the beginning of 9, for Matthew is not as concerned with chronology as he is with using specific miracles to present Jesus as the Messiah.

1. The City

Having healed the demon-possessed men on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus returned in the boat and came into His own city. Now you might think that Nazareth, where He grew up, was His city. However, if you read Matthew 4:13-15, you discover that He moved to Capernaum at the beginning of His ministry: "And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the seacoast, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah...." In fact, Luke 4:29-31 indicates that He left Nazareth because they threw Him out--He was a prophet without honor in His own country. He reestablished His home several miles away in the little town of Capernaum on the north shore of the Lake of Galilee. It is even likely that He had taken up residence in the house of Peter from such indications as Matthew 8:14, where He healed Peter's mother-in-law.

2. The Crowds

Before He crossed the Lake of Galilee, Jesus had been doing miracles in Capernaum and the surrounding area. He had been healing all kinds of diseases and had been casting out demons. Such demonstrations of power had caused the crowds to swell. As He came back, another huge crowd had come to the place where He stayed.

3. The House

It is marvelous that Matthew, Mark, and Luke each wrote about the same story and picked out different issues that were pertinent to their own purposes. For that reason, parallel accounts from Mark 2 and Luke 5 help us to see the whole picture: Jesus had gone into a house (possibly Peter's) and was probably upstairs. It was common in those days to build a two-story house and to use the large upper room for social gatherings. That seemed to be the case with the house in which He broke bread with His disciples on the night He was arrested. Then, on top of the house was a roof, where people could spend time as well. Because of the climate in that part of the world, the roof top was a pleasant place to be. Homes that had such a roof would also have had outside staircases going up to it. Evidently, the Lord was in a house that may have been like that, and the people had crowded their way in. Perhaps the crowd even extended out the doors and onto the porch. In that setting, we see a marvelous demonstration of faith and healing that we will examine under the heading of six key words, the first being:

I. FAITH (v. 2a)

"And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed; and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer..."

A. The People

First of all, notice that there is no antecedent in Matthew for the people who brought the paralytic. However, in Mark and Luke we find that there were four men, possibly friends or relatives who brought that man in. Evidently, they cared about him. They had all heard that Jesus was in town and wanted the paralytic to come to Jesus. The paralytic may have even recruited the four to help him.

B. The Purpose

The man needed to have someone bring him to Jesus, because he was "sick of the palsy" (Gk. paralutikos). That was a type of paralysis, which is a loss of the motor functions of the body and sometimes includes a loss of sensory ability. It could have been the result of a neck or back injury, a birth defect, muscular dystrophy, polio, or various other diseases. It's apparent in that man's case that he had a severe paralysis that may have rendered him a quadriplegic. He was unable to assist those who moved him, for it took four men to carry him on a pallet, which is a thick quilt or a thin mattress that could be rolled up and carried about. It is often supported by a thin wooden frame.

C. The Problems

In Biblical times it would have been extremely difficult to be paralyzed, because the ambulatory apparatus and the medical knowledge that we have today was not available. A paralytic would have to be cared for in all of the basic necessities of life. As a result, there was probably more of a social stigma attached to such disabling illnesses than there is now.

Furthermore, the paralytic probably thought that he was sick because he was sinful, a common conclusion of the time. You may remember some disciples asking Jesus about this issue: "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (Jn. 9:2). Now the disciples were right in the sense that all sickness is linked to sin, because if there were no sin, there would be no sickness. But they were wrong in reflecting the feeling of the day that a person became directly sick from being sinful. In fact, such thinking had been around for a long time, going all the way back to the Book of Job, possibly the first book ever written in the Bible. Job's friends had essentially told Job that. Therefore, the paralytic not only suffered from the disease itself and the stigma and incapacitation that accompanied it, but also from an overwhelming sense that he was sinful, and therefore directly responsible for his illness. Although it would not be uncommon for such people to seek to be alone and shun the crowds, that man wanted to come to Jesus. I believe without any doubt that the paralytic came to Jesus primarily because of his sin, not his sickness. That is why Jesus said to him, "...Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (v. 2b). Evidently, the despair of his life was not that he was physically ill, but that he was sinful.

Sickness is not always directly related to sin. However, all sickness is a graphic demonstration of the destructive power that's at work in the world because of sin. Whether or not the man understood how his sickness was related to his sin, as in the case of James 5:14-15, he did know that there was sin in his life that needed to be dealt with.

D. The Persistence

What makes the faith that Jesus recognized in the men who brought the paralytic so great? Evidently, they must have believed that Jesus could heal him because they brought him to Jesus. According to the accounts of Mark and Luke, they came to the house where Jesus was, but couldn't get in with the paralytic because of the crowd. So they decided that there was only one way to get in--they climbed the outside staircase, went up on the roof top, and began to make a hole in the roof by removing tiles. They must have made some fairly good calculations because when they were done, they dropped the paralytic on his pallet straight down at Jesus' feet. That is persistent, inventive faith! Even the paralytic had faith if we assume that he had enlisted the four men to bring him to Jesus. We can't know that from what he said, however, because he made no request at all. He may have been paralyzed to the extent that he couldn't talk. He laid at the feet of Jesus, in full view of everybody, full of grief and fear. He knew that Jesus was a healer of bodies and I'm convinced that he must have hoped that He was also a healer of hearts. The thing that probably burdened him most was his sin. He willingly exposed the ugliness of his social stigma and his sinfulness to the whole crowd for the sake of being at the feet of Jesus. That's the true humility of a seeking heart. For that reason, I believe that Jesus recognized the faith of all five of them. Theirs was not an ordinary faith; it was strong and persistent. Although there were times when Jesus healed people with no faith at all or very little, He was especially disposed to healing people with great faith. For example, in Matthew 9:18, we read, "While He spoke these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she will live." To believe in resurrection involves great faith. In the same chapter, "...blind men came to Him; and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you" (vv. 28-29). So Jesus was especially disposed to those of that kind of faith, and that paralytic had it even though he lay in silent reverence.

E. The Promise

Then the Lord broke the silence and said to the one who was paralyzed, "...Son, be of good cheer

[or, 'take courage' (NASB)]...." Jesus addressed the man as "Son" (Gk. teknon = 'child'), a term of tenderness. Here was a man overwrought with his sin by social condemnation from without and the guilt from within. Believing that Jesus possessed the power of God, he was willing to put himself in the presence of a Holy God and take his chances. In the midst of his fear, the Lord said to him, "Stop being afraid--take courage! There's nothing to fear." In a wonderful way, the Lord comforted and encouraged one who was fearfully conscious of his sickness and sin. That's the tenderness of Christ, who can love the sinner even though He is offended by his sin.

The statement, "be of good cheer," uses the Greek verb tharseo, which refers to a subjective courage. A synonymous verb (tolmao) refers to a courage that is objective. It would be like saying, "Grit your teeth, hang on, and master your fear." But the word Jesus used means "There's nothing to be afraid of." In other words, the Lord didn't say to him, "Look fella, grit your teeth and master your fear"; He said, "Child, what are you afraid of? There is nothing to fear."

Let me tell you something: There's plenty to fear if you come before God as a sinner without repentance. But there was nothing to fear when the paralytic came, because he had a broken and a contrite heart. The Lord doesn't forgive the sins of people who don't. It is not the one who tries to hide his sin who has nothing to fear; it is the one who reveals it that has nothing to fear. To this man who was shaken with grief, overcome with fear, and burdened with guilt, the Lord responded in answer to his faith.

II. FORGIVENESS (v. 2b)

A. Explained

Jesus said, "Your sins are dismissed." Forgiveness is a divine miracle that ranks with any other miracle--it is instantaneously bestowed with a word. If the paralytic had never said a word, how did the Lord know that forgiveness was what he wanted? Simply because the Lord knows the heart of every man: He read the heart of the paralytic and He read the hearts of the scribes. As the giver of all good, He gives before we even can articulate the request. And the case of the paralytic was no different: He read the man's heart and dismissed His sins.

That is the remission of sins that the Bible talks about. It is an integral part of salvation. When the Lord sends our sins away, He sends them as far as the East is from the West, buries them in the depths of the deepest sea, and remembers them no more (Ps. 103; Mic. 7:19; Jer. 31:34b). In 1 Timothy 1, Paul said, "[I was]...a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy.... This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (vv. 13, 15). The Lord gave the greatest gift that dealt with the greatest need.

B. Exemplified

When I was finishing my senior year at college playing football, I spoke at a Kiwanis Club that was honoring me with an award. Somebody came up afterwards and asked me to talk to a girl in a hospital who had been accidentally shot in the neck and paralyzed. So I went to the hospital and talked with her. She told me that she would kill herself if she could, but of course she was unable. After I had presented the gospel to her, she agreed to ask Christ into her life as we prayed together. I'll never forget what she said to me after I went back to see her: "I can honestly say that I'm glad the accident happened, because if it hadn't, I never would have met Christ and had my sins forgiven." That's the deepest need and the truest grief in a human life. When Jesus said, "Your sins are removed," He met that man's need in the most profound way. Forgiveness of sins is the message of Christianity.

C. Evaluated

People say, "You shouldn't bring up sin; that's negative thinking." But it's essential to the message of Christianity. If we don't talk about sin and the need for forgiveness, we have prostituted our message.

1. The Sinfulness of Man

The Bible says that sin:

a. Transgresses the Law (1 Jn. 3:4)b. Defiles God's Image in Man It has stained the soul with the devil's image (Jn. 6:70; 8:44).c. Rebels Against God (Lev. 26:27)d. Displays Gross Ingratitude Toward God (Josh. 2:10- 12)e. Is Incurable Jeremiah 13 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (v. 23).f. Affects All Men "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).g. Is Deep in the Heart of Man Even regenerate man still fights against it (Rom. 7:19).h. Dominates the Entire Person It perverts the mind, will, affections, and body (Jer. 17:9).i. Brings Man Under the Dominion of the Devil (Eph. 2:2)j. Brings Man Under the Power of God's Wrath (Eph. 2:3)k. Subjects Man to Misery¹) Sin Causes Trouble (Job 5:7)²) Sin Causes Emptiness (Rom. 8:20)³) Sin Causes Peace to Be Forfeited (Isa. 57:21)l. Dooms Men to Hell Forever (2 Thess. 1:9)

2. The Forgiveness of God

If sin so affects all men, then the best news you could ever give is that God forgives sin. The paralytic was living proof. When Jesus said, "...thy sins be forgiven thee," I believe the pain of Calvary thrust into His great heart, because He knew that the only way He could forgive that man's sin was to bear it. In like manner, He must have tasted the agony of the cross throughout His life whenever He forgave sin. He knew He would bear the punishment that He had removed from that helpless soul.

III. FURY (v. 3)

"And, behold, certain of the scribes [along with some Pharisees (Lk. 5:17)] said within themselves, This man blasphemeth." Mark and Luke add that they reasoned, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mk. 2:7; cf. Lk. 5:21).

A. The Analysis of the Situation

Jesus forgave the crippled man, but all that the scribes and Pharisees concluded was that Jesus was a blasphemer. They even failed to acknowledge their own need for forgiveness. Such an attitude has been around for a long time. Today, when a message is preached on forgiveness, some will open their hearts to Christ, and others will leave uninterested, failing to recognize the problem of sin and therefore not willing to accept the solution of forgiveness. Furthermore, instead of accepting the fact that Jesus could forgive sin and relieve the pressure of their guilt, Christ's opponents realized that since only God could forgive sin, and Jesus was claiming to be God, He was therefore a blasphemer. To them, the ultimate blasphemy was to claim to be God by saying and doing things that only could be ascribed to Him.

B. The Accuracy of the Statement

The scribes and Pharisees were right about the fact that only God can forgive sin: Isaiah 43:25 says, "I, even I, am He who blotteth out thy transgressions...." However, they were wrong about Christ, because He is God. In fact, the divine ability Jesus demonstrated by reading their thoughts was evidence of His omniscience: He knew what was in the heart of the sick man and He knew what was in the minds of the scribes and Pharisees because He is God.

C. The Accusations Against the Savior

1. Blasphemous

When the scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of blasphemy, it was part of the ever-increasing antagonism that ultimately led them to crucify Him. After accusing Him of blasphemy in verse 3, they accused Him of being...

2. Immoral

Verse 11 says, "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto His disciples, Why eateth your Master with tax collectors and sinners?" In other words, "If He runs around with a bad crowd, then He must be a bad man."

3. Impious

Verse 14 says, "Then came to Him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but thy disciples fast not?" Here were some accusing Him of being irreligious. He didn't follow the accepted religious practices.

4. Satanic

The culminating accusation of the chapter comes in verse 34: "But the Pharisees said, He casteth out demons through the prince of the demons." What a contrast their fury was in light of the faith of the paralytic and the four who helped him! That's always the way it is: Christ comes with a message of love, grace, and forgiveness and there are those who rejoice in it, and yet there are others who become infuriated by it.

IV. FORENSIC (vv. 4-6a)

Forensic means "an argument," which is exactly what Jesus presented here. He didn't always defend His actions, but this time He did, because there was an important truth to be expressed.

A. Divine Perception (v. 4)

"And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, Why think ye evil in your hearts?"

People often say that Jesus isn't God. If He isn't, then I don't know how He knew their thoughts. John 2:25 says that He "needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man."

Anybody who knows people's thoughts must be God, as the following passages show:

1. 1 Samuel 16:7--"...the LORD looketh on the heart."
2. 1 Kings 8:39--"...for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men."
3. 1 Chronicles 28:9--"...for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."
4. Jeremiah 17:10 -- "I, the LORD, search the heart...."
5. Ezekiel 11:5 -- "...for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them."

God knows everything, and Jesus knew that the scribes and Pharisees were thinking evil in their hearts, even to the extent of later wanting to kill Jesus (Mt. 12:14). An evil heart is one that plots against God, trying to deceive Him. For example, when Ananias and Sapphira tried to deceive God in Acts 5, Peter said, "...why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit...?" (v. 3). In Acts 8:20-22, Simon Magus tried to use the gift of God for his own wicked ends. Indicting the scribes and Pharisees for thinking evil in their hearts, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy with a clever argument:

B. Dual Perspective (v. 5)

"For which is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?"

First, let's consider which would be easier from the perspective...

1. Of Doing

The scribes and Pharisees couldn't give an answer, because neither are easier--both are impossible for men, but are possible for God. They couldn't truthfully say either one, let alone do them. But Jesus could say both, because He could do either with the same divine ease. Only God can heal, and only God can forgive. The scribes and the Pharisees were the ones who taught that disease and sickness were a result of sin. If they really thought about it, their own theology told them that the One who could heal diseases could forgive sin and vice versa. So He said, in effect, "Which is easier, to forgive or to heal? If I can do one, then I can do the other. I'm not a blasphemer--I'm God." They were trapped, because they knew He could heal, and they knew that God was capable of both. If Jesus had power over disease, disasters, demons, and death, then He could certainly deal with sin. There's another interesting way to look at this verse and that's from the angle...

2. Of Saying

Which one of the two miracles is easier to say? It's easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven," isn't it? If someone walks up, I could say, "Your sins are forgiven," but I can't prove whether or not I accomplished that. But if someone rolls up in a wheel chair and I say, "Rise up and walk," it's going

to be pretty easy to verify if I can do that or not. Therefore, the latter statement would be more difficult to say. For that reason, Jesus' choice serves as...

C. Direct Proof (v. 6)

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house."

If all that Jesus said was, "Your sins be forgiven," those watching would have never known that He actually did that. Therefore, by saying, "Rise up and walk," and by healing the paralytic, they would conclude that Jesus had forgiven his sins because the two are inseparably linked. Jesus was demonstrating His healing power as proof of His power to forgive sin, which was the root of the paralytic's problem. Any pretender can claim to forgive sin, and through the centuries some have claimed that they had the power to do so. But Jesus didn't want the people to think that He was making an empty promise, so He accomplished the visible miracle, which proved He had the power to do the invisible one.

V. FORCE (v. 7)

"And he arose, and departed to his house."

Can you imagine that? The paralytic's four friends had their heads through the roof watching, the people were listening, the scribes and Pharisees were unable to respond--nobody had talked but Jesus in that dramatic scene. He had read His opponents hearts and nailed them to the proverbial wall with His forensic. And then, He simply said, "Get up and go home, fella." Immediately, the man got up, rolled up his little bed under his arm and picked up its wood frame. You better believe that an aisle was instantly created as the guy walked out of that place. When he got outside, you can imagine the excitement when he met his four buddies tripping down the stairs! What power they had experienced! Not only did Jesus have the power to heal that man's disease, He had the power to forgive sin--and still does.

VI. FEAR (v. 8)

"But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled [phobeo = 'to be afraid'], and glorified God, who had given such power unto men."

A. The Expressed Reverence

1. Explained

I believe that the multitudes knew that God was working through Jesus. I don't think, however, that they understood the fullness of all that the incarnation meant. But they did know God was there and that He had given power to Jesus--and they were afraid. Isn't that the same reaction we've seen all along in the Gospels to the miracles and teachings of Christ? The reaction of fear has several shades of meanings in classical Greek, but the one that is used most in the New Testament is "awe" or "reverence." It is the kind of fear that someone feels in the presence of one who is infinitely superior.

2. Exemplified

For example, it is used to describe the reaction of people when...

a. Jesus was seen walking on the water (Mt. 14:26)b. Jesus stilled the storm (Mk. 4:41)c. Jesus healed the paralytic (Lk. 5:26)d. Jesus raised the widow's son at Nain (Lk. 7:16)e. Jesus healed the demoniacs at Gerasa (Lk. 8:37)f. An angel of the Lord appeared beside the altar to Zacharias (Lk. 1:12)g. Zacharias recovered his speech (Lk. 1:65)h. The angels sang to the shepherds (Lk. 2:9)i. The angel rolled the stone away before the guards at the tomb (Mt. 28:4)j. The women had discovered the empty tomb (Mt. 28:8)k. The people will be faced with the shattering events of the last days (Lk. 21:26)l. The people saw the signs and wonders and felt the power of the early church (Ac. 2:43)m. The people learned of the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Ac. 5:5, 11)n. The demons overcame the Jewish exorcists at Ephesus (Ac. 19:17)In each usage, there is the reverential fear of

God or the supernatural.

B. The Expected Results

We should in like manner be in awe of Christ. That type of fear should characterize the Christian today as it did the early church. Acts 9:31 says that the church was "walking in the fear of the Lord." It is essential that we be in awe of Christ, not only because we see the response of fear to the power of God demonstrated in the gospels and in Acts, but also because the Epistles exhort us to manifest:

1. A Chaste Life--First Peter 3:2 says that our "chaste conduct [should be] coupled with fear."
2. Holiness--Second Corinthians 7:1 says that we should be "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."
3. True Repentance--Second Corinthians 7:10-11 says that fear is an element of true repentance.
4. A Godly Christian Life--Philippians 2:12 says that we should work out our salvation "with fear and trembling."
5. Mutual Ministry, Love, and Respect--Ephesians 5:21 indicates that submission has its roots in "the fear of God."
6. Powerful Evangelism--Second Corinthians 5:11 says, "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...."
7. Discipline in the Church--First Timothy 5:20 says that discipline must be done publicly "that others also may fear."

Christian behavior is to come out of the reverential fear of God. The people who witnessed the healing of the paralytic glorified God and so should we. They were in awe of His presence--that's the right response. I hope you are in awe of Christ.

So Jesus' forgiveness of sin is the greatest message we have to give. I hope you have experienced that forgiveness. When the crowd departed, there were those who were forgiven and those who were furious. Christ offers forgiveness, blots out all the past, and washes away all the sins of the past, present, and future. The greatest news you'll ever hear is that forgiveness is available to you.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is the most essential message that God gives to sinful man?
2. The second set of miracles shows Jesus' ability over three realms. What are they? Explain each.
3. After leaving Nazareth, where did Jesus reestablish His home? Mention some Scripture verses that discuss that.
4. Whose house did Jesus possibly reside in?
5. How did the four men demonstrate that they cared for the paralytic? Why was it necessary for them to assist him?
6. What are some of the ways in which the paralytic was suffering?
7. Although not all sickness is directly related to sin, what is sickness a graphic demonstration of?
8. How did the four men demonstrate their faith in Jesus' ability to heal?
9. How did the paralytic demonstrate the humility of a seeking heart?
10. Why did the paralytic have nothing to fear when he came to Jesus?
11. What was the deepest need that Jesus read in the paralytic's heart?
12. What are some of the things that the Bible says about sin?
13. What did the scribes and Pharisees fail to acknowledge their need of? What fact did they refuse to accept? Instead, what did they conclude?
14. Besides blasphemy, what other accusations did the scribes and Pharisees make in Matthew 8?
15. Why would it be easier to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"?
16. According to Matthew 9:6, what did Jesus prove by healing the paralytic?
17. What was the multitudes' reaction to the power of Jesus?
18. What type of fear is most common in the New Testament?
19. According to 2 Corinthians 7:1, in what does holy living find its source?

Pondering the Principles

1. Have you recently been a stretcher-bearer for anyone? In other words, are you leading people to Christ for salvation? Whom do you know at work, in your neighborhood, or in your family that needs the divine forgiveness that Jesus can give? Do any of them seem to be spiritually "paralyzed" and unwilling to come to Jesus on their own? Determine to care for the spiritual well-being of those you know who need Christ, asking God for wisdom on how you and other believers might carry them into the presence of Christ.
2. Meditate on the following verses about God's great forgiveness: Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 32:1-5; 130:1-4; Isaiah 55:6-7; Micah 7:18-19; Acts 10:43; Ephesians 2:1-7; 4:32; 1 John 1:7-2:2, 12; If your meditation has brought to your mind something you need to ask forgiveness for, do so now. As part of your meditation, take a few moments to thank God for being rich in mercy.
3. Knowing that God searches your heart and knows your every thought, is there any place you can hide from God? Read Psalm 139:1-12. As believers, how should we respond to a God who knows our thoughts? As we willingly submit our thoughts to His guidance and forgiveness, make the last two verses of Psalm 139 your personal prayer.

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