

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Sundays @ 10:00 a.m. Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: March 29, 2009

Sin, Sickness and Spiritual Authority

by Dan Trygg

"And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, ...and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing." Luke 5:17

"And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'My son, your sins are forgiven.'⁶ But there were some of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,⁷ 'Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?'⁸ And 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?⁹ Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "'Your sins are forgiven"'; or to say, "'Arise, and take up your pallet and walk"'?'¹⁰ But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' -- He said to the paralytic--¹¹ 'I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home.'¹² And he rose and immediately took up the pallet and went out in the sight of all; so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'"

Mark 2:5-12

"But when the multitudes saw *this*, they were filled with awe, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men."

Matthew 9:8

When we compare the accounts of this episode in each of the first three Gospels (Matt. 9:1-8; Mk. 2:1-12; Lk. 5:17-26), **the vividness and detail of Mark's account clearly stands out.** This is one place where it is quite evident that Matthew and Luke must have known of, and used, Mark's account as a skeleton for their writing. It is easy to see that they probably summarized or abridged Mark's account. Matthew doesn't speak of the men lowering their friend through the roof. While Luke mentions this, his description is very flat, ...a brief brushstroke when compared with the vivid description of Mark. Again, each writer edits his telling of the story to emphasize what is important to his purpose. When we combine all the accounts, we get a fuller understanding of what really took place.

Did you ever wonder whose house this was that was torn apart? Mark alone tells us that **it was Jesus' place of residence, probably Simon Peter's home.** This was the same place "the whole city" of Capernaum had brought their sick to, some weeks before, where many had been healed of their diseases, and delivered of demons, in that late night of ministry (Mk. 1:32-34). Remember that when they again gathered the following morning to receive more ministry, Jesus had abruptly chosen to leave town to go elsewhere? Wherever else He had gone, the same kinds of miracles were in evidence. Now, He finally has returned home, to Peter's house. Once word got out that He was there, crowds began to gather to see Him, to hear Him preach, and to hopefully experience God's healing power for themselves or their loved ones. Soon the house was filled with people. There was not even room to get near the door.

Luke is the only one to specifically report that "the power of the Lord was present to perform healing". This is an important insight into the nature of Jesus' ministry, and to the fact that soon all of the disciples would also experience the ability to heal the sick, cast our demons, and even raise the dead. It was *God's* power, but required faith in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, and choosing to respond to His leading, to make this all possible. Just as Jesus said that He did what He saw the Father doing, and did the works of His Father (Jn. 5:19,20,36; 10:32,37,38; 14:10,11), in the same way God is able to empower Jesus' followers to do the works Jesus did, and even more extensive ones that He Himself had done. **Just as Jesus was a man "anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him", so the followers of Jesus would experience the same dynamic of the Spirit, and be able to do as He did** (Acts 10:38; Jn. 14:12; Acts 2:43; 3:1-16). Note that it was about what *God* was ready and willing to do, not just about what people wanted. Jesus talked about "the works of the Father", works which the Father had "given Him to do". **It is clear that *the initiative is God's. Without Him, we can do nothing.*** Our will is important, in that God wishes to work through us, ...but *our will apart from His power or willingness is empty. We must be certain that "the power of the Lord is present to heal"*.

All three gospel writers mention that the paralytic was brought to Jesus by his friends. Only Mark specifically mentioned that there were four of them. **These four men were desperate to get their friends to Jesus. When they found that there was no way to bring him into the house, they refused to give up. Going up the outer stairway, or by a ladder, they carried their friend to the roof, and began to "unroof the roof"!** It was not uncommon for first century homes to have flat roofs. Luke says that they "let him down through the tiles", which gives us a wrong impression. These were not roof tiles that could be easily removed like shingles. Typically, roofs were constructed by laying branches and brush and straw over heavier beams and crossmembers, next covering this with a mixture of mud, straw, tar and clay. This mixture would then be worked into the thatching, and was compressed and

smoothed with a roller, until it was smooth. Once it was hardened, rain would typically run off. Additional layers were added and rolled on each year. Knowing this, in order for these men to get their friend to Jesus, they had to break through the plastered and hardened clay and pull out the branches and brush to make a hole large enough for a three by five foot long mattress to be lowered through by ropes on each corner. This could not have gone unnoticed by those below, and would have caused dust, dirt, grass and pieces of other roofing material to fall down on the heads of the people in the room below. **Mark's description was quite accurate, "and digging out, they let down the pallet"**.

All three gospel writers also commented, "and seeing their faith, He said to the paralytic" (Matt. 9:2; Mk. 2:5; Lk. 5:20). **How did Jesus "see their faith"? Their faith was evident by their actions. In the same way, we show we have faith by our actions.** A cursory overview of Hebrews 11, a listing of OT faith-heroes, shows the repeated pattern "by faith"... followed by a verb. By faith... Abel offered, ...Noah built, ...Abraham obeyed, ...Joseph gave orders, ...Moses chose to endure ill-treatment, ...Rahab welcomed the spies, etc. James, the brother of the Lord, said, "...I will *show you* my faith by my works" (Jas. 2:18). A faith without any outward expression is useless, idle, unemployed. **True belief will lead to action, or it is not real.** In the case of these four men, and their friend, their faith was clearly strong and active. They went to extreme measures *because* they truly, genuinely, wholeheartedly believed that Jesus could and would cure their friend. How could you leave empty-handed, if you really believed that? That was not an acceptable option, so they found a way to get their friend to Jesus. It required hard work, embarrassment, and even public disapproval, ...but it showed without any question the level of their trust that Jesus was the answer.

The faith of these friends provides a practical example of the notion of importunity in prayer, talked about in Luke 11:1-13 and 18:1-8. **Importunity has been described as "persistence", but the Greek word actually implies the notion of "shamelessness".** The man who woke his friend up to ask for bread, persisted on asking even when others would have quietly given up and went home. The man would not take "no" for an answer, and kept beating on the door until his friend got up and gave him what he asked for. You can almost hear people thinking, "Has the man no respect? His friend is in bed for the night, and does not wish to get up. How rude! How shameless!" Yet, **Jesus' point was that his persistence paid off.** He got what he wanted. The same is true of the unrighteous judge and the widow. Again, the widow kept after the judge, pestering and appealing to him for protection. Finally, because of her shameless, repeated haranguing, the judge gave her what she wanted. She, too, went way beyond the acceptable behavior of the court. She did not allow protocol or public opinion keep her from her request. She was *irritatingly* persistent. **Jesus actually encourages us to pursue God in this way.** It is reminiscent of Isa. 62:1-7, where Isaiah says that he will not keep silent until God restores Israel, and brings forth righteousness and salvation for them. He encourages others to "give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (vs. 7).

I have heard it taught it was the faith of the *friends* that Jesus responded to, not that of the *paralytic* himself. That may be overstating the case just a bit. We don't *know* that the paralytic was unbelieving or resistant, ...or whether he was encouraging his friends to get him in to Jesus at any cost! One thing we can say for certain is that **without the zealous, unyielding faith of the paralytic's friends, he would not have been able to get himself into that room to see Jesus.** This illustrates the poignant truth that **sometimes we need the help of others to obtain the blessings and breakthroughs that God may have for us.** Our cultural training may cause us to recoil at this, thinking it to be unfair, but it *is a fact of life.* We see this principle played out in the natural world, but we do not see that it has application for the spiritual realm. **We are members of a spiritual body, an organism or team, with interactive, interdependent parts. God set things up so that we need help from others, and we were made to help others.**

Finally, a key part of this story has to do with the question of forgiving the sins of people. Jesus' words, "Child, your *sins* are forgiven", created a stir among the crowd. Could it be that a sin problem was behind his paralysis? We don't know. The religious leaders were offended, thinking, "No one can forgive sins, but God alone." This is often misinterpreted, but **Jesus' point is that IF God gives His authority to someone, then they can indeed forgive sins, just as they can heal the impossibly paralyzed.** The word for "authority" means "legal right and power". Jesus had been given this authority, and He later shares it with His followers (Jn. 20:21-23). **The key to understanding this is to see that we are not determining this on our own, rather we are only God's spokespeople, expressing God's heart as His representatives.** If we are, as Jesus was, hearing from the Father, then we *can* assure people of His forgiveness. When we see that they have fulfilled the conditions He has set forth for receiving forgiveness in the scriptures, and especially when we also have the witness of the Spirit within us, we can express to them the Father's heart. If, on the other hand, we can see that a person is *not* responding properly to God's truth, we can solemnly warn them that their sins are *not* being removed, ...not because of *our* opinion, but because of what *He* has *said* that He requires. Matthew reports that **the crowd understood Jesus as making a universal statement, "they were glorifying God, who had given such authority to people"**.