

**“I Just Dropped In To See  
What Condition My Condition Was In”**

*Healing of the Paralytic*

**Mark 2:1-12**

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The sermon title comes from a Mickey Newbury song called, “I just dropped in to see what condition my condition was in.”

That’s what this paralytic does – because of his condition, he literally drops in on Jesus. They can’t get to him due to the crowds, so four enterprising friends lower him through the roof.

Take out your bulletin insert that says, “Home and Heart Page.” On the bottom of the “sermon side” are five blank lines. Grab a pencil and fill these in.

There are **Five Stages of Healing** in this story:

- 1. Faith**
- 2. Forgiveness**
- 3. Foolishness**
- 4. Fitness**
- 5. Witness**

First, we see the **Faith** of five men: the paralytic who wanted to come to Jesus, and four friends who were determined to get him there.

Their faith is so inventive, it breaks through barriers to get close to Jesus.

Faith *always* gets you closer to Jesus.

Faith is like a seed that trusts in the light, even when buried in dirt and darkness.

Faith “moves mountains.” Like a growing seed, it pushes mounds of dirt aside, breaks new ground, lifts off anything in the way, and achieves its goal.

This paralytic and his friends had such “seed faith.” They are not stopped by obstacles – for faith always sees other options, beyond the obvious.

Since they couldn’t get through a door, they scrambled up to the top of the house, loosened a few roof tiles, and lowered the stretcher right into Jesus’ lap! That’s faith for you: inventive, imaginative, persistent.

When the world is full of “No,” faith finds a “Yes!” Faith doesn’t stand outside the door whining about what can’t be done. Faith finds a way to bring us to Jesus.

What’s next? **Forgiveness.**

This man, flat on his back on a pallet, spectacularly interrupts the greatest Preacher of all time in the middle of a sermon. Folks in the room are brushing ceiling plaster out of their eyes. Jesus looks at him and says, “My son, your sins are forgiven.”

Well, *that's* a surprise.

We see this man as a medical case.

Jesus sees him first as a spiritual case – a sinner in need of forgiveness.

So he addresses first things first.

Sin can immobilize us. It's as though we're bitten by a snake or scorpion, infected with poisonous venom. Without the antidote, we will surely die.

Jesus is the antidote to sin. His forgiveness frees us from our spiritual paralysis.

But then comes doubt: the **Foolishness** of those who question God in their hearts.

This is the first controversy in Mark's gospel, Jesus' first run-in with the authorities (and certainly not the last).

"How can you say this?" they wonder. "Only God can forgive sins. You think you're God! That's blasphemy!"

You know, when someone is healed from a long-time illness, the people around them have to adjust. The ugly truth is that some folks around you don't *want* you to get better, because they would have to change their perception of you, and their idea of what's possible for *them* as well. That's pretty frightening. The more stuck they are *themselves*, the angrier they will get at any positive change in you.

When you get well, nay-sayers around you are going to try to deny it and drag you down.

That's utter foolishness on their part, and it springs from fear of change.

Next comes the actual healing, the full **Fitness** of health – and the proof of Jesus' ultimate authority.

"All right," Jesus says. "Multiple choice question. Which is easier to say?"

(a) 'Your sins are forgiven,' or,

(b) 'Rise, take up your pallet, and walk'?"

(If I do the supposedly 'harder' task, then surely I've got the power to do the 'easier' task, right?)

"So that you may know I do indeed have the *authority* to forgive sins – he turns to the paralytic – I say to you,

**1. Get up!**

**2. Pick up your sick bed!**

**3. Go home!**

"Yeah, right," we think, in that split-second before the man actually *does* just that:

1. He gets up;

2. He picks up the pallet he'd been lying on;

3. And, before our very eyes, he walks out!

That's *impossible!* – except when Jesus is around!

Fitness means you're no longer paralyzed, no longer helpless and flat on your back.

(At the bottom of your worksheet, see how Fitness works.)

First, you **Stand up!** You get up and get out of bed!

In hospitals now, after major surgery, they'll have you walking the halls later that day. It didn't use to be so, but now we realize it's healthy.

Jesus knows what doctors are just rediscovering: getting on your feet is a crucial step in healing.

Secondly, you **Pick up** your sick bed! You've been stuck here far too long! Being healthy means not lying back down on your sick bed again. Ever walk into an old nursing home or hospital, where the odors just permeate everything? Know how an invalid's room smells? The bed-sheets stink. Pick up those sheets, wash them or get rid of them – they reek with sickness! To “take up your sickbed” means, be done with that former life. Don't go back to how you lived before!

And third, you **Go home!** Head back! Start walking! That's a good word, but a tough one. Novelist Thomas Wolfe writes, *You Can't Go Home Again*. When you have changed so profoundly, home itself changes for you. For home is where those old patterns are. It's a real risk – being healed, leaving your sick-bed, returning home – because *there* is where you have been sick. The danger is that you could revert to those old, unhealthy ways. To stay healthy, you've got to break those paralyzing patterns. Like you broke through the roof, there is another break-through necessary when you go home. You'll have to face the foolishness of Step 3 all over again – this time, it's not the doubts of others, but your own self-doubts that assail you.

Do you realize that many people who win the lottery are, within a year or two, just as poor, and sometimes *poorer*, than before? That's because they fail to change their mental associations with money. The same back-sliding danger can happen physically, mentally, and spiritually, too.

Pastor Phil Hansen, the man I studied under for drug and alcohol rehab counseling, liked to say, “Stinking drinking springs from stinking thinking.” Rehabilitation means you have to change your *mind*.

Psychologist Eric Berne reports that a man called him up after his wife came home from a ten-day stay in the hospital, and said, “Doctor, my wife seems happier and better, but now I can't get along with her at all.”

See, healing upsets old patterns. When you have structured your life around sickness, it's hard to go home healed. But home is where you are sent. “Stand up; pick up your sick-bed; and go home.” When the man did just that, all were amazed and glorified God.

When you move with amazement and glorification, that's **Witness**. After the Lord has brought you to Fitness, he sends you to Witness.

Our story ends with witness; it also obviously *started* with witness. *Somebody* had to have told that paralytic and his friends about Jesus. Somebody led them to believe Jesus could help them. That *witness* is what sparked their faith and inspired them to act. Another's witness brought them to fitness. Now they, because of their fitness, will witness to others.

Evangelism is just one beggar who's been fed telling another beggar where to find bread. Our mission, "sharing the good news of Jesus Christ," is formerly sick people telling other sick people where to find healing.

Spiritual health gives you the ability to move – to "Journey with Jesus," while sin is rigor mortis – inability to move.

Sin paralyzes you. Forgiveness frees you.

Also, recognize that you can't do this on your own. You need the support of others.

Ever hear me say, "There's no such thing as a 'solo Christian'"? It's true! This man was a *paralytic*. He *couldn't* get to Jesus on his own. He had to rely on his friends. That *community* carried him to the Lord. None of *you* would've come to Jesus, either, without the community of faith.

There's a great church ad campaign, showing a picture of pall-bearers carrying a coffin, with the question, "Will it take six strong men to bring you back to church?"

They'll lower *that* pallet into the lap of the earth, not into the lap of Jesus. No one will say, "Arise."

That's permanent paralysis! If you keep "stiffing" God in this life, you may end up as nothing more than a "stiff" in the ground – with no healing, no new beginning, no new life. That's the consequence of unforgiven sin.

Psychologist Tom Harris says some people approach him with an unspoken "treatment contract" that says, "I'll promise to let you help me if I don't have to get well."

We come to church like that comic strip character, Andy Capp, a lazy man seeking employment, who declares, "I'll look for work providing I don't have to find any."

Some folks say, "I'll come to church providing I don't have to change."

Listen: if you're not *guilty*, you *cannot* be forgiven.

If you're not *sick*, you *cannot* be healed.

If you're not *paralyzed* by sin, you *cannot* be set free.

Do you *want* to be healed? Then you'll be desperate to make your way to Jesus, whatever it takes. You'll find friends to bring you to him. You'll note there is foolishness all around you. But take heart; you're at the feet of the Master, where you hear that sweet word of forgiveness and healing. "Your sins are forgiven." No longer paralyzed by fear, you are well.

Now stand up, pick up your sick-bed, and move!

Stand up now. You'll find yourself singing, "*I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me!*" (Hymn #860)

Amen.