

## What Did He Say?

By Rick Ezell

“Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5 NIV).

In one sense, this whole story of a lame man brought to Jesus in Mark 2 takes place because of the irrational commitment of his friends. Unable to get to Jesus through traditional means, they seek alternative means. They become bold and illogical. The crowd is too thick to get close to Jesus by going in on the ground floor. They come with an idea, making a hole in the roof. They realize it’s an unorthodox way to get into a room, but they are desperate. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Inside the house Jesus is teaching, when suddenly a noise above him muffles his words. More noise, then dirt begins to fall from the ceiling. A shaft of light breaks through. Somebody has knocked a hole in the roof! Jesus stops, looks up, and smiles. Interruptions don’t bother Jesus.

Everyone else looks up only to see four faces in the hole peering down at them. All eyes are on them. Slowly the four men lower a stretcher through the hole in the roof. No one knows what to say. In a few moments the stretcher comes to rest in the middle of the room in front of Jesus. On the stretcher a man lies silently. Even a casual glance tells you that he is very ill.

A hush falls on the room. What will Jesus say?

Jesus doesn’t say, “Son, your body is healed.” Instead, he said, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5 NIV). Don’t you find that statement a little odd? This man coming for healing is given forgiveness instead. What would you want if you were paralyzed—healing or forgiveness of sins? Too often we want the physical healing over the spiritual blessing. We want the temporary fix over the eternal reality. We want the external improvement over the internal change.

Why did Jesus say your sins are forgiven? Because this man had a deeper need than physical healing and external well-being. You see there is more than one kind of paralysis. There is the paralysis of the body caused by disease; there is also the paralysis of the soul caused by sin. This man was sicker than he knew. He was doubly paralyzed and didn’t even know it.

The rabbis said it this way: “No sick man is healed until his sins are forgiven.” That’s because all suffering is ultimately rooted in sin. Not that this man was especially sinful. He wasn’t. But he stands as a kind of object lesson to teach us the truth that death and disease are consequences of sin. If there were no sin in the universe, there would be no sickness. If there were no disobedience, there would be no death. We may want physical healing, a temporary fix, and external improvement, but what we need is the spiritual blessing, eternal reality, and internal change that can only come through the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus is teaching a lesson by the order in which he does things: Our greatest problems are spiritual, not physical. As important as healing is, it is not as important as forgiveness.

We need what Jesus gave this poor man. We need to have our sins forgiven. That’s far more important than physical healing because without forgiveness, healing doesn’t really matter. Healing touches the body but it doesn’t touch the soul.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, “Without forgiveness, there is no future.” His words ring true because they are based on the truth of God. Without forgiveness, there is no future, no freedom, no hope and no healing. But where there is forgiveness, there is grace and mercy and a future as bright as the promises of God.

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