

Roof Issues

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- [0 : 00] I'm going to focus on these 12 verses together of Mark chapter 2, so if you do have a Bible, please keep it open. Looking again at verse 3, where we read, And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.
- They came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. I had a friend up in Betty Hill who lived with a perpetual fear about the roof of her house being damaged by the wind.
- Now, if you've ever been to the village of Betty Hill in the very north of Scotland, the very north of Sutherland, I'm sure you'll agree that it's the most spectacular place, the most scenic place, and not just in Scotland, not just in Britain, but the world.
- Far more scenic than other towns in Sutherland, like Galsby. And there's a person from Galsby this evening, I'm sure, who would be able to testify to that.
- It's a stunning place. Absolutely love it. But it's also a cold place. It's a bleak place, especially during the winter, with nothing but wind and rain for days, weeks, possibly even months on end.
- [1 : 16] It makes Lewis or Glasgow seem almost tropical. And on those windy, wintry nights, this woman, who was well into her 80s, would be found standing outside her house in a nightie, carefully surveying her roof, watching every single tile ready to phone her niece if a single tile blew off.
- In fact, there was one morning, I think it was about 7 in the morning, she phoned me, informing me that the tile on her roof had blown off. And I'm not a practical person. And high free folk, you know, they smirk when I say these things.
- If a tile blew off the roof, I'd get some sellotape and try and fix it that way. I had no idea what to do. But that was the situation that this woman found herself in. Well, this evening, we're looking at a well-known incident from the life of Jesus that involved considerable damage being done to the roof of a house.
- We'll divide the passage under two headings. We're going to look at a distressing condition and then a dramatic conversation. A distressing condition and then a dramatic conversation.
- First, a distressing condition. Look at verses 1 to 4, where Mark focuses on the distressing condition that Jesus saw. The distressing condition that Jesus saw.
- [2 : 38] Now, the settings given in verses 1 and 2, Mark tells us that Jesus returned to Capernaum, verse 1. He had begun his ministry, his public ministry at least, in this small fishing town on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee.
- He had taught in the local synagogue and his teaching had been well-received. The people were left marveling, amazed, astonished, astounded at all that he was saying because he was teaching them with great authority.
- He had then traveled throughout the Galilee region preaching in all the different towns, all the different synagogues. But because of the increasing mass hysteria concerning his miracles, he had had to withdraw to desolate places.

And he now returns to Capernaum after some days and the report circulates that he's at home. Mark also tells us that a crowd gathered, verse 2.

He says that many were gathered all together, says that there was no more room in the house that Jesus was staying in, and he says that there was no room even at the door.

[3 : 45] The crowds are cramming in, clamoring to see Jesus, to hear Jesus. And Mark tells us that Jesus was preaching the word to them.

Verse 2 again. In Mark chapter 1, we find Jesus bursting onto the scene of history, proclaiming the gospel of God. And the content of his message, the content of his preaching was simple.

It was stark. It was hard-hitting. It was to the point. It was this. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. And repent and believe the gospel.

Jesus came with the message that God's kingdom, God's saving reign, God's long-promised deliverance had come, and it had come with him.

And that people must respond to this. That is what lay at the front and center of Jesus' public ministry. His primary focus was the preaching of the word.

[4 : 47] It wasn't miracles. It wasn't deeds of mercy. It was the preaching of the word. In fact, if you go on in a few chapters, you find him being confronted with this crowd of over 5,000 men, and he's got compassion on them, because he sees them as being like sheep without a shepherd.

But the first thing that he does when he sees this crowd, is he feeds them not with bread, but with his word. And so if Colin, and I don't want to pick on Colin, but if you ever see Colin deviating in the slightest from that central, pivotal focus, that his primary ministry is the preaching of the word, and if you start seeing him saying things like, well, I need to be a bit more involved in other things, and the preaching shouldn't be so central, you have a word with him, and say, uh-uh, Colin, something's going on with you, something's going wrong with you, and if he doesn't listen, I don't know who Colin listens to.

Speak to Kathmar. Speak to someone like that. Now, having noted the setting, though, we see the encounter. Look at verses 3 and 4. Mark introduces us to a man who is in a distressing condition.

We're not told his name, not told his age, not told the names of his parents, not told what had happened to him, all the things that we might love to learn about him. All Mark tells us is that this man was a paralytic, and Mark emphasizes the severity of that paralysis by highlighting that he had to be carried, and had to be carried by four men.

Mark goes on and tells us about the determination of these men to get to Jesus. He says that this man's friends were attempting to bring him to Jesus. They've heard about Jesus' power, heard about his sovereign, supernatural, spirit-given authority, and they know that he's already shown himself to be someone who is able and willing to help those who are in a miserable, lost condition.

[6 : 53] Back in chapter 1 of Mark's gospel, he's healed a leper. He's gone on to cast out demons. And so they attempt to bring their paralyzed friend to Jesus.

And Mark also says that they faced obstacles as they tried to get to Jesus. We've already seen that the house that Jesus was in was currently crammed with people.

Even the doorways were blocked. It was a health and safety nightmare. And now Mark presents this large crowd as being an obstacle, a barrier that is coming between these men and Jesus.

It would seem that they now have no chance of getting to Jesus, that they have simply made this trip in vain. But Mark isn't finished.

As he goes on to speak about the determination of these men. Houses you know were in first century Palestine, tended to have flat roofs. Roofs that were made of thatch and earth.

[7 : 52] And these four men now make their way up onto the roof of this particular house. And they proceed to remove the roof. They literally unroof the roof. And once they've made an opening, they let down their friend to where Jesus was.

They demonstrate themselves to be determined to overcome any obstacle, any barrier that might become between them and Jesus. No matter who it is or what it is, or even what it will cost them.

They're desperate. They're determined. They're resolved. They're resolute in getting to Jesus. Now friends, as we consider these verses, we're being shown the purpose of affliction.

The purpose of affliction. That's what we have here in Mark 2. This man's sickness, his paralysis, is the cause, the reason, for his encounter with Jesus.

He might never have seen the beauty of Jesus, never have heard the voice of Jesus, never have known the grace of Jesus, never have felt the closeness of Jesus, if he hadn't first experienced this paralysis, this suffering, this affliction.

[9 : 11] J.C. Ryle makes this interesting observation where he says this, Who can doubt that to the end of his days, this man would thank God for his paralysis.

Without it, he might probably have lived and died in ignorance and never seen Christ at all. Without it, he might have kept his sheep on the green hills of Galilee all his life and never been brought to Christ and never heard the blessed words, your sins are forgiven.

That paralysis was indeed a blessing. Who can tell but that it was the beginning of eternal life to his soul. In other words, God had a good purpose in this man's affliction.

And friends, that's important for us to reflect on. Sometimes in his wisdom and grace, God will allow a person to experience a particular sickness, a particular sorrow, a particular setback to draw them to Jesus.

He might do this in the life of someone who isn't yet a Christian. And he might do this in the life of someone who's been a Christian for many years, many decades. Afflictions are God's appointed means of often drawing a person to himself.

[10 : 41] Some of you might be familiar with the story of Joni Eriksson Tada. She was a young woman, still a teenager, her whole life ahead of her. And one day she was involved in a diving accident that left her paralyzed from the neck down.

And when she eventually left the hospital, one of her friends, Steve Estes, met up with her for Bible study. And Joni was hurting. Understandably, she was hurting physically, but also suffering emotionally, even spiritually, wondering why God would allow all of this to happen to her.

And Steve Estes gave her 10 words that have stayed with her throughout the rest of her life, words that she shares on many occasions. They're these. God permits what he hates to accomplish what he loves.

You might want to write that down. God permits what he hates to accomplish what he loves. In the 55 years since her accident, after spending over half a century in a wheelchair, Joni still speaks about how her accident, how that affliction, was God's appointed means of humbling her pride, drawing her nearer to Jesus, creating and cultivating within her a deeper hunger for God's Word.

She speaks about the fact, it's a wonderful phrase, she used it at a conference a number of years ago, she speaks about the fact that the weaker that she has become in her wheelchair, the harder she's leaned on Jesus.

[12 : 31] One of her favorite Bible verses, words she often quotes, are the words of Psalm 119. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes.

And perhaps that's been the experience of some of you tonight. Perhaps you're here and you can look back and you can see that it was the afflictions, far more than the joys, far more than the pleasures, that God used to really draw you, indeed cast you, on Jesus.

Might have been a season of sickness, might have been a sore bereavement, might have been the breakdown of a relationship, even the breakdown of a marriage, might have been a time of financial difficulty, might have been witnessing the suffering of a loved one, and like the paralyzed man of Mark chapter 2, and like the composer of Psalm 119, and like Joni Erikson Tadda, you too can testify and say, it is good that I was afflicted.

I would never have chosen it for myself, and it certainly wasn't pleasant, and it certainly wasn't easy, but it certainly drew me to Jesus, and threw me on Jesus, and cast me on Jesus, and Jesus alone.

This evening, friends, we're being reminded that even painful trials, and everyone's painful trial is different, even painful trials can have a good purpose, a God-given purpose, that behind a frown in providence, God does indeed hide a smiling face, and the distressing condition.

[14 : 24] And then we have, second, a dramatic conversation. Look at verses 5 down to 12, where Mark focuses now on the dramatic conversation that Jesus had.

the dramatic conversation that Jesus had. Verse 5, we see the recognition. Mark tells us that Jesus saw their faith. Beginning in verse 5, sees the faith of this paralyzed man, sees the faith of his four friends, he sees that they have a knowledge of his power, not just a knowledge of his power, but a belief in his power, but he also sees that they have an act of trust, that he is sufficient to deal with their situation, and that nothing and no one is going to come between them and Jesus.

Their faith is real, their faith is active, their faith is alive. And Mark then tells us that Jesus spoke to the paralytic. Look at verse 5. He addresses him as son, term of endearment, term of affection, and he says, son, your sins are forgiven.

Now this man and his four friends had thought that his paralysis was his biggest, deepest, greatest problem, but Jesus sees him as having a far bigger problem, a far greater deep problem, a far deeper problem than paralysis.

This man's biggest problem, his deepest problem, his greatest problem as far as Jesus is concerned, is his sin that's left him condemned before God, that's separating him from fellowship with God.

[16 : 02] And so Jesus, in full recognition of this, says, son, your sins are forgiven. We move from the recognition to the restoration in verses 6 to 12.

We hear the complaint, verses 6 and 7. Mark introduces us to the scribes. They were the respected teachers of the Old Testament scriptures. They were the guys who had PhDs in theology, PhD guys who are always a bit of a nightmare, a bit of a pain in the neck, aren't they, Colin?

They were the recognized experts when it came to the interpretation and the application of God's word, how God's ancient word related to everyday life.

And Mark tells us what the scribes were thinking. He writes that they were sitting and questioning in their hearts and their innermost being the deepest recesses of their soul.

And they were saying to themselves, why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sin but God alone? These men rightly believe that only God could forgive sin because it's only God, well, primarily God, who has been sinned against.

[17 : 11] They knew the words of Psalm 51, how there's David and he's committed adultery with Bathsheba and he's murdered her husband, Uriah. And yet in Psalm 51, David says, Lord, I need your forgiveness because it's you, Lord, whom I have sinned against.

These men knew that. And they're angry that this man, this fellow, this Jesus is going about saying to people, your sins are forgiven. They say he's blaspheming, a crime punishable by death.

Having heard the complaint, we see the confrontation. Look at verse 8 and 9. Mark tells us that Jesus perceived in his spirit what these men were thinking. Amazing, isn't it?

That they're not happy because Jesus is claiming to do something that only God can do and Jesus is fully aware of what these men are thinking in their hearts, something that only God can do.

And so he asks them why they're thinking such things in their hearts. And he then asks them whether it's easier to tell this paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven or to say to him, arise and take your bed and walk.

[18 : 22] Now, of course, the obvious answer is it's far easier to say to a paralyzed man, your sins are forgiven. After seeing the confrontation, we hear the command.

Look at verse 10 and 11. Jesus continues speaking and he declares himself to be the son of man. This title, son of man, is Jesus' favorite self-designation.

He uses it 14 times in Mark's gospel, uses it 81 times in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The son of man is a mysterious figure who's mentioned in Daniel 7, one whom the ancient of days, God, gives a kingdom and authority on earth to.

Jesus clearly saw himself as that elevated, exalted, enthroned figure, that son of man. And he says that he is now going to do something that will prove that he is the son of man who has authority on earth to forgive sin.

And he then addresses the paralyzed man and he gives him three commands. Commands him to rise. Commands him to pick up his mat, pick up his bed. And commands him to go home.

[19 : 38] And having heard the command, we see the cure. Look at the beginning of verse 12. The air is now filled with tension. You could cut it with a knife. If this man rises, picks up his bed, and walks, it will be undisputable proof that Jesus really possesses divine authority to both heal and forgive.

But if this man doesn't rise, and if he doesn't pick up his bed, and if he doesn't walk, it will simply expose Jesus as being nothing more than a failure and a fraud.

And Mark tells us what the man did. He rises, he picks up his bed, and goes out before them all. This man has been restored physically by Jesus, and spiritually by Jesus.

Jesus. This man has been healed by Jesus, and forgiven by Jesus. And we move from that restoration to the reaction at the end of verse 12.

Mark tells us how the crowd reacted. They were all amazed, including the scribes. And they glorified God, and Mark doesn't simply tell us how they reacted, but he also tells us what they said.

[21 : 00] They exclaim, we never saw anything like this. They see this as a unique, unprecedented, unparalleled event.

Well, friends, as we consider these verses, we are being shown the provision of forgiveness. Not just the purpose of affliction, but the provision of forgiveness.

That's what we've got here in Mark 2. Jesus meets this paralyzed man, recognizes that his greatest need is to have his sin forgiven, and so Jesus says to him, Son, your sins are forgiven, and then Jesus heals this man, restores his incapacitated body to demonstrate to him, to demonstrate to the scribes, and to demonstrate to the great crowd that he is the one who has divine authority to forgive.

Mark presents Jesus as being the Savior who provides forgiveness. And that's important for us to reflect on. R.C. Sproul tells the following story.

He says this, many years ago, a friend of mine who is not a Christian asked me to leave the ministry and come to work for him in his psychiatric practice. I was shocked because I know nothing about psychiatry.

[22 : 26] So I asked him why he wanted to hire me. He said, you may not know anything about psychiatry, but you know something about guilt. You know something about forgiveness.

98% of the people who come to me don't need a psychiatrist. They need a priest. You cannot believe how many people are walking around this world with unresolved guilt that is eating them up.

And perhaps that's true of someone who's here today. Maybe you're here tonight and you're carrying a load of guilt that's eating you up and it's robbing you of any joy, robbing you of any comfort, robbing you of any hope, robbing you of any assurance.

Maybe you're here and you're feeling an agonizing sense of spiritual failure that's keeping you down and preventing you from making any spiritual progress.

I know people like that. People who have let the Lord down in some way and maybe let themselves down in some way and they feel that they can never move on from that. They can never do anything more for the Lord.

[23 : 36] They're nothing more than a write-off. Maybe you're here today and you're feeling crushed. You're feeling overwhelmed by a great sense of shame. Maybe some of you are back from the youth conference and your friends are all buzzing after it and they're so full of fire, so full of passion, so full of zeal after it and you're thinking to yourself, that's not me because there's something in my life that's just gnawing me and eating me up.

And this evening, I want to lift up Jesus before you as the one who is qualified, the one who has authority to forgive any sin and every sin.

However deep it is, however dark it is, however dirty it is, however disgraceful it is. He's the one who is willing and able to offer a person a complete, comprehensive forgiveness that will cost them absolutely nothing, though it cost him everything at the cross as we saw this morning.

So this evening, I want to ask whether you're a Christian or not, are you going? will you go to this Jesus who offers a full, free forgiveness?

Are you going? Will you go to this Jesus who is willing and able to deal with your deepest, greatest, most deep-rooted need?

[25 : 22] Your sin. Savior who provides forgiveness. But as we consider these verses, we're not just shown the purpose of affliction and not just shown the provision of forgiveness, but we're also shown a preview of the future.

Preview of the future, that's what we've got here in Mark 2. You remember how the Old Testament prophets spoke about the day when the Lord would come and restore, put right, his broken creation, his broken world.

And the prophets said that it would be a day when the lame would leap like a deer. And here we find a paralyzed man and he's rising and he's picking up his bed and he's walking home following his encounter with Jesus.

It's a foretaste. It's a preview of the future that Jesus has come to bring as the great Son of Man.

And friends, that's important for us to reflect on. Bob Dylan. I get in trouble in the high three at times. One of the guys, one of our elders, he's a very good friend of mine, he says, you mention Bob Dylan and you two more than you mention John Calvin.

[26 : 46] Bob Dylan, great theologian, has a song Everything is Broken where he sings about a world that's completely broken and in need of complete total repair.

And friends, the world is broken and it's inhabited by people with broken minds, people with broken bodies, people with broken spirits, and people with broken hearts.

But the gospel promises a day, doesn't it, when Jesus will return and will restore his broken world and not just his broken world but the broken minds and the broken bodies and the broken spirits and the broken hearts of each and every one of his broken people.

the gospel promises a day when there will be a cosmic, not just a worldwide but a cosmic renovation and the groaning of the sin damaged creation will finally be brought to an end.

Vaughn Roberts tells a wonderful story to illustrate this. He says that an older saint, an older Christian hobbled into his church one Sunday and with a smile she said to him, you don't know where I can find some new legs, do you?

[28 : 15] Roberts replied, well yes I do but you may have to wait a while. You'll get them when Jesus comes again. Immediately she exclaimed, well that's worth waiting for.

Roberts continues, one mark, now please listen to this, especially if you are aware that you're maybe an older saint. He says this, one mark of godly Christians as they get older is that they do not just live in the past like so many elderly people but are looking forward to the future.

The Christian can always say the best is still to come. And so as we close I want to ask, friend, is this the future that you're waiting for?

Are you living tonight, friend, with a gospel rooted hope that says the best, the very best, not something slightly better but the very best is still to come.

Is that how you're living tonight, friend? That as you leave this building, you're going into dark world, physically dark tonight but maybe even spiritually dark too.

[29 : 38] Are you going out glowing and shining because you believe in your heart of hearts that the best is still to come?