

Only God Can Forgive

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Preacher: Walt Alexander

[0 : 00] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

So Mark chapter 2, if you look with me in verse 1, this is the word of God. It says, And when He, that's referring to Jesus Christ, returned to Capernaum, after some days it was reported that He was at home.

And many were gathered together so that there was no room, not even at the door. And He was preaching the word to them.

Verse 3, And they came, referring to the men, bringing to Him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him.

And when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.

[1 : 22] Verse 6, Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming.

Who can forgive sins but God alone? And immediately Jesus, perceiving in His Spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, Why do you question these things in your heart?

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven, Or to say, Rise, take up your bed and walk. But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

He said to the paralytic now, I say to you, Rise, pick up your bed and go home. And He rose and immediately picked up His bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, We never saw anything like this.

It's the Word of God. The authoritative, inerrant, infallible Word of God. May God bless it as we open it this morning.

[2 : 44] You know, Tony Hawk is undoubtedly the most famous skateboarder ever. And though most people know his name, most people fail to realize who he is, who he really is when they interact with him in daily life.

Most people encounter him and they pause and they kind of scratch their heads, but mistake him for someone else. Mr. Hawk has so many of these interactions that he posts them on Twitter for us to enjoy.

I want to share a few of that. I just think they're great. He talks about a TSA agent looking intently at him, says, I'm trying to figure out who you look like before checking your ID. He says, Okay.

She says, That cyclist Armstrong. A nearby agent pipes in, That ain't Lance Armstrong. He adds, He's right. The agent continues, Oh, you look like that skateboarder.

Same last name, too. Crazy. He responds, Crazy. Guy at a restaurant says, You famous? He responds, I think that depends on who you ask.

[3 : 53] The guy says, Anyone ever tell you you look like Tom Brady? Hawk responds, Never. Never. Now, this is great. His legal name is Anthony, obviously.

Another time he talks about giving his ID to a TSA agent who checks his ID, looks at him, looks at the ID, looks back at him, and curiously and loudly says, Tony Hawk is my favorite skateboarder.

He adds, I'll tell him. He talks about a kid that he met last year at a skate park. He said, Are you Tony Hawk? Hawk responds, I am.

No, you're not. Okay, I'm not. But are you for real, Tony Hawk? I am. For real. This is great. I thought you'd look younger. Me too.

All right, one last one. Another TSA agent checking his ID says, Hawk, Like that skateboarder, Tony Hawk? He responds, Exactly. Cool. I wonder what he's up to these days.

[4 : 53] He says this. You know, it's funny to hear folks meeting famous people, not realizing who they are. One of the things we're going to see in the gospel, Mark, is that many people meet him and fail to realize who Jesus is.

The crowds gather to hear him. That's what we see right in this passage. We're not going to hang out on time, but they gather to hear him. They gather to watch him. They fail to realize, though, who he is. The scribes, they too gather to hear him, to watch him heal, but they too fail to realize who he is.

And over the next couple of weeks, this next section that we're going to run into for the month of March, not only the scribes fail to realize who he is, they begin to question him and challenge him. Beginning in our passage all the way up until 3.6, Jesus has a number of confrontations with the scribes that are marked by their questions. Look down in 2.7. He says, their question, who can forgive sins but God?

So they ask him about forgiveness of sins. Look in 2.18. Now, John's disciples were fasting and the Pharisees were fasting, but Jesus were not. Why do John's disciples and disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?

[6 : 04] They're questioning again. And then in 3.4, there's another question about the Sabbath. Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath? And so they're asking these questions.

And Mark uses these questions, because these questions don't deter Jesus. In so many ways, these questions and confrontations with the scribe are used by Mark as a foil to unveil who Jesus is, to unveil what he's come to do.

And so we're going to look first at this encounter all about forgiveness, this healing that's all about forgiveness. In a word, where we're going is, there is no forgiveness of sins except through the blood of Jesus Christ.

There's no forgiveness of sins except through the blood of Jesus Christ. First point, we're going to break this out in is, your greatest problem is your sin. That's wonderful news, right?

Your greatest problem is your sin. Our passage begins with Jesus preaching to many at home. Look down there in verse 1. When he returned to Capernaum after many days, it was reported that he was at home, and many were gathered.

[7 : 07] There was no room, not even at the door. He is preaching the word to him. And I just love this. Did you catch this? Jesus is at home. You should ask, what is his home?

It's almost certain that Jesus is at the same home he was at in chapter 1, which is the home of Simon Peter. So he's back at this home, the home where Jesus healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law.

And so in so many ways, Peter's home has become Jesus' home. Peter's house has become the place where Jesus now lives. And it goes on to become a headquarters for his ministry in Galilee. Interestingly enough, archaeologists years ago believe they had located this very house in Capernaum. There was another church built on top of it in the 5th century, but they've excavated that, and they found this home where Peter lived, and where Jesus lived during his ministry. And many people actually gathered there after Jesus' death. This was a church. This housed a church for years to come. And so people gathered to hear the word about Jesus Christ. But tonight, Jesus is preaching.

[8 : 22] Word has spread about the miracles. Many go to see him. Wouldn't you love to run to that house to hear Jesus? There's not room. There's no more room.

There's not even room enough to stand in the door. And to this crowd gathered, Jesus is once again preaching. We've said that's the main activity Jesus does in the book of Mark.

And here we have him once again preaching. He doesn't have a healing tent out front. He's preaching. You know, one more little background detail. It's important that we get an idea of these homes.

So these homes are not what we traditionally think of as home, but one you'd see in the Middle East where there's kind of a compound with large exterior walls that open up into a courtyard.

That was probably where Jesus healed Mary's or Simon Peter's mother. It was definitely where Jesus was preaching in this moment. And the roofs were not made of trusses and plywood and shingles.

[9 : 21] They were flat and less robust. They were often thatched with different sticks and mud and things like that or perhaps tiled. So it was not uncommon for people to go up on the roof to rest.

You know, ours are quite a pitch. And so you may not walk around on the roof or lay out a chair on the roof to sunbathe or something like that. But we know Peter did that type of thing in Acts 10 because these flat roofs became another living room to rest in.

And so as Jesus is preaching, a man is let down from the roof. Look at verse three and four. They say, And they came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof.

Now Luke tells us that they removed tiles. But they removed the roof above him when they made an opening. They let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. Now there's so many little details that we don't know.

How did they let him down? You know, I mean, some kind of belay system or something like that. We don't really know, but this is just quite a dramatic scene. You know, I've had a few odd things happen while I'm preaching.

[10:26] One person has passed out before. One time I was making a point and a balloon descended down from the ceiling right before my face. That's the closest I've got to a descending dove experience.

I didn't know what to have. I mean, it's either a harbinger of a good thing or a bad thing. I just moved on, you know, but Jesus is preaching. Men remove the roof and it comes down. You know, you would think it's kind of, it's kind of natural.

So, so there's no room in the front door. There's no room in the living room. So they just climb up on the roof to take away some of the roof so they can hear what Jesus is saying. But these men do not want to just hear.

They let down this man before them. We, we only have this one little glimpse at these men. They don't reappear in the gospel, but the glimpse is incredible.

These men must have heard about Jesus Christ. The paralyzed man must have heard about Jesus Christ. He appealed to these men to carry him up. and when there was no room for these men to take him, they didn't just drop him off.

[11:26] You know, like we might take the kids to soccer practice, just get out of the car. You know, that's not what these guys did. They took him up. They said, all right, we're going up on the roof. We're going to rip apart part of the roof.

The word literally means dig at the roof. So it's kind of dig at the fashion, the thatching of the roof. There's probably debris falling down on them in that moment. And they lower him down.

Look at the way Jesus responds. Look at five. A, he says, when Jesus saw their faith, how faith was in here, you know, miracles in the gospel, they're often linked with faith.

Your faith has made you well. That's what Jesus says again and again, but it's not the faith of the paralyzed man that Jesus applauds. It's the faith of these four men. Who refuse to take no for an answer.

It's just wonderful that there's a powerful contrast already going on in this passage. There's tons of them. Just spend a whole month in this. The crowd in the gospel are people who want to be entertained by Jesus.

[12:31] There's no room because the people who want to, to clap and want to be entertained by this man have crowded it out. Pun intended.

And so throughout the gospel, Jesus deliberately avoids the crowds. Because he knows them.

They're the, they want to be entertained, but these men and the many other men and women of faith in the gospels are ready to follow him and place everything into his hands.

I just love that. So Jesus looks down. So he says, he looks up and he sees their faith, but he looks down at this paralyzed man and says, son, your sins are forgiven. Now he must've thought, what? Um, no, thanks. I came to be healed. You remember my friends up there in the roof that just ripped a hole in the roof and lowered me down.

That's not what I came for. I came to be healed. But Jesus spoke to make a profoundly important point to this man. Looking directly at this man, he said, your greatest problem is not your paralysis.

[13:47] Jesus is saying, I know being paralyzed is difficult. I know waiting on people to bathe you and clothe you and feed you and move you is hard.

If you don't know how hard it is, go read something by Johnny Erickson Tata. I know how long you, I know how you long to walk and run and be free, but you must understand something. Your paralysis is not your greatest problem.

Your greatest problem is how you've responded to your paralysis. Jesus is making a profoundly, albeit painful point to him and to us.

Your greatest problem is not what has happened to you. And you may be in a pit like Mel described. Your greatest problem is not chronic illness.

Your greatest problem is not the wrongs done to you. Your greatest problem is not your unfaithful spouse. Your greatest problem is not your overbearing parents. Or your thankless boss.

[14 : 46] Or your unanswered prayers. Your greatest problem is not even your suffering. Now those are hard truth. All these things seem to be our greatest problem.

You know, our greatest problem is not the pain and suffering we face, regardless of how terrible it is. Our greatest problem is how we've responded to it. And it doesn't seem that way.

It's not the way it feels, but it's the way it is. Look at the way Ed Welch puts it. Suffering hurts more, but sin is more serious. Suffering will not last, but sin has consequences that reach into eternity. What Jesus is saying right here is your greatest problem is your sin. How you've responded to the hard things.

You know, in so many ways, this is repulsive to our culture that is obsessed with identifying victims. And there are victims. I'm not dismissing that.

[15 : 49] But what Jesus is saying is actually profoundly free. The paralyzed man came to Jesus and said, if only I can be healed, I'll be free. I'll be set. My life will be gravy.

You know, everything we got, I'll be happy forever. And Jesus is saying, son, you're mistaken. You think that if you're healed, you'd be happy. I've come to tell you. Actually, the whole Bible tells us. I was reading about the complaining in numbers 11 this morning.

The whole Bible tells us you can be delivered of one, one earthly circumstance and start complaining really quickly. Before long, you'll complain again. That's what Jesus is saying.

It's easy to begin to believe that if only Jesus did this or that, we'd be set. But it's not true. That's why we look into the lives of people who seem to have everything and everything that we want and assume their lives are just so much more interesting and light and happy.

Their jobs are more interesting. Their relationships richer, their life easier, but stories confirm again and again, it's not true. You know, by all accounts, the life of Anthony Bourdain looked like one to be, he envied.

[17 : 01] If you don't know Anthony Bourdain, he's a New York city chef who worked or was a New York city chef, worked his way up a bestselling author. His fame grew with the TV show where he took his camera to parts unknown and showed you how to eat the food there.

It's really rad show because he eats some really crazy stuff. Bourdain seemed to have it all. And yet he committed suicide. And the weeks after people began to understand that Bourdain was a complex man with many bouts of depression.

And in one episode, he said this, he said, things have been happening lately. I'll find myself in an airport for instance, and I'll order an airport hamburger. It's an insignificant thing.

It's a small thing. It's a hamburger, but it's not a good one. Suddenly I look at that hamburger and I find myself in a spiral of depression that can last for days.

Now you can think, man, or I tend to think a hamburger, you know, maybe it's just that he, he tried to make great food. And yet he goes here and realizes the world's full of terrible food.

[18 : 04] And we can amen that it is. We need to make better food. But right after that line, he says, it's like that with the good stuff too. It's like that with the good stuff.

See, our souls need more than food, success and money and travel. All the good stuff is not enough. Jesus is telling this man, healing you is not enough.

Not enough for Jesus to heal this man or me or you. Jesus came to do something deeper. Point two, your sin is against God. Your sin is against God.

Look at verse six. Jesus continues this interaction with the, or the attention immediately shifts to the, the scribes. Now, some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts.

Why does this man speak like this? He's blaspheming who can forgive sins, but God alone. And immediately Jesus perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned him, said to them, why do you question these things in your heart?

[19 : 06] I'm sure you remember the scribes from a couple of weeks ago from that first healing in Capernaum. The scribes were a select group of people who carefully interpreted the law, studied the law and taught the law. And because of their learning, everyone looked up to them, especially

when they began to talk about the law.

And so they heard what Jesus was saying and they did not like it. And I love that. The focus immediately becomes not, not so much on what they said, but on what they, what they thought three times there.

Mark emphasizes their thought. They're questioning in their hearts for sick. They were immediately, Jesus perceived in their spirit that they questioned within themselves.

Then he says, you question these things in your heart. So they're questioning these things inside. I mean, the idea is be careful what you say around Jesus. There's a powerful interplay again between the outside and inside.

And this passage, the crowd fills the inside of the house to be entertained. The four men of faith and the paralytic have to break from the outside in. They had to break into the house. The paralyzed man believes his greatest problem is outward, physical and visible and physical, not realizing that his greatest problem is inward, invisible and spiritual.

[20 : 20] The scribes seem to be going right along outwardly, but inwardly they're questioning and ready to confront Jesus. And so they question who can forgive sins, but God.

And they know the law. Exodus 34 says the Lord, the Lord, I mean the great revelation of the character of God, the Lord, a Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, keeping thousands, steadfast love for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity and transgressions and sin.

That's all the word. Only God can do it. Isaiah 43, 25 says, I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my name.

And I will not remember your sins. And so these questions lead them, lead them to conclude, if Jesus is claiming to forgive sins, he's claiming to be God. And if he's claiming to be God, he's blaspheming God.

He's declaring himself to be God when he's not God. They're right about half of it. Jesus is claiming to be God by forgiving the paralyzed man's sin, but he's not blaspheming God because he is God.

[21 : 30] But there's another point Jesus is making to this man and to us and scribes on the ground, and that's your sin is against God. Now that seems obvious, right? Let's say Mary, Larry, Mo and Curly get into a scuffle as they often do.

Perhaps Larry is talking and says something that annoys Curly so that he punches him in the mouth. Now, how would Larry respond if Mo says, Curly, I forgive you for punching Larry.

Now, we're probably all confused on who punched who now, but, uh, uh, uh, I am a little confused too, actually, uh, Larry's talking. So Curly punches him in the mouth and Mo tries to forgive him.

And, you know, how would, how would Larry respond if, if, if, if Mo says, I forgive you for punching Larry, he'd say, Hey, you can't forgive him. He punched me.

Now, sometimes in our culture, they tell us to forgive people that didn't punch us, but we won't go there. Uh, the same thing's going on here. Jesus is saying, I forgive sins because they're against me.

[22 : 35] Now that, that seems obvious. Only, only I can forgive your sins because all of your sins have been committed against me from the beginning of your life until now. All your grumbling, all your lusts, all your harshness, all your anger, all your discontent is ultimately against me.

The scribes believe many people suffer because of their sin or their parents sin. Yet they failed to see the deepest problem of sin was that it was against God. Jesus says, your sin is only and ultimately against me.

You know, Psalm 51 helps us see this very clearly. You know, David has done the cardinal sin. You know, David has, has committed adultery with Bathsheba. Uh, uh, another man's wife.

David's failed to lead the people of God. They'll fail to lead them into battle. But when he comes into the presence of God, he says against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

If you were an Israelite in those days, you'd say injustice. Where's Bathsheba, David? Where's Uriah, the man you killed in your confession?

[23 : 44] Well, this is the word of God. It's helping us see something vital. There's a horizontal component to every sin, but the far more important component is vertical. The Lord is our, is the potter.

We are his clay. The Lord is the creator. We are his creature. We are created his and created in his image to love him and serve him. The greatest tragedy, what Jesus is helping us see is not horizontal is vertical.

If you read Psalm 51, there is no horizontal. It may make you angry, but it helps you realize sin is ultimately an only against God.

Only the vertical matters. Every sin is against him. No sin is hidden from his sight. Every sin will come before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ.

Several weeks ago, this was brought to my attention in a painful way. A devastating report was released from the ministry of Ravi Zacharias.

[24 : 51] Ravi was one of the most highly regarded defenders of the Christian faith until his death last year, bringing hundreds of thousands of people to the faith, if not more.

But sadly, it seems he had concealed a life of sexual morality and financial dishonesty. It's just, the wreckage is horrible.

In one message, listen, before he died, he said, those of you who have seen me in public have no idea who I'm like in private. But it wasn't a moment of honesty.

He said, God does. God does. And I encourage you today to make that commitment and say, I'm going to be the man in private who will receive the divine accolade, well done, good and faithful servant.

It's a very brazen thing to say. I'm so saddened for the disappointment and frustration Ravi's family and friends are experiencing right now. But I'm even more saddened for the awareness that Ravi is standing before the one to whom he seems to have deliberately rebelled against.

[25 : 57] Because it doesn't matter if you pass horizontally. It doesn't matter if you pass the grave. It doesn't matter if you pull the wool over someone's eyes. There is one who sees everything and every sin is directly against him.

Our deepest problem is sin. And our deepest problem is our sin is against a holy God. And it must be dealt with. You know, you can't become a Christian until you realize this.

You can't become a Christian until you realize your deepest problem is your sin. It's not someone else's fault and that all your sin is against God. God. But after you become a Christian, this is some of the best news in the world's most helpful news because you realize your deepest problem is your sin against God.

So it's not your child's sin against you. Not your spouse's sin against you. Not your boss's sin against you. It can free you from a life of scorekeeping in your friendships and enable you to get right with God and find true forgiveness and healing.

It sets you free from bitterness and from fearing what other people think. Point three, only God can forgive your sin through Jesus.

[27 : 16] Only God can forgive your sin through Jesus. Look in verse nine. Jesus says, which is easier to say? To say the paralytic, your sins are forgiven or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk.

Jesus answers their thoughts there, right? Which is easier? To say your sins are forgiven or rise, take up your bed? This is a puzzling question. One commentator said, people have been thinking about this for hundreds and hundreds of years and we still don't really know what Jesus is talking about.

On the one hand, it does appear, he's saying, it's easier to just throw out words and say your sins are forgiven because forgiveness of sins is not seen, right? So they're just saying, if you said, rise, take up your bed and you didn't heal the man, everyone would know because the guy couldn't walk. So Jesus said, well, it's easier to just throw out words, right? And so the scribes are focused on what he's saying and they assume that's what's going on. Jesus is tossing out impressive words to impress the crowd.

So in order to show them that he has the power to forgive sins, he heals the man. So in order to show him he has the power to do, the easier he does, the harder. But is the forgiveness of sins really easier?

[28 : 42] I think it seems like Jesus is also saying or also saying, you know, that healing is easy. Doctors and surgeons and prophets can heal. That's the definition of medicine, trying to heal.

But as you acknowledge in your heart, only God can forgive sins. And so they already acknowledge that. So it seems like Jesus is saying that that's the harder thing. And so which is easier? Yes.

Neither. But Jesus continues and helps us see. Look at verse 10. He says, but that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins.

He said to the paralytic, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. That you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. I say to you, paralytic men, rise, take up your bed and go home.

Here's that word, authority again. That word that emerged in the first interaction in Capernaum. It's this word for someone who has the right stuff, who has the authority to be in charge, the right to be in charge.

[29 : 48] And so Jesus saying, my authority to forgive sins and my power to heal are linked to my position as the Son of Man. So Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man here.

This title comes straight from Daniel 7. Look there with me. He says, I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of the heavens there came one like the Son of Man.

And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. To him it was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples and nations and languages shall serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which none shall or shall not pass away in its kingdom.

One that shall not be destroyed. I think that's solving the riddle here. Only the Son of Man, only the one whom the ancient days has exalted, only the one whom the Lord has given authority to completely heal and truly forgive, only the one anointed with the Holy Spirit, only the one who's mightier than Isaiah and John and all the prophets, only the Messiah who's ushering in the kingdom of God, only God's promised Son, only Jesus can do these things, only Him who has this authority. And look at those little words there in verse 10. He says He has authority on earth. So, now priests in those days, they believed in the forgiveness of sins, they didn't believe they could give it, but they did believe that it was coming at the end, at the end, at judgment from the Lord.

[31 : 25] But Jesus is saying right now that the final judgment being interrupted, Jesus is moving in to history to bring forgiveness of sins now. I just love those little words on earth.

the scribes never claimed to forgive sins. There are people who offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins. They awaited a final day of judgment when the forgiveness of sins would be offered. But now Jesus stands here and there offering forgiveness of sins once for all through Him.

So He says to the man in the climactic moment of these verses, Rise! Take up your bed and walk. Go home! I love that.

Jesus begins at home and then He sends this guy at home in the end. Jesus is saying to the world and to us, only God can forgive your sins through Jesus. There's two words for forgiveness in the New Testament.

One is to give freely, to be gracious, it's the one that's in Ephesians 4.32, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you.

[32 : 31] It's just to be be gracious as God's been gracious to you. So it's focused on the positive if you will. The second is to send away, to release, to be free.

So forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. So that's focused on the negative, right? You forgive us the negative debts against us so that you can be free.

The image behind this is that of a prison. You know, if someone has a debt they cannot pay, they're thrown into the prison until they can pay the debt. They're not released until they can pay the debt. We often talk about forgiveness in this way because we say we throw you in the doghouse. we withdraw affections towards someone we're angry with and it's a way of putting them in prison. But when you forgive, they're released.

They're sent away. That's the word that's used here. Here's the idea. The paralyzed man thought his prison was paralysis. But after his encounter with Jesus Christ, he realizes his prison was much deeper and much more serious.

[33 : 40] His prison was his bondage to sin and his need for a savior. His prison was not his knees not working, his legs not working. His prison was his bondage to sin.

The paralyzed man went up to the house, went up to Jesus' house on that day to have his leg healed. But he went home having his sins forgiven. He went up trying to have the burden of his paralysis removed but went home having the burden of sin thrown down.

He went up trying to get his feet freed. Finally free but went home finding his soul completely free. What is the prison you think you're placed in?

A hard marriage? Singleness? Sickness? A job that just won't do it.

You don't feel fulfilled in? I'm not being trying. I'm not being acting like it doesn't hurt. And the dispatches help us see the main prison.

[34 : 46] The main prison is our captivity to sin. Our need for someone to come and let us out to set us free. I love the way John Bunyan captures it in the Pilgrim's Progress.

He said he ran thus till he came at a place somewhat ascending and upon that place to the cross and a little below in the bottom a tomb.

So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up with the cross his burden loosed from off his shoulders and fell from off his back and began to tumble and so continued to do till it came to the mouth of the tomb where it fell in and I saw it no more.

Then was the Christian glad and like some light said with a merry heart he has given me rest by his sorrow and life by his death.

Then he stood still a while to look and wonder for it was very surprising to him that the sight of the cross should ease him of his burden. He looked therefore and looked again even till the springs that were in his head of his head and in his mind and his heart being free sent waters down his cheek.

[36 : 11] There's no greater gift than the forgiveness of sins than having that debt thrown away forever. That's what forgiveness of sins is all about.

That's what this man encountered when he met Jesus Christ. In many ways many scholars in these verses say the shadow of the cross begins to fall in the gospel of Mark right here.

This first use of the word the son of man is not taken up again until Mark 8 then throughout the rest of the chapter in reference to the cross.

Use one more time Mark 14 for a different way. This is the first run in with the scribes. The first accusation of blasphemy. The first experience of opposition for our Lord and Savior and a conflict that will not end until he hangs from the cross.

So too this first declaration of forgiveness points forward to the cross where forgiveness will be purchased for all who trust in Jesus Christ and the debt buried forever. I love the way John Owen says it.

[37 : 18] Putting words into the Savior's mouth. that he didn't say but poetically capture what he did. He says why this is mine. This agreement I made with my father that I should come and take thy sins and bear them away.

They are my lot. Give me thy burden. Give me all thy sins.

Thou knowest not what to do with them. I know how to dispose of them well enough so that God shall be glorified and thy soul delivered.

It's as if Jesus is saying that this paralyzed man this man that came in thinking his greatest problem was his paralysis and Jesus says give me thy sins.

Give me all thy sins. Don't tuck any away. Don't make the mistake of Ravi Zachariah. Don't tuck any away. Don't trust in yourself in any way. Give me thy sins.

[38 : 22] I know of how to dispose of them. I'm going to one place to dispose of them because that's where I'll take all of them on myself that I might suffer the wrath of God for all these sins so that I might dispose of them completely so that you paralyzed man you believer in McMinn County might walk home not with a burden on your back but with fresh legs that sing joy to the Lord who has set you free finally and fully and forever that's what's going on that's what these verses are pointing forward to and I just love the picture of this paralyzed man who contributes absolutely nothing he can't even walk up to the house that's a wonderful someone's got to drag us to the house to hear these words that set us completely free as access leaping and praising God

Ephesians 1 says in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses all the debts according to the riches of his grace praise the Lord let us pray father in heaven we thank you for your mercy towards us in Jesus Christ we worship you and praise you we thank you that you have set us free from the greatest debt and from our greatest problem our sins against you and our need for a savior but we pray that you would more and more define our lives as people who have been set free that we might forgive others as we've been forgiven that we might extend grace show mercy live as lights in the world because you've given us life and joy and peace and all these things we praise you and worship you in Jesus name amen you've been listening to a message given by Walt

Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens Tennessee for more information about Trinity Grace please visit us at trinitygraceathens.com B B B B