

Chapter 20

The sick of the palsy restored

Matthew 9 vv. 1 - 8

Mark 2 vv. 1 - 12

Luke 5 vv. 17 - 26

One day, many people are seen to be walking through the streets of Capernaum. They are all going in the same direction. Look, they are all moving in great haste. Oh, and where are they all going? ... Surely there has not been an accident? ... No, but let us just go and see.

In one of the streets there is a house with an open door. Through this open door they step inside. One after another they disappear from view. Yet still they come. At last the house is completely full. Nobody else can get in. People are standing in the hall and the porch, yes even in the street they press towards the door. They crane their necks and listen attentively in hopes of hearing something at least.

Why have so many of the people of Capernaum made their way into that house? Why are those who stand outside, so anxious to hear something? ... What is going on? ...

You know already that the Lord Jesus preached during the daytime in the towns and villages of Galilee, but that He usually returned to Capernaum in the evening, where He spent the nights. Sometimes indeed He stayed away for a few days, but then He returned again.

Well, the Lord Jesus has now returned unexpectedly to Capernaum. Some had seen Him, and they quickly informed others. The news had spread through the town like wildfire. A great many get ready to go to Him.



Yes, even in the street they press toward the door.

That is why all those people are hastening along; that is why they all enter that building, for in that house is the Lord Jesus and there He is speaking. That is

why those who can no longer find room inside, and who therefore have to stand outside, are so intent. Oh, they hope that they too will be able to hear something.

Now you must not imagine that all those people felt a need of the Lord Jesus. You must not think that all those listeners really believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Saviour. No indeed! Most of them have gone there from curiosity. Perhaps another miracle would take place, which they would be able to see too. Others found it nice to hear Him speak, because he preached so differently from the scribes. That was the reason why most had sought Him. Nothing more.

Perhaps I should tell you first, that the houses in the land of Canaan looked quite different from our houses. There in the East they were built with flat roofs. They are still like that in

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Eastern lands today. Most of our houses have sloping roofs covered with tiles or slates. This was not the case there however. There they could walk upon the roof top.

Inside too, those houses were laid out quite differently from ours. In the middle there was usually an open space, where palm trees stood or often beautiful flowers bloomed fragrantly. A sort of garden then - a courtyard. Around this open space the rooms were built.

Well now, the house into which so many people have been going, and where the Lord Jesus is now speaking is one of this type.

Come, let us go inside in our thoughts. There He sits, the Prophet of Nazareth. His face is serious. He speaks with a calm, clear voice. He shows the people that they must be converted, that they must be given a new heart. He gives them to understand the absolute necessity of forgiveness of sins. In one word, He brings to them the Gospel.

It is quiet; breathlessly quiet. They all listen attentively.

His hearers sit around Him in a great circle. Many have no room to sit, so they must remain standing.

But just look! Close by Him sit a few men, dressed in long white robes and with thick beards. Who are they? ...

They are Pharisees. Some of them have even made a long journey in order to hear Him. They have walked for days, or ridden upon some beast or other, to get to Capernaum. They are Pharisees from Judea and Jerusalem.

Now, why have they come all the way to Capernaum? ... Were they so anxious to hear the Lord Jesus preach? ... Did these Pharisees also long for forgiveness of their sins? ... Did they

believe in the Lord Jesus? ...

No indeed. On the contrary. These Pharisees hated the Lord Jesus. Forgiveness of their sins? ... They never gave that a thought, for they supposed that they could earn heaven themselves. Believe in the Lord Jesus? Not a bit of it! They considered Jesus to be a deceiver. How terrible, don't you agree?

But why then have they come to Capernaum? Well, they have heard that Jesus was daily surrounded by great multitudes of people, who listened to His words. They could not tolerate that, it would have to stop.

Now they have come hoping to be able to find something against the Lord Jesus. Perhaps Jesus was in serious error. Perhaps He was transgressing the laws of Moses. Oh, they only hoped so, for then they could take Him captive, yes, then they could kill Him. If only they could do that, then they would be rid of Him!

Look, there they sit. They are listening very carefully, but there is no love in their eyes, and their hearts are filled with hatred.

The Lord Jesus knows that. He knows that the Pharisees have come, if possible, to take Him. He knows all things.

We do not know all things. When the master or mistress stands in front of the class, he or she does not know what is going on in the minds of the children sitting before them. They can to all appearances be listening very attentively, when their thoughts are really busy with something quite different. Sometimes they do not even hear what is being said.

But with the Lord Jesus it is not so. He knows even our thoughts.

So that is why He knew also that these Pharisees sat there with hatred and revenge in

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their hearts. He knew that all sorts of angry, evil thoughts were brooding in their heads. But He did not tell them that, no, He kept silence. He acted just as though He had noticed nothing.

Oh, how patient the Lord is. He speaks to these evil Pharisees too. He tells them that they too can be converted.

Suddenly the breathless quiet is broken. They hear someone walking on the flat roof above them. Now, what can that be?

All eyes look up inquiringly. No, there is nothing to be seen yet. How annoying, how disturbing! They cannot listen properly with such interruptions, they want to call out "Keep quiet, we can hear nothing."

But the noise does not cease, in fact it becomes even worse.

The roof was possibly covered with large flat tiles. And then? ... Just look! All at once a tile is raised. Then another, and another. An opening is formed in the roof. Through that opening they can see that four men are on the roof. What rude people, don't you think so, boys and girls? For shame! They ought never to be allowed to make such a disturbance. What bad manners. Yes, it certainly seems so, but in fact it is not.

Very likely some of the hearers were quite cross. They look up with angry glances. Others are curious. They think: "What is the meaning of this?" They hope that something is about to happen.

There is One, however, who knows all things. He is not angry. He is not curious. He knows!!!

When the opening in the roof is big enough, it is for a while a little quieter. But then ... then ...

Very carefully those four men let

something down on strong cords through the gap. They let down a sort of mattress, or thick mat. In the Bible it says "a couch".

Now you must not think that it was a bed like one of ours. No, it was probably more like a mattress, to each of the four corners of which they had tightly secured a cord, whereby they could let it down.

The Lord Jesus stops speaking. Nobody can be expected to listen now. He waits patiently. All those present look upwards in great amazement.

Look, the bed is now on the ground. It has come to rest at the feet of the Lord Jesus. On the bed lies – a man. But, who is it? What does this man want? ... Why have the four men on the roof, who now look down anxiously through the opening, thus let him down? ...

This man is a very unhappy wretch. He is paralysed. In the Bible it says that he was "sick of the palsy". So "paralysed" and "sick of the palsy" mean the same thing.

Have you ever seen a man or woman who is paralysed? Some have a paralysed hand, others a paralysed foot. Something which is paralysed cannot be moved. Such people are very unfortunate.

But with this man it is not just his hand or his foot which is paralysed. No, this poor wretch is completely paralysed. Oh, how terrible that is.

You can doubtless run and jump or play and tumble, but this poor man could not. This man could never walk. He had to lie indoors. Happily he had some kind friends who sometimes carried him, bed and all, outside. Then

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he could enjoy the sunshine, and lie in the fresh air. That was good for him and needful too. It was a help for him wasn't it?

How do you treat disabled people? Do you tease them? Do you ridicule them in the street? ... Yes? ... Shame on you! That is cowardly, yes worse than that, it is very wrong. Take your example from these friends. They helped their poor friend as much as they could. They had pity on him.

While the palsied man lay indoors or out motionless on his bed, he could think and calmly consider. He thought then, no doubt, about his sickness, but also, how it came about that there was so much sadness and suffering in the world. When God created the world there was no sadness or suffering, but all this misery has come through sin. That is why so many are sick. That is why so many children weep for the loss of a father or a mother. That is why the hospitals are so full. These are the consequences of sin.

Many people complain about this. They blame God for it. Do you do that too, sometimes?

This poor paralysed man does not complain however. He does not blame the Lord. No, no, God is not to be blamed for his misery, but he, he himself is the cause of it. He knows that he is a sinner. He knows that he has often angered the Lord, and that he still does so, daily. Yea, he knows that not only with his understanding, but the Lord has also discovered to him his sins. He has sorrow for sin. No, I repeat, he is not angry with God, he does not complain. On the contrary, he knows that he has deserved it. God is still good to him. He is still alive. He has friends who look after him. The Lord would be righteous in casting him into hell.

Many times he shut his eyes and prayed. He implored God for forgiveness. He wept tears of sorrow. Not because of his misfortune, but because he had sinned against God, against such a merciful God. Deep in his heart there was love towards God. God Himself had wrought that love in his heart, for by nature we hate God, we are enemies of Him.

One day he hears tell of the new Prophet. Very likely his friends told him. He hears of the wonders done by this great Prophet. He hears what this Prophet preaches. He is informed that Jesus of Nazareth tells the multitudes that He has come to save His people from sin. He hears that this Prophet declares that He is the Saviour, who will redeem sinners from ruin, and bring them to glory.

He listens with open mouth to the story his friends tell. And the paralysed man believes it. He believes that what Jesus preaches is true. He believes that Jesus is in truth the Saviour, the Son of God. Oh, he believes that Jesus can save him too from his sins, that Jesus can forgive his sins.

Oh, if only he could go to Jesus. If only he could seek Him. But no, he cannot do that. He is paralysed, cannot even move, let alone walk.

Daily he lies there thinking about it. He longs to meet Jesus. His soul thirsts for the Saviour.

And now? Now, he is by Jesus. Now he lies at His feet. How this has come about we do not know. Perhaps he himself has asked his friends if they will bring him to Jesus. But it could also be that his friends have done it of their own will. The Bible is silent on this point.

Whatever is the case, the four men have picked him up, bed and all, and carried him to the house where Jesus is. But as they come closer,

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then ... Oh, what a pity, it is so full up, they cannot get in.

"Please move aside and let us through", they ask. But it is no good, it is too crowded, it is impossible to get inside.

Very disappointed, there lies the poor palsied man. What now? ... Must they take him back home and leave? What? ... Go back? ... Never!

For a moment the friends stand and consider what they can do. Oh, they have an idea. On the outside of the house a stone stairway leads up to the roof. Their minds are soon made up. If they cannot bring their friend to Jesus through the door, then it must be through the roof.

Carefully they carry him up the stairs and, panting a little, reach the top. They are soon standing on the roof. Then they listen carefully for a moment to determine whereabouts Jesus is sitting. They can judge this from the sound of His voice. And then? ... Then they simply break open the roof.

When the opening is large enough, they let their poor friend down before the feet of the Lord Jesus, and they believe that Jesus will not cast him off. So, there he lies at last. It has cost them sweat, for that was heavy work, but still they have succeeded. Thus far their trouble has been rewarded.

Below all is silent. Jesus is still silent; all those present are quiet, even the palsied man says nothing. What must he say? Perhaps he has become rather self-conscious now that they all stare at him in amazement. Must he tell Jesus what it is all about?

No, he need not do that. The Lord Jesus knows what is going on in his heart.

This man has not come just to be healed

of his affliction and then to depart. No, this man has come for Jesus himself. He has come because he needs the Lord Jesus as a Saviour. Oh, he has come for deliverance from sin.

With eyes full of pity, the Lord looks on him lying there. And then from the mouth of the saviour come these words: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee".

That was exactly what the man sick of the palsy wanted, just what he was in need of. A wonderful peace comes into his heart, a peace which cannot be described, but which makes him intensely happy.



The sick of the palsy being let through the roof.

The Pharisees hear this too. A look of annoyance comes into their faces. They become angry. They think within themselves:

"Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?"

And that is true, boys and girls. In this sense the Pharisees were right. God only has power to forgive sins. Man cannot do that, but the Pharisees forgot one thing. The Lord Jesus is God. Yet they did not believe it, they would not believe it, and that is why they are angry. They do not however say anything – they only think these things.

But the Lord Jesus will let them hear that He knows their thoughts. He will show them that He is all-knowing. He will demonstrate to them that He is in truth the Son of God, the long awaited and long promised Messiah.

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"Why reason ye these things in your hearts?", He asks at once of these angry men, and proceeds in words like these – "You think that I should not speak like that, don't you? You think that it is not true. You think that I say it to deceive the man. But I will shew you that I speak no lie."

Then the Lord Jesus turns again to the palsied man and says to him with emphasis: "I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

Yes, but surely the man cannot do that? Is he not paralysed? ... Certainly that is true, but the Lord Jesus does not only say it, He heals the man too. The paralysis disappears, strength returns to his hands and feet.

Oh, just look! At the word of the Lord Jesus the palsied man rises. He stands up. He is restored, completely restored! God only can do something like this. The man had not asked for this. This had not been of prime importance to him. But the Lord bestows it upon him unasked.

The man rolls up the mattress on which he has laid for so long, and leaves the house. Now the people do make room.

Have you seen that, Pharisees? Can you still not see that the Lord Jesus is indeed God? ... No children, they see nothing, they do not want to see anything. They will not admit that they are wrong. They will not believe in the Lord Jesus. They hate Him still, yea more so than before. Oh, how terrible that is. Yet they can do nothing to prevent it, and so they remain silent but resentful.

The other hearers see it too. They are all amazed. In the Bible it says that "they glorified God". Did they do that in fact from their hearts, or did they do it only from their understanding? ... Oh, most of them did it only with their mouth. They were not really sincere.

All have left; evening has come.

The Pharisees with hearts full of hatred and envy. The many hearers have gone back home, talking excitedly to each other about what has happened. Their curiosity has been rewarded. They have seen a miracle. Nothing more.

The palsied man and his friends have also gone home. Oh, how happy that man was. He too, has glorified God. But he did it with his whole heart, he did it in sincerity. To think that the Lord Jesus has been pleased to look upon him. He cannot understand it. He has not deserved it, no. It is all of grace.

This story also has something to say to us. What has it got to do with you, boys and girls? Probably you too have at some time been ill. Perhaps at some time you have been seriously ill. And then you have prayed. Why? ... Well, you became anxious perhaps that you might die, and you are frightened of death, aren't you? You asked if the Lord would make you better again, if you might be restored to health.

And the Lord has heard you. You have not died. Perhaps you may have had a little friend, even a little brother or sister who has died. But you have been restored. The fever left you and you got better again. Wonderful!

And then? ... What then? ... Well, nothing more. Then everything went back to normal. You started once more to play and to rough and tumble and you forgot the Lord. Is it not so? ... Or is it otherwise with some? Oh, I fear that with many this is how it went.

No children, it is not enough, it is not right. You may indeed have been healed of your sickness, but not of your sins. They are not forgiven. You had no concern about that; you had no need of it. But why is that?

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That is because you are still dead in trespasses and sins. You are not troubled by sin. May the Lord yet grant that you may grieve over sin. God granted that to the paralysed man, and He can grant it to you too. He and He only can make alive your dead hearts.

Children, seek the Lord in your youth. Who knows, God may be gracious to you also. Oh may those words sound in your hearts yet again:

"My Son, My daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee."