

The Miracles Of Jesus Christ: Healing A Paralytic (Part Two)

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In the healing of the paralytic (Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26), the physician Luke uses a medical term, "palsied" (KJV), the technical Greek word used to describe paralysis from disease in some part of the nervous system. Because his disease was so debilitating, the man needed comfort and healing. Jesus thus refers to him as "son," or more literally, "child," showing His fatherly compassion.

Paralysis represents sin's crippling power and the sinner's sheer helplessness to do anything to relieve his own suffering. The apostle Paul speaks of our initial lack of spiritual strength in Romans 5:6, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." With this miracle, Jesus forgave the penalty that the man had incurred through sin and raised him from his miserable state.

1. What does forgiveness of sins have to do with the man's disease? Matthew 9:2, 6; Mark 2:5, 10-11; Luke 5:20, 24.

Comment: Jesus sets the spiritual and physical in the right perspective. Since sin was responsible for the man's paralysis, He deals with the cause first, then the effect. All actions are subject to the law of cause and effect; for every action there is a reaction. The man's physical ailment was not nearly as heavy a burden as his spiritual corruption. In reality, physical healing is meaningless without a sound mind. Psalm 103:3 can be seen as a prophecy that the Christ would forgive sins related to sickness and disease.

2. Why can the world not solve its own problems of poor health? John 8:24.

Comment: The world rejects Christ as it continues to disobey God. Undoubtedly, God through Christ caused the healing in this miracle, so He is the source of the blessing, and His Son is the instrument. God alone can provide both spiritual and physical healing immediately (Romans 3:23-26). This contrasts sharply to the power of local religious leaders, who could heal no one—and actually made the people spiritually sick by their false teachings (Matthew 23:15)! Nor could the physicians heal the paralytic.

The One who heals physically is also the Source of spiritual salvation. The world's religious and civil leaders, doctors, psychologists, and social workers are ineffective in solving society's problems, but the church has Jesus Christ to direct the way and provide solutions to the problem of sin. It takes His blood to cleanse repentant believers of sin and bring spiritual healing. Only Christ, as God's Son and man's Savior, can forgive sin.

3. What effects did the miracle have on the witnesses? Matthew 9:8; Mark 2:12; Luke 5:26.

Comment: The people were stunned, moved to glorify God, filled with fear, and confounded. It is no surprise that the witnesses to the miracle were amazed at the astounding healing. Each of the three gospel writers uses a different Greek word to express a variation of a state of awe. Nevertheless, considering the great impact this

miracle had on observers, most of them were not moved to have faith in God. Though filled with awe at His mighty works, they were not convinced or converted. Faith is not produced through sight (II Corinthians 5:7). Miracles and physical proof do not instill faith. God must call a person, opening his mind to His truth (John 6:44). Today, people tend to think that sensationalism will convert sinners, designing their religious presentations to impress people and increase followers by physical rather than spiritual quality.

In addition, the people were moved to glorify God in their limited way (Matthew 9:8). Yet, their reaction to the healing did not cause a change of heart in them.

Luke writes that they were all "filled with fear" (Luke 5:26). It can be terrifying to be near the power of Almighty God. Paul states, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). Realizing his own sinfulness in the presence of the perfection and might of God, Peter knelt in fear at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8). Again, however, most of the witnesses to the paralytic's healing refused to overcome their sins and change their lives.

James notes that even the demons believe and tremble before God (James 2:19), yet they, of course, have never been converted. This principle should enlighten us about the professed religion of others. Being filled with awe, glorifying God, or experiencing fear are not enough in themselves; they are merely beginnings of understanding and wisdom (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10).

Some witnesses to this miracle said, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:12). Others exclaimed, "We have seen strange things today!" (Luke 5:26). They were confounded. The miracle they witnessed was one of a kind, different from anything they had ever seen before. No other "gods" compare with our God the Father and Jesus Christ!

In Luke's account, the word "strange" is the Greek word from which the English word "paradox" derives. It suggests true things that are contrary to all common sense and ordinary experience. The things of God are beyond the understanding of mere human beings. In this miracle, we see the incomprehensible sovereignty and glory of God in His comfort and healing of the sick through His Son Jesus Christ, our Savior.