

First Forgiveness, Then Healing

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true healing begins with the forgiveness of sins, emphasizing faith and repentance as the pathway to both spiritual and physical restoration.

Scripture: Luke 5:20, Matthew 9:2, Mark 2:5, 1 John 1:9, Hebrews 7:25, Mark 2:10, Acts 5:31

Topics: "Forgiveness", "Faith", "Healing"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the story of the paralyzed man brought to Jesus, emphasizing that forgiveness of sins must precede physical healing. Spurgeon highlights the importance of faith, repentance, and the divine authority of Christ to forgive sins. He encourages listeners to come boldly to Jesus, assuring them of God's mercy and the completeness of His pardon. This message offers hope and assurance to all who feel burdened by sin and weakness.

Transcript

"When He saw their faith, He said to him, Man, your sins are forgiven you." Luke 5:20.

I HAVE read to you the narrative of the healing of the man taken with the palsy and many of you remember that, last Sabbath evening, I preached upon the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law who were "sitting by" [Sermon #1991, Volume 33—"Sitting By"] I tried to represent the position of many in our congregations who are just "sitting by." I preached to the outsiders of the congregation on the divers reasons which led to this, "sitting by." I must confess that I did not reckon on so large a blessing as I have already seen as the result of that sermon. When I came here on Monday afternoon, that being Whit-Monday, when everybody is supposed to take a holiday, I was surprised, on my arrival at about three o'clock, by a friend running up to me and saying, "We are glad you have come, Sir, for there is already a room full." There is quite a nice number of friends who have come forward from the congregation and who, one after another have said, "We cannot be sitting by any longer. We feel that we cannot remain among the sitters-by, but that we must come in and partake of the Gospel feast and join ourselves with the disciples of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

This blessed result of my sermon has set the bells of my heart ringing all the week and I have felt deeply thankful to God for it. I said to myself that as I had taken one arrow, which had sped so well, out of that quiver, I would take another! Having spoken to those who are "sitting by," I think I will now speak to those who are not sitting by, but who, indeed, are the principal persons in the congregation, namely, those who are sick and sorry and who need the Savior. For this palsied man who was let down by ropes through the

ceiling was the most remarkable person in that congregation! We may readily forget those Pharisees and learned legal gentlemen, but we can never forget this man to whom, as soon as ever they "let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus," the Savior said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I trust that, at this time, there are some present in this audience who are not sitting by, but who are already praying, "God be merciful to me!" Some whose prayers are rising to Heaven in accents like these, "Lord, help me!" "Lord, save, or I perish!"

You are the principal persons in the congregation, both to the preacher and to the preacher's Master! He cares more about you and about what shall take place in you, than about any of the Pharisees or doctors of the Law who may be sitting by. God is glorified in scattering His miracles of mercy where there is the greatest need of them. Our Lord Jesus, when the poor man was let down by his four friends through the ceiling, said to him at once, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." Matthew puts our Savior's words thus, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you," while Mark's record is, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." Well, Jesus may have uttered all of these words and all the different versions of the story may be correct, for it is not every man's ear that catches the whole of every sentence that is spoken, and we may be glad that there are three Evangelists who have recorded what the Savior said. There is no real difference in the sense—and the difference in the words may only show that Jesus said all three sentences.

I am going, on this occasion, to talk a little about this man, first, before his forgiveness. Next, a little more about his forgiveness, itself. And then a little about what followed after his forgiveness.

I. First, then, let us think of this man BEFORE HIS FORGIVENESS.

We are not told much about him. If I indulge in imagination a little, you will take it for what it is worth. This man, it seems to me, first, had faith which went out towards the Lord Jesus. Evidently, as I read the narrative, he had been suddenly paralyzed. This affliction usually comes up all of a sudden—men who have been about their business as actively as usual have been, in a moment, struck down with paralysis. This man appears to have been completely paralyzed, so as to have been unable to move and, as he lay in that helpless state, he heard that Jesus of Nazareth had come to the city— and he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was able to heal even him. It does not strike me that his friends would have brought him to Christ unless he requested it. The most rational explanation of the whole proceeding seems to me to be this—he believed in Jesus as able to heal him and he continued to cry out earnestly—and to pray that he might, somehow or other, be taken into Christ's Presence. He could not stir hand or foot, but he had friends—and he begged those friends to take him to Jesus.

Well now, there never was a soul, yet, that had faith in Christ but what Christ revealed Himself more fully in the way of love to that soul! If you know that you can not save yourself. If you believe that Christ can save you and if your one anxiety is to be laid at His feet that He may look upon you, and save you, He will assuredly accept you. "Him that comes to Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." Whether he comes running, or walking, or creeping, or borne of four, so long as he comes, Christ will accept him! And if his faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, our Lord Jesus will not let it die! If there is but a smoldering faith, He will not quench the smoking flax. Do you believe this? If you do, let it cheer you and comfort you. There is already something that is well with your soul! It was better to be paralyzed and to have faith in Christ than to be walking upright like the Pharisees and lawyers who had no faith in Him! The apparent wretchedness of your condition is not the real wretchedness of it—it may even turn out to be the blessedness and the hopefulness of it! If you believe in Jesus, I care not how far you have fallen, or how

great is your inability—if you believe in Jesus, you are brought into contact with Omnipotence and that Omnipotence will heal you!

This man, I believe, further thought that Christ could heal him, but he began to feel his great sinfulness. I am certain that he did because Jesus never forgives where there is no repentance. There was never yet the flat, "Your sins are forgiven you," until, first, there was a consciousness of sin and a confession of sin. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This man, lying there paralyzed, wept at the thought of his past life, his omissions and his commissions, his falling short and his transgressions! His heart was heavy within him. He seemed to say to his friends, "Get me, somehow, to the great Prophet! Get me within sight of this wonderful Savior! Oh, get me within a touch of Him, that I may be restored, that I may have this great load which presses me down so sorely, taken off my heart! Worse to me, even, than the paralysis is this awful sense of sin. Take me, oh, take me into the Presence of this Messiah, this Son of David, that He may have mercy upon me!" That I conceive to have been his condition before the Word of Pardon was spoken to him.

Next, being hopeful, himself, he inspired those about him with hope. Of course they would not have taken him to Christ if they had not had some sort of belief that, possibly, he might be healed. It is wonderful what sick people can do even when they can do nothing—how, when they seem to be utterly powerless—they find a strength in feebleness. Their very helplessness seems to be a plea where there is anything of generosity left in the heart of those who are near them. So this man pleaded, "I believe Jesus will heal me. I believe He will have mercy upon me—get me to Him, do get me to

Him!"

They resolved to do it if they could and he was willing to be carried to Christ. Four stout stalwart men said, "Yes, we will get you to Him, somehow, though it is a difficult task, for the house is small, the room is crowded and there is sure to be a press about the door." "But," said the poor man, "oh, try to do it, for it is my only hope. If I could but get where Jesus could see me, He would look on me and save me. Oh, get me to Him, get me to Him!" The palsied man would make no dispute about how it was to be done, so they carried him to the door of the house. And then they said to the people crowding around, "Make way for this poor palsied man," and he would say, "I pray you, friends and neighbors, make way." But they would not. Perhaps they, too, had their friends who needed to be healed, or they, themselves, had an anxiety to hear the great Teacher, so they pushed and pressed to get as near Him as they could. You see, those quibbling Pharisees and doctors of the Law had got in, first, and they blocked up the road. They are always in a poor sinner's way! What must be done? The poor man's bearers would have abandoned the task, I think, but he said, "No, do not give up trying to get me in! It is my only hope. Oh, get me to Him! Get me near Him!"

So, next, the man was willing to be lowered into the Presence of Christ. There was no other way but to go up those stairs outside the house and to take him to the roof. And he, not fearing as many would have done, said, "Yes, break it up and let me down." These four men, belonging to a fishing town, were adept in the use of ropes and they soon had their tackle ready and broke a way through the roof. As I told you in the reading [See "Exposition" at end of sermon—Ed.] I always feel pleased at the idea of the dust and the debris of the roof coming down upon the heads of the Pharisees and doctors of the Law! It always delights me to think that those gentlemen would have dust on their heads, for once, and since they were there, they were bound to have a little of it. Of course, when these gentlemen come to a place of worship, one feels bound to be respectful to them, but if they come at an untimely hour when there is any rough work

going on, one does not feel any particular regret! If, when souls are being saved, these gentlemen should have their corns trodden upon, we do not even ask their pardon or make any apology! Such a work as Christ had to do could not stand still for the sake of reverence to the learned doctors of the Law! so the roof was broken up and this man, though paralyzed, was not afraid to be let down. It is probable that there were no outcries from him when they began to let him down. I think, if it had been my case, I might have been afraid that one rope would go a little faster than the other. But no, the man keeps still in his mingled paralysis and courage till down drops the pallet just before the Savior!

There he lies upon his mattress, on the floor of the house, just before the Savior's eyes, exactly where he wanted to be. Here I address myself to some who would give all that they have if they could but be brought under the eyes of Jesus. The one thought of such a sufferer is, "Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that I could be near Him! Oh, that He would look on me, cure my helplessness and pardon my sin!" What a wonderful picture this scene would make! The crowd is obliged to make way or else they will have to bear the man and his bed on their heads—so he is dropped down into their midst—and there he lies. The great Preacher has been preaching, but He stops. This is an interruption which is, indeed, no interruption to Him! His discourse is but broken off for a minute, to be illustrated with engravings, that men may see, in later years, that what they have heard is but the letter-press and that the miracle which is now to be worked shall be the engraving which shall convey the Teacher's wonderful meaning to all eyes! So the poor palsied man lies there before the Savior.

Is that where you desire to lie, dear Friend? In your deadly sorrow, sin and weakness, do you wish to lie at the Savior's feet? That is where I want you to lie and if you will to lie there, that is where you do lie. The Lord Jesus is in the midst of us, tonight, and you can at once cast yourself down before Him. Do so! Tell Him about your paralysis. Tell Him how sick you are, how sinful you are. No, you need not speak so that I can hear you—His ears will hear the whisper of your soul. Your heartbeats will be vocal to His heart and He will note all you say or feel in your inmost soul. Just lie before Jesus and as you lie there, what are you to do? This man did not speak a word, but, as I believe, he lay there repenting that ever he should have lived as he had done, mourning that he should have wasted his life and misspent his time. I think, too, that he lay there believing, looking at that wondrous Man and believing that all power was in Him, and that He had only to speak the word and the sinner would be, at once, forgiven! So he lay there, in the Presence of Jesus, hoping and expecting forgiveness and healing.

II. Now, in the second place, we are to consider THE FORGIVENESS ITSELF.

This poor paralyzed man had not lain there long before the blessed Master broke the silence and said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I think that the four men up on the roof, looking down to see what would happen to their friend, would hardly understand what that sentence meant! They had brought him to Jesus because he was paralyzed, but he had wanted to come, first of all, because he was a sinner! He desired to have his paralysis cured, but secretly, in his soul, there was another matter which they might not have understood if he had tried to explain it to them. It was his sin that was his heaviest burden! And the Savior, the great Reader of Thoughts, knew all about that sin, so He did not, first, say to him, "Rise up and walk," but He began by saying, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Observe that the pardon of sin came in a single sentence. He spoke and it was done. Jesus said "Man, your sins are forgiven you," and they were forgiven him! Christ's voice had such almighty power about it that He needed not to utter many words. There was no long lesson for the poor man to repeat. There was no intricate problem for him to work out in his mind. The Master said all that was required in that one

sentence, "Your sins are forgiven you." The burden of a sinner does not need two ticks of the clock for it to be removed—swifter than the lightning's flash is that verdict of absolution which comes from the eternal lips when the sinner lies hoping, believing, repenting at the feet of Jesus! It was a single sentence which declared that the man was forgiven!

Next, remember, that it was a sentence from One who was authorized to absolve. He was sent by the Father on purpose to forgive sin—and do not imagine that He has now lost His authorization to forgive—for, "He has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Jesus is appointed as High Priest on purpose that He may stand on God's behalf and declare the remission of sin. What Jesus said was spoken with Divine Authority. It is vain for a priest to say to a sinner, "I absolve you." What can he do in such a case? He, or any other man who does not call himself a priest, may speak in his Master's name, and say to the penitent, "If you do sincerely repent, if you truly believe, I know you are absolved and I comfort you with the assurance of this absolution." So far, so good—but the Master, alone, can really give the absolution—it must come from Him who has power upon earth to forgive sins!

Now, my Hearer, have you never been forgiven? Are you in your pew and yet lying at that dear Master's feet—and do you desire above all things that He should say to you, "Your sins are forgiven you"? And do you believe that He can say it? And will you accept it from Him as being by Divine Authority? If so, I think He says it to you, for in His own Word He declares that they who believe in Him are forgiven. He says to each one of those who are penitent and believe in His Grace, "Your sins are forgiven you." Take the absolution and go your way! Do as Martin Luther did, in the days of his dark distress, when a brother monk said to him, "Do you not believe in the Creed, and do you not say, 'I believe in the forgiveness of sins'? Now believe in the forgiveness of sins for yourself." Trust Christ's Word and you will be believing what is absolutely true! Trust it, take the comfort of it, and go your way! It is thus that Jesus Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the revealed Word of God, says authoritatively to each penitent, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Further, observe that this sentence, although it was but one, and was so short, yet was wonderfully comprehensive—"Man, your sins are forgiven you." Not one sin alone, nor many sins, but all your sins are forgiven you. When you go into particulars, you are apt to leave something out, therefore the declaration is made all-inclusive, there are no particulars given. "Your sins are forgiven you." Sins against the holy God? Sins against a righteous Law? Sins against the Gospel? Sins against the light of nature? Sins of this and sins of that kind? No, there is no enumeration. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." Murder, adultery, theft, fornication, blasphemy? Yes, in a word, "all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "Man, your sins are forgiven you." What a far-reaching pardon it is! "Your sins are forgiven you." At one sudden sweep of the Divine wave of mercy, they are all washed away! There is no such thing as a half-pardon of sin. I heard someone talking, the other day, about original sin being forgiven, but the other sins left. But sin is a whole—it goes or it stays altogether—it cannot be broken up into pieces! It is all there or it is not there at all—and it is not there if you believe in Jesus! This blessed and comprehensive sentence sets free from every jot and taint and stain of guilt—"Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Observe, also, that this sentence contained no conditions—and the blessed Gospel, speaking to every repenting and believing sinner, gives him absolute forgiveness. Behold, the tally is destroyed, the record of your debt is nailed to the Cross! And as for your sins, they are like the Egyptians when the Red Sea swallowed them up—the depths have covered them—there is not one of them left, however great or many

they may have been. If you are now a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He says to you now by His Word, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." I pray the blessed Master, by His Holy Spirit, to make His Word come home to many here with power. Oh, that those dear lips, which are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, did themselves speak to you! Oh, that those wounds of His which are mouths that preach pardon to sinners, might speak to you and say, "Your sins are forgiven you"! There is no mouth that speaks pardon like that gash in His side out of which His very heart speaks as He says, "I have loved you, and given Myself to death for you. Your sins I have borne on the tree and put them away once and for all. Man, your sins are forgiven you." Oh, that Jesus Himself might thus speak effectually to many of you!

But note that this sentence sufficed the receiver. When the Savior afterwards raised this palsied man to health and strength, He did not do it to let the man know that his sins were forgiven. The man knew that, already, and did not need any more evidence of it. But Jesus did it for another reason. To the scribes and Pharisees He said, "That you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house." Those unbelieving men had not evidence enough that Christ could forgive, but he to whom Christ spoke needed no further proof than the power of that voice in his own conscience! And if He shall speak to you, my Hearer, you will not need any books about the evidences of Scripture, the proofs of Inspiration and so on, to you—this indisputable miracle of pardoned sin shall stand forever as a holy memorial of God's mighty Grace! It shall be unto you for a sign, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off, that God has pardoned you and spoken peace to your soul—and this God shall be your God forever and ever! To every soul that is in a similar case as that of the poor palsied man lying repenting and believing at the feet of Jesus, His Word gives the comfortable assurance, "Believe, and your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you." Believe it and go your way in peace!

III. Now I close by noticing, thirdly, what followed AFTER THIS MAN'S FORGIVENESS.

He was absolutely, irreversibly, eternally forgiven, for, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He never plays fast and loose with men. He never issues a pardon from His Throne and afterwards executes the pardoned sinner! His pardon covers all that may come afterwards as well as all that has gone before. But what happened to this man?

I believe that, first, there was an inward peace that stole over his soul. If you could have looked into the face of that palsied man, while still palsied and lying there in that hammock, you would have seen a wonderful transfiguration! Did you ever see a face transfigured? If you are a soul-winner, you have often seen it. All human faces are not beautiful—some are absolutely repulsive! The countenances of some who have lived long in sin are dreadful to look upon. Yet I have noticed faces that at first I could scarcely endure, when the persons have been gently led to the Savior, and they have perceived the love of God to them and have at last believed, and felt within their soul the kiss of peace, why, they have looked positively beautiful!

I should have liked to have had them photographed, only it was too sacred a thing. Speak of physiognomies—the Grace of God is such an eternal beautifier that the face from which you would have turned away in disgust and said, "There can be no good thing behind that countenance"—is absolutely changed by the Lord's mighty working! I say not that a single feature may be altered—the person may be the same in feature, but, oh, what a marvelous difference there is in the expression of the whole contour of the countenance when Free Grace and dying love have cast their magic spell over the spirit and the Holy Spirit has made the dead to live, and the person has been born again in Christ Jesus! Well, that change

took place in this man's mind, I am sure it did, when Jesus said to him, "Your sins are forgiven you." He was in no hurry to be raised from his palsied state! He does not appear to have said a word and those scribes and Pharisees looked on with their malevolent countenances, but they did not frighten him—he lay quite still and was in no hurry, even, for the Master's next blessing. It would come in due time, he knew it would, and he was of good cheer, for had not Jesus said to him, "Be of good cheer, your sins be forgiven you"?

But next followed the man's immediate cure. The Master said to him, "Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house." Our blessed Master was accustomed to preach the Gospel in a way which I have heard some friends greatly question. They tell us that we ought not to bid men to believe and repent because they cannot. There are two parties on opposite sides of this question—one says, "If you tell a man to believe and repent, that proves that he can," which I do not believe. And others say, "If they cannot repent, you ought not to exhort them to do so," which I also do not believe! Though I know them to be as helpless as that poor palsied man, unable to lift hand or foot, yet in the Master's name we say, as the Master was known to say, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." "Oh," says one, "I could not say that to an un-regenerate man." Do not do it, Brother, if you cannot do it. Go home and go to bed—what is the use of you for such work? The man who can speak miracles is the one who is needed and the man who can speak as his Master has bid him speak!

Surely, the faith does not lie in believing that the man can, himself, do what he is told to do! The faith lies in believing that Christ can do it and, therefore, speaking in Christ's name, we say to the sinner just as the Lord Jesus did to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth your hand," and he does so. Look at Ezekiel speaking to the dry bones in the valley. Ezekiel, do you believe that these dry bones can live? "Not I," he says, "I know that they are dead." The Lord says to him, "Ezekiel, prophesy to these dry bones!" How can he do it? It would be inconsistent with what he just said! "I have nothing to do with that," he says, "I was sent by the Lord to do it and I do it in the name of God." That which may seem perfectly inconsistent with your reason is quite consistent when faith brings in the supernatural element with which God moves those to whom He gives the commission to preach the Gospel in His name!

The Savior said to this man, "Arise, take up your couch, and go into your house." Now observe his precise obedience. "Immediately he rose up before them all." The tendency of a paralyzed person is to be paralyzed in will. There are some persons, no doubt, who have ailments that can easily be cured if they believe they can be cured because there is not much the matter with them, after all. But this man was completely paralyzed, yet he so fully believed in Christ that up he rose and stood before the Master! Then Jesus said, "Take up your couch." I think I see him undo those four ropes and quickly shoulder his mattress. "Walk," says the Master, and he walks! "Go into your house," says the Master. He might have stopped and said, "No, Lord, let me stay and hear the sermon out," but no, not a word did he say about it, but off he went to his own house!

Oh, that all were as obedient to Christ as this man was, that, having the simplicity of faith, they would render the fullest obedience! But thus it often is that the very chief of sinners, when pardon is given to them, have given to them, at the same time, a tender conscience, a willing mind, a yielding spirit. "Whatever He says to you, do it," said the virgin mother to the servants at Cana of Galilee—and that is good advice for you! If Christ has healed you, obey Him! Obey Him at once, obey Him exactly, obey Him in everything, be it little, or be it great! If some say it is nonessential, remember that what is not essential to salvation may be essential to obedience! Do it if Jesus commanded it! Do it whether it appears to you to be essential or not! That is not a question for you to ask—that is a heartless, loveless question. He has

healed you, do what He bids you, as He bids you, when He bids you—and raise no question about it. Take up your bed and go into your house, if so He bids you. Or, if He puts it to you, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," believe and be baptized. Be obedient unto Him who deserves to be obeyed!

Now, lastly, this man, it is said, "immediately rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house glorifying God." I think I hear what he said. "Glory!" he cried, "Glory be to God!" He felt so glad, so happy, that he took up his bed before them all and, as he walked along, he glorified God. And would you not have done the same if you had been paralyzed and had been restored as he had been? And will you not do so? If you have been sin-bound and Christ has set you free, surely you will take the earliest opportunity of telling others what Jesus has done for you and seek to glorify His name! I did not wonder when a Brother lately said to me, "I have been spending all the morning in the workshop telling the men that I have found the Savior." And one, last Sunday, turned to his wife in this Tabernacle and said, "I am saved!" She said to him, "Don't disturb the worship," but I almost wish he had done so! What a mercy it is to be saved! Salvation puts a new sun in our sky and a new joy in our hearts! Believe on Jesus and this salvation is yours! God grant that it may be, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: LUKE 5:12-26.

Verse 12. And it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy. As far gone with leprosy as he could be—thoroughly tainted and eaten up with that loathsome disease.

12. Who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. He felt that the difficulty lay in the will of Christ, not in His power. No other teacher would have looked at such a man! Everybody shrank from him, for he scattered defilement wherever he moved. A leper was a being from whom all kept clear, so this one was afraid that the great Teacher was not willing to cure him. "If You will," he said, "You can—I know that You can make me clean."

13. And He put forth His hand, and touched him. This was a wonderful instance of condescending love on the part of the Lord Jesus and touching the leper did not defile Him. On the contrary, Christ removed the defilement from the leper—"He touched him,"

13. Saying, I will: be you clean. It was the will of Christ that worked the miracle, that secret movement of the heart of Christ, that silent Omnipotent going forth of Divine Energy that accomplished the leper's cure!

13. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. Christ can heal sin in the same way that He cured this leper. If He touches the worst man in this place, He can make sin to depart from him the moment He touches him. It does not require years in order to perfect the work of salvation—it can be done in a moment! Such is the wonder-working power of Christ—"immediately the leprosy departed from him."

14. And He charged him to tell no man: but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. Our blessed Master did not court fame. He did not wish to make Himself notorious—the crowds that flocked around Him were inconvenient to Him, so He did not wish to have them increased. There was danger in such crowding and Jesus was wise in His generation, so He charged the healed leper to tell no man, but to show himself to the priest and to present the offering required under the Law.

15. But so much the more there went fame abroad of Him. Fame is like fire. If you heap anything on it to prevent it from spreading, it often acts as fuel to the flame! So, the very effort to hide the light of Christ's

power made it spread all the more widely.

15. And great multitudes came together to hear and to be healed by Him of their infirmities. I wish that all congregations would come together from the same motives—to hear and to be healed by Christ! What is your disease, my Hearer? What ails your soul? What is the mischief in your spirit? What is the malady in your heart? Jesus can heal you! Oh, that you would at once seek to be healed by Him!

16. And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. Just when there were such grand opportunities of doing good, just when everybody sought Him, does He go away from them into the wilderness to pray? Yes, because He felt what we ought to feel but often do not, that He needed fresh power, that as the servant of God He must wait upon God for fresh power for His great life-work. "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed." No doubt it was the constant habit of Christ to pray, but there were certain special times when He retired into lonely places and His prayer was peculiarly fervent and prolonged.

17. And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the Law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. The word, "them," scarcely gives the right sense of the original. It should be, "the power of the Lord was present to heal." Jesus did not heal the Pharisees and doctors of the Law, but He healed many of the congregation. Now, how do you account for this power present to heal? Why, by that wilderness prayer—"He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed," and afterward, in a very high and remarkable manner, "the power of the Lord was present to heal." And when the power to heal was present, the patient to be healed was very soon present, too!

18. 19. And behold, men brought on a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus. There appears to have been, according to Mark, some breaking up of the material that formed the roof of the house where Christ was. It was not altogether such an easy matter as some have imagined, to let this poor palsied man down into the Presence of Jesus. And if some of the dust from the roof fell down upon the Pharisees and doctors of the Law who were sitting by, it would only be what they were accustomed to throw into other people's eyes!

20. And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you. Christ has eyes with which He can see faith. You and I cannot see it, but He can—"When He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, your sins are forgiven you." This was going to the very root of his disease. Jesus knew what really ailed the man—he was palsied in spirit as well as in body—and Christ removed the root of his disease by forgiving his sin.

21. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason. The gentlemen I alluded to, just now, began to reason. It was just like them—instead of beginning to praise God, they "began to reason"—

22. Saying, Who is this, which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, He, answering, said unto them, What reason you in your hearts? See, Jesus can perceive thoughts! I have heard of "thought-reading"—here is a true specimen of it—"Jesus perceived their thoughts and said unto them, What reason you in your hearts?"

23. Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk? Anyone can say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or, "Rise up and walk." But to forgive sins, or to give the power to rise up and walk, equally needs God! If God is present and can make the palsied man arise and walk, He is also able to forgive his sins.

24-26. But that you may know that the Son of Man has power upon earth to forgive sins, (He said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto you, Arise, and take up you couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear. With awe, and reverence. They felt that God had come very near to them and they, perhaps, said, like Jacob of old, when he was afraid, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven." They were filled with fear—

26. Saying, We have seen strange things today. Oh, that we might see such "strange things" in this house, tonight, and whenever we meet to worship God!

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