

# Paralysis and Forgiveness

by David Platt

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**Scripture:** Mark 2:1, Matthew 28:19, Romans 10:14, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Revelation 21:4

**Topics:** "Faith in Action", "Global Missions"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Good morning. When I think about the word intensity, I think of John Piper. So, not David, John Piper is the most intense guy, not just about the Bible, true story.

We were talking about the skin on dog's paws and why they can stay out in the cold in the same gestures, pipe, intense, right? When I think about the word earnestness, earnest, I think of David. I think he has a seriousness and an earnestness about the gospel that is not just admirable, it's contagious. And I think, brother, your ministry, I think in my life and so many others' lives has been bittersweet.

And I say bittersweet because I can recall four years ago, a talk that you gave and some of my best friends in the world that were miles apart, streamed that talk and the Lord used you to call both of them to missions. And three years ago, it was bitter because I've had to say some goodbyes to some people that I love very dearly. But one of the things that makes it sweet is that I know for every goodbye that I've said to them, I'll say hello to countless people in eternity.

And so I'm grateful every time I hear this brother preach God's word, I'm reminded that when we give God everything, that we lose absolutely nothing. And so we're gonna pray for him right now. And I would say, watch your friends closely because you may just have to say goodbye to a few of them.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you and we're thankful for our brother, David. We ask that you would do what you've done in and through him countless times, Father.

You are a faithful God and what you've done in the past is the best indicator of what you'll do in the future. So I pray that he would rest not on his preparation, not on his notes, but he would rest completely and utterly on your spirit, Father. Would you speak through him? Would you transfer some of that earnestness for your glory through him to us? It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Well, if you have a Bible, Hannah, I hope you do or somebody around you does, you can look on with. Let me invite you to open with me to Mark chapter two. That was humbling.

Made me wanna listen to John O preach. As you're turning, I also just wanna thank Dr. Carson for the invitation to stand before you today. I have, like many of you for decades, had a high esteem for him from a distance and he's ministered to me in countless ways through his preaching and his writing on a daily basis through his devotionals for the love of God.

But over the last year or two, when I was walking through some personal and ministry challenges, he was so kind to reach out to me, to pray for me, to encourage me in ways that made all the more clear to me that what he preaches and what he writes is how he lives and he genuinely loves pastors and I praise God for his leadership in TGC. And with that said, I know I'm the least deserving pastor or person to be on this stage right now and need God's help to honor Jesus and hopefully encourage you. Before we journey into this remarkable text, I wanna invite you to journey with me into the heights of the Himalayas where Lord willing, I'll be a month from now.

So imagine landing via helicopter at around 12,000 feet and hiking out many miles over the course of the next week. And during that week, you come face to face with what I can only describe as a collision of urgent spiritual and physical need. Urgent physical need, study was done in these villages about 10 years ago and researchers found that half the children were dying before their eighth birthday.

I have four kids, we're in the process of adopting number five and losing one of my kids is one of my greatest fears. I can't imagine that being an expectation for half of them. One mom had 14 children, two made it to adulthood.

The dying of things like diarrhea or simple infections that you and I can get an antibiotic for over the counter. Poverty is rampant and one of the worst byproducts of that poverty is sex trafficking. Traffickers prey on families in these villages.

A trafficker meets with a mom or dad, promises their daughter a better life if she will go with him into the city. And with the village conditions they live in, it doesn't take a lot of convincing before they send her off. Young girls taken into the city and put into brothels.

Where they are broken and abused by numerous so-called customers a day. Others taken to other countries, thousands of girls taken from these villages. Urgent physical need accompanied by urgent spiritual need.

These mountains are the birthplace of Buddhism and the hometown of Hinduism. Out of about nine million people in the region, there are maybe 100 followers of Jesus. Most have never even heard of Him.

When you mention Jesus, people have a puzzled look on their faces as if you're talking about somebody in a nearby village with a bizarre name. This collision of need is evident in the individual faces of men, women, and children you see. Just see the face of a man whose eye has fallen out because infection has overtaken his head.

He'll likely die soon and he has never heard of Jesus. See the face of an eight-year-old boy with cerebral palsy physically chained to a barn outside because the village leader said this son was a curse in his home. See the face of a young girl in a brothel motioning for you to come over to her because she thinks you want what so many other men want from her.

And then see not the faces but the bodies of men, women, and children burning on funeral pyres as their ashes fall down into a river that their family's hope will transport them to a better life in a new incarnation. So I ask you, how do you respond to this collision of urgent spiritual and physical need? Do you only share the Gospel? What if they're starving? Do you do anything about that? What if they don't have water? Or medicine? Do you do anything about the reality that this child is chained to a barn? That this girl is enslaved in that city and raped every day? It's one thing to ponder questions about evangelism and mercy ministry and justice and the Gospel in the halls of our conferences, in the confines of our classrooms, in the comforts of our homes, behind our computer screens, or even behind our pulpits on Sunday mornings. But it's a whole other thing to consider these questions when you're face-to-face with that starving family, when you're looking into the eyes of that chained child, that trafficked girl, or watching that body burn right in front of you.

And the reality is the Himalayas are not the only place where this collision of need exists. In the city where I live, Metro Washington, D.C., the city community where you live, we are surrounded by physical and spiritual need, which makes Mark II a particularly applicable text for us. An amazing story that I think because of its familiarity to most of us may have lost its luster for many of us.

So I invite you to listen to it and just try to imagine it's the first time you've ever heard it. The Bible says when he, Jesus, returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home and many were gathered together. So there was no more room, not even at the door.

And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. When they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him.

When they made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their fate, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. 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 hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven, or to say, rise, take up your bed and walk? For that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the paralytic, 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.

Oh, what an understatement, get the picture. Capernaum, Jesus' base of operations and his Galilean ministry situated on the northern shore of that famous sea. A crowd is crammed into the house, overflowing out the door.

Inside, Jesus is preaching to eager listeners, including scribes who are trying to figure out who this disease-healing, demon-delivering teacher is. And suddenly, four men show up with a paralyzed man on a mat. They want to get in the house, but no one will let them.

Just imagine, people at the door, looking back, making eye contact with the man on the mat, his friends around him, and then turning back without budging. So when pushing and prodding don't work, the friends get resourceful, scrappy. We can only imagine the conversation as the first says, why don't we climb up on the roof? The second responds, a lot of good that will do, genius.

Jesus is inside, not outside. To which the first replies, yeah, I know that, bro. Let's just take the roof off.

To which the third says, you can't remove a roof. And the first says, why not? They look at each other, and finally the fourth says, I don't know a better option. We have to get our friend to Jesus.

That's the only way, so let's do it. They climb up on the roof, a common place in a Palestinian home to sit or stand or lie down, to sleep on a cool night, almost like you might picture a deck. It's sturdy enough to walk on, so imagine you're inside, and you hear footsteps above as you're listening to Jesus in front of you.

All of a sudden, you hear an odd noise, and dirt starts to fall on your head. First, it's a little, then it's a lot. And it's not just falling on you.

It's falling on people all around you. Jesus himself is dodging it. Have you ever been distracted in preaching? This is more than a baby crying.

This is the roof coming down on your head. You can only imagine the owner of the house screaming, what are you guys doing to my roof? We don't know for sure whose house it was. I'm pretty sure that if it was Peter's mother-in-law, she was about to have another headache she would need to be healed of, when suddenly the sun starts to peek through.

By now, Jesus, despite his authoritative teaching, has lost the crowd's attention. More dirt falls, more tiles are removed, until a massive hole is formed. Mark's description in the original language suggests a major demolition job here.

The text literally says they unroofed the roof. Once the hole is established, there's a long pause. Everybody waits for what will happen next.

And that's when a mat, likely tied with ropes at its corners, is slowly lowered down, and on it lies a paralyzed man, now nestled in front of Jesus' feet. No one speaks a word, inside or outside. Did you notice how Mark doesn't record a single word spoken even by the friends? I can just imagine Jesus looking down at the man, then up at his friends.

What expression do you imagine on their faces? Are they nervous, anxious, smiling? I can safely assume they were sweating, as they catch their breath and wait to see what will Jesus do. And we don't know exactly what Jesus saw on those friends' faces, but we do know that whatever Jesus saw was the face of faith. And Jesus said to the man, son, your sins are forgiven.

Which is a bit odd when you think about it, because the man didn't even ask for that. This is where we know. We don't have all the details.

We don't know for sure if anyone else said anything. We do know that it was common belief in that day that physical suffering was attributable to personal sin. But we don't know if this man's paralysis was tied to specific sin in his life, or if it was something he was born with.

All we know is that Jesus makes a pronouncement that shocks the crowds. This man has sinned, and Jesus has authority to forgive him. Which leads the scribes to wonder in their hearts, the penalty for blasphemy is death, and this teacher deserves it.

While the text doesn't tell us they said anything out loud, they just saw that in their hearts, they were questioning. So he says, which is easier? To forgive sins or to heal paralysis? And after he paused, he says, I'll show you that I have authority to forgive sins. Then he turns to the paralytic and says, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.

And picture it, to the amazement of the crowd crammed into that home, to the disgust of scribes sitting on the floor, and to the delight, the pure delight of four friends peering down through an unroofed roof. The man stood. He stood.

Immediately picked up his bed and ran out of the room. The crowds moved for him this time. Can you imagine those friends running down off the roof, jumping up and down with their friend, chest bumping, shouting as they raced? They raced home with a demolished house in their wake, full of people who now for the first time speak in the story saying, we have never seen anything like this.

Is this not an awesome story? So what does it teach us, specifically about evangelism? I invite you to consider this story with me through the following lenses. One central theme, two urgent needs, three characteristics of Jesus, four faithful friends that all lead to five exhortations in evangelism. Not expecting you to have gotten all that.

We'll go one at a time, one, two, three, four, five. We'll start with one. One central theme in this story, and really in this section of Mark's gospel, and that theme is the primacy and power of Jesus' word.

The primacy and power of Jesus' word. We have seen and heard this at numerous points over the last two days, and we see it again here in our text today, and before our text today. Back in Mark chapter one, verse 14, the Bible says after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, saying the time was fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Then in verse 21, Mark writes, they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. Later in the second half of verse 27, after healing a man with an unclean spirit, the crowds asked, what is this? A new teaching with authority.

He commands even unclean spirits, and they obey him. In verse 36 and 37, the crowds are looking for Jesus, and verse 38 says, he said to them, let us go into the towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out. Then you have the story we just read, and right after that, in chapter two, verse 13, Mark writes, Jesus went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them, a clear emphasis in Mark on Jesus preaching and teaching, so it's no surprise to hear at the start of our text, in verse two, many were gathered together, there was no more room in the house, not even at the door, and he was preaching the word to them, and as the story unfolds, it's by the word of Jesus that this

man's sins are forgiven.

It's by the word of Jesus that this man's paralysis is healed, one central theme in this story, the primacy and power of Jesus' word, which leads us to two, two urgent needs. First, the man's physical need was evident. This man's physical need was evident.

He was paralyzed. We obviously don't know how severe his paralysis was. It was bad enough to be confined to a portable bed.

We don't know whether he could move any of his muscles, if motor areas of his brain were not functioning, if his spine, at some point, had snapped, but his physical need was evident to all, and affected all of his life. First, this man's physical need was evident, yet second, and particularly significant, this man's spiritual need was ultimate. This man's spiritual need was ultimate.

More important than even his physical paralysis was his spiritual malice. Again, we don't know if his suffering was directly due to any particular sin in his life. It's biblically possible that it was or wasn't, but regardless, we know this.

This man was a sinner, which meant that his ultimate need was not healing from God, but holiness before God. And this is the ultimate need in all of our lives. Our ultimate need is never physical.

Our ultimate need is always spiritual. In fact, all of our physical suffering ultimately goes back to a spiritual source. When sin entered the world, so did suffering and pain of all sorts, every headache we have, every body ache we feel, every form of cancer, every type of tumor testifies to the reality that this world is not as it should be.

Our ultimate problem is that we are separated from God by sin in a world that is full of suffering. So our ultimate need is not to be rid of our maladies, but to be reconciled to our Maker. This man's physical need was evident.

This man's spiritual need was ultimate, which leads to three characteristics of Jesus, heightened by the first 14 times in the book of Mark when Jesus will refer to himself as the Son of Man, a title that will be associated with Jesus' suffering, humiliation, and death, but it's more than that. Remember the prophecy in Daniel 7, 13 and 14. Behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a Son of Man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him, and to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. Now, the Son of Man is not merely a humble reference to Jesus' humanity. It is a powerful statement of Jesus' authority, and his authority is all over this text.

Three characteristics of Jesus here. One, Jesus has authority to read our hearts. Jesus has authority to read our hearts.

As soon as Jesus pronounces forgiveness of the paralytic sins, he looks over at the scribes and he sees their questioning, accusing hearts. They don't have to say a word, for Jesus knows what is in them in the same way that he knows what is in every one of our hearts. Right now, all of our hidden motives, all of our secret thoughts, all of the sin we don't want anybody else to know about, all across this room, not one of us escapes his gaze, and nothing in our lives is hidden from his eyes.

The Son of Man, Jesus has authority to read our hearts. Second, Jesus has authority to heal our sicknesses. To heal our sicknesses.

We almost take this for granted when we see this in the Gospels, and we've seen this different places even last night. But we, huh, may we never cease to be amazed and awed and absolutely encouraged by the reality that Jesus speaks and paralysis disappears. Jesus speaks and disease is gone.

Jesus speaks and demons run. Jesus speaks and death itself obeys. Jesus has authority to heal our sicknesses.

None of those things are sovereign. Disease is not sovereign, demons are not sovereign, death is not sovereign. Jesus is sovereign.

And then, as if that isn't good enough news, it gets better, because this text tells us that Jesus has authority, number three, to forgive our sins. And this is the greatest news of all. Jesus has authority to forgive our sins.

So we said earlier that our ultimate need is not physical but spiritual, because all of our physical suffering ultimately goes back to a spiritual source, sin. We said our ultimate problem is that we are separated from God in a world that is full of, by sin, in a world that is full of suffering. So our ultimate need is not to be rid of our maladies, but to be reconciled to our maker.

And this is what Jesus has come to do. If sin is ultimately the root of all our suffering, then what we need most is someone to solve that problem. We need someone with power, not just over disease and demons, we need someone with power over sin and death.

And Mark 2 makes clear, this someone has come. The scribes were right, only God can forgive sins. Yet what they failed to see was that God in the flesh was standing right in front of their eyes.

And this is the good news of the Bible, the greatest news in all the world. God has not left sinners alone in a world of sin and suffering. God himself has come to us.

He has lived a life we could not live, a life of perfect, sinless obedience to the Father. And then though he had no sin for which to die, he chose to die on a cross for our sins, as our substitute, Jesus died for our sins. And the good news keeps getting better because Jesus didn't stay dead for long.

Jesus rose from the grave in victory over sin and death. And now he offers reconciliation to God for anyone, anywhere who repents and believes in him. This is the gospel.

Yet sadly, it is not the gospel that is being preached in many places around the world. As I travel around the world, there's so many places where a false gospel is being proclaimed, that if you believe in Jesus, you will be healed of all your diseases now, that if you trust in Jesus, you'll be free of your sicknesses today. It is not the gospel because the gospel is much, much better news than that.

The gospel is not going to Africa and saying, trust in Jesus and your HIV AIDS will be gone. The gospel is not going to America and saying, trust in Jesus and your cancer will be gone. The gospel is going anywhere and everywhere in the world and saying, trust in Jesus and your sins will be gone.

And when that happens, oh, don't miss it. When that happens, then the root of suffering is severed. When our sins are gone, we are reconciled to God with the very righteousness of Christ, which means that we

can know no matter what happens in this life with bodies that are all wasting away, we can know that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons in the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will ever be able to separate you and me from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

So for all who trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, you can know cancer will not have the last word. Tumors will not have the last word. Alzheimer's will not have the last word.

Parkinson's will not have the last word. Pain will not have the last word. Heart attacks, hospital rooms and hospice care will not have the last word.

Death itself will not have the last word because death has been defeated by the Son of Man. His name is Jesus and he will have the last word. The good news of the kingdom is not that Jesus will heal you of all your sicknesses now.

The good news of the kingdom is that Jesus will forgive you of all of your sins forever. And forgiveness is God's greatest gift because it meets our greatest need. Jesus has authority to forgive our sins, which then leads us to four faithful friends and by faithful, I mean full of faith.

This entire story unfolds because Jesus sees their faith. Verse five, when he saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, son, your sins are forgiven. Faith in Jesus unlocks forgiveness from Jesus.

And notice, it wasn't just this man's faith on the map. There's actually a question about who there is in the text. The only thing we know is that it was plural.

More than one person's faith that led to this proclamation of forgiveness in the scene. So what was it about their faith? I see at least four characteristics. One, their faith was confident.

Their faith was confident. These men believed Jesus could help their friend. There's no way they would have gone to this extreme if they didn't.

They really believed if we can just get them in front of Jesus, something amazing will happen. Their faith was confident. Their faith was compassionate.

Compassionate, like they really loved him, didn't they? You don't go to these measures for someone you don't care for. Imagine this man lying there on his mat while the crowds are running to the home where Jesus is teaching. Were it not for the compassion of four faithful friends, he'd have stayed there on that mat and only heard stories of what Jesus had said.

Because of their compassion, he found himself at Jesus' feet. Third, their faith was creative. Their faith was very creative.

Resourceful, scrappy, even a bit reckless. No obstacle could stand in their way. No crowd and no roof.

They demolished a house to get their friend to Jesus. And fourth, their faith was contagious. Contagious, again, Mark tells us very little about this man lying on the mat.

But I try to imagine myself on that mat and I'm lying there when word gets around that Jesus is teaching in the house up the way and everybody starts running and I'm stuck until four friends say, we're gonna take you to Jesus because we believe he can help you. I think their faith starts to encourage my own. Maybe he

can help me.

Maybe he will. Then when I'm lying on that mat outside the house and the crowds are looking at me but won't let me in, I think I'd start to get discouraged. But then I'd look over at my friends talking, pointing up to the roof, hatching a plan.

When they come back and tell me their crazy idea, I think my faith would be encouraged. When I'm lying there on the roof, watching them dig out a hole in it, strap ropes to my mat and lower me down, I'm guessing I'm looking up into their eyes, seeing their determined faces and their faith is bolstering my own with hopeful anticipation. Until the moment my mat settles on that floor and I now look up in the face of Jesus with the expectant, faith-filled faces of my friends in the background, I think my heart would be filled with faith in that moment.

Their faith was contagious. Their faith affected Jesus and their faith affected this man in need. And so we come to five exhortations in evangelism that I would offer you based upon this story in God's Word.

One, I exhort you, us, make the proclamation of Jesus' Word primary in a world of spiritual need. Make the proclamation of Jesus' Word primary in a world of spiritual need. See the primacy and the power of Jesus' Word and proclaim it.

Sunday after Sunday after Sunday, we get to do this, we get to make eye contact specifically with unbelievers in the worship gathering. What a mercy that God brings unbelievers to us. I stand out in the lobby in between our services in Metro Washington.

I have so many conversations with unbelievers who have come. I think about Jesus calling fish for men. I don't even have to go out and find fish on Sundays.

It's like they're jumping into the boat. So make eye contact with unbelievers every week and proclaim the gospel of God, but not just in the church, in the world, wherever we go. You look through Mark, and not just Mark, but the Gospels, the book of Acts, and yes, Jesus and the disciples speak the Word in synagogues but most of their Word ministry was done on streets and in houses.

Is that true of us? Being at this conference has brought back memories to me of my early years in faith, including the first time I can remember sharing the gospel. I hadn't thought about this in a long time until I got here. When I was in middle school, a student minister invited me and a buddy to meet him at an arcade one day.

We thought it sounded great, so we went. He showed up with a video camera and he said we were gonna interview people and ask them about their faith. And my buddy said, do we still get to play video games? And he said, sure.

So we went up to some other teenagers. Our student minister started asking questions from behind the camera as my buddy and I watched and listened, and when the questions were finished, the student minister put the camera down and said, now David would like to share with you about his faith in Jesus. All of a sudden, I didn't have a choice but to proclaim the Word.

In the days to come, that student ministry nurtured a boldness in my buddy and me for evangelism, we would go out to the train station, share the Gospel with cab drivers who were waiting to pick up people and share the Gospel through Bible studies in our homes, rallies at our schools. I remember I broke my arm

playing baseball, had a big black cast on it all the way up my arm, so I had my older brother write on the cast, are you sure, in big white letters. People would come up to me and say, am I sure of what? And I would say, are you sure that you will go to heaven when you die? And share the Gospel with them.

And I continued through all kinds of creative things in college, on a state university campus, in seminary. My first semester in seminary in New Orleans, I was in a personal evangelism class where we were assigned a local church and required to participate with that church in evangelism over the course of the semester. My team got the last church left on the list, the Eucharist Baptist Church, right in the heart of the French Quarter.

We met with the pastor, he took us on a tour of the quarter, but we stopped in Jackson Square, and he said, you're on your own from here. My team looked around at all these tables with fortune tellers and tarot card readers, and we thought, why don't we get in on the action? So we went and bought a table, put a cloth on top of it, some candles, and we made a sign that said, we'll tell your future for free. We sat up right next to the voodoo queen of New Orleans and sat down with a couple of chairs across the table from us.

They would sit down and ask, you'll tell my future for free? And we'd say, absolutely, guaranteed. We were tempted to ask them to put out their hands, but we didn't, we just asked them some questions to establish the fact that they had sin in their life, and then we'd tell them, your future doesn't look very good. And we'd tell them how it could change.

I share all this because I've been pretty convicted the last couple days in my own life that over years of ministry and the busyness of doing a lot of things in the church, I fear I've lost that level of boldness and creativity and commitment of my time to ministry of the Word in the world. I spend hours preparing for the ministry of the Word on Sundays, which is important, but I spend relative minutes doing the ministry of the Word on the streets and in houses all week long, and that needs to change in my life. What about you? Let's make the proclamation of the Word primary in our ministries and in our lives in a world of urgent spiritual need.

Second exhortation, make the power of Jesus' love evident in a world of physical need. Make the power of Jesus' love evident in a world of physical need. I trust it's clear from all the messages these days that the proclamation of Jesus' Word is primary in the mission of the church, but doesn't this text compel us to open our eyes to opportunities we have in this world to show the power of Jesus' love amidst people's physical need? The mission of the church is to make disciples of the nations, and the more we give ourselves to this mission, the more we will realize that the nations are hurting.

Over a billion men and women and children are extremely poor, ultra poor. Millions of refugees are in need of a home, and hope, millions of children are in need of food and medicine, untold numbers and names are trafficked and enslaved right now, just like my younger daughter. So as we work primarily to keep people from eternal suffering, I exhort us, let's also work diligently to care for people amidst earthly suffering.

Let's see the man, the woman, the child on the mat, and refuse to turn our eyes away, knowing that these physical needs are far from us and near to us. So if you were to listen to a podcast from our church, you would likely hear loud, pretty high-pitched amens during the sermon from a girl named Marissa. Marissa has cerebral palsy, spends her life in a wheelchair.

Every Sunday, she wheels that motorized chair to the middle aisle right in front of me. Before she came to our church, she was used to being put in a corner by herself, even at churches who had not thought through how to care for children or adults with special needs. But this time, she found a family of brothers and sisters who welcomed her, and as they cared for her special needs, they brought her to the one who could meet her greatest need.

She was baptized not long ago, and as I studied this text, I couldn't help but think about her, and I just wanna invite you to watch her baptism with me. Meet Marissa. Welcome, Marissa, to the baptism pool, and she has asked that I read her testimony for her.

At one point in my life, I hated going to church because it prevented me from spending quality time with my dad, and I was usually shoved into a corner. This changed when my mom and I found NBC. Soon after, we started attending and met Diane Anderson, the director of access at the time.

She was waiting at the front door for another family, but they came in to me and said, can you come back with me? So I asked my mom if I could go with her to help in access that day. Then Diane said, you really don't need to be in here, and invited me to go to junior high to participate with the rest of the kids my age. I was 13 years old.

When NBC started to offer winter camp at Rockbridge, I went because the church made sure that I had someone to go with me to help with my physical needs. That camp was life-changing for me. It was the first time I came into a body of believers and felt accepted, like they actually wanted me there and with them, having fun, praying, worshiping, and hanging out together.

Will Gaskins, the junior high pastor at the time, gave a talk that first night, asking, do you know where you will go if you were to die tonight? And for some reason, the way he asked it really hit me that night. I'd always believed in a higher power, but this was the first time I was offered a relationship with Jesus that was deeply personal. That night, I officially and knowingly gave my life to Jesus.

Even though I had been born again, coming back from camp, things did not mean that life got easier. Being in a wheelchair alienated me from my classmates before. So sharing my love for Jesus with them now, so alienated me more from them because they believed I couldn't mentally understand salvation.

I really didn't have friends in school, but I had a community of believers at church who loved me and helped me to become more like Christ. I'm being baptized today because I want to obey the commandment Jesus gave to the disciples in Matthew 28 and 19. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And I know God is with me even to the end of the age. Marissa, based off of that profession of your faith, it is our privilege to baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bearing you in the likeness of His dead, raising you to the newness of life. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Take the power of Jesus' love evident in a world of physical need. Third exhortation.

Persevere in personal evangelism that is full of faith. Persevere in personal evangelism that is full of faith in all the ways we saw in these four faithful friends. I exhort you, persevere with faith in personal evangelism, faith that is confident in the power of the gospel to save.

We talk much of the challenges of evangelism in our age, in our culture, and they are indeed many. But based on this text, and particularly the picture of these faithful friends, I want to exhort us to be full of faith that when we bring Jesus and the lost together, He will show His power to save. We talk about these challenges, yet we will not prove faithful if we talk more about how hard the ground is than we talk about how great the gospel is.

We will not prove faithful if we talk more about how hard the ground is than we talk about how great our God is. The gospel is the power of God for salvation, and Jesus will show His power when we share His word. So let's persevere in confident, compassionate, loving, creative faith.

Like we strategize and plan for so many things. We strategize and plan for worship services in the church. What's the order gonna be? We strategize and plan for programming in the church.

We strategize and plan, whiteboard, do all these things. So how are you strategizing and planning for personal evangelism in your life, in your family, in your church? As we strategize and plan, let's be bold, even a bit reckless. I'm not saying we demolish houses, but the weapons of our warfare do have power to destroy strongholds.

So let's persevere in confident, compassion, creative, contagious faith that believes God can and will save people by this gospel, even when they don't yet believe. I think about my mother-in-law. I first met her when I started dating my wife, Heather, 25 years ago.

Heather's mom was not a believer. She really had no interest in talking about Jesus. So Heather and I began praying together for her.

We would share the gospel with her over and over and over again. We wrote letters. We tried to be creative, seemingly to no avail.

Her heart was just hard. Until one day, we were on vacation with Heather's family, and her mom got up in the morning to read the Bible. And Heather said, Mom, what are you doing? And her mom cheered.

And I'm waiting to tell you, but I recently read in a book a presentation of the gospel, and it made sense. And she said, I get it. Now I want to read the Bible.

She was born again. Everything in her life changed. She was in the Word every day, praying, sharing the gospel, joining the church, the fruit of new birth, evident in new life.

I had the privilege of baptizing her. And about a month later, she unexpectedly died of a brain aneurysm. Quite honestly, it was hard to cry at the funeral because there was such joy in our hearts.

And I share that. I just share that because I'm guessing across this room, there are many of you who have family members, parents, children, siblings, spouses, close friends, who you share the gospel with, and nothing has happened, and I just want to encourage you to keep pressing in full of faith. Keep sowing gospel seeds.

Keep praying, pleading prayers. Persevere in personal evangelism that is full of faith. Fourth exhortation, persevere in global missions that is focused on the unreached.

Persevere in global missions that is focused on the unreached. Should've left more time here, but let me sum it up. Jesus is the Son of Man.

To Him belongs all authority in heaven and on earth, that all peoples, nations, and languages should worship Him. There's about 6,000 to 7,000 peoples, nations, languages that are still unreached by the gospel, not yet reached by the good news of His forgiveness. Over two billion individual men, women, and children, just like us, just like our kids, who are being born and living and dying and going to hell without ever even hearing how they could go to heaven.

Many of them born into an earthly hell of physical suffering only to then move on to an eternal hell of everlasting, never-ending suffering. While many have the privilege of running and hearing the words of Jesus, while we sit here in a land of Bible-saturated resources where we can crowd into conferences to listen to Jesus, who is gonna turn around, make eye contact with those who cannot hear His name because they do not have His word, they don't know a Christian, no Christian is going to them. So what Christian is gonna go to them? What church, what community of faithful friends is gonna stop just listening to more and more and more for ourselves? What Christian's gonna go? What church is gonna send? What pastor's gonna lead his local church for the spread of God's global glory among those who are sitting beside? Who's gonna rise up with confident faith that God has power to save Somalis? That God has power to save Malays? That God has power to save the Hui in China and the Hazara in Afghanistan, the Berber in Morocco and the Baloch in Pakistan, the Pashtun and the Punjabi, the Tibetans and the Turks, 80 million people in Turkey, 80 million, about 6,000 believers.

More believers at this conference than among 80 million people in Turkey. So let's go to them with compassionate conviction. Let's grab the four corners of this proverbial mat and with creativity and contagious faith, let's marshal our resources and commit our resolve to doing whatever it takes to bring them to Jesus.

May the nation see in you and me and the members of our churches, life transforming, death defying faith in Jesus on their behalf. I've prayed that God might even use his word by his spirit today, like right now, to call out some from this room to go to the unreached. And that God might open the eyes of every Christian and every pastor in this room to the part he's calling every one of us to play and the spread of his forgiveness to those who have never even heard his name.

Finally, final exhortation from this text. Never stop rejoicing in Jesus' forgiveness of sin. And always keep hoping in Jesus' victory over suffering.

Never stop rejoicing in Jesus' forgiveness of sin. And always keep hoping in Jesus' victory over suffering. Never stop rejoicing in Jesus' forgiveness of sin, of your sin, my sin.

Praise God every day we have been forgiven of our sin. Praise God every day that you have been forgiven of your sin and praise God every time someone else is forgiven of their sin. Heaven rejoices when a sinner repents and God forgives.

Just imagine the rejoicing that is happening in heaven right now over sinners all over the world who at this moment are repenting and receiving forgiveness. May it be nonstop rejoicing in heaven. Through our lives.

Never stop rejoicing in Jesus' forgiveness of sin and always keep hoping in Jesus' victory over suffering. Many of you know Johnny Erickson Tata, our sister in Christ, herself a quadriplegic who has recently been hospitalized. Latest update is that they had ruled out radiation but that she's still in pain and having difficulty breathing.

When I heard this latest news, I was reminded of one of my favorite quotes from her. I thought it'd be appropriate to share as we close our time in the story of a paralytic who stood to the glory of God. Johnny writes, I hope in some way I can take my wheelchair to heaven.

With my new glorified body, I will stand up on resurrected legs and I will be next to the Lord Jesus. And I will feel those nail prints in his hands. And I will say, thank you, Jesus.

He will know I mean it because he will recognize me from the inner sanctum of sharing in the fellowship of his sufferings. He will see that I was one who identified with him in the sharing of his sufferings. So my gratitude will not be hollow.

And then I will say, Lord Jesus, do you see that wheelchair over there? Well, you were right. When you put me in it, it was a lot of trouble. But the weaker I was in that thing, the harder I leaned on you.

And the harder I leaned on you, the stronger I discovered you to be. I do not think I would have ever known the glory of your grace were it not for the weakness of that wheelchair. So thank you, Lord Jesus, for that.

And now, if you like, you can send that thing off to hell. Oh, indeed. One day, paralysis will be no more.

One day, pain will be no more. One day, starvation and trafficking will be no more. And one day, suffering and death itself will be no more.

For Jesus, the forgiver of our sins, is going to return. And he is gonna raise our bodies to be like his body, where we will rejoice and rest forever in his presence. So brothers and sisters, may you and I be found faithful in evangelism from this day until that.

Will you pray with me? Oh God, we praise you for your forgiveness of our sins. What words can even begin to express our gratitude for your grace in our lives? Even thinking about some of these circumstances in the Himalayas. Why were we not born there, a place where the gospel's not yet common? Physical suffering looks like some of these pictures.

It had nothing to do with where we were born. We praise you for your grace and your mercy in our lives. And we are, we don't know how to understand all these pictures of physical and spiritual need we see in the world.

But God, we pray, we pray today. And I just pray over this whole room that your mercy in us would resound your glory through us. Would resound in the spread of your mercy among more and more and more people.

God, we pray right now for those family members, friends who've been sharing the gospel with God, would you open their eyes to salvation, we pray. Please, oh God, save them. Please, please.

We've asked so many different times, we're asking again, and we'll keep on asking, God, please, please save them. And please, oh God, give us your heart, not just for them who are closest to us, but for others in our city and community who are far from us, who we are prone to bypass, to not make eye contact with. And then people far from us, who we are prone to ignore and neglect.

God, please, spend our lives, spend our leadership in our churches for the spread of your gospel and the glory of your name, that more and more and more people might know your mercy and give you glory. In

Jesus' name we pray.

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/CvvlxkozdtU.mp4>

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