

1. **Introduction:** After preaching in other Galilean towns, Jesus returned to Capernaum which had become His homebase.
2. **Mark 2:1-2:** *“And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them.”*
 - There is a striking contrast between chapters 1 and 2. In chapter 1, the glory of Jesus’ baptism with the descent of the Spirit and the heavenly voice of approval.
 - There is opposition but only from supernatural sources – Satan in the wilderness, the demon at the Capernaum synagogue.
 - In chapter 2, Mark describes the beginning of human opposition (like in verses 6, 7, 19, and 24). Chapter 3 shows human opposition increasing.
 - Conflict between Jesus and the leaders who interpreted Scripture was inevitable. Jesus’ focus was on love for and obedience to God and His holy law.
 - Jewish religious leaders stressed obedience to tradition and emphasized outward expression. Their power and prestige depended on the public accepting their position on the meaning of Scripture and how the law was to be observed. Jesus was a threat.
 - When Jesus returned to Capernaum from preaching in nearby Galilean towns, the news spread quickly. Soon there was a crowd at house in which He was staying.
 - At first the Jewish leaders simply question events in their hearts but increasingly become bold and vocal.
 - Considering both Mark and Luke’s description we see that Jesus was staying in a rather large home. Visitors filled it to the point that no one else could get in the door.
 - Many of those who came were curious religious leaders.
 - **Luke 5:17:** *“Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem.”*
 - Pharisees and teachers of the law were there to investigate Jesus. What was the truth about this man who was said to heal illness, exorcise demons, and even cleanse lepers?
 - Jesus was *“preaching the word,”* no doubt challenging the man-made dogmas of the religious leaders. That kind of challenge would soon have Jesus into trouble.
 - As Jesus preached, suddenly there came an interruption. Four men came carrying their paralyzed friend.
3. **Mark 2:3-4:** *“And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay.”*
 - Unable to get into the crowded house, the four devised a way to bypass the problem.

- They went up onto the flat roof, opened a hole through the clay, sticks, and tile structure big enough to allow the man on his pallet to be lowered with ropes to Jesus.
 - There would have been noise and falling debris when the hole was made in the roof.
 - Think about it. There is no record the 4 friends or the paralytic spoke to Jesus.
4. **Mark 2:5-7:** *“And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’ ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷“Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*
- People in the room saw a paralytic and his friends interrupting Jesus to seek a miraculous healing.
 - The faith of the man and his friends in coming to Jesus was great, and Jesus was moved by their trust in Him.
 - What Jesus saw before Him was a man in great need. His greatest need, however, was not his paralysis but his sin.
 - Paralysis was an earthly problem, but his spiritual sin problem, if not dealt with, would be an eternal problem.
 - Jesus dealt with the most critical problem first.
 - ***‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’*** The religious leaders heard and were offended. ***““Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”***
 - They are correct that only God can forgive sins but in error by failing to recognize who stands before them.
5. **Mark 2:8-9:** *“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? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?”*
- Jesus had anticipated their reaction and supernaturally sensed their silent protests. He was about to use this incident to reveal something important about Himself for the first time
 - The answer you would give to Jesus’ question depends on whether you believe He can deliver on enabling the paralyzed man to get up and walk.
6. **Mark 2:10-12:** **“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic—¹¹“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” ¹²And 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!”**
- Jesus already knew that most of the people in the room didn’t believe He could truly forgive sins.

- So, He said to the paralytic, **“pick up your bed, and go home.”**
- **“And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all.”**
- Jesus had healed the paralytic in the sight of the whole crowd. That made it difficult for the scribes and Pharisees (Luke 5:21) to deny that He could forgive sins.
- Both actions require greater authority and power than any mere human possesses.
- Jesus’ comment before He tells the man to get up and go home gives important insight into His healing ministry.
- He says, **“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”** this paralytic man will obey my command to get up and go home.
- That is, Jesus’ healing ministry, in addition to relieving human suffering, serves to authenticate that Jesus is the divine Person long expected to come and heal the spiritual sickness of His people.

7. **What We Learned:** From this event in Jesus’ ministry, we have learned:

- (1.) In Jesus’ response to the paralytic, we learned that the deepest needs of humans are not physical and visible but spiritual and invisible.
- (2.) Jesus knowing the religious leaders questioning His actions in their hearts shows us that the first signs of a critical, unaccepting heart are internal and hidden. There in the heart criticism and rejection festers and grows.
- (3.) When Jesus says to the paralytic, pick up your bed and go home and he does, we are reminded that genuine miracles are immediate and self-evident.

8. **Calling of Levi:** After the episode with the paralytic, Jesus remained in Capernaum. Many people came to hear His teaching. The duration of that time period is not known.

- Capernaum was a relatively large town and had a good many religious officials, both Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Pharisees despised Gentiles and were politically nationalistic. Sadducees were aristocratic. Pharisees were middle class.
- Pharisees controlled the bulk of Jewish people by being very Jewish through their determination to obey the law of Moses whatever the cost.
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- They generated over 600 rules which they said if obeyed would satisfy the requirements of the law. These legalistic rules covered every aspect of life.

- The rules were indeed derived from the law of Moses, but the rules were an expanded and interpreted version that enabled the Pharisees to dominate.
 - Rules generated by the Pharisees were designed to say that you don't need to think, you simply need to learn the rules and blindly obey them.
9. **Mark 2:13-14**: ***"He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. ¹⁴And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him."***
- Capernaum was located on a prominent trade route. The tax collector required any goods being transported to pay tax.
 - Jesus had been in Capernaum a substantial time and no doubt had seen Levi frequently, perhaps talked with him.
 - One day while walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw Levi and apparently told him the time had come for him to join the group who followed Him which Levi did.
 - Tax collectors were not welcome in a Synagogue. They were considered to have sold themselves to the Romans.
 - When Jesus called Levi to be a part of His inner circle of disciples, it no doubt created a scandal.
10. **Mark 2:15-16**: ***"And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"***
- Levi gave a dinner for Jesus and His disciples to which he invited fellow tax collectors and others considered sinners.
 - When the Pharisees realized what was going on, they were loudly indignant and asked why Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners.
 - When Jesus heard of what they were saying, He responded with a classic statement.
11. **Mark 2:17**: ***"And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."***
- How were spiritual sinners to get the spiritual treatment they needed if the righteous avoided them?
 - With this statement, Jesus pointedly identified the legalistic hypocrisy of those who considered themselves "too good" to associate with those they considered sinners even when the purpose of association was to offer the sin-healing power of God.