



Mark 2

An OCF Bible Study

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How would you describe the friends carrying the paralytic on the mat (vv. 2-5)? True friends. Committed. How easy it would have been for them to say, "Well, there is no sense trying to get to Jesus today. Maybe we can come back tomorrow." They were desperate just like the leper and had no doubt about Jesus' power.

We can imagine how the friends on the roof must have felt. They went to a lot of trouble to see their friend healed of his paralysis and now the teacher only wants to forgive his sins! Standing on the roof we might imagine them shouting, "No, he's paralyzed! We wanted him to walk, not to be forgiven!" Jesus knew what the man's real and greatest need was. We all need God's forgiveness more than anything.

Jesus saw their faith. It was evident/visible. Can the same be said of us, that others can see our faith (v. 5)?

What might be some evidences of our faith that we can display? How might others see our faith? By seeing clear evidence of the Fruit of Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). By our language. By the way we sincerely and genuinely care for others. As believers, we should be known for the things we do, more so than the things we don't do.

What was the concern of the teachers of the law (vv. 6-7)? Only God himself had the authority to forgive sins. By forgiving the man's sins, Jesus was claiming to have divine authority which angered these religious leaders.

What was the point Jesus was making with His illustration (vv. 8-11)? It was easier to forgive the man's sins than to heal the man, because forgiveness is invisible – no one could verify at that moment if the man was forgiven before God or not. However, it could be instantly verified whether or not the man could walk. Jesus did the "harder" miracle to prove that He was able to do the "easier" miracle.

How did the people respond to the miracle (v. 12)? They praised God, which is exactly what is supposed to happen. Miracles are designed ultimately to glorify God. However, from the reaction of the observers, most of them apparently marveled at the physical miracle (even "glorifying God")—but did not worship Jesus as God.¹

Jesus singled out Levi. What was Levi's profession (v. 14)? He was a tax collector. **What do we know about tax collectors?** They were Jews who worked for the enemy – their Roman oppressors – and had the force of Roman soldiers behind them to make the people pay their taxes. They were the most visible Jewish collaborators with Rome. Tax collectors were despised as traitors. The Jewish people rightly considered them extortioners because they could keep whatever they over-collected.

What is Levi's Greek name? Matthew Who was Matthew? One of the twelve apostles.

Jesus said "follow me" to Levi. What did Levi stand to lose by following Jesus (v. 14)? "Levi gave up a lucrative business for good when he chose to follow Jesus....[responding] immediately to Jesus' gracious, authoritative invitation to follow Him."² For Peter, James, and John, if this "following Jesus" thing didn't pan out, they could easily go back to the fishing business. But it would be nearly impossible for Levi to return to tax collecting. Many others were competing for the greatly sought after career of quick wealth even though they would be shunned by their fellow Jews. **Have you willingly given up anything to follow Jesus?**

What was the significance of having dinner at Levi's house (v. 15)? "Eating a meal together meant something in Jesus' world that it does not mean today in the West. Hospitality was a sacred duty in the ancient Near East. When someone invited someone else to eat with him, he was extending a pledge of loyalty and protection to that person. To accept an invitation to dinner implied a willingness to become a close friend of the host."³

Why do you think tax collectors and sinners were so attracted to Jesus? Because of His unconditional acceptance of them. He didn't pass judgment on them. He accepted them right where they were.

Application: We should do the same with our non-Christian friends. Recognizing they have a natural bent to sin, we shouldn't be surprised or offended when they do so.

What was Jesus' point when He said that those who are well have no need of a physician (v. 17)? Jesus was the physician of the soul, and it makes sense for Him to be with those "sick" with sin. Jesus was saying that He was able to offer what these sinners knew they needed: spiritual healing.

What was the concern of the religious establishment (v. 18)? Jesus' disciples weren't doing things the way they're supposed to be done — "according to *our* tradition." The Pharisees were well known for fasting twice weekly (Luke 18:12). Fasting is a legitimate form of worship, but they had distorted it, turning it into a ritualistic tradition that they legalistically imposed upon the people.

How did Jesus respond (vv. 19-20)? Jesus' message is bold and clear: "I'm not like the Pharisees or John the Baptist. I am the Messiah, the bridegroom to the people of God. Wherever I am, it is appropriate to have the joy we associate with weddings." When He was physically gone, it would be more appropriate to fast — but not now.

Jesus introduced two parables to announce the new era which was incompatible with the old one.

- **What did the old garment and old wineskins represent?** Old Covenant, old system, old way of doing things.
- **What do the patch of unshrunk cloth and the new wine represent?** New Covenant, new worship format, new way of God relating to his people.

Jesus' point was made clear by these examples. You can't fit His new life into the old forms. Jesus came to introduce something new, not to patch up something old. Judaism had become "old" and obsolete and Jesus was going to set up a "new" form of God's kingdom on earth.

Why were the Pharisees concerned about the disciples' picking of the heads of grain (v. 23)? There was nothing wrong with what the disciples did. Though Jesus disciples did something that the Mosaic Law permitted when they plucked the ears of wheat or barley (Deuteronomy 23:25).... by doing it on a Sabbath day, they violated a traditional Pharisaic interpretation of the law. The Pharisees taught that to do what the disciples did in plucking the heads of grain constituted reaping, threshing, and winnowing, and that was forbidden work on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10)."⁴

What did Jesus say about the Sabbath (vv. 27-28)? "The Pharisees made the Sabbath a straitjacket that inhibited the Jews.... Jesus pointed out that God gave the Sabbath as a good gift 'for man.' He designed it to free His people from ceaseless labor and to give them rest."⁵

What was the second principle Jesus declared? That He is the Lord of the Sabbath. If He, the Lord of the Sabbath, was not offended by His disciples' actions, then these sideline critics should not have been either.

It's easy to pick on the Pharisees. However, someone once said that if we examine ourselves closely and honestly, there is a little bit of Pharisee in all of us. Can you find any evidence of Pharisee-like traits in your life? In your heart?

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¹Dr. Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Mark, 2015 Edition* (published by Sonic Light: www.soniclight.com), p. 45

² *Ibid*, p. 46

³ *Ibid*

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 50

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 51