

March 10, 2019

Mark 2:1-12

Faith Expressed (Mark 2:1-5). The very first phrase in Mark 2:1 sets the context for the story that follows. In that phrase, Mark explained that “he (Jesus) entered Capernaum again.” Since Jesus was in Capernaum last, so much had happened. For example, in Mark 1, one reads that Jesus had been preaching in other villages (Mark 1:38) and that He had been performing other miracles (Mark 1:39-42). Due to the reports of those who had been healed, the end of Mark 1 explains that the crowds have gotten so large that Jesus can “no longer enter a town openly” (Mark 1:45). Based on this description, then, it should come as no surprise to discover that when Jesus returned to Capernaum, and people found out about it, they filled the home where He was staying (Mark 2:2).

One group, in particular, merits attention. It is a group of four individuals. They came to Jesus bringing a paralytic. Their desire to help this man see Jesus was so strong that they were willing to take whatever measures they needed to make this happen. When they got to the house where Jesus was and saw the crowd of people, they were undeterred. Instead of leaving, they decided to go up on the roof. They dug through the roof above where Jesus was standing and lowered this man down before the Lord. The text states that when Jesus saw the faith of these four helpers, He said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5). This statement would surely bring joy to the crowd would it not? Not necessarily.

Authority Questioned (Mark 2:6-7). Among those in attendance that day were a group of scribes. In the days of Jesus, scribes had a variety of functions. According to one commentator, scribes were known primarily as teachers of the law and as authorities in biblical interpretation. So, when they heard Jesus proclaim forgiveness of sins, they believed that He was committing blasphemy (Mark 2:7). This was a serious charge. According to Leviticus, the penalty for blasphemy in the Old Testament was death. To blaspheme was to use irreverent or impious speech about God. Since only God could forgive sins, what Jesus had done was unbiblical. Certainly, Jesus, a man, did not have that kind of authority.

Power Proclaimed (Mark 2:8-11). According to Mark, the scribes had said nothing audibly among themselves. They were simply thinking these things about Jesus in their hearts. Jesus knew, however, what they were thinking and asked them, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?” (Mark 2:8). This question led Jesus to ask another question of this group: “Which is easier to say to the paralytic, ‘your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat, and walk?’” (Mark 2:9). To demonstrate to the scribes that He had authority on earth, Jesus spoke to the paralytic and said, “get up, take your mat, and go home” (Mark 2:11).

Authority Demonstrated (Mark 2:12). What happened next astounded the crowd who had gathered at this home! After Jesus spoke to the paralytic, the text succinctly but powerfully explains that “Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone” (Mark 2:12). Wow! Is it any wonder that they people were astounded and that they glorified God? With this miracle, Jesus demonstrated to the crowd, in general, and the scribes, in particular, that He did have authority to forgive sins. By the way, that message still rings true today. The Son of Man has authority to forgive sins.