

Mark 2:2-4

*“And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.”*

Life, it can be said, is a series of barriers. There are educational barriers for entrance to many jobs, financial barriers to purchase a home, and status barriers for entering social groups. The issue with barriers in our lives is what will we do about them? Will they become the excuse we use to give up and turn away or will they be the proving ground of our character and perseverance to excel? How we approach the barriers God has placed in our lives will define who we are and who Jesus Christ is to us.

The men in our passage knew about barriers. Certainly the impenetrable thicket of people surrounding the house where Jesus was teaching is a road block which would turn many away with a simple excuse of at least, “we tried.” But the friends of the paralytic were not ones to be daunted by the human forest around the front door. Showing uncommon resourcefulness, his friends find a way to the roof where they dig through to lower their friend to Jesus. But the crowd is only one of the barriers that need to be overcome for the paralytic to be healed.

A barrier not addressed but equally present is the suspicious skepticism of the religious leaders in the room. They are witnesses to the healing act of the Messiah, yet the question in their hearts is “Why does this man speak that way?” A priest could pronounce the forgiveness of sin on the basis of repentance and sacrifice (Leviticus 4, 5, and 16), but Jesus states He can forgive sins as if He were God. Either these words of Jesus are incredibly outrageous or incredibly wonderful. And how intimidating would it be to choose between the words of this Healer or the pressure from your religious leaders and men of authority. How often are we cowed by the stare or word of scoffing we hear from co-workers and family to turn away from the words of the Messiah which offer forgiveness and cleanse us from guilt of sin? The authority of the Messiah exceeds the peer pressure of those around us to think they have no need of the healing touch of the Messiah because the Messiah came to save sinners, not the self righteous who scoff at the grace of God.

And yet another barrier exists for the paralytic and us as well: our own skepticism. Will someone who has to be carried in on a stretcher by others believe the words of Jesus about the forgiveness of sins and then act on Jesus command to get up and carry it outside? Or will we accept the judgment of the world and say to ourselves, this man cannot forgive what I have done. How often do we, paralyzed by the sin in our lives, look at Jesus but think to ourselves, I cannot get up and carry anything because this barrier is too great for me to overcome? You see, there comes a time when each one of us has to make faith our own. The faith of his friends to get him to this point is for naught if this man does not exercise his faith and obey Jesus. You may be here this morning at the urging and prayer of a friend or family members. But for all the faith of your family, it will have no benefit for you unless you respond to the words of Jesus and stand up, tuck your mat under your arm and walk to the glory of God.