

A WORD ON WORSHIP

REVIEW OF MESSAGE FROM MARCH 25, 2018

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Luke 5:20-21

“Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”

This is the colorful story of the paralytic man whose friends lowered him through the roof as Jesus spoke in a crowded house (Luke 5:17-26). Mark’s gospel is the most elaborate in describing the men digging through the roof. If this were Peter’s house you can imagine how he, not to mention his wife, felt to have his house jammed with people and then to see these four guys dig a hole through his roof to let their friend down in front of Jesus! As a preacher, I can relate to the problem of dealing with distractions while you’re preaching. As Jesus was speaking, some of the people in the front row began feeling dirt raining down on their heads. As they looked up, they saw a patch of daylight through the ceiling. As they kept looking, it grew until they saw four sweaty-faced men who proceeded to lower this guy on a stretcher right in front of Jesus. How do you stick to your message when that happens?

Jesus had a minute to think about His response. He surprised everyone by saying to the paralytic, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” It must have startled the guys on the roof. One of them had his head down through the opening so he could hear. The other guys were asking, “What did Jesus say?” He relayed, “He said that his sins are forgiven.” “His sins are forgiven? Didn’t He heal him? You mean we went to all the trouble of making this hole through the roof and letting him down just so he could get his sins forgiven? We want him healed.



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Some may look at this poor man and say, “His main need is for emotional healing. Imagine what he must feel like, being totally dependent on others for everything he needed. But Jesus did not say, “Friend, I want you to feel good about yourself.” He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” Others may have said, “What this man needs is economic and educational help. Let’s give him food stamps, government health care benefits and some job training.” But Jesus said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

Forgiveness of sins is not just a little option, thrown in with the total benefit package of the abundant life. If the Bible’s message about death and eternal judgment is correct, then forgiveness is the main need of every person. People don’t primarily need their marriages fixed, emotional problems resolved or economic help. People need to know with assurance from God that their sins are forgiven. All other needs are secondary. As Jesus taught on another occasion, “What profit is it to gain the whole world and lose your soul?” (Matt. 16:25). There’s something much more important than having a healthy body and plenty of money; it’s having God forgive your sins.

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