

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CARRIED BY FOUR.

A Sermon

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“And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed. And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judæa, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.”—Luke v. 16–26.

YOU have this same narrative in the ninth chapter of Matthew, and in the second chapter of Mark. What is three times recorded by inspired pens must be regarded as trebly important, and well worthy of our earnest consideration. Observe the instructive fact, that our Saviour retired and spent a special time in prayer when he saw unusual crowds assembling. He withdrew into the wilderness to hold communion with his Father, and, as a consequence, to come forth clothed with an abundance of healing and saving power. Not but that in himself as God he always had that power without measure; but for our sakes he did it, that we might learn that the power of God will only rest upon us in proportion as we draw near to God. Neglect of private prayer is the locust which devours the strength of the church.

When our Lord left his retirement he found the crowd around him exceeding great, and it was as motley as it was great; for while here were many sincere believers, there were still more sceptical observers; some were anxious to receive his healing power, others equally desirous to find occasion against him. So in all congregations, however the preacher may be clothed with his Master's spirit and his Master's might, there will be a mixed gathering; there will come together your Pharisees and doctors of the law, your sharp critics ready to pick holes, your cold-blooded cavillers searching for faults; at the same time, chosen of God and drawn by his grace, there will be present some devout believers who rejoice in the power that is revealed among men, and earnest seekers who wish to feel in themselves the healing energy. It seems to have been a rule with our Saviour to supply each hearer with food after his kind. The Pharisees soon found the matters to cavil at for which they were looking; the Saviour so worded his expressions that they caught at them eagerly, and charged him with blasphemy; the enmity of their hearts was thus thrown out upon the surface that the Lord might have an opportunity of rebuking it; and had they been but willing, the power of the Lord was present to heal even them. Meanwhile, those poor tremblers who were praying for healing were not disappointed; the Good Physician passed not by a single case, and at the same time his disciples who were looking for opportunities of praising him anew, were also fully gratified, for with glad eyes they saw the paralytic restored, and heard sins forgiven.

The case which the narrative brings before us, is that of a man stricken down with paralysis. This sad disease may have been of long continuance. There is a paralysis which gradually kills the body, binding it more and more surely in utter helplessness. The nerve power is almost destroyed; the power of motion is entirely suspended; and yet the faculties of the mind remain, though greatly weakened, and some of them almost extinguished. Some have thought that this man may have been stricken with what is called the universal paralysis, which very speedily brings on death, which may account for the extreme haste of the four bearers to bring him near the Saviour. We do not know the details of his case, but certain is it that he was paralyzed; and, as I look at the case, and study the three records, I think I perceive with equal clearness that this paralysis was in some way or other, at least in the man's own judgment, connected with his sin. He was evidently penitent, as well as paralytic. His mind was as much oppressed as his bodily frame. I do not know that he could be altogether called a believer, but it is most probable that being burdened with a sense of sin he had a feeble hope in divine mercy, which, like a spark in smoking flax, had hard work to exist, but yet was truly there. The affliction for which his friends

pitied him was in his body, but he himself felt a far severer trouble in his soul, and probably it was not so much with the view of being healed bodily, as in the hope of spiritual blessing, that he was willing to be subjected to any process by which he might come under the Saviour's eye. I gather that from the fact that our Saviour addressed him in these words, "Be of good cheer;" intimating that he was desponding, that his spirit sunk within him, and, therefore, instead of saying to him at once, "Rise, take up thy bed," our tender-hearted Lord said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." He gave him at the outset a blessing for which the patient's friends had not asked, but which the man, though speechless, was seeking for in the silence of his soul. He was a "son," though an afflicted one; he was ready to obey the Lord's bidding when power was given, though as yet he could neither lift hand nor foot. He was longing for the pardon of sin, yet could not stretch out his hand to lay hold upon the Saviour.

I intend to use this narrative for practical purposes; may the Holy Spirit make it really useful. Our first remark will be this:

I. THERE ARE CASES WHICH WILL NEED THE AID OF A LITTLE BAND OF WORKERS BEFORE THEY WILL BE FULLY SAVED.

This man must needs be borne of four, so the evangelist, Mark, tells us; there must be a bearer at each corner of the couch whereon he lay. The great mass of persons who are brought into the kingdom of Christ are converted through the general prayers of the church by the means of her ministry. Probably three out of four of the members of any church will owe their conversion to the church's regular teaching in some form or other; her school, her pulpit, her press have been the nets in which they were taken. Private personal prayer has, of course, in many instances been mingled with all this; but still the most of cases could not be so distinctly traced out as to be attributable mainly to individual prayers or exertions. This is the rule, I think, that the Lord will have the many brought to himself by the sounding of the great trumpet of jubilee in the dispensation of the gospel by his ministers. There are some, again, who are led to Jesus by the individual efforts of one person; just as Andrew found his own brother Simon, so one believer by his private communication of the truth to another person becomes instrumental, by the power of God's Spirit, in his conversion. One convert will bring another, and that other a third. But this narrative seems to show that there are cases which will neither be brought by the general preaching of the word, nor yet by the instrumentality of one; they require that there should be two, or three, or four in holy combination, who, with one consent, feeling one common agony of soul, shall resolve to band themselves together as a company for this one object, and never to cease from their holy confederation until this object is gained and their friend is saved. This

man could not be brought to Christ by one, he must have four to lend their strength for his carrying, or he cannot reach the place of healing. Let us apply the principle. Yonder is a householder as yet unsaved: his wife has prayed for him long; her prayers are yet unanswered. Good wife, God has blessed thee with a son who with thee rejoices in the fear of God. Hast thou not two Christian daughters also? O ye four, take each a corner of this sick man's couch and bring your husband, bring your father, to the Saviour. A husband and a wife are here, both happily brought to Christ; you are praying for your children; never cease from that supplication: pray on. Perhaps one of your beloved family is unusually stubborn. Extra help is needed. Well, to you the Sabbath school teacher will make a third; he will take one corner of the bed; and happy shall I be if I may join the blessed quaternion, and make the fourth. Perhaps, when home discipline, the school's teaching, and the minister's preaching shall go together, the Lord will look down in love and save your child. Dear brother, you are thinking of one whom you have long prayed for; you have spoken to him also, and used all proper means, but as yet without effect. Perhaps you speak too comfortingly to him: it may be you have not brought that precise truth to bear upon him which his conscience requires. Seek yet more help. It may possibly be that a second brother will speak instructively, where you have only spoken consolingly; perhaps the instruction may be the means of grace. Yet may it possibly happen that even instruction will not suffice any more than consolation, and it may be needful for you to call in a third, who perhaps will speak impressively with exhortation, and with warning, which may possibly be the great requisite. You two, already in the field, may balance his exhortation, which might have been too pungent by itself, and might have raised prejudice in the person's mind if it had come alone. All three of you together may prove the fit instruments in the Lord's hand. Yet when you three have happily combined, it may be the poor paralysed one is not yet affected savingly; a fourth may be needed, who, with deeper affection than all three of you, and perhaps with an experience more suited to the case than yours, may come in, and working with you, the result may be secured. The four fellow-helpers together may accomplish, by the power of the Spirit, what neither one, nor two, nor three were competent to have done. It may sometimes happen that a man has heard Paul preach, but his clear doctrine, though it has enlightened his intellect, has not yet convinced his conscience. He has heard Apollos, and the glow of the orator's eloquent appeals has warmed his heart, but not humbled his pride. He has later still listened to Cephas, whose rough cutting sentences have hewn him down, and convinced him of sin; but ere he can find joy and peace in believing, he will require to hear the sweet affectionate words of John. Only when the fourth

shall grasp the bed and give a hearty lift will the paralysed person be laid in mercy's path. I anxiously desire to see in this church little bands of men and women bound to each other by zealous love to souls. I would have you say to one another, "This is a case in which we feel a common interest: we will pledge each other to pray for this person; we will unitedly seek his salvation." It may be that one of our seat-holders, after listening to my voice these ten or fifteen years, is not impressed; it may be that another has left the Sabbath-school unsaved. Let brotherly quaternions look after these by God's help. Moved by one impulse, form a square about these persons, beset them behind and before, and let them not say, "No man careth for my soul." Meet together in prayer with the definite object before you, and then seek that object by the most likely ways. I do not know, my brethren, how much of blessing might come to us through this, but I feel certain that until we have tried it we cannot pronounce a verdict upon it; nor can we be quite sure that we are free from all responsibility to men's souls until we have tested every possible and probable method for doing them good.

I am afraid that there are not many, even in a large church, who will become sick-bearers. Many will say the plan is admirable, but they will leave it to others to carry it out. Remember that the four persons who join in such a labour of love ought all of them to be filled with intense affection to the persons whose salvation they seek. They must be men who will not shrink because of difficulty; who will put forth their whole strength to shoulder the beloved burden, and will persevere until they succeed. They need be strong, for the burden is heavy; they need be resolute, for the work will try their faith; they need be prayerful, for otherwise they labour in vain; they must be believing, or they will be utterly useless,—Jesus saw their faith, and therefore accepted their service; but without faith it is impossible to please him. Where shall we find quartets such as these? May the Lord find them, and may he send them to some of you poor dying sinners who lie paralysed here today.

II. We now pass on to the second observation, that SOME CASES THUS TAKEN UP WILL NEED MUCH THOUGHT BEFORE THE DESIGN IS ACCOMPLISHED.

The essential means by which a soul is saved is clear enough. The four bearers had no question with each other as to what was the way to effect this man's cure: they were unanimous in this—that they must bring him to Jesus; by some means or other, by hook or by crook, they must place him in the Saviour's way. That was undoubted fact. The question was, how to do this? There is an old worldly proverb, that "where there's a will there's a way;" and that proverb, I believe, may be safely imported into spiritual things, almost without a caution or grain of salt. "Where there's a will

there's a way;" and if men be called of God's grace to a deep anxiety for any particular soul, there is a way by which that soul may be brought to Jesus; but that way may not suggest itself till after much consideration. In some cases the way to impress the heart may be an out-of-the-way way, an extraordinary way—a way which ordinarily should not be used and would not be successful. I dare say the four bearers in the narrative thought early in the morning, "We will carry this poor paralytic to the Saviour, passing into the house by the ordinary door;" but when they attempted to do so the multitudes so blocked up the road that they could not even reach the threshold. "Make way; make way for the sick! Stand aside there, and give room for a poor paralysed man. For mercy's sake, give a little space, and let the sick man reach the healing prophet!" In vain their entreaties and commands. Here and there a few compassionate persons back out of the crowd, but the many neither can nor will remove; besides, many of them are engaged upon a similar business, and have equal reasons for pressing in. "See," cries one of the four, "I will make way;" and he pushes and elbow's himself a little distance into the passage. "Come on you three!" he cries: "follow up, and fight for it, inch by inch." But they cannot do it; it is impossible; the poor patient is ready to die for fear; the bed is tossed about by the throng like a cockleshell boat on the sea-waves, the patient's alarm increases, the bearers are distressed, and they are quite glad to get outside again and consider. It is evidently quite impossible by ordinary means to get him in. What then? "We cannot burrow under the ground: can we not go over the heads of the people, and let the man down from above? Where is the staircase?" Frequently there is an external staircase to the top of an eastern house; we cannot be sure that there was one in this case; but if not, the next door house may have had such a convenience, and so the resolute bearers reached the top and passed from one roof to another. Where we have no definite information much may be left to conjecture; but this much is clear: by some means they elevated their unhappy burden to the house-top, and provided themselves with the necessary tackle with which to let him down. The Saviour was probably preaching in one of the upper rooms, unless the house was a poor one without an upper story. Perhaps the room was open to the courtyard, which was crowded. At any rate, the Lord Jesus was under cover of a roof, and a substantial roof too. No one who carefully reads the original will fail to see that there was real roofing to be broken through. It has been suggested as a difficulty, that the breaking up of a roof might involve danger to those below, and would probably make a great smother of dust and to avoid this, there have been various suppositions—such as that the Saviour was standing under an awning, and the men rolled up the canvas; or that our Lord stood under a veranda with a very light cov-

ering, which the men could readily uncover; others have even invented a trap-door for the occasion. But with all due deference to eminent travellers, the words of the evangelists cannot be so readily disposed of. According to our text, the man was let down through “tiling,” not canvas, or any light material; whatever sort of tiling it was, it was certainly made of burnt clay, for that enters into the essence of the word. Moreover, according to Mark, after they had uncovered the roof, which, I suppose, means the removal of the “tiling,” they *broke it up*, which looks exceedingly like breaking through a ceiling. The Greek word used by Mark, which is interpreted “breaking up,” is a very emphatic word, and signifies digging through, or scooping up, which evidently conveys the idea of considerable labour for the removal of material. We are told that the roofs of Oriental houses are often made of big stones; that may be true as a general rule, but not in this case, for the house was covered with tiles; and as to the dust and falling rubbish, that may or may not be a necessary conclusion; but as clear as noonday is it that a substantial housetop, which required untiling and digging through, had a hole made in it, and through the aperture the man in his bed was let down. Perhaps there was dust, and possibly there was danger too, but the bearers were prepared to accomplish their purpose at all risks. They must get the sick man in somehow. There is no need, however, to suppose either, for no doubt the four men would be careful not to incommode the Saviour or his hearers. The tiles or plaster might be removed to another part of the flat roof, and the boards likewise, as they were broken up; and as for the spars, they might be sufficiently wide to admit the narrow couch of the sick man without moving any of them from their places. Mr. Hartley, in his Travels, says: “When I lived at Ægina I used to look up not unfrequently at the roof above my head, and contemplate how easily the whole transaction of the paralytic might take place. The roof was made in the following manner:—A layer of reeds, of a large species, was placed upon the rafters; on these a quantity of heather was strewed; on the heather earth was deposited, and beaten down into a solid mass. Now, what difficulty would there be in removing first the earth, next the heather, and then the reeds? Nor would the difficulty be increased, if the earth had a pavement of tiling laid upon it. No inconvenience could result to the persons in the house, from the removal of the tiles and earth; for the heather and reeds would stop anything that might otherwise fall down, and would be removed last of all.” To let a man down through the roof was a device most strange and striking, but it only gives point to the remark which we have now to make here. If we want to have souls saved, we must not be too squeamish and delicate about conventionalities, rules, and proprieties, for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. We must make up our minds to this: “Smash

or crash, everything shall go to pieces which stands between the soul and its God: it matters not what tiles are to be taken off, what plaster is to be digged up, or what boards are to be torn away, or what labour, or trouble, or expense we may be at; the soul is too precious for us to stand upon nice questions. If by any means we may save some, is our policy. Skin for skin, yea, all that we have is nothing comparable to a man's soul." When four true hearts are set upon the spiritual good of a sinner, their holy hunger will break through stone walls or house roofs.

I have no doubt it was a difficult task to carry the paralysed man upstairs; the breaking up of the roof, the removing the tiling with all due care, must have been a laborious task, and have required much skill, but the work was done, and the end was gained. We must never stop at difficulties; however stern the task, it must always be more difficult to us to let a soul perish than to labour in the most self-denying form for its deliverance.

It was a very singular action which the bearers performed. Who would have thought of breaking up a roof? Nobody but those who loved much, and much desired to benefit the sick. O that God would make us attempt singular things to save souls. May a holy ingenuity be excited in the church; a sacred inventiveness set at work for winning men's hearts. It appeared to his generation a singular thing when John Wesley stood on his father's tombstone and preached at Epworth. Glory be to God that he had the courage to preach in the open air. It seemed an extraordinary thing when certain ministers delivered sermons in the theatres; but it is matter of joy that sinners have been reached by such irregularities who might have escaped all other means. Let us but feel our hearts full of zeal for God, and love for souls, and we shall soon be led to adopt means which others may criticise, but which Jesus Christ will accept.

After all, the method which the four friends followed was one most suitable to their abilities. They were, I suppose, four strong fellows, to whom the load was no great weight, and the work of digging was comparatively easy. The method suited their capacity exactly. And what did they do when they had let the sick man down? Look at the scene and admire? I do not read that they said a single word, yet what they did was enough: abilities for lifting and carrying did the needful work. Some of you say, "Ah, we cannot be of any use; we wish we could preach." These men could not preach: they did not need to preach. They lowered the paralytic, and their work was done. They could not preach, but they could hold a rope. We want in the Christian church not only preachers, but soul-winners, who can bear souls on their hearts, and feel the solemn burden; men who, it may be, cannot talk, but who can weep; men who cannot break other men's hearts with their language, but who break their own hearts with their compassion.

In the case before us there was no need to plead “Jesus, thou son of David, look up, for a man is coming down who needs thee.” There was no need to urge that the patient had been so many years sick. We do not know that the man himself uttered a word. Helpless and paralysed, he had not the vigour to become a suppliant. They placed his almost lifeless form before the Saviour’s eye, and that was appeal enough; his sad condition was more eloquent than words. O hearts that love sinners lay their lost estate before Jesus; bring their cases as they are before the Saviour; if your tongues stammer, your hearts will prevail; if you cannot speak even to Christ himself, as you would desire, because you have not the gift of prayer, yet if your strong desires spring from the spirit of prayer you cannot fail. God help us to make use of such means as are within our power, and not to sit down idly to regret the powers we do not possess. Perhaps it would be dangerous for us to possess the abilities we covet; it is always safe to consecrate those we have.

III. Now we must pass on to an important truth. We may safely gather from the narrative THAT THE ROOT OF SPIRITUAL PARALYSIS GENERALLY LIES IN UNPARDONED SIN.

Jesus intended to heal the paralysed man, but he did so by first of all saying, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” There are some in this house of prayer this morning who are spiritually paralysed; they have eyes and they see the gospel; they have ears and they have heard it, and heard it attentively too; but they are so paralysed that they will tell you, and honestly tell you, that they cannot lay hold upon the promise of God; they cannot believe in Jesus to the saving of their souls. If you urge them to pray, they say: “We try to pray, but it is not acceptable prayer.” If you bid them have confidence, they will tell you, though not in so many words perhaps, that they are given up to despair. Their mournful ditty is:—

“I would, but cannot sing;
I would, but cannot pray;
For Satan meets me when I try,
And frights my soul away.

I would, but can’t repeat,
Though I endeavour oft;
This stony heart can ne’er relent
Till Jesus makes it soft.

I would, but cannot love,
Though woo’d by love divine;
No arguments have power to move
A soul so base as mine.

O could I but believe!
Then all would easy be:
I would, but cannot—Lord, relieve:
My help must come from thee.”

The bottom of this paralysis is sin upon the conscience, working death in them. They are sensible of their guilt, but powerless to believe that the crimson fountain can remove it: they are alive only to sorrow, despondency, and agony. Sin paralyses them with despair. I grant you that into this despair there enters largely the element of unbelief, which is sinful; but I hope there is also in it a measure of sincere repentance, which bears in it the hope of something better. Our poor, awakened paralytics sometimes hope that they may be forgiven, but they cannot believe it; they cannot rejoice; they cannot cast themselves on Jesus; they are utterly without strength. Now, the bottom of it, I say again, lies in unpardoned sin, and I earnestly entreat you who love the Saviour to be earnest in seeking the pardon of these paralysed persons. You tell me that *I* should be earnest; so I should; and so I desire to be: but, brethren, their cases appear to be beyond the minister’s sphere of action; the Holy Spirit determines to use other agencies in their salvation. They have heard the public word; they now need private consolation and aid, and that from three or four. Lend us your help, ye earnest brethren; form your parties of four; grasp the couches of these who wish to be saved, but who feel they cannot believe. The Lord, the Holy Spirit, make you the means of leading them into forgiveness and eternal salvation. They have been lying a long time waiting; their sin, however, still keeps them where they are; their guilt prevents their laying hold on Christ; there is the point, and it is for such cases that I earnestly invoke my brethren’s aid.

IV. Let us proceed to notice, fourthly, that JESUS CAN REMOVE BOTH THE SIN AND THE PARALYSIS IN A SINGLE MOMENT. It was the business of the four bearers to bring the man to Christ; but there their power ended. It is our part to bring the guilty sinner to the Saviour: there our power ends. Thank God, when *we* end, Christ begins, and works right gloriously. Observe that he began by saying: “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” He laid the axe at the root; he did not desire that the man’s sins might be forgiven, or express a good wish in that direction, but he pronounced an absolution by virtue of that authority with which he was clothed as the Saviour. The poor man’s sins there and then ceased to be, and he was justified in the sight of God. Believest thou this, my hearer, that Christ did thus for the paralytic man? Then I charge you believe something more, that if on earth Christ had power to forgive sins before he had offered an atonement, much more hath

he power to do this, now that he hath poured out his blood, and hath said, "It is finished," and hath gone into his glory, and is at the right hand of the Father. He is exalted on high, to give repentance and remission of sin. Should he send his Spirit into thy soul to reveal himself in thee, thou wouldst in an instant be entirely absolved. Does blasphemy blacken thee? Does a long life of infidelity pollute thee? Hast thou been licentious? Hast thou been abominably wicked? A word can absolve thee—a word from those dear lips which said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." I charge thee ask for that absolving word. No earthly priest can give it thee; but the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus, can utter it at once. Ye twos and fours who are seeking the salvation of men, here is encouragement for you. Pray for them now, while the gospel is being preached in their hearing; pray for them day and night, and bring the glad tidings constantly before them, for Jesus is still able "to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

After our blessed Lord had taken away the root of the evil, you observe he then took away the paralysis itself. It was gone in a single moment. Every limb in the man's body was restored to a healthy state; he could stand, could walk, could lift his bed, both nerve and muscle were restored to vigour. One moment will suffice, if Jesus speaks, to make the despairing happy, and the unbelieving full of confidence. What *we* cannot do with our reasonings, persuadings, and entreaties, nor even with the letter of God's promise, Christ can do in a single instant by his Holy Spirit, and it has been our joy to see it done. This is the standing miracle of the church, performed by Christ today even as aforesaid. Paralysed souls who could neither do nor will, have been able to do valiantly, and to will with solemn resolution. The Lord has poured power into the faint, and to them that had no might he hath increased strength. He can do it still. I say again to loving spirits who are seeking the good of others, let this encourage you. You may not have to wait long for the conversions you aim at; it may be ere another Sabbath ends, the person you pray for may be brought to Jesus; or if you have to wait a little, the waiting shall well repay you, and meanwhile remember he has never spoken in secret in the dark places of the earth; he has not said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye my face in vain."

V. Passing on, and drawing to a conclusion: WHEREVER OUR LORD WORKS THE DOUBLE MIRACLE, IT WILL BE APPARENT. He forgave the man's sin and took away his disease at the same time. How was this apparent? I have no doubt the pardon of the man's sin was best known to himself; but possibly those who saw that gleaming countenance which had been so sad before, might have noticed that the word of absolution sunk into his soul as the rain into the thirsty earth. "Thy sins be forgiven thee," fell on him as a

dew from heaven; he believed the sacred declaration, and his eyes sparkled. He might almost have felt indifferent whether he remained paralysed or not, it was such joy to be forgiven, forgiven by the Lord himself. That was enough, quite enough for him; but it was not enough for the Saviour, and therefore he bade him take up his couch and walk, for he had given him strength to do so. The man's healing was proved by his obedience. Openly to all onlookers an active obedience became indisputable proof of the poor creature's restoration. Notice, our Lord bade him rise—he rose; he had no power to do so except that power which comes with divine commands. He rose, for Christ said "Rise." Then he folded up that miserable palliasse—the Greek word used shows us that it was a very poor, mean, miserable affair—he rolled it up as the Saviour bade him, he shouldered it, and went to his home. His first impulse must have been to throw himself down at the Saviour's feet, and say, "Blessed be thy name;" but the Master said, "Go to thy house and I do not find that he stayed to make one grateful obeisance, but elbowing the crowd, jostling the throng with his load on his back, he proceeded to his house just as he was told, and that without deliberation, or questioning. He did his Lord's bidding, and he did it accurately, in detail, at once, and most cheerfully? Oh! how cheerfully; none can tell but those in like case restored. So, the true sign of pardoned sin, and of paralysis removed from the heart, is obedience. If thou art really saved thou wilt do what Jesus bids thee; thy request will be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and that once ascertained, thou wilt be sure to do it. You tell me Christ has forgiven you, and yet you live in rebellion to his commands; how can I believe you? You say you are a saved man, and yet you wilfully set up your own will against Christ's will; what evidence have I of what you say? Have I not, rather, clear evidence that you speak not the truth? Open, careful, prompt, cheerful obedience to Christ, becomes the test of the wonderful work which Jesus works in the soul.

VI. Lastly, ALL THIS TENDS TO GLORIFY GOD.

Those four men had been the indirect means of bringing much honour to God and much glory to Jesus, and they, I doubt not, glorified God in their very hearts on the housetop. Happy men to have been of so much service to their bedridden friend! Who else united in glorifying God? Why, first the man who was restored. Did not every part of his body glorify God? I think I see him! He sets one foot down to God's glory, he plants the other to the same note, he walks to God's glory, he carries his bed to God's glory, he moves his whole body to the glory of God, he speaks, he shouts, he sings, he leaps to the glory of God. When a man is saved his whole manhood glorifies God; he becomes instinct with a new-born life which glows in every part of him, spirit, soul and body. As an heir of heaven, he brings

glory to the Great Father who has adopted him into the family, he breathes and eats and drinks to God's praise. When a sinner is brought into the church of God we are all glad, but we are none of us so joyous and thankful as he; we would all praise God, but *he* must praise him the loudest, and he will.

But who next glorified God? The text does not say so, but we feel sure that his family did, for he went to his own house. We will suppose that he had a wife. That morning when the four friends came and put him on the bed, and carried him out, it may be she shook her head in loving anxiety, and I dare say she said, "I am half afraid to trust him with you. Poor, poor creature, I dread his encountering the throng. I am afraid it is madness to hope for success. I wish you Godspeed in it, but I tremble. Hold well the bed; be sure you do not let him fall. If you do let him down through the roof hold fast the ropes, be careful that no accident occurs to my poor bed-ridden husband; he is bad enough as he is, do not cause him more misery." But when she saw him coming home, walking with the bed on his back, can you picture her delight? How she would begin to sing, and praise and bless the Lord Jehovah Rophi, who had healed her beloved one. If there were little children about, playing before the house, how they would shout for glee, "Here's father; here's father walking again, and come home with the bed on his back; he is made whole again, as he used to be when we were very little." What a glad house! They would gather round him, all of them, wife and children, and friends and neighbours, and they would begin to sing, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities: who healeth all thy diseases." How the man would sing those verses, rejoicing in the forgiveness first, and the healing next, and wondering how it was that David knew so much about it, and had put his case into such fit words.

Well, but it did not end there. A wife and family utters but a part of the glad chorus of praise, though a very melodious part. There are other adoring hearts who unite in glorifying the healing Lord. The disciples who were around the Saviour, they glorified God, too. They rejoiced, and said one to another, "We have seen strange things today." The whole Christian church is full of sacred praise when a sinner is saved; even heaven itself is glad.

But there was glory brought to God, even by the common people who stood around. They had not yet entered into that sympathy with Christ which the disciples felt, but they were struck by the sight of this great wonder, and they, too, could not help saying that God had wrought great marvels. I pray that onlookers, strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, when they see the desponding comforted, and lost ones brought in, may be

compelled to bear their witness to the power of divine grace, and be led themselves to be partakers in it. There is “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men,” when a paralysed soul is filled with gracious strength.

Now, shall I need to stand here, and entreat for the four to carry poor souls to Jesus? Shall I need to appeal to my brethren who love their Lord, and say, band yourselves together to win souls? Your humanity to the paralytic soul claims it, but your desire to bring glory to God compels it. If you are indeed what you profess to be, to glorify God must be the fondest wish and the loftiest ambition of your souls. Unless ye be traitors to my Lord as well as inhuman to your fellow-men, you will catch the practical thought which I have striven to bring before you, and you will seek out some fellow Christians, and say, “Come, let us pray together, for such a one,” and if you know a desperate case you will make up a sacred quaternion, to resolve upon its salvation. May the power of the Highest abide upon you, and who knoweth what glory the Lord may gain through you? Never forget this strange story of the bed which carried the man, and the man who carried his bed.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke v. 1–26.

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