

# Mark 2

by John Nelson Darby

---

*Jesus' ministry and the paralytic man's faith demonstrate the power of faith and perseverance in seeking Jesus, and the gospel's message of forgiveness and salvation.*

**Scripture:** Mark 2:1

**Topics:** "Faith", "Grace and Forgiveness"

---

## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of faith and the power of Jesus to forgive sins and heal, as illustrated by the story of the paralytic man who was lowered through the roof to reach Jesus. He highlights that true faith overcomes obstacles and recognizes the need for a Savior, while also pointing out that Jesus came to call sinners to repentance, demonstrating God's grace and love. The sermon underscores the transition from the law to grace, emphasizing that Christ's presence brings forgiveness and healing, and that the new covenant established through His sacrifice is a source of true rest and righteousness for believers.

---

## Transcript

But after some days, when the expectation had lessened a little, the Lord enters again into the city. It was soon noised abroad that He was in the house, and so many came together that there was no room to receive them, not even about the door. Jesus preached the word to them, because this service was always His first object. He was the Word, He was the Truth, He was Himself that which His word announced, of whom man had need. His word, too, was confirmed by His works, and the people knew that He possessed the power that could deliver them from every evil.

They bring a paralytic man, carried of four; but not being able to get as far as Jesus, hindered as they were by the crowd, they uncover the roof - easily done in the East - and let down the paralytic man to the place where Jesus was. This was an evident proof of their faith; it was the deep sense of need, and confidence in Jesus, in His love, in His power. Without an urgent desire to be healed, and a full confidence in the power and love of Jesus, they would have been discouraged by the difficulty presented by the crowd, and would have gone back, saying perhaps, "We will come again, we may be able to get at Him another time." But there are no difficulties for faith; its principles are these - the need of finding the Saviour, of feeling our misery, and of feeling that Jesus alone can heal us - that His love is strong enough to look upon us in our wretchedness. It is of course the work of the Spirit which reveals Jesus to us; but He produces such a sense of our wretchedness that we are impelled to go to seek the Lord, and difficulties do

not drive us back, because we know that Jesus alone can heal us, that His love is enough; not indeed that we are already sure of being healed, but enough to attract us to Himself in the assurance that He will do it. And if we have already come to Him, faith always produces need in the soul, and the assurance that the Saviour will respond to our need. And Christ never fails to answer to it; He may allow difficulties to prove the faith, but faith that perseveres finds the answer; and that which if we know the Lord's sufficiency, produces this perseverance is the sense of our need. The source of all is the operation of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

242 The Lord takes occasion by the wretched state of the paralytic man to point out the true root of all evils - sin. He had come because sin was in the world, and with what object then but that sin might be forgiven? It is true that, since God is just, it is needful that a perfect atonement be made for sins in order that they may be forgiven. But Jehovah, who knew everything, could administer the pardon by means of the Son of man in that manner which now makes all believers participate in a perfect pardon by means of the gospel. As to His government also He could pardon or leave under the effects of His punishment both individuals and the whole nation. Now He who was present had the right and power to forgive sins upon earth: and He gave the proof of it. In Psalm 103 He is celebrated as the One who would forgive all Israel's iniquities, and heal all his infirmities.

The great need of guilty Israel was this forgiveness: Christ announces it. As to the government of God itself, Israel could not be re-established in blessing, if he did not possess God's pardon. "Thy sins be forgiven thee," said the Lord: the scribes cry out against the blasphemy. But God, the Jehovah of Psalm 103, was there present in the person of the Son of man; and He gives the proof that this right belonged to Him by fulfilling that which is said in that very Psalm: "who healeth all thine infirmities." "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, He saith to the sick of the palsy, Arise, and take up thy bed and go thy way." The man gets up, takes up his bed and goes away. Pardon and power to heal were come upon earth in the person of the Son of man, of Him who, having divine rights and power, was down here in humiliation upon earth to bring the love and the power of God to the wretchedness of man, to the fatal miseries of the soul, giving a proof of it in freeing the body from the sufferings which sin had introduced.

God was present in love. The power to heal was there, but the important truth was that forgiveness was come upon earth. This is the first great truth of the gospel. That which is here announced by Christ is now proclaimed in the gospel which is the means of reconciling God's justice with free pardon, with the full lasting pardon of sins clearly shewn forth before men in the Lord's words. The remission of sins is announced, founded on the Saviour's work. But if this be the spirit of the gospel, if this be the work of Jesus, He must come to call sinners, He must make Himself their friend, in order that they may have confidence, and may believe in this grace, and that the world may know the Saviour's true character.

243 That which follows in our history makes us understand clearly the mission and the ministry of Jesus. He calls Matthew who was sitting at the receipt of custom. The tax was hateful to the Jews, not only because they had to pay it against their will, but much more because it was the proof of their being in slavery to the Gentiles. They had lost their privileges as the free people of God; and when their fellow-countrymen took this office, as they were wont to do, under the Roman knights, their bitterness was very great, and the man who took such a situation became hated as a perfidious traitor of the religion and the nation. Thus these tax-gatherers were despised and detested. Now Matthew invites the Lord, and many other publicans were at table with Jesus and with His disciples.

The scribes and Pharisees raise the question as to how it could be possible that a righteous teacher should sit and eat with unclean men and sinners. Jesus hears this, and answers with divine wisdom. The simplicity of the answer equals its force. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Here it is grace that is working; and the work of Jesus presents a full contrast to the law. The law demanded human justice from man; Christ and the gospel announce divine grace which reigns and reveals God's righteousness. Here we have grace; as to divine righteousness, it should be fully revealed when Christ should have accomplished His work upon the cross: truth as important as it is precious!

Christ, the Saviour, came to seek sinners, and does not seek righteous persons; even were there any such, there would be no need to seek them, but in His sovereign grace and perfect goodness He came to seek sinners; He does not send them away but seeks them, and can sit and eat with them whilst being Himself altogether holy. This is the manifestation of God in love in the midst of sinners to win the hearts of men, and to produce confidence toward God in these hearts, and to bind all the faculties of the soul with the power of a perfect object, and to form it according to the image of that which leads it, and which it contemplates; whence to inspire this confidence, since good was come into the midst of evil, and had taken part in the wretchedness in which fallen man lay - a goodness which did not drive away the sinner on account of his sins, but which invited him to come.

244 Man's ruin began when he lost his confidence in God: the devil had succeeded in persuading Eve that God had not permitted man to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, because He knew that, if he did it, he would be as God, knowing good and evil; that God had forbidden him to touch the tree from jealousy; and, if He did not wish that we should be happy, we must make ourselves happy. And this is what Eve sought, and what all men seek who do their own will. Thus man fell, and thus man remains in all the wretchedness which is the fruit of sin, awaiting God's judgment upon the sin itself. Now, before executing judgment God came in love as Saviour to shew that His love is greater than sin, and that the worst sinner can have confidence in this love that seeks sinners and adapts itself to their wants, which does not demand righteousness from man, and brings him salvation and grace by which to present him finally to God as His righteousness through the work of Christ: but He comes in love to sinful men to reconcile them with Himself. Instead of punishing them for their sins, He finds occasion to manifest the immensity of His love in coming to those who were lying in sin, and in giving Himself as a sacrifice to put it away.

In His life Christ presents this love of God, God Himself manifested in love to man; in His death He is as man before God, made sin for us in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, and that the righteous God, the God of love, never might remember our sins. In the history which we are considering He manifests God's love towards man. The law was the perfect rule of that which man ought to be as son of Adam; it demanded of man that he should be such, and pronounced a curse upon the man who did not do that which it required. It added God's authority to that which was fitting to the relationships in which man finds himself, and gave a perfect rule for conduct to man in these relationships; a rule easily forgotten or broken in the fallen state of man. It did not give life, nor strength, nor objects to attract and rule the heart; but it established the relationship of man with God and with his fellows, and cursed all those who had not kept it, that is, all those that were under it.

245 The flesh does not submit, nor can it submit to the law of God: grace then, whilst it establishes the authority of the law and the curse itself, since Christ the blessed Saviour has borne it, must needs change everything in the ways of God. Forgiveness is not the same as the curse, and paying a debt is very

different from demanding the money. It is quite just to demand payment, but, if the debtor has nothing to pay, he is ruined; whereas, if he pays, he is set free. Christ has done more; not only does He pay the debt, but He has acquired glory for those that believe. Not only has He freed the debtor from his debts, but He has given him an immense fortune in God's presence.

But then the change is complete and perfect, and the Lord's words which follow shew us this. John's disciples and the Pharisees used to fast, and the Lord gives motives why His own could not do it. The Bridegroom was present and so it was not the time for fasting, but the time would soon come when the Bridegroom would be taken away; and then they should fast. The joy of His presence would be turned into sorrow by His absence, by the need which this absence would create in the heart. The other reason is this: it was impossible to mix the two systems; the new wine (the truth and the spiritual power of Christianity) could not be put into old bottles, into the old institutions and ceremonies of Judaism. If this were done, the new wine would destroy the bottles, and both would be spoiled, the wine would be lost and the bottles destroyed. In like manner a piece of new cloth does not suit an old garment: the garment would be torn, and the rent would only be greater. Indeed it is not possible to attach the spiritual power of Christianity to the carnal ceremonies which human nature loves, because it can make of them a religion without a new life, and without the conscience being touched. The unconverted man, if he wishes, may thus do as much good as the converted man. No, the new wine must be kept in new bottles: it is important for us to remember it. The dispensation was changed, a new order was coming in, and all was altered; the nature of the things was different - they could not exist at the same time; fleshly ceremonies and the power of the Holy Ghost could never go together. Think of it, Christians! Christianity has tried to embellish itself with these ceremonies, and often even under Pagan forms; and what has it become? It has adapted itself to the world of which these forms were the rudiments, and has become really pagan, and its true spirituality can hardly be found at all.

246 But there was an institution founded by God, that is, the sign of His covenant with Israel - the sabbath - and it was too the sign of God's rest in the first creation. Now, in Israel man was put to the proof, to see whether, with a perfect rule, and with means offered by the law (God Himself being present in the tabernacle or temple), he could serve God and fulfil righteousness as a son of Adam in the flesh. The sabbath was not "a" seventh day but "the" seventh day, in the which at the end of creation God ceased creating, and rested. The question then arose as to whether man could share God's rest: and the answer is, that he has sinned, and therefore can never have any part in this rest. Under the law he was again put to the proof; and then he made the golden calf before Moses came down from the mountain. God then exercised patience with the people until they rejected Christ. But it was impossible to establish a covenant between God and man after the flesh; man could not enjoy God's rest. More than this; the sabbath of the first creation was for man, and He who enjoyed all the rights of man according to God's counsels was Lord of the sabbath: thus these two principles are unfolded.

First, as when David, the anointed of the Lord, had been rejected, everything was common and profane; so when Christ, the last proof offered to man in the flesh, was rejected, nothing was holy for man; the seal of the first covenant had lost all its meaning. Then, when Christ renounces for a time His position in Israel as Messiah, He becomes (as we see often in the Gospels, Luke 9:21, 22, etc.) the Son of man. Thus He is the Lord of the sabbath which was made for man; thus the sign of the old covenant disappears through man's sin and his rejection of Christ.

247 Christ's resurrection is the beginning of the new creation, the foundation of the new covenant founded upon His blood. This is the sign of God's rest for us. Satisfied, glorified by the death of Jesus, God has

raised Him from among the dead and has found a resting-place for His love and His righteousness; and we, the objects of this love, are made the righteousness of God in Christ.

Thus the Lord's day is a most precious gift from Him, and the true Christian enjoys it with all his heart; and, if he is faithful, he finds himself in the Spirit to enjoy God, happy to be freed from material labour to adore God as his Father, and to enjoy communion with the Lord. It is always a bad sign when a Christian talks of his liberty and makes use of it to neglect the Lord, in order to give himself to the material work of the world. However free a Christian may be, he is free from the world and from the law, in order to serve the Lord. How much good may he not do on the Lord's day! And this is a third principle which is found in chapter 3 in this Gospel.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-nelson-darby/mark-2/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**