

Series: *Jesus the Master Evangelist*

Title: "Tearing Off the Roof" (part 2)

Speaker: Rev. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 4/19/2009

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One of the keys characteristic of a Scripture-driven church is that it practices Bible-based evangelism. Doing evangelism God's way. Preaching the Gospel in its fullness. And, trusting God for the results.

If we are to going to be obedient to the Word of God, we need to understand what the Bible says about evangelism. And we have no better place to look than the four Gospels, and we have no better example than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Master Evangelist. So in this series, we have begun examining three accounts from the evangelistic ministry of the Lord Jesus Himself.

The three accounts we're be studying are the account of Jesus' dealings with the paralytic in Mark chapter two, the rich young ruler in Luke chapter 18, and the publican Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19. Today we are continuing the study we began last time, in the account of the paralytic in Mark chapter two.

I want to begin by calling your attention to the passage once again. So please turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of Mark, chapter two. And let us hear God's Word from Mark chapter two, verses 1 through 12.

1. And again [Jesus] entered Capernaum after some days, and it was heard that He was in the house.

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2. Immediately many gathered together, so that there was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door. And He preached the word to them.
3. Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men.
4. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.
5. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."
6. And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,
7. "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"
8. But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?"

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9. Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'?
10. But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — He said to the paralytic,
11. "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."
12. Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

May the Lord, as He has promised, add His blessing to the reading of His Word.

We saw last time that Jesus had entered a house, an overflow crowd gathered, he began to preach, but then his preaching was interrupted in a most unusual way. And we see also the determination of these four men who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus. Let me read verse four once again:

And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying.

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These men literally took the roof apart in order to get the paralyzed man to Jesus. And they lowered the paralytic man down to Jesus. And some in the crowd have to back away, so that there's room to let down the man on his bed, all the way to the floor.

And I asked you to picture, in your mind's eye, what it would have been like to be in that house, among that crowd, hearing Jesus preach, and then seeing His preaching interrupted in this most unusual way. And now, here is this man, lying on his bed in the middle of the crowd, unable to get up, unable to move. And Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sees him, and moves to him. And as we read last time, in verse five: "Jesus saw their faith."

"Jesus saw their faith." How do you *see* faith? Well, it's interesting here that Mark, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, doesn't use the Greek word that means "to see with the eyes." He uses a different word. He uses the Greek word *oida*, which means "to know something, to possess information about something." And that is the point here. This is the Son of God who saw their faith. This is the discerner of hearts. This is the Lord, the creator God, who doesn't simply look on the outward appearance, but looks on the heart of a man.

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Jesus "saw their faith." Now faith means belief. It means trust. Faith always has an object. And Biblical faith, in particular – the kind of faith we see exercised here – this faith clearly has the Lord Jesus Christ as its object. These four men have brought this paralyzed man to Jesus. They let nothing stand in their way. Not the crowd, not even a building. They have faith in Jesus that He can do for this man what no one else can do. They bring this man to be healed physically. They come expecting a miracle. But Jesus performs not one miracle – but two. Not just the miracle they were anticipating, but also a far greater one.

Once again, place yourself in this scene. There is a hush of anticipation. We're expecting the miracle. We're expecting Jesus to heal this man. He's done it so many times in recent days. And we expect Him now to do it again.

But what does Jesus do? He doesn't heal the man at once. He doesn't immediately relieve his physical problem. No. Jesus recognizes that there is a much deeper and more serious problem. There is a deeper problem in this man. And there is a deeper problem in some of the others who are present.

Mark tells us that Jesus says to the man, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." And Matthew, in his parallel account of this event, elaborates even further. Jesus says, "Son, *be of good cheer*, your sins are forgiven you." And we're

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standing there in the crowd wondering, "Be of good cheer? How can He possibly say such a thing! This man can't even move! He can't even speak! His condition is desperate! And Jesus tells him to be of good cheer, because his sins are forgiven?! This doesn't make sense!"

And to the finite human mind, it wouldn't make sense. "Lord, how can you ignore his real problem? It's all well and good to reassure this man that his sins are forgiven, but can't you see the condition he's in? Aren't you going to do anything about *that*?"

And Jesus will do something about that. But He takes things in their proper order. This man's greatest need is not healing of the body, but the salvation of his soul. And that is the greater miracle that Jesus performs here.

Jesus says, "Son, be of good cheer..." He addresses the man as "Son" – and he is indeed a son. The word that is used for "son" here has to do with lineage. Jesus had told the Pharisees, you are of your father the devil. That is your lineage. But to this man he says, "Son" identifying him for all to see as one of those that John spoke of in his Gospel account when he wrote, "As many as received Him, to them He gave power to be called the sons of God, even to them who believed on His name." Jesus is identifying this man as one of His.

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And the word that is used here is not merely a relational term. It is also, in the original language, an affectionate or intimate form of address. It is a term of endearment. It is a term that indicates a special relationship. Only the Lord Jesus, God in the flesh, the Master Evangelist, could use such a term to address such a man. The Lord knew those who were His.

And He tells him, your sins are forgiven – and in the original, this is a word that signifies a once-for-all action, completed in the past, and never to be repeated. And it is passive – the subject is the recipient of the action – he couldn't do a thing for himself. This is perfect forgiveness. And the word "forgiven" here in the original signifies that the man's sins have been put away, sent away. As the Scripture says, they have been removed "as far as the east is from the west."

Now Charles Spurgeon thought – and I tend to agree with him – Spurgeon thought that Jesus also declared the man's sins forgiven first, because the man may have thought that his physical paralysis was the result of his sin. And this seems to be indicated by the way Jesus says to him, "Son, be of good cheer..." In the original this is a strong imperative – "Son, take heart! Take courage! Cheer up! Your sins are forgiven!" And the implication would be, as Jesus said

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in another case, in John chapter 9, when Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth, and He said this: "It is not because of his sins that this man is in this condition. His physical infirmity has been for the glory of God."

But we read in verses six and seven that "some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'"

And here the unbelieving scribes speak their own condemnation. They refuse to believe that this is the Son of God. They are always looking for a way to accuse Him. They are always looking for a way to trap Jesus. But instead, the Lord Jesus Christ springs a trap on them, verse eight:

But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?"

Again, we have here the all-knowing creator God, the discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus has cloaked His glory, to take on a body of flesh, but God in the flesh still knows the hearts of men. He knew the believing hearts of the paralytic and those who brought him. And he knew the

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unbelieving hearts of the scribes. And Jesus says to these unbelieving scribes, verse nine

Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" — He said to the paralytic, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out **in** the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

A double miracle. The God who heals the sick is also the God who saves the soul. The Lord Jesus Christ not only makes the paralyzed man able to take up his bed and walk, not only postpones physical death, but He saves his soul from Hell, and causes him to walk in newness of life – eternal life.

In the light of this account of the Master Evangelist at work, I'd like for us to consider these questions: How does this account of the healing of the paralytic apply to our own hearts and lives, here and now? And how does it apply to the ministry of the church in doing the work of evangelism? And in this regard, I'd like to focus our attention on one thing in particular, and that is the

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four men who brought this man to Christ. And I'd like to mention several things.

First, people need for us to bring them to Christ. In the physical sense, this man had no capacity to bring himself to the Savior. He needed to be brought. There was a physical distance between this man and the Lord Jesus Christ that needed to be crossed. These four men brought him to Jesus. In the same way, we need to bring people to Jesus. We need to bring them within the sound of the preaching of the Gospel. Faith comes by hearing, Romans tells us, and hearing by the Word of God. People need for us to bring them to Christ.

Second, God often works through multiple people to bring someone to Christ. One or more people may pray for an individual. Someone else may give that person a Bible. Someone else may witness to that individual personally. Someone else may bring that person to church, or to a Bible study. This man, this paralytic, had to be carried by four men, one at each corner of his bed. Each one had to do his part. And God used them all, to bring this man to the Savior. God often works through multiple people to bring someone to Christ.

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Third, bringing someone to Christ involves effort. Sometimes it's inconvenient to take the time to share the Gospel with someone. Sometimes it's inconvenient to bring them to church. Sometimes it's inconvenient to find the time to pray. All of those things involve effort. These four men had to carry the paralyzed man some distance. I'm sure they all had other things to do, but they did this. And they were determined. They tried to get in the door, and they couldn't. They had to carry this man, bed and all, up onto the roof. Even if there was a stairway on the outside, as there were on many houses of that time, it still wasn't an easy thing to do. But God sanctified and blessed their effort. Bringing someone to Christ involves effort.

Fourth, bringing someone to Christ involves determination. Bringing someone to Christ means letting nothing stand in our way. I knew a lady who prayed for her husband's salvation for twenty-four years. He was a vile sinner. He was involved in organized crime. But she kept praying, and living a godly life before him in their home, in spite of what he did, in spite of his abuse, in spite of his hatred of the Gospel. But she was determined to keep on praying for her husband. And she enlisted others to pray.

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And one day, after twenty-four years, God performed the great miracle and saved that man from Hell. He became a diligent worker in the church. He became a witness to the men with whom he had lived a life of sin. Three of his children became missionaries. And he himself became the assistant director of an inner city rescue mission, and he served for many years before the Lord took him home.

These four men were determined. They let nothing stand in their way. They carried this paralyzed man to Christ. They tried to get in the door, but they couldn't. So they went up on the roof. And they literally took the roof apart, because they knew that this man's only hope was in the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to have that same kind of determination. And sometimes it means doing things that are as unconventional as tearing off the roof.

But lastly, in all our efforts we need to remember that it is God who does the saving. These four brought the man to Jesus. It took effort, determination, inconvenience. But that was where their abilities ended. They couldn't heal him physically. Far less could they take care of his deeper need of salvation from his sins. But Jesus could do both. So they placed this man at the feet of Jesus, and He did the rest.

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Commenting on this account, one minister of an earlier generation said this:

“What we need in the church today are stretcher-bearers – men and women with that kind of faith that will go out and bring in the unsaved so that they can hear the Gospel. There are many people today who are paralyzed with sin, paralyzed by indifference, or paralyzed by prejudice. A great many people are not going to come into a church where the Gospel is preached unless you take a corner of the stretcher and bring them in. That’s what these men did. They had the faith to bring this poor man to hear the Lord Jesus deal with him personally, and say, ‘Son, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you.’ ”

Dear friends, may we have that same desire, and that same urgency, to bring men and women and boys and girls to Christ. May we engage in that same kind of combined effort of praying, witnessing, and working for the salvation of family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers. May we not spare any effort in bringing men to Christ. May we not be so concerned about our own convenience. May we have the same determination to break down obstacles between the lost and the Lord. And when we come to the end of

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our human efforts, enabled by the Holy Spirit, may we trust in Jesus, and in His power alone to save.

And as we bring people into the church, may there be a faithful preacher of the one true Gospel, proclaiming the message from the Word of God, with clarity, with conviction, with urgency, and without apology, without diluting the message, without shortcuts. And may there be a church full of people who are praying – praying for lost souls, praying for those who are working to win them to Christ, praying for the one who preaches the Word. And for those who come to Christ, may the church be faithful to and focused **upon** the other half of God's two-fold purpose for His church. And that is the work of building up the saints in sound doctrine. That is the other half of the vital work of Christ's church, for both the newest convert and the most seasoned saint. All need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we grow in grace by feeding upon His infallible Word.

And as the church grows – as it grows numerically as the lost come to the Savior, and as it grows spiritually as the saints are built up in the faith – that kind of God-given growth will have an impact that extends beyond the church, into the home, into the family, into the workplace, into the shopping place, as the Word of God bears the fruit of the Spirit in changed lives. May

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we desire that kind of impact radiating out from our churches. May even the unbelieving see the effects, and say, as these people said in Mark chapter two, "We never saw anything like this."