

"And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four." Mark 2:3

Jesus Christ had returned to Capernaum. The news of His arrival quickly spread throughout the village. In fact, whenever Jesus entered a heart, a home, or a village it could not be hidden or kept a secret. The people began to flock from every direction to the place where He was speaking. Jesus was the greatest sensationalist the world ever saw. Still, He never did anything for the sake of a sensation. There was nothing cheap or superficial in His actions. The thing He did, however, created a sensation. As the multitudes were flocking to Him the humble dwelling was soon filled to overflowing. He preached the Word unto them. He showed them the will of God for their lives. He made plain the way of salvation for all men. The people heard Him gladly.

There were four men in the community who were devoid of religious selfishness. Instead of rushing to the place where Christ was speaking they went after a helpless friend who could not come to Jesus. The names of these four men are left out of the record, but the thing they did abides with us. They might have been relatives, or friends, but nothing is said to identify the doers. It is thus with thousands. Their simple, unostentatious charities are unnamed and unhonored. But, their record is on high. I should like to call your attention to three things in this story:----

I. The Coming of the Paralytic

1. He was helpless

He was paralyzed or palsy-stricken. Palsy is not so painful as cancer, nor so loathsome as leprosy, nor so fatal as cholera; but it is a disease attended with suffering besides leaving its victim eminently helpless. Having even lost the power of speech, it was indeed a pitiable case, and he seems to have brought it upon himself by sinful indulgence according to the implications of Christ's words.

2. He had friends who helped him

Powerless to move, the poor man was peculiarly dependent upon kind friends. These friends had heard of the wonderful cures wrought by Jesus Christ, and so they determined at all hazards to carry their friend to Him.

3. He had difficulties in approaching Christ

As they came carrying the paralytic on a pallet, they could not come near Christ because He was surrounded by a great crowd of people. The crowd paid no attention to the invalid and his bearers, or at least showed no disposition to make way for them to get to Jesus. An ordinary degree of faith would have given up the attempt, and the mournful procession would have returned home as it came. But, these men were not so easily daunted. Whenever there is a strong will there is sure to be a way.

4. All difficulties were victoriously surmounted.

They ascended the staircase outside the house, and went up on the flat roof of the house, carrying the paralytic with them. They went over the place where Jesus was, took up part of the tile roof, and let down the bed on which the sick of the palsy lay into the midst right in front of Jesus. They adopted an expedient which few would have thought of, and still fewer attempted, so earnest was their desire for their friend's recovery, and so strong their confidence in Christ's power and willingness to satisfy that desire.

II. The Conduct of the Physican

When those four friends by means of ropes had let the bed down into the room where Jesus was talking with rabbis of all the schools, Jesus recognized in their action, not an outrage upon decency and propriety, but an exceptional expedient to meet exceptional difficulties; not presumptuous forwardness requiring to be checked, but energetic perseverance deserving every encouragement.

The Lord read the hearts of those bearers and saw their faith in Him. Their faith was obvious in the simple fact of their seeking His healing power. Their faith was seen in their works. It was also obvious in their earnestness and the length to which they went to get him to Jesus. Jesus also read the heart of the paralytic. He was his trembling fearfulness, and his consciousness of sin. Perhaps the paralytic was more troubled about his sin than about his sickness. Anyway Jesus knew his deepest wants. When Jesus saw the faith of the contrite heart, He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." His bestowment of forgiveness was immediate, free, complete, authoritative and effectual.

III. The Co-operation of the Partners

This incident teaches the principle of co-operation. The business world has adopted this principle and all dividends are based upon co-operation of machinery and men. The constant effort of each captain of industry is to secure co-operation from the men in his employ. Production is thus speeded up and greater dividends mark the close of the business year. The civic bodies of our cities and towns keep this as their watchword. These bodies render a great service to community as a whole. They come together weekly to give consideration to community growth and expansion. They pool their interest and pull together for definite ends. They seek to create a spirit of service and helpfulness. This word, "Co-operation", originally belonged to the church, which needs to recover its own property, and put it into operation on a larger scale. The church needs co-operation on a larger scale and that of a personal character. This co-operation must go beyond mere church attendance and writing a check for expenses. It must go to the point of personal service in helping others to come to Christ.

This passage of scripture emphasizes the importance of co-operation in Christian work. The pallet had four corners. No one person could possibly carry them all. So it is with the family, the church, the state. Each is a multi-cornered institution. The wife or mother may be a wonderful woman, yet she cannot make an ideal home herself; the husband and father must co-operate and so must every child. A pastor might have much of the ability of Peter, Paul and John, but he cannot make an ideal church by himself; all members must co-operate to bring about the desired result.

Why is it that a handful of soldiers can disperse an armed mob of twenty times their number? It is not because the soldier is physically stronger or braver than the civilian. It is because he has learned to co-operate. That is what drill means, and it multiplies every soldier's efficiency twenty-fold. Some churches have the weakness of a mob. Others have the strength of an army.

In this paralytic on his way to Jesus, "borne by four" we have pictured to us the mission of the Church to bring sin-sick humanity to the Great Physican for healing, and the method of its accomplishment, through the co-operation of all her members.

Note that every one of the four had a corner to carry and he carried it. Not one of them loafed behind with his hands in his pockets. Each one had a corner. So it should be in the church. Christ's command and motto for His church is "To every man his work."

The Lord does not expect you to carry all the corners. But He does expect you to carry one. If you are a true child of God, the Lord has a corner for you and nobody but you. If a real child of His, you will never be satisfied till you are carrying that corner. Let us consider how we should carry our corners.

1. Carry your Corner Cheerfully

Those pallet-bearers were engaged in a work that appealed to the kindness and compassion. To help that poor victim of disease back to health and happiness was a joy and privilege.

And so, Christians, if you have to contribute an unusual amount of labor unusually hard to advance the cause of Christ, do not grumble about it. Do not whimper and whine over it. It has a bad effect all the way around. It takes the spring out of your own spiritual step. Then, it demoralizes your fellow-workers. Most unbecoming is it in a worker for such a cause and such a Master as yours. Carry your corner cheerfully.

2. Carry Your Corner Steadily

Suppose one of the four men had been every little while letting go of his corner, every now and then dropping it to attend to something else. How dangerous to the sick man, how annoying to the other carriers, what a hindrance to progress such a habit would have been. And what a common habit this is in the church, the habit of irregularity, of unsteadiness in the performance of important duty. Carry your corner steadily.

3. Carry your Corner Bravely

When the four men came in sight of the house in which Christ was preaching, they found the entrance blocked with a dense multitude. Impossible for man to work his way to Jesus through the crowd; doubly impossible for four men carrying a helpless paralytic. Had we been one of the four we might have given it up right there and said, "We've done our best and failed; let's carry him back home."

But there was no give-up in those men. If they cannot get through the crowd they will get around it. They will let the sick man down through a hole in the roof into Christ's presence. A bold and original plan, truly; and a splendid, ~~this is~~ bold originality in Christian work, guided by wisdom.

What objections Little Faith could have raised! "The staircase is too steep and narrow." "It will fall with our weight." "We may stumble and drop the sick man and break his neck." Thus Little Faith can always multiply objections and magnify difficulties. In all matters of duty Little Faith is a cowardly investigator and a pernicious adviser, as the Bible everywhere teaches. Well was it for the paralytic that his friends were not of the Little Faith breed. Difficulties only nerve them to greater efforts. Each man of the four takes a fresh grip on his corner. Up the stairs they press, every muscle braced. Out on the roof they go. Soon the astonished audience beneath beholds a helpless form descending, lower lower, till it lies before the Preacher. With what joy four faces look down to see the glorious issue of their battle with difficulties, their poor friend lying right at Jesus's feet. And with what answering joy Jesus looks up at them. Such faith, that difficulties cannot daunt nor obstacles overthrow, our Lord delights to bless. It is the measure of Christian power and fruitfulness.

4. Carry your Corner Prayerfully

The four friends might have carried their corners ever so cheerfully, steadily, bravely, yet unless followed by Christ's word of power their labor would have been vain. All their hopes center in Him. For the success of their efforts they are looking to Him and Him only. That is the spirit in which every one of us should carry his corner, with his eye, his faith, his hope fastened on Christ, and his heart ever whispering, "Lord, add thy blessing, for all our help must come from thee."

5. Carry your Corner Persistently

There were three stages in the experience of those workers. First, impossible, no one but Christ could heal; all others had failed. Second, it was difficult--It involved labor and inconvenience. Those men had to put out their time and strength in order to bring about a blessing. Third, when placed before Christ, it was done. The miracle of salvation and healing was accomplished.

We must learn that we should never give up. Cyrus Field was ten years laying the Atlantic Cable. The first time he tried to lower it, the great rope snapped in mid-ocean; and when they grappled it and brought it up to the surface it slipped away from them and was gone. Not until he had tried thirty times was the tireless patience of the project or rewarded. In life's school one of the hardest lessons to learn is persistence. A resourceful man is one who keeps trying if he fails from the first attempt. When others say it is time to quit, he says it is time to begin.

"There are three rules for success. The first is "Go on," the second is "Go on", and the third is "Go on". An old colored preacher said, "There are three pints in perseverance. The first is take hold. The second is, hold on, and third is, never let go."