

CARRYING YOUR CORNER

Mark 2:1-12.

This charming miracle took place in Capernaum where Jesus often went and where many of His miracles were performed. Upon His arrival He went to a certain house. The news of His arrival there soon spread throughout the village. In fact, whenever Jesus entered a heart, a home, or a village, it soon became known. As soon as it was known that Jesus had gone to this house, the crowds assembled there also. Various motives prompted them to assemble -- such as, curiosity, concern, anxiety, and antipathy. Some were merely curious. They came just to hear His words of wisdom and to see His works of power. Others were heart-hungry and seeking help. Still others were present in the role of critics. But regardless of what their motives were, Jesus did not alter His message in the least. He neither courted their favor nor feared their frowns. To Jesus the chief value of a crowd was the opportunity it presented to preach the Word of God. He was not a religious entertainer, but a Divine instructor. Instead of tickling their fancies, He taught their minds. He made plain the way of salvation, and showed them the will of God for their lives.

I. The Paralyzed Sinner.

This poor man was suffering from that terrible form of physical disability described as palsy. Due to an insidious disease of the nerves, his muscular action had lost its motion. He could no longer command the muscular activities of his body. Powerless to move, he was helpless and entirely dependent upon loved ones and kind friends. He had to be carried wherever he went. Truly he was in a pitiable condition.

II. The Persistent Saints.

We do not know who these four men were. Their names are not given. Nothing is said about them as to their business or how long they had been Christians. They had a simple confidence in the ability and reliability of Jesus. They trusted in the Saviour's trustworthiness. They were assured that He had the disposition and the power to fulfil His own programme -- "the recovery of sight to the blind, and the setting at liberty of them that are bruised."

They had a feeling of compassion for the paralytic. They planned to bring him to Jesus. When the first one suggested it, probably the second said, "We can't do it." Likely said, "We will get somebody to help us." Went to third and then to the fourth and said to each, "We want you to help us." Thank God for people who plan to bring others to Christ. It is letting people alone that sends them to hell. It is planning to go after them that brings them to Christ.

They pushed their plans. They did not stop with planning. Instead, they went to the house of the paralytic, whom they loved and wanted to take to Christ. All honor to those four bearers, by whom this paralytic was lovingly and tenderly carried to the house in which the Lord Jesus was preaching. I can see them now as they go down the street, one at each corner of the pallet. Each one carried his corner without complaining and without refusing because there was something he didn't like about one of the other three or the manner in which either of them was doing the job.

When these men got to the door of the house, they found it blocked. In many places the greatest hindrance is in Christian people. But they would not be defeated. They stuck to their task. Any weakling can resign. They refused to give up, although the crowd had erected a barrier between the man and the blessing Jesus had for him. If they could not get in the door, they would see that the man reached Jesus some way. Their faith was energetic, industrious, and inventive. When they could not bring the man to Jesus in one way, their pushing inventiveness made another way. They climbed up the outside stairway to the low and flat roof and walked out on it. They laid the paralytic down on the roof, removed some of the tile, and let him down through the opening into the presence of Christ. They looked down and watched to see what Jesus would do. The

Master recognized in their action, not an outrage upon decency and propriety, but an exceptional expedient to meet exceptional difficulties. Christ admired the courage, the inventiveness, the perseverance, and the faith of these men. Men of faith hold on, keep their mind on the task, and their eyes on the Master.

What did it take on the part of each man to pick up his particular corner?

1. A recognition of need.

They were fully conscious of the serious condition of their friend. If we are going to bring unsaved people to Jesus, then we must be conscious of their helpless and hopeless condition without Him. It is so easy to see the material, physical, and mental needs of those about us, but we are almost blind to their spiritual needs. Each of the four men carried his corner faithfully because he was fully convinced of the seriousness of his friend's condition.

2. An implicit faith in Christ.

Each was fully persuaded that Jesus could and would do something for his sick friend.

3. A purposeful desire.

Each wanted to bring the need and the fulness of power together.

4. A sacrificial spirit.

Each was willing to make a real sacrifice in order to bring his friend to Jesus. To bring the paralytic to Jesus, each man had to take time out from his personal business, had to expend physical energy, and had to give up the privilege of hearing the greatest preacher of all time. The enterprise required a sacrifice. Well, discipleship always costs. It always costs something to hold up your corner.

5. A persistent effort.

Full of enthusiasm, and agreed upon their plan of action, the four men set out with the paralytic. When they reached the house the doorway was blocked by a crowd. This crowd was unwilling to get out of the way and let them bring the palsied man to Jesus. That was almost enough to dampen their ardor, daunt their courage, and frustrate their enterprise. Their faith and determination were put to a severe test. They might have convinced themselves that the task was hopeless, and that they might just as well abandon the attempt and turn back home. But true faith is not so quickly defeated. Difficulties might test, but could not defeat the faith of these men. On the contrary, it developed in them an ingenuity in devising means of overcoming the obstacles. Here was the sick man, there was his Healer, and it was their business to bring the two together somehow, cost what it might. May God help us to press on in the face of every possible obstacle.

6. A Cooperative spirit.

It was one thing to be aware of the man's condition and to believe in the certainty of Christ's power, but it was altogether another thing to effect a meeting between the two. Bringing the man to Jesus was more than a one man job. He sought the cooperation of three others who were like-minded, all of whom were willing to lend a helping hand. One man was inadequate, two were insufficient, three a lopsided party, but four made the perfect combination. There was one corner for each man to hold up, and he did it. When all four took hold at the same time, lifted together, and walked in unison, it did not take long until they had the man where he needed to be. We need to work together. Are you holding up your corner? Are you meeting your Christian responsibility? Don't fail to carry your corner.

7. A prevailing faith.

At last every hindrance had been overcome. All that they could do was accomplished. Their task was ended. What a feeling of satisfaction must have filled their hearts when they saw their task completed!

III. The Powerful Saviour.

When they brought the man to Jesus, it was then the Master's turn to act. What did He do? He first of all took cognizance of their faith. In that plural pronoun there was included the faith of the paralytic together with that of the four men who brought him to Jesus. Notice that the Word does not say when He saw their clothes, nor when He saw their bank account, nor when He saw their standing, nor when He saw their education, nor when He saw their prestige, but when He saw their faith. It was because of the faith of these five men that Jesus spoke the life-giving words. When they showed their faith by their works, Christ exercised His great power.

A Young preacher went to assist an older preacher in a series of meetings. Early in the series, the young preacher gave the invitation that is given in so many meetings, "All of you who have friends that are lost, and who want us to pray for them, come and give us your hand, and tell us about them." No one came except one old lady, stooped with years. And as she took the young preacher by the hand, she said: "Pray for my son, John." After the service was over and they were leaving, the minister inquired as to the identity of the old woman and her son. The older preacher replied: "I wouldn't pay any attention to her. She has been doing that at every revival meeting for twenty years. Nobody pays any attention to her. And John; you see that tramp sitting out there by the side of the road? That is John."

The young preacher wandered out to where John was, and sat down by his side, talked to him about his soul and invited him to the service. John said to him: "I don't know whether I will come to the service or not, but I want to tell you, I have been coming to this church for twenty years, and you and my mother are the only ones who ever said anything to me about being a Christian."

That evening at services, John was seen in the rear of the building. When the invitation was given, he came down the right aisle. The old mother came down the left aisle and met him there at the front, threw her arms around his neck and said, "Thank God, twenty years is not too long to wait to have a joy like this."

Jesus said to the paralytic, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." When He said that, Jesus spoke home to the deepest needs, not only of that man, but of every man. Forgiveness means the remission of a penalty and the restoration of a broken fellowship. Not only did the powerful Saviour forgive this man, but He saved him from the consequences of his sin. This He did by healing his body. This man was healed in body as well as healed in soul in response to faith. That exceeded the fondest expectations of the four. Two cures were wrought on him at one time. Jesus said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." As the word was spoken, the power was imparted, and the man who came through the roof with his back on the bed went out of the door with the bed on his back. Think of the joy of the men of the roof. But the Pharisees who were looking on criticized. There never was a congregation where there were not critics, and too often criticism comes from those who might be expected to rejoice. One day a learned man said to Mr. Moody, "You made thirty-eight grammatical errors in your sermon today." Mr. Moody replied, "I am quite sure that I must have made even more than that. I have not had the educational advantages that you have had. But I am trying to use all that I have for the glory of God. Are you?" How much did that man get out of Mr. Moody's sermon. The person who looks only for the mistakes of others finds very little in life to enrich himself. Criticism is the poorest substitute in the world for service. A certain store has this motto: "Come in without knocking go out the same way." Let's not belong to the knockers gang.

Sinners are paralyzed by: --

1. Doubts.

They doubt themselves, Christians, and Christ.

2. Discouragement.

3. Disease of sin.

Let us, therefore, persist in loving, leading, and lifting souls to the Saviour, who is powerful to save, to keep, and to use.