

Last week we looked at the 'Unique authority of Jesus', both in the manner in which he taught and also in the manner he commanded the evil spirits to come out of the man who was possessed. This week we continue on the same theme of Jesus' authority particularly with reference to healing and forgiving sins. Mark in his gospel always raises the question in the people's mouth, "Who is this?" and allows the readers to figure out that Jesus is indeed God in human flesh. When Jesus taught in the synagogue he spoke as one who had great authority unlike the Pharisees and the Scribes who too taught but did not come across with the same authority. The people were amazed at the teaching of Jesus and also at his power to drive out the demons. This morning we will be looking at how the church shares in Christ's authority to heal sickness and sin.

Mark records for us that Jesus was again in Capernaum after a few days. Jesus was probably in the home of Peter and Andrew where he was preaching the Word concerning the nearness of the Kingdom of God and the necessity for repentance and faith. As he was teaching some people came bringing a paralyzed man. As they came to the door, they found out that the house was crowded and overflowing and there was no way in which they could manage to bring that man to Jesus. So they decided on an ingenious method. They went up to the roof and dug out the roof and lowered the man in front of Jesus. The roof was usually made out of wood and mud and therefore would not have been too difficult to dig through. The friends are quite desperate to make sure that the man is brought before Jesus.

When Jesus saw the faith of these young men he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Those who were standing around him were shocked because Jesus was claiming the divine prerogative to forgive sins. Therefore the question that was troubling them was, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" They were upset that Jesus rather than speaking words of healing, spoke words of forgiveness which seemed offensive to them.

Jesus immediately perceived in his spirit that they were discussing this question among themselves as to why Jesus was blaspheming and considering himself to be God. Jesus then turns to the crowd and says, "Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'" There seems to be no answer from the crowd. So he said to the man, "Get up, take your mat and go home," and the man got up and walked out in full view of the crowd. Jesus shows through this healing that he has the authority not only to forgive sins, but in order to prove that, he made the paralytic whole. Through this incident Mark reveals to us that Jesus is indeed God in human flesh.

The authority of Jesus is given to the followers of Jesus. The church is called to share in Christ's authority to heal sickness and to bring healing to the spirit by the forgiveness of sins. We are called to exercise this authority as the body of Christ. We are to pray for people for their healing and for the forgiveness of sins. As members of the body we are to exercise these gifts as the book of James reminds us. May we truly share in this authority and bring the good news to all around us.