

**6TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
JUNE 25/JULY 8, 2007**

ROMANS 12: 6-14

ST. MATTHEW 9: 1-8

Fr. Dr. Photios+ (W)

Gospel And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Two Paralytics And They Are Different People!

Sin does great harm to one's soul and often causes bodily illnesses/infirmities. Today's Gospel deals with this phenomenon.¹ At the behest of the Gergesenes, Jesus left, not resisting them but leaving "quietly and meekly". They thought more highly of their swine than of their chances for eternity. So be it. "Christ does not abide... where men live like swine, in mire and stench and an absence of good works".² Let's remember this lesson for our own spiritual purposes!

The Lord comes to his sometimes place of residence, Capernaum, and they bring him *a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed*. The world's physicians had not been able to heal him, so his relatives brought him to the "heavenly Physician, our Lord Jesus Christ".

Now, how many paralytics are there?

Many who simply read the divine Scriptures without study think that all four evangelists speak of one and the same paralytic; hence, some reproach the evangelists for contradicting one another and not being in agreement. This is not so, and cannot be so...³

The paralytic today is different from the one in St. John's Gospel (St. John 5: 1-18):

To those who investigate (the matter) carefully, the place, time, day and manner of healing, as well as other details, attest that this man sick of the palsy is one person, and the paralytic of whom the Evangelist John the Theologian speaks is another.⁴

So the Evangelists are not at odds about this issue.

The Paralytic's Faith Itself Was The Critical Factor Along With The Lord's Grace

Some say that the paralytic today was cured due to the faith of the people who brought him to the Lord. And it is good that we seek the prayers of others:

Saint Ambrose

The Lord looks with affection on the humble.... Learn, you who are sick, to gain health through prayer. Should you be so diffident because of your grave sins, seek the prayers of others, call upon the Church to pray for you, and in His regard for her, the Lord will give what He could refuse to you.⁵

This is so in some cases such as infant baptism (the active faith of the parents who bring the child), the Canaanite woman believing and her daughter being healed (cf. St. Matthew 15: 22-28), and the centurion believing thus his servant arose from his sick bed (cf. St. Matthew 8: 5-13).⁶ Jesus' *seeing their* faith could mean "Either the faith of the men who brought the paralytic, for Jesus often worked a miracle on account of the faith of those who brought the one sick; or, of the paralytic himself."⁷

But this is different from those spiritual examples. Here the paralytic believes himself!

This paralytic, however, chose to leave his house, and put up with being carried through the market-place, and did not shrink from appearing in the sight of all, whereas ordinarily the sick do not wish anyone to be a witness of their debility, and many have preferred to die in their infirmities than to reveal and expose their misfortune to all.⁸

This paralytic's faith was out in the open for all to see; and Christ's words confirm it: *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.* The Lord didn't heal him first. He forgave him. He was not upset that forgiveness came first. Christ absolved the sins of his soul, and then He healed him!⁹

Thus, He first forgives the sick man's sins, and afterwards He heals his body also, teaching us that many illnesses

spring from sin, and that first one must be cured of the cause.¹⁰

Our sins are washed away by baptism and repentance, and we cannot call Him our Father until we have done so:

So it also is with us, brethren; we cannot call God our Father until we have washed away our sins in the font of baptism and repentance. When we have emerged from it and have cast aside the evil burden (of sin), then do we say, Our Father, Who art in heaven.¹¹

Jesus Reads The Scribes' Evil Thoughts

The scribes were a jealous and envious lot. They witnessed Christ's miracles and yet vehemently opposed Him, saying *within themselves, This man blasphemeth*. They were hypocrites, bribing others while at the same time being "vexed with indignation; they complained, and reproached the Master and Saviour with blasphemy. they imagined that they were standing up for God's honour".¹²

Jesus read their thoughts. This should have 'tipped off' the scribes that He is God because no one other than God can know what is in one's heart, or remit others' sins. They didn't believe Him, so He queries them *Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?* "No one can forgive sins but Him Who **alone** (emphasis supplied) knows men's thoughts."¹³

Christ forgave him first "But by healing the body, I shall guarantee that the soul has been healed as well."¹⁴ The Lord poses a question for them, which of these tasks is easier, forgiving one's sins or healing the body so he can rise up and walk? Both are impossible for all except the True God. The Lord imposed the punishment for one's sins, so He Who sent it can lift it:

With remission of the sickness comes remission of sin, on account of which the affliction was permitted. If the Lord heals, clearly it is He Who sent the punishment. If He punishes, He certainly has the power to end the punishment. And if He lifts the punishment, He surely forgives the offence on account of which the punishment was permitted.¹⁵

Christ Gives Them The Sign

He points out to them that He has the power to forgive sins. Whilst we are on the earth, we can repent and be forgiven them "but when we shall pass from this world, we shall no longer be able to wash them away by confession, and the doors will be shut".¹⁶

They needed a sign since remitting the sins provided no visible evidence in itself. Christ gave such a sign when he told the palsied man to take up his bed and go to his house,

upon which he did so! Christ sent him by himself so he would not praise the Lord in His presence and so there would be witnesses who might then have “an occasion for faith (in Him)”¹⁷ Those multitudes still considered Him to be just a man.¹⁸

Saint Ambrose

In this place He gives a complete likeness of the resurrection. Healing wounds of **mind and body** (emphasis supplied), He forgives the sins of souls and makes an end of the infirmity of the flesh: This is to cure the whole man. And though it is a great thing to forgive men their sins,... nevertheless, it is a much more divine work to give resurrection to their bodies, because the Lord is Himself the resurrection.¹⁹

The Multitude marvelled But...

They marvelled because “He performed a sign as God; nevertheless, they regarded Him as a man, albeit One with greater than human power.”²⁰

As sinners, we are palsied in our souls. What we need is to repent and come to the Lord and commence the life-long struggle toward salvation. If we do repent, confess in Him and struggle on the Royal Path, we will become like the little children we are supposed to be. It is not enough to simply understand we sin; we must also then “take up our beds, our bodies, and go on to do good works”²¹ In other words, we must put our faith into action. Good works are an integral part of our faith, they manifest our faith in Christ!

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

¹ *The Gospel Commentary (Lessons Taken from the Holy Gospel and from Many of the Divine Writings of Our Father among the Saints, John Chrysostom)* (translated from the Slavonic into English by Hieromonk German Ciuba), Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, Pennsylvania, 2002, p. 310.

² *ibid.*

³ *id.*, p. 311.

⁴ *id.*

⁵ [The Healing of the Paralytic, P.L. 15 (col. 1638), *Expos. Evang.*, in Toal, IV:182, 183.] cited in *The Orthodox New Testament Holy Gospel, Volume 1 (Second Edition, Revised and Enlarged)* October 2000, Holy Apostles Convent/Dormition Skete, Buena Vista, Colorado, *St. Matthew*, Endnote # 88, p. 96.

⁶ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.

⁷ Blessed Theophylact, *Explanations of the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew, Vol. I*, (translated from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade) Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 76.

⁸ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, pp. 313-314.

⁹ *id.*, p. 314.

¹⁰ *id.*, p. 315.

¹¹ *id.*, pp. 316-317.

¹² *id.*, p. 317.

¹³ *id.*, pp. 317-318.

¹⁴ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁵ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 318.

¹⁶ *id.*, p. 319.

¹⁷ *id.*

¹⁸ Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

¹⁹ *The Orthodox New Testament Holy Gospel, op. cit.*, citing Saint Ambrose in his [*The Healing of the Paralytic*], *St. Matthew*, Endnote # 90, p. 96.

²⁰ *The Gospel Commentary, op. cit.*, p. 320.

²¹ *id.*