

**SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT  
(ST. GREGORY PALAMAS)  
FEBRUARY 19/MARCH 4, 2007**

**HEBREWS 1:10-2:3**

**ST. MARK 2: 1-12**

by

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**Gospel:** *And again He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house.*

*And straightway many were gathered together, inasmuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them.*

*And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.*

*And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.*

*When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

*But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,*

*Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?*

*And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?*

*Whether it is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?*

*But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,)*

*I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.*

*And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.*

...

When God comes, it says, the blind will see, the lame will walk, the deaf will hear and the stammerers will speak distinctly. Can the Jews tell us when such signs occurred in Israel, or when anything of the kind took place at all in Jewry?

[St. Athanasius the Great (+373), *On the Incarnation*, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary, Crestwood, New York, 1944 (First Edition), 1953 (Revised and Second Edition), (Paperback Edition), 1993, p. 71.]

...

But Christ speaks also to us, who *are palsied in soul*: Arise and walk; that is, It is not enough for you simply to be raised up after your fall; (ye *must*) also walk on the path of progress in virtue, following the spiritual course (emphases supplied).

[Hieromonk German Ciuba (tr. from the Slavonic into English; tr. from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, A.D. 1343), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p. 84. ]

## Our Commemorations

We commemorate our Saviour Jesus Christ's healing of the paralysed man, who can be visualized as an imperfect messenger of God, i.e. ourselves who are flawed by our spiritual frailty. The Lord's curing of the paralytic can be considered as the cleansing of the paralysis of sin. We also honour one of the greatest defenders of Orthodoxy, St. Gregory Palamas (+1359), who carried high the banner of hesychasm and distinguished "between the Essence and the Energies of God, both being equally *uncreated* (emphasis supplied); through the uncreated Energies man can have true communion with God..."<sup>1</sup>

## Faith of the Paralytic and His Carriers

Jesus came to Capernaum, and the populace learned of His being “in the house”. Many jammed it to hear His word:

The faith of those men was so great that they even made an opening in the roof through which they lowered the paralytic. Thereupon the Lord healed him, seeing the faith of those who carried him, or of the paralytic himself.<sup>2</sup>

Christ knows the paralytic’s faith is consuming and real. After all, he allowed himself to be lowered through the roof opening and carried to the Lord:

... when he saw that the place of assembly was filled, the approaches blocked, the haven of refuge obstructed, he submitted to be let down through the roof.<sup>3</sup>

This is proof of his faith in the Lord. He was not healed merely because those bringing him believed. St. John Chrysostom says that Christ seeing their faith “refers not merely to those who brought the man but also to the man who was brought.<sup>4</sup> So, he believed as did the four who bore him to Christ. Both the paralytic and his carriers expressed their faith in Him by their conduct. This must have impressed our Lord because He often healed even “the *unbelieving* (emphasis supplied) sick on account of the faith of those who brought them” as well as the faithful needing healing who were brought to Him by unbelievers.<sup>5</sup>

## The Lord’s Order of Healing

See the Lord’s method of healing: he first forgives his sins and subsequently cures his disease. Christ does it in this order because our most serious illnesses are resultant from our sins. So, He says to the paralytic “... thy sins be forgiven thee”.<sup>6</sup>

## The Usual Opposition

As in many instances, it is the scribes/Pharisees who disbelieve, silently within the “reasoning in their hearts”, falsely accusing the Lord of blasphemy. Their reasoning was that since only God can forgive sins, Jesus is blasphemous. In this ‘reasoning,’ they betray their lack of faith. Christ knows what is in their hearts and exposes them “Why reason ye these things in your hearts?...”:

They did not utter the word, they did not proclaim it through the tongue, but reasoned in the secret recesses of their heart. How then did Christ act? He made public their secret thoughts *before* the demonstration which was concerned with the cure of the paralytic’s body, wishing to prove to them the power of His Godhead. For that it is an attribute of God alone, a sign of His deity to shew the secrets of His mind, the Scripture saith “Thou *alone* knowest men’s hearts” (emphases supplied).<sup>7</sup>

Even though He “had revealed their innermost thoughts, the Pharisees remained senseless, not conceding that He Who knew their hearts could heal their sins as well”.<sup>8</sup>

### The Next Step

The Lord then heals the body thus making credible His healing of the paralytic’s soul (consider the paralytic to be our sinful selves). He confirms the more difficult by curing the body. The physical healing was the easiest part although the Pharisees thought the healing of the body was the more difficult task:

For to forgive sins is a very much greater act than to heal the body,  
greater in proportion as the soul is greater than the body.<sup>9</sup>

They had thought that Jesus was not going to heal the visible body but just claim to have healed the invisible soul by pronouncing forgiveness on the paralytic. This type of ‘thought process’ illustrates the Pharisees’ lack of faith. They doubted He was going to heal the body. In their minds, our Saviour was a deceiver.<sup>10</sup>

In short, these faithless souls wanted physical proof. The Lord obliges them saying that it is really easier to heal the physical body even though they mistakenly believe otherwise. So He will go on and heal the body, but in “so doing I will *confirm* the healing of the *soul* as well, which is difficult although it seems easy because it is invisible and cannot be verified” (emphases supplied).<sup>11</sup>

### Christ’s Command

I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into  
thine house.

The Lord confirms the miracle is *real*, not just a phantasy. He not only healed but “filled him with strength”. This is the same thing Christ does for us every day throughout the ages of ages, he cures us spiritually, delivering us from our sins *plus* providing us with the spiritual strength in our combat against the evil one.

### Capernaum and Spiritual Paralytics

We are all ‘paralytics’ in our Capernaum, Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church:<sup>12</sup>

Capernaum was called Christ’s city; for Bethlehem brought Him into the world, Nazareth brought Him up, but Capernaum had Him as its regular resident.<sup>13</sup>

...

For Christ at this very moment is in Capernaum, which, interpreted, is the house of comfort and consolation, which is the Church. For the house of the Comforter is the Church. I too am a paralytic, for the powers of my soul are inert and will not move to

do good. But if I am carried by the four evangelists and brought to the Lord, then I will hear Him call me, ‘Child,’ (for by doing His commandments I become a son of God) and my sins will be forgiven me.<sup>14</sup>

Consider the roof of the house our minds, which is over all that we are. Our roofs are made up of earthly materials, that of *this* world. Our roofs need opening up to Christ’s Truth. Strip away our earthly concerns and emphases and Jesus ‘opens’ to us. When we are ‘lowered’ through our roofs, we are humbled, healed, then we ‘take up our bed,’ our bodies, and commit them to Christ.<sup>15</sup> When our eyes have been opened to the Truth of Christ, we will understand too the meaning of the last sentence in the Gospel “We never saw it on this fashion.” As those present who glorified God and said it, we will understand that we *were* paralytics, but have been spiritually healed.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky (tr./ed by Hieromonk Seraphim Rose), *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Second Edition), Saint Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, Platina, CA, APPENDIX III, Fathers and Teachers of the Church, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup> Bl. Theophylact’s *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Mark, Vol. II* in the series, Bl. Theophylact’s *Explanation of the New Testament* (tr. from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade), Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Paralytic Let Down Through the Roof*, p. 6 of 10 at <http://www.ccel.org/fathers/NPNF-09/roof.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *id.*

<sup>5</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> *id.*, see fn 2 and 3, pp. 24-25 - note that the paralytic in St. Matthew 9:2-8 is the same one as in our Gospel of today, but there is a different paralytic in St. John 5:5-15.

<sup>7</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>9</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

<sup>11</sup> *id.*, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> *id.*

<sup>13</sup> Hieromonk German Ciuba, (tr. from the Slavonic into English; tr. from the original Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, A.D. 1343), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p. 79.

<sup>14</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> *id.*